



Refocusing resistance for climate justice

COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris



no. **23**
September 2015
ejolt report

Editors

Leah Temper
Tamra Gilbertson

Contributors

Pere Ariza-Montobbio - FLACSO
Stefania Barca – University of Coimbra
Sam Bliss
Patrick Bond – University KwaZulu-Natal
Kevin Buckland – 350.org
Marcelo Calazans – FASE-ES, Brazil
Andrea Cardoso – ICTA, UAB
Maxime Combes – Attac, France
Tamra Gilbertson – Carbon Trade Watch
Hamza Hamouchene – Algeria Solidarity Campaign
Faith ka-Manzi – University of kwa-Zulu-Natal
Joan Martinez-Alier – ICTA, UAB
Daniela Meirelles – FASE-ES, Brazil
Leah Temper – ICTA, UAB
Lena Weber – Lund University

Series Editor: Beatriz Rodríguez-Labajos (UAB)

Cover Photo: Jeff Nicholls - Tsimshian
(The Bridge Over Wedzin Kwah Wet'suwet'ten territory)
Layout: Ricardo Santos

The contents of this report may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational or non-profit services without special permission from the authors, provided acknowledgment of the source is made. This publication was developed as a part of the project Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade (EJOLT) (FP7-Science in Society-2010-1). The EJOLT project (2011-15) has received funding from the European Union's 7 th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 266642. The views and opinions expressed in this report are the authors' views and the European Union is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. EJOLT aims to improve policy responses to and support collaborative research and action on environmental conflicts through capacity building of environmental justice groups around the world.

Visit our atlas of environmental justice (www.ejatlas.org), our free resource library and database at www.ejolt.org or follow tweets (@EnvJustice) or updates on our facebook page (EJOLT) to stay current on latest news and events.

Please cite contents of this report using:
Temper L., and Gilbertson T., (eds). *Refocusing resistance to climate justice: COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris*, EJOLT report no. 23, 2015.

Abstract

The climate and environmental justice debates are heating up ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21, scheduled for December this year in Paris. In theory, the conference objective is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change, from all the nations of the world.

However, within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), controversial schemes to supposedly protect the Earth's climate eclipse the urgent need to reduce emissions at source and phase out fossil fuels.

This report firstly lays out how activists are organizing towards Paris to confront the powers that are ignoring the popular mandate for taking serious action on climate change. In the second section, we take a broader perspective examining important and emerging discourses and alliances within the Climate Justice movement. Finally in the 3rd section we focus on the ongoing resistance of those living alongside exploitative projects – from forest-grabbers to pipelines – and who are the most powerful force for keeping fossil fuels under the ground.

In Paris, there is no hope that the official conference will put on the table the Climate and ecological Debt owed from the wealthy to those who are being dispossessed. Yet in the streets and across the world, a decentralized movement of “Blockadia” is opposing fracking, pipelines, false solutions and dirty coal, racking up victories and gaining strength. This report aims to send a strong message, that far from believing the UN can save the world's climate, resistance to global climate injustice and inequality is alive and building from the ground up.

Keywords

Blockadia Climate Justice Pipelines Fossil Capitalism Extreme Energy
Responsibility Unburnable fuels Financialization

Refocusing resistance for climate justice

COPing in, COPing out and beyond Paris

Foreword	6
Introduction by Leah Temper and Tamra Gilbertson (editors)	8
Chapter 1	
To COP in or out? Climate politics 21 cops in	16
1 Challenges for the climate justice movement: connecting dots, linking Blockadia and jumping scale by Patrick Bond	17
2 The anti-politics of the Green Climate Fund: what is left to negotiate? by Sarah Bracking	34
3 Having the last word: towards Paris2015 – challenges and perspectives by Maxime Combes	42
4 Hacking the Cop: The Climate Games at Paris 2015 by the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination	53

Chapter 2

Strategic discourses and alliances

- | | | |
|----------|--|----|
| 5 | Climate justice: two approaches by Joan Martinez-Alier | 56 |
| 6 | The common(s) denominator: oil and water on a common river by Kevin Buckland | 57 |
| 7 | Labour and climate change: towards an emancipatory ecological class-consciousness by Stefania Barca | 63 |
| 8 | Energy sovereignty: politicising an energy transition by Pere Ariza-Montobbio | 74 |
| 9 | Desertec: the renewable-energy grab? by Hamza Hamouchene | 79 |
| | | 85 |

Chapter 3

Resistance to extractivism: stemming the flow

- | | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 10 | Women from KwaZulu-Natal's mining war zone stand their ground against big coal by Faith ka-Manzi and Patrick Bond | 92 |
| 11 | Leave the bones of Mother Earth in place: the liabilities left behind from Colombian coal exports by Andrea Cardoso | 93 |
| 12 | Not one more well!: corruption and Brazil's pre-salt expansion by Marcelo Calazans, Tamra Gilbertson and Daniella Meirelles | 98 |
| 13 | Fracking as environmental load displacement: examining the violence of unconventional oil and gas extraction by Lena Weber | 104 |
| 14 | Decolonizing and decarbonizing: How the Unist'ot'en are arresting pipelines and asserting autonomy by Leah Temper and Sam Bliss | 110 |
| | | 116 |

Foreword

Conflicts over resource extraction or waste disposal increase in number as the world economy uses more materials and energy. Civil society organizations (CSOs) active in Environmental Justice issues focus on the link between the need for environmental security and the defence of basic human rights.

The EJOLT project (Environmental Justice Organizations, Liabilities and Trade, www.ejolt.org) is an FP7 Science in Society project that runs from 2011 to 2015. EJOLT brings together a consortium of 23 academic and civil society organizations across a range of fields to promote collaboration and mutual learning among stakeholders who research or use Sustainability Sciences, particularly on aspects of Ecological Distribution. One main goal is to empower environmental justice organizations (EJOs), and the communities they support that receive an unfair share of environmental burdens to defend or reclaim their rights. This has been done through a process of two-way knowledge transfer, encouraging participatory action research and the transfer of methodologies with which EJOs, communities and citizen movements can monitor and describe the state of their environment, and document its degradation, learning from other experiences and from academic research how to argue in order to avoid the growth of environmental liabilities or ecological debts. Thus EJOLT supports EJOs' capacity in using scientific concepts and

methods for the quantification of environmental and health impacts, increasing their knowledge of environmental risks and of legal mechanisms of redress. On the other hand, EJOLT has greatly enriched research in the Sustainability Sciences through mobilising the accumulated 'activist knowledge' of the EJOs and making it available to the sustainability research community. Finally, EJOLT has helped to translate the findings of this mutual learning process into the policy arena, supporting the further development of evidence-based decision making and broadening its information base. We focus on the use of concepts such as ecological debt, environmental liabilities and ecologically unequal exchange, in science and in environmental activism and policy-making.

The overall aim of EJOLT is to improve policy responses to and support collaborative research on environmental conflicts through capacity building of environmental justice groups and multi-stakeholder problem solving. A key aspect is to show the links between increased metabolism of the economy (in terms of energy and materials), and resource extraction and waste disposal conflicts so as to answer the driving questions:

Which are the causes of increasing ecological distribution conflicts at different scales, and how to turn such conflicts into forces for environmental sustainability?

Throughout the EJOLT Project between 2011 and 2015 we have produced as a team several reports on legal strategies for communities to claim environmental justice, the economic valuation of environmental liabilities and many other issues. Four previous reports are very closely related to this final report on Climate Justice and can be seen as stepping stones to it. They are Report n. 2 with the title *The CDM cannot deliver the money in Africa* with several examples of scams disguised as “clean development mechanism” investments; Report n. 6, a major study with the title *Towards a Post-Oil Civilization. Yasunization and other initiatives to leave oil in the soil*; Report n. 11 on *International Law and the Ecological Debt*; and Report n. 18 on *The Ecological Debt: history, meaning and relevance for Environmental Justice*.

The present final report is written with a sense of urgency hoping it will be used before and during the COP 21 in Paris in December 2015. It is composed of three sections. The first lays out how activists are organizing towards Paris to confront the powers that are ignoring the popular mandate for taking serious action on climate change. In the second section, we take a broader perspective examining important and emerging discourses and alliances within the Climate Justice movement. Finally in the 3rd section we focus on the ongoing resistance of those living alongside exploitative projects – from forest-grabbers to pipelines – and argue that these are the most powerful force for keeping fossil fuels under the ground.

Introduction

Leah Temper and Tamra Gilbertson

As the climate and environmental justice debates heat up ahead of the COP21 scheduled for December this year in Paris, there is sparse hope that the official conference will address the climate and ecological debt owed from the wealthy countries to the Global South. And there are no reasons to expect a strong concerted action by the “creditor countries” that instead of alms-begging tries to bring the debtors to account, thereby helping to reach an agreement that would imply really substantial reductions to emissions of greenhouse gases.

Left to their own devices at COP21, countries in the Global North will likely push for a weak agreement that continues to benefit the North and avoid responsibilities to countries far less culpable for the climate crisis. The question of responsibility is a recurring one. From the responsibility that some refuse to assume. And the responsibility that others are fighting to assert in the face of this criminal inaction.

First off, there are early indications that the COP21 includes plans to eradicate Common but Differentiated Responsibility, a hallmark of the Rio Treaty of 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol. Further, claims for “loss and damage” from the most vulnerable countries to get compensation for the destruction brought about by climate change are being silenced, with polluters fearing it would open up legitimate discussions about their

liability for historical emissions and the reparations entailed.

Meanwhile, there is evidence demonstrating that climate change related impacts from both slow violence, such as sea level rises and fast violence, from cyclones, tornadoes and floods, have increased. Yet there is no mechanism for describing responsibility and no consensus on how to address loss and damage, particularly given that much of what is lost cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

In terms of addressing mitigation, several new carbon markets have been set up in California, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Quebec, Korea and China; just a few of the markets that could be linked in the future. This strategy will include the further commodification of everything that can be viewed as a carbon sink, especially forests in the new REDD agreement due to be signed at the COP21, but also including the oceans, soil, agriculture, pastoralist lands, and algae.

Some optimism can also be rallied by new strong voices and some unexpected allies that have been heard in the last two years urging solutions. There are increasing signs that the courts might be willing to intervene, as in The Netherlands urging a governmental policy of deeper cuts in emissions, and elsewhere supporting attempts to claim damages from fossil fuels

companies for climate change. Also, Pope Francis' ecological encyclical *Laudato si* acknowledges the science of climate change, powerfully defends the existence of an ecological debt from North to South (in paragraph 52), and criticizes carbon credits markets as sharply as any environmental activist could hope for (paragraph 171). The idea of "unburnable fuels", born in the Niger Delta and in Ecuador in 1995 and put into circulation by Oilwatch and diffused further by EJOLT, has been adopted by Nicholas Stern and many others in another guise, in the campaigns for disinvestment from the fossil fuel industries.

Moreover, in the streets and across the world, decentralised movements are opposing fracking, pipelines, false solutions and dirty coal, racking up victories and gaining strength. Movements are reframing their demands, and a rights-based discourse is complemented if not substituted by demands for autonomy, energy sovereignty, debt reclamation and assertion of responsibility to lands, the territories, and to the future.

This compilation of articles gives a voice to these resistances, shares vital research from destructive projects and demonstrates how the UN's lack of leadership threatens the planet and exacerbates the climate crises. The two main objectives of this project is to:

- Open space for debate on climate politics ahead of and beyond the COP21 in Paris
- Feed into the wider debate on climate and environmental justice

The following introduction reviews what is on the table at the COP21 in Paris and then outlines the contributions.

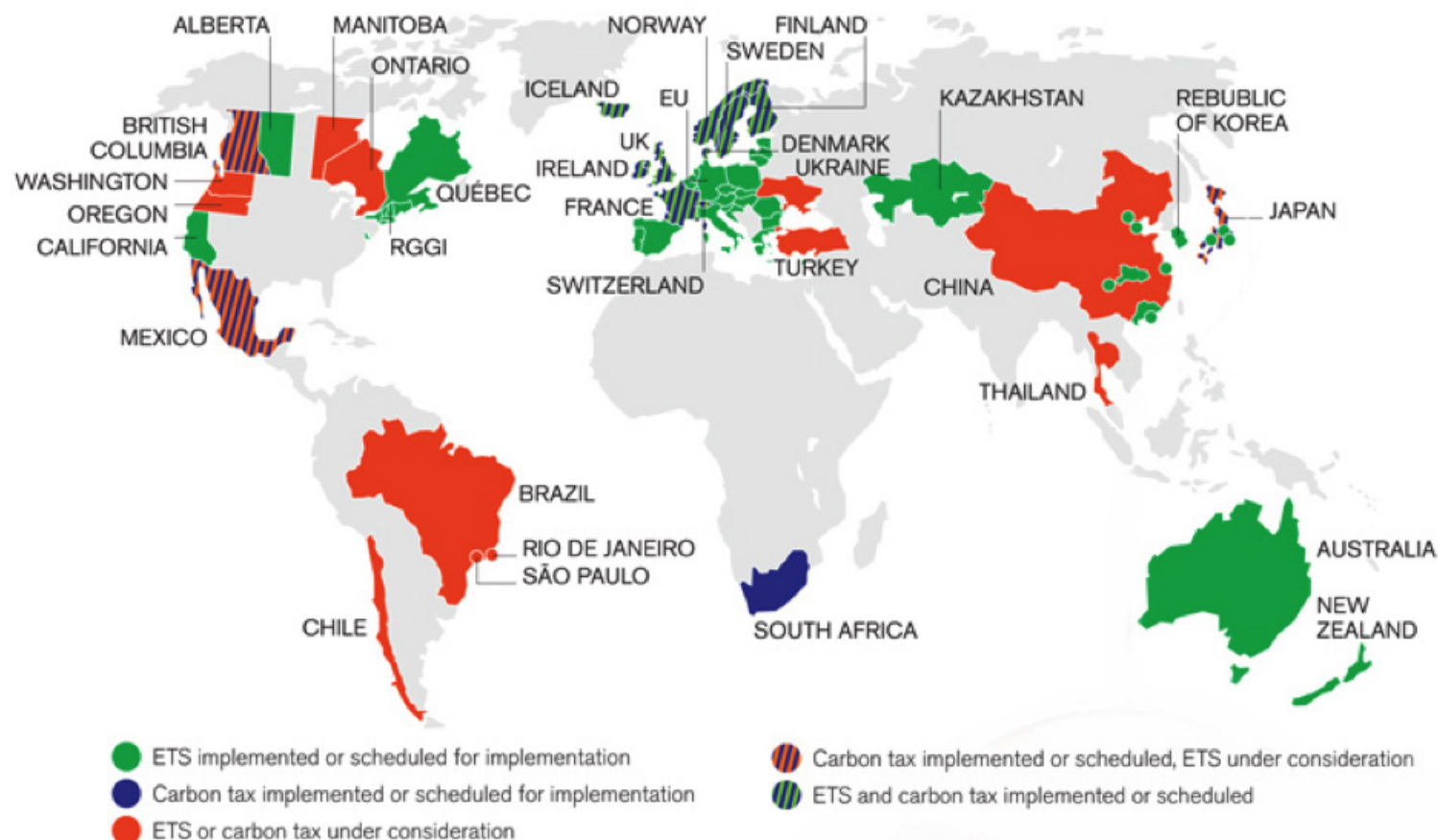
A few key points on the table at the UN COP21

After 25 years of failed climate negotiations, climate justice advocates are preparing for the COP21 in Paris to be yet another round of shameful false solutions. This admission of "defeat" is far from what one might assume as "failure"; rather, changes are being made but they are happening outside the UN framework in the streets and on the lands. The UN approach distracts from effective solutions – limiting us to a view that sees climate change as a primarily financial and "cost-efficiency" issue. Therefore, alternative futures fail to be envisioned within this framework..

One failure of past COPs is seen in the carbon markets over the past decade and has demonstrated how carbon trading is both ineffective and corrupt.¹ The EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) – the largest functioning carbon market in the world – has not helped to achieve emissions reductions, nor has it been an effective tool for dealing with the real causes of climate change. From policy-makers looking after the interests of corporate lobbies, to windfall profits for heavy polluters and financial traders, using a neoliberal market-based system for stopping pollution has been inherently ineffective.²

1 Gilbertson, Tamra (2011) "Frauds and Scams in Europe's Emissions Trading System", *Climate and Capitalism*, May 2011. <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2011/05/05/fraud-and-scams-in-europes-emissions-trading-system>

2 See for example the Scrap the ETS declaration, <http://scrap-the-euets.makenoise.org/KV/declaration-scrap-ets-english/>



It is likely that the COP21 Paris agreement will not really achieve commitments to substantially reduce emissions quickly enough, and to stop “losses and damages”. It will instead direct some funds into reviving and expanding carbon markets and offsets, with plans to link international carbon markets in the future. Although the failure of carbon markets has been widely documented, there will be no debate in Paris on how to discontinue markets, rather the direction will be how to enhance current carbon markets and expand new ones in the Global South and North. The COP21 in Paris will likely see a return to carbon market fixes in order to build a broader field of climate policy through which capital can flow.

During the UN climate talks in 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, a new Green Climate Fund (GCF) was conceived, promising to counter climate change with US\$100 billion from the Global North to the Global South for “sustainable development” pathways. It was launched at the 2011 UN climate talks in Durban, South Africa, although the GCF has not fully been agreed upon in the UN, and this amount of money has not materialized. Financial players are hard at work to ensure it will be a profitable financial instrument in order to continue a neoliberal approach to climate finance, rather than a means to distribute public grant money to countries in need of new renewable energies and perhaps climate adaptation funds.

3 Gilbertson and Coelho, “The Natural Capital Finance Facility: A window into the “green” economy,” CTW and Counter Balance publication, Nov 2014. <http://www.carbonradewatch.org/downloads/publications/a-window-into-the-green-economy.pdf>

The GCF has quickly morphed into an avenue to use financial mechanisms created by financial intermediaries, such as banks and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) that will profit the most from the proposed “flexible” financing.³

Not included in the report but also on the table in Paris are expanded Reducing Emissions through Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) markets and Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA). Climate Smart Agriculture aims to apply the tenets of REDD to Farmland and envisions compensating investors from the Global North with carbon credits for their contribution to CSA projects in the Global South. Yet rather than refocusing and compensating small-holders for the work they already have done and do “cooling down the earth” through agro-ecological production within a food sovereignty framework – what could be termed “climate-wise” agriculture, CSA builds on staples of the Green Revolution such as modified seeds, chemical pesticides, and synthetic fertilizers, as well as high risk technologies such as synthetic biology, nano-technology and geo-engineering. This imposition of new biotechnology on farmers around the world threaten chaos within volatile ecosystems, increased dependency on markets and increased speculation within the food system.

As Pat Mooney of the ETC Group writes, “Climate smart agriculture has become the new slogan for the agricultural research establishment and the corporate sector to position themselves as the solution to the food and climate crisis.... For the world’s small

farmers, there is nothing smart about this. It is just another way to push corporate controlled technologies into their fields and rob them of their land.” CSA offers the same potential for conflict, injustice and cost displacement that has been demonstrated through the implementation of REDD.⁴

As John O’Neill explains, REDD is as a form of injustice through “displaced responsibility” whereby for example REDD forestation schemes contract communities with the responsibility to maintain and preserve trees for decades into the future. He gives the example of the N’hambita Project in Mozambique where communities were contracted to preserve trees for 100 years tying future as well as current generations into future obligations. He argues that here “Both spatial site and temporal scale of responsibility are displaced. In addition to the unjust displacement of burdens the policy is unlikely to be effective given the immediate subsistence needs of those who take on those responsibilities.”⁵

In this report

Faced with UN “paralysis”, the first of the three sections grapples with UNFCCC COP politics, from past grievances to current debates, to the best way to mobilise against the UN framework ranging from a critical-realist perspective infused with historical overviews to creative and disruptive interventions.

Patrick Bond provides a sweeping overview of the shape of climate politics today. Affirming that

4 For more information on REDD, see for example, no-redd-africa.org and Cabello and Gilbertson (eds.) “No REDD, a Reader” CTW and IEN, 2011. <http://noredd.makenoise.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

5 John O’Neill, private communication.

mobilisation from inside is “suicide”, he lays out sources of hope for the principles of climate justice, from South Africa to Peru to New York. Acknowledging differences and challenges, he offers hope for a unity project that can globalise the resistances of what he terms “the central issue of our day.”

Sarah Bracking dissects the Green Climate Fund. She asks whether its financialised nature is a form of entrapment designed to depoliticise and divert any meaningful debate into fiscal jargon. She ends with an open question of how to move from alms-begging to autonomous prefigurative bases of resistance.

Maxime Combes provides one answer to her question from the perspective of the mobilisation in Paris, outlining the mass march strategy that aims to shift from a defensive and reactive position towards a self-defined climate justice agenda that aims to be forward-looking, pro-active and constructive, notwithstanding the outcome of the meeting.

Finally, the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination opens the invitation to “a mass participation trans-media action framework that merges the street disobedient bodies and cyberspace” so as to turn the city into a total resistance performance open to all.

While the authors agree that giving false hope for a just and effective climate agreement would be naïve, they all make the case that there is a need for stronger resistances and to learn from the past in order to move forward beyond Paris.

Discourses and Alliances

The second section focuses on the broader discourses and alliances born from climate justice movements across the globe. Making the links includes articulation with labour movements, reviewing and understanding energy sovereignty, and rethinking large-scale renewable energy projects, not only from a decentralised perspective, but from a perspective of historical power relations. This section highlights the discursive battles over terms such as climate justice, responsibility and liability, renewable and “Green”. As Aaron Vasijntan has written recently, “Words can make or break whole movements. The way a problem is defined, the slogans that movements use, are incredibly important in order to make necessary policy changes.”⁶

The backlash against the term Anthropocene is the most recent reminder of how “wars of words” are fought over who gets to define meaning. Anthropocene expresses the reality of “humans fundamentally transforming the earth’s geology” that was noticed many decades ago yet has recently been in vogue. To many (including some authors here), the term Anthropocene serves as a rallying cry for the need for urgent action of climate change. Yet the term has been easily appropriated for other conclusions – from those who argue that we are beyond the point of no return so we may as well dance while Rome burns, to the headline-grabbing “eco-modernists” whose recent manifesto refers to the potential for a “good anthropocene” where endless and perpetual growth can be sustained by constant technological innovation and infinite “clean” energy in the form

6 Vasijntan, Aaron. The Anthropocene debate. Why is such a useful concept starting to fall apart? <http://www.unevenearth.org/?p=684>

of nuclear power. While others recognise that “blaming” all humans brings about its own set of injustices.

Other words may not be as easy to usurp. Joan Martinez-Alier takes us through two approaches to climate justice through two recently published books, one from philosopher Henry Shue, and the other from journalist Naomi Klein. Shue’s book focuses on how responsibility and liability should be enacted in global negotiations, whereby justice requires that luxury emissions should decrease in order to meet the needs of those on subsistence emissions and where (causal if not moral) responsibility should lead to strict liability. Klein meanwhile acknowledges that ineffectual politicians and the UN will not provide the radical solutions needed whatever the advice from moral philosophers and that these solutions must come from elsewhere in the shape of anti-capitalist environmental justice movements that currently offer the only hope for a re-thought Anthropocene that takes justice for humanity and other species into account.

Kevin Buckland takes us on a journey on a flotilla of paper canoes through the Hudson river to the New York People’s Climate March in 2014 as a means to understand how the concept of the commons can inform this anthropocene in creation. Faced with the threat of “bomb trains” coming from the North Dakota Bakken fracked and water-polluted oil fields, and oil barges on the river that provides New York it’s drinking water, Buckland weaves a story of water as commons and posits framing resistance against fracking as resistance against incursions into the democratic commons.

Stefania Barca, a pioneering author on “working class environmentalism”, makes the case for recentering labour in the climate change debate and how an alliance between labour and climate mobilisation may offer both a starting point and necessary precondition for a revolution in the way production, reproduction and consciousness interact.

Pere Ariza grapples with the difficult questions inherent in the new concept of energy sovereignty, acknowledging the thorny questions this framing brings up, such as “who is the sovereign in energy sovereignty?” and at what scale should sovereignty be enacted? Pointing to sometimes conflicting forms of sovereignty that need to be navigated, and contrasting state sovereignty that aims to return power to the state from deregulated market regimes with internal sovereignty of the political community to decide on energy generation, distribution and consumption in a way that is appropriate within their ecological, social, economic and cultural circumstances, he offers examples of both at work.

This question of sovereignty and the appropriate scale for an energy transition is further developed in Hamza Hamouchene’s article on Desertec, the mega solar project that aims to harvest the sun from the North African countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria to power European energy demand. Hamouchene digs into questions of what the renewable future should look like, and questions the green panacea through centralized renewable energy production in the context of neocolonialism.

Resistances

As energy conflicts (in extraction, transport, and waste as greenhouse gases) become ever more extreme, we can safely affirm that climate justice movements around the world are diversifying and growing in number and strength. The third and final section honours the courage and grit that it takes for communities to continue resisting around the world. It is in these spaces that people are taking back their lives and protecting all life on Earth. Frontline movements and communities work to keep fossil fuels in the ground and lands alive in often dangerous situations.

A recent article in *Nature* used detailed data and well-established economic models to calculate the most economically inefficient fossil fuels whose exploitation needs to be slowed down drastically or abandoned to limit global warming to under 2 degrees. They concluded that these “unburnable fuels” include vast amounts of oil in the Middle East, coal in the US, Australia and China, and that trillions of dollars of known and extractable coal, oil and gas, including most Canadian tar sands, all Arctic oil and gas and much potential shale gas, should not be exploited.⁷ Yet purely monetary calculations provide a poor guideline for where to leave it in the ground. Cultural significance, social impacts, biodiversity and sacredness are more cogent reasons that can guide us where to leave oil in the soil, gas under the grass and coal in the hole.

Most important are the claims of those on the territory who oppose extraction and claim their right to live in healthy and safe environments and to

self-determination. They employ a wide repertoire of resistance ranging from innovative proposals for how to pay the carbon debt while keeping “unburnable fuels” in the soil, such as the proposal of the women from Fuleni, in South Africa, who are trying to Yasunize the coal reserves that are dangerously close to communities and to a natural park conserving rhinos as Patrick Bond and Faith Ka-Manzi argue in their article.⁸ Yet in contrast to the Yasuni Proposal that argued for funds to be funnelled from climate debtors to the Ecuadorian state, this proposal argues that the funds should go directly towards supporting the activists themselves who are putting their lives on the line to defend the territories.

In Colombia, there is not yet much talk of leaving the coal in the hole (except perhaps in the very sensitive ecosystems of the paramos), but Andrea Cardoso argues that there is no time like the present. She demonstrates that as coal prices plummet the simplest math shows that the violence and environmental destruction of mining does not add up to the costs in the vast extraction fields of Cerrejon and El Cesar. She concludes by challenging the Colombian government to come to terms with this.

Can oil profits fund a social revolution? In Brazil, pre-salt oil was sold as the bonanza that would pave the social welfare state, yet several years in, amidst corruption and scandal, Marcelo Calazans, Tamra Gilbertson and Daniella Meirelles survey the scene and the growing movement that is proclaiming “Not one more well!”.

7 McGlade, Christophe, and Paul Ekins. “The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global warming to 2 [deg] C.” *Nature* 517:7533 (2015): 187-190.

see also McGlade, Christophe, and Paul Ekins. “Un-burnable oil: an examination of oil resource utilisation in a decarbonised energy system.” *Energy Policy* 64 (2014): 102-112.

8 Temper, L., Yáñez, I., Sharife, K., Ojo, G., Martínez-Alier, J., CANA, Combes, M., Cornelissen, K., Lerkelund, H., Louw, M., Martínez, E., Minnaar, J., Molina, P., Murcia, D., Oriola, T., Osuoka, A., Pérez, M. M., Roa Avendaño, T., Urkidi, L., Valdés, M., Wadzah, N., Wykes, S. 2013. **Towards a Post-Oil Civilization: Yasunization and other initiatives to leave fossil fuels in the soil.** EJOLT Report No. 6, 204 p.

Lena Weber also takes up the theme of both the slow and the fast forms of violence that extreme energy wreaks, from the view of Algeria. Protests against fracking were perhaps the most visible environmental mobilisations in the country to date, and are contributing to new thinking about climate change across North Africa and new articulations with networked climate justice movements.

Finally, Leah Temper and Sam Bliss visit the Unist'ot'en camp resisting pipelines in British Columbia Canada. Here the Wet'suwet'en argue less in terms of human or indigenous rights but they rather affirm a very different understanding of responsibility than that which we began with – responsibility for them is what they are fighting for – responsibility to the salmon, to the watershed, to the ancestors and to the future.

Conclusion

Can an ethic of responsibility to nature enacted from below counteract the apathy towards nature and care demonstrated by those at the top?

Across the world, communities are creating new frontiers of resistance against the opening of fossil fuel frontiers. Some struggles draw upon mutual inspiration and become linked and coordinated with each other, creating true resistance corridors. In this report, we see that communities are succeeding in rolling back and slowing the advance of the fossil fuels economy.

As networked climate justice movements around the world cohere and consolidate, focusing not only

on claims for an ecological debt but also on concrete instances of resistance on the ground, it becomes ever more apparent how the spokes of these networks follow the routes of oil pipelines, refineries and other infrastructures of fossil capitalism. This report begins to ask how can we subvert this power, through alliances with workers and other social actors, through new imaginaries and through spatial and strategic interruptions.

The next step for climate justice movements is to turn this power of the capitalist organisation of energy production against itself by forging greater unity between those at the points of extraction and transport, and the consumers of fossil fuels in coordinated actions. Paris provides just one such occasion to engage in a global collective strike against the gas, petro and carbon economy, but the next step is for a movement of movements to define a schedule of resistances.

Meanwhile, this report aims to share just a few of these important stories with the hope of placing emphasis on these actions in order to advance the discourse within the climate justice debate and include greater solidarity for frontline movements in the future. Finally, this report aims to send a strong message, that far from believing the UN can save the world's climate, resistance to global climate injustice and inequality is alive and building from the ground up.



Chapter 1

To COP in or out?

Climate politics 21 cops in

- 1 Challenges for the climate justice movement: connecting dots, linking Blockadia and jumping scale** by Patrick Bond 17
- 2 The anti-politics of the Green Climate Fund: what is left to negotiate?** by Sarah Bracking 34
- 3 Having the last word: towards Paris2015 – challenges and perspectives** by Maxime Combes 42
- 4 Hacking the Cop: The Climate Games at Paris 2015** by the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination 53

Challenges for the climate justice movement: connecting dots, linking Blockadia and jumping scale

1

Patrick Bond is the Director of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society in Durban, South Africa.

Introduction

A 2015 special issue of the journal Mobilizing Ideas – “Expansion, Evolution, and Impact of the Global Climate Change Movement”¹ – was introduced by Jackie Smith,

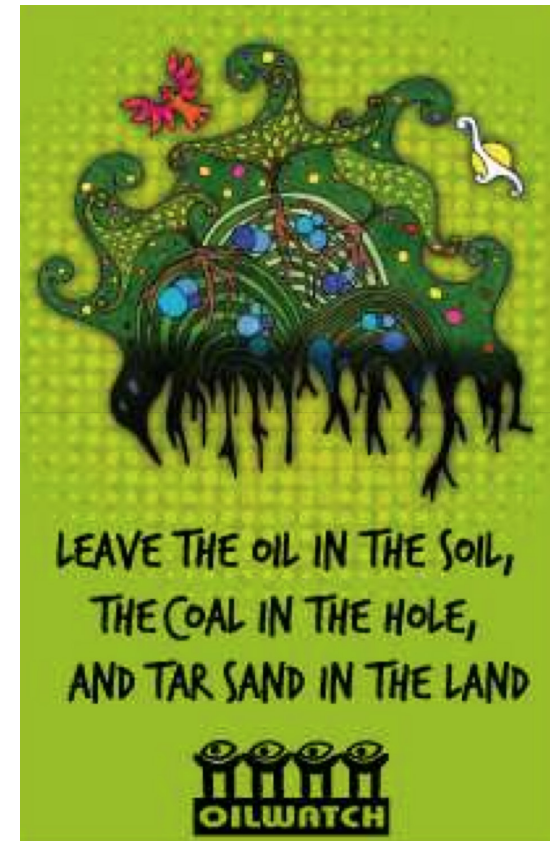
in the field of climate justice especially there has been a tremendous growth in organized anti-systemic resistance by low-income people of colour and people from the global South. From its origins in the early 1990s, the “environmental justice” movement has failed to gain the attention it deserves from social movement scholars...

One reason is the failure of global-scale advocacy as a result of the extremely atomistic nature of climate justice activism thus far. However, reasons Jen Allen,

fragmentation may be a good thing. In the absence of a global agreement, climate action depends on national and local responses. These newcomers to climate advocacy have mobilized new groups that can push for national and local climate action commensurate with science. Entering the arena of climate change governance, or “bandwagoning” to climate change governance, can be a difficult task.

Bandwagoning requires linking the activists’ traditional issue, be it justice or gender, to climate change in a way that will persuade those already working on climate change. The NGOs or social movements need to invest in information gathering and dissemination, relationship building, travel, and staff training. Moving between areas of global governance is costly, yet many have engaged in bandwagoning, and taken on climate change... For those who are bandwagoning, the goal is to advance their traditional issues as well as achieve climate action.

One site requiring more attention is Southern Africa, given the dangers of climate change for this region, but also given a profusion of bandwagoning opportunities that have so far gone unrealised. The strengths and weaknesses here allow insights into what can be done globally, with the aim of promoting stronger linkages and scale-jumping in the interests of climate justice. In 2015 the major opportunity to see the results of this process is the global climate summit in Paris. But it was in New York and then Lima in 2014 that we tested whether such a major activist initiative is possible, and what kinds of framing, strategies and tactics it can conceive and perhaps also implement. The central



¹ <https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/>

claim of environmental justice activism, to think globally and act locally so as to avoid reducing campaigns to Not In My Back Yard (Nimby), becomes yet more critical when the thinking globally must now become acting globally, integrating climate into all spheres of activism, and as for fossil fuel burning, demanding Not On Planet Earth! (Nope!).

Dangers of disconnections

When in mid-2015, less than a year after documenting the spirit of “Blockadia” with such enthusiasm, Naomi Klein offers this reality check, we need to take it seriously: “I’m continually amazed by the extent to which we fail to make connections between, for instance, a fight for affordable public transport and climate change.”²

Southern Africa’s leading environmental justice organisations struggling against injustices in the mining industry gathered in Cape Town to compare notes from February 9-12, 2015, as they do every year. The “Alternative Mining Indaba” (AMI) brought together more than 150 activists from vibrant African community organisations, another hundred or more NGO workers stretching from local to international, the most active advocacy networks, a phalanx of public interest lawyers, a few brave trade unionists and even some curious armchair academics like myself. It taught me the most sobering lessons about how even in a site well primed for climate justice activism, vastly more work is needed.

The kick-off day included a set-piece protest march to the gleaming Cape Town International Convention Centre. The target: the corporate “African Mining Indaba” attended by thousands of delegates from multinational and local mining houses plus a few of their side-pocket politicians.³ The AMI’s internal critics told me they felt the march was tame and predictable. It was.⁴ The march helped activists let off some steam, for they were angry at the blasé mood in both Indabas. Just beforehand in the opening AMI plenary, two charismatic keynote speakers – Zimbabwean democracy advocate Brian Kagoro and Matthews Hlabane from the SA Green Revolutionary Council – were joined by militants from several communities who raged openly against petit-bourgeois NGO reformism. Warned Kagoro, “We risk here, as the elite of civil society – civilocracy – becoming irrelevant. If you want mining to carry on, in just a bit more humane way, there will be another Alternative Mining Indaba happening in the streets.”

Perhaps with this bracing threat in mind, the march was followed by three days of exceptionally rich presentations and debates. The break-out rooms were filled with campaigning tales and most carried the frisson of outright opposition to non-essential mining. For example, asked the leading-edge critics, do we really need to drink fizzy sugar water (Coca Cola products whose profits line SA Deputy President’s Cyril Ramaphosa’s gorged pockets) from the tin cans (smelted in Richards Bay, South Africa, at a wicked cost in terms of coal-fired electricity) that we immediately toss away into the AMI hotel’s (non-recycled)

2 http://www.climateandcapitalism.com/2015/05/10/naomi-klein-to-fight-climate-change-we-must-fight-capitalism-2/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+climateandcapitalism%2FpEtD+%28Climate+and+Capitalism%29

3 Money was the main reason no activists could make their case inside: the entrance fee was nearly \$2,000. For a taste of some of the grievances against the big mining houses, see the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre’s balanced fact sheet: <http://business-humanrights.org/en/mining-in-southern-africa-briefing-note>

4 The week’s best moment for confrontation was a small guerrilla theatre stunt just outside the convention centre. Pretoria’s Anglican Bishop Jo Seoka invited suited executives to drink the disgusting water that his grassroots allies brought from mining-affected communities. No one took the bait; and an amusing video resulted: <http://www.fin24.com/Economy/Mining-Indaba/Mining-bosses-dared-to-drink-toxic-water-20150211>

rubbish bin? To slow the awesome destruction caused by senseless mining, some activists suggested UN “Free Prior and Informed Consent” language as the best way for communities to deflect prospecting. Techniques to delay Environmental Impact Assessments were shared. Tax justice narratives came in handy, given the mining houses’ prolific capital flight and illicit financial flows. Still other progressive lawyers suggested routes into the jurisdiction of legal reparations. While most everyone complained of a Resource Curse in which multinational mining capitalists corrupt African politics, economics, environments and societies. Yet I had a clear sense that no one believed minor Corporate Social Responsibility reforms will ever treat, much less cure, the Resource Curse. Instead, the reforms discussed were practical handles for raising concerns, getting publicity, adding a bit of pressure, and giving mining-affected communities – especially women – a sense of hope and solidarity.

Still, the disconnects were obvious regarding the central issue of our day: climate change. To illustrate, there was a flashy red-and-white document produced about South African coal, containing explosive information and vivid photos of ecological destruction and human suffering. It is full of horrifying facts about the coal industry’s wreckage: of public and household health, local environments, and the lives of workers, women, the elderly and children (regrettably there’s no web link). This particular booklet does not hesitate to explain mining industry abuse via co-optation of the African National Congress ruling-party elites via

Black Economic Empowerment (BEE).⁵ The critique connects many dots, and certainly the particular agency that published it is one I consider amongst the half-dozen better international NGOs. Their grantees do amazing things in many South African, other African and global contexts. Yet the coal booklet offered only a token mention – a few words buried deep in the text – about climate change. Though coal is the major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and although there is a vibrant world campaign against coal mining in favour of renewable energy, the climate crisis was completely lost amidst scores of other eloquently-described grievances.⁶

Drawing this disconnect to the agency’s attention, I received this explanation from one staffer: “While climate change is a great middle class rallying point, it has no relevance to people living in poverty beyond their empty stomachs, dirty water and polluted air.” As we learned the hard way at the civil society counter-summit during the United Nations COP17 here in Durban, this may be a brutally frank but true estimation of the hard work required to mobilise for climate justice.⁷ In the last comparative poll (done by Pew in 2013), only 48% of South Africans considered climate change to be a ‘top global threat’, compared to 54% of the rest of the world.⁸

Fortunately, the terrain is fertile, especially in the South African provinces – Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal – attracting the most militant and sophisticated attacks on big coal anywhere in Africa. They are carried out by a myriad of militant

5 Ramaphosa-style BEE translates into worse misery for the many, and enrichment for a very few such as South Africa’s deputy president. His billion-dollar net worth comes not only from that notorious 9% share of Lonmin and all that it entailed, but also from his Shanduka company’s filthy coal operations. With men like him at the helm, South Africa certainly isn’t going to kick the life-threatening Minerals-Energy Complex habit. See <http://monthlyreview.org/2014/04/01/south-africas-resource-curses-growing-social-resistance/>

6 <http://coalswarm.org/>

7 <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/durban-s-conference-polluters-market-failure-and-critic-failure>

8 <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/24/climate-change-and-financial-instability-seen-as-top-global-threats/>

It taught me the most sobering lessons about how even in a site well primed for climate justice activism, vastly more work is needed.

community and environmental groups, including Mining Affected Communities United in Action, the Green Revolutionary Council, Bench Marks Foundation (a progressive church-based research/advocacy network), periodic critiques by radical NGOs such as groundWork and Earthlife (the latter hosts a branch of the International Coal Campaign), legal filings by the Centre for Environmental Rights and Legal Resources Centre, supportive funders like ActionAid, and women's resistance organisations (supported by Women in Mining, Womin). Still, aside from communiqués by Womin feminists and occasional NGOs (mostly in passing), it is extremely rare that they connect the dots to climate change.⁹

Another good example of disconnecting-the-climate-dots emerged in March 2015, when South African Environment Minister Edna Molewa incited furious complaints from grassroots communities, NGO activists and progressive lawyers who fight prolific pollution by mining houses, petro-chemical plants and smelters. Molewa's job includes applying new Minimal Emissions Standards to 119 firms – including the toxic operations of Eskom, Sasol, AngloPlats, PPC cement, Shell, Chevron and the Engen oil refinery – whose more than 1000 pollution point sources are subject to the Air Quality Act. Ten years ago when the law was first mooted, these firms should have begun the process of lowering emissions. They did not, and as a result Molewa let 37 of them (mostly the largest) off the hook for another five years by granting exemptions that make a mockery of the Act. Yet notwithstanding their justifiably

vociferous complaints regarding these exemptions, South Africa's environmental NGOs (ENGOS) simply forgot to mention climate change. There was just one exception, Samson Mokoena, who coordinates the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance: "Not only has Eskom been granted postponements, but so has the largest emitter of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the country, Sasol."¹⁰ In contrast to Mokoena, one of the world's top campaigning ENGOS ignored CO₂ in predicting Molewa's decision will "result in about 20,000 premature deaths over the remaining life of the [Eskom] power plants – including approximately 1,600 deaths of young children. The economic cost associated with the premature deaths, and the neurotoxic effects of mercury exposure, was estimated at \$20 billion."¹¹ Add climate change (that NGO did not) and these figures would rise far higher.

The excuse for giving Molewa a pass on the climate implications of her latest polluter-massage is that the Air Quality Act was badly drafted, omitting CO₂ and methane. That omission allowed one of the country's leading journalists to report, "The three pollution baddies that can cause serious health issues, are particulate matter (soot), sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides." Surely in such a list, other Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions such as CO₂ and methane qualify as baddies? More than 182 million Africans are expected to die prematurely by 2100 thanks to GHGs, according to Christian Aid.¹² But Molewa "seemed to have developed a 'massive blind spot', ignoring how air pollution is transported over very long distances to damage human health in places far removed from the

9 <http://thegreentimes.co.za/women-stand-their-ground-against-big-coal/> and http://www.bench-marks.org.za/research/policy_gap_9.pdf

10 At its plant in the small city of Secunda, Sasol squeezes coal and gas to make liquid petroleum, in the process creating the single greatest site of CO₂ emissions on earth, and Eskom is Africa's largest CO₂ emitter by far when adding up all its plants together. See <http://www.moneyweb.co.za/moneyweb-south-africa/environmental-ministers-emission-relieve-slammed>

11 http://groundup.org.za/article/polluters-let-hook_2747

12 <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/climate-of-poverty.pdf>

source of emissions,” alleged another international ENGO. But just as big a blind spot exists when that very ENGO simply forgot about climate change, even though GHGs are co-pollutants with all the other airborne toxins, transported over very long distances, and wreak enormous damage.

There is, however, one thing worse than neglecting climate change when you have an excellent chance to raise consciousness: assimilation into the enemy camp. In some cases, civil society degenerates from watchdog to lapdog. Naming what may be some of the most notorious include a multinational corporate tool called the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), whose SA chairperson Valli Moosa also chairs AngloPlats.¹³ Following Molewa’s announcement, and a day after the SA finance minister yet again postponed introducing a carbon tax law, WWF’s Saliem Fakir “welcomed the government’s commitment to the mitigation of climate change and support which showed that South Africa was leading the way among developing countries in terms of policy measures towards easing the burden on the environment.”¹⁴ When WWF meets a toxic polluter or a captive regulator like Molewa, it seeks a snuggle-not-struggle relationship. It is long overdue that it changes its acronym to WTF.

Behind the disconnections lies divide-and-conquer capitalism

In Naomi Klein’s brilliant new book and her husband Avi Lewis’ forthcoming film, *This Changes Everything*, we find crystal-clear linkages between

climate (“This”) and practically all other areas of social struggle.¹⁵ For Klein, it is the profit motive that, universally, prevents a reasonable solution to our emissions of GHGs: from energy, transport, agriculture, urbanisation, production, distribution, consumption, disposal and financing. Through all these aspects of the world’s value chains, we are carbon addicted. In each sector, vested corporate interests prevent the necessary change for species survival. It is only by linking together our single issues and tackling climate as the kind of all-embracing problem it is, that we can soar out of our silos and generate the critical mass needed to make a difference. But in turn, that means that any sort of systemic analysis to save us from climate catastrophe not only permits but requires us to demand a restructured economic system in which instead of the profit motive as the driving incentive, large-scale ecologically-sound planning becomes the fundamental requirement for organising life.

Is it therefore overdue, in civil society, for “capitalism” to be spoken about openly, even if this occurs now for the first time in many generations, especially in those politically backward societies – e.g. North America and Europe – where since the 1950s it was practically forbidden to do so? In much of Africa, in contrast, grievances against colonialism were so fierce that when neo-colonialism replaced it over fifty years ago, many progressive activists found courage to talk about capitalism as the overarching, durable problem (worse even than the remaining white settlers). In South Africa, anti-capitalist rhetoric can regularly be heard in every township, blue-collar (and red-collar) workplace,

¹³ Moosa was responsible for what, five years ago, the SA Public Protector termed “improper conduct” when approving the world’s largest coal-fired power plant now under construction, Eskom’s Medupi. At the time, Moosa was serving as both Eskom chair and a member of the ruling party’s finance committee, and signed a dubious boiler-supply deal worth more than \$4 billion with a company, Hitachi, whose local affiliate was 25% owned by Moosa’s party. The Medupi boilers needed to have 7000 of the welds redone. (The ruling party led the liberation struggle and regularly wins elections... but really isn’t too experienced at making coal boilers.) <http://mg.co.za/article/2009-02-18-moosa-acted-improperly-in-awarding-of-medupi-contract>

¹⁴ <http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/draft-carbon-tax-bill-proposed-1.1824418>

¹⁵ <http://thischangeseverything.org/>

When WWF meets a toxic polluter or a captive regulator like Molewa, it seeks a snuggle-not-struggle relationship. It is long overdue that it changes its acronym to WTF.

and university. Here, Moscow-trained presidents and even communists who were once trade union leaders have quite comfortably populated the highest levels of the neoliberal state since 1994.

Talking about capitalism and climate is more vital than ever. To do so, though, requires a somewhat longer-term perspective than the average activist and NGO strategist has scope for, in gatherings like the AMI. If we do not make that leap out of the silos in which all of us have sunk, we will perish. We are so overly specialised and often so isolated in small ghettos of researchers and advocacy networks, that even our finest extractives-sector activists and strategists are not being given sufficient scope to think about the full implications of, for example, where our electricity supply comes from, and why mining-smelting corporates get the lion's share; how climate change threatens us all; and how the capitalist economy makes these crises inevitable. The solution? A critical part of it will be to think in ways that intersect, with as much commitment as we can muster to linking class, race, gender, generational, environmental and other analyses of the oppressed. Action then follows logically.

Looming ahead in Paris at the end of 2015 is another Conference of Polluters, or COP (technically, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC). The last twenty did nothing to save us from climate catastrophe. Judging by early rough drafts of the Paris COP21 agreement recently leaked, another UN fiasco is inevitable. The Coalition Climat21

strategy meeting for Paris was held in Tunis on March 23-24 2015, just before the World Social Forum. There was hope that this could be a breakthrough gathering, if indeed fusions were now ripe to move local versions of 'Blockadia' (as Klein calls it) – i.e. hundreds of courageous physical resistances to CO₂ and methane emissions at source – towards a genuine global political project. The diverse climate activists present seemed ready for progressive ideology, analysis, strategy, tactics and alliances. Between 150 and 400 people jammed a university auditorium over the course of the two days, mixing French, English and Arabic. It was far more promising than the last time people gathered for a European COP, in 2009 at Copenhagen, when the naivety of 'Seal the Deal' rhetoric from mainstream climate organisations proved debilitating.

Recall that leaders from the US, Brazil, South Africa, India and China did a backroom deal that sabotaged a binding emissions follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol. In 'Hopenhagen,' even phrases like 'System change not climate change' were co-opted, as green capital educated by NGO allies agreed that a definition of 'system' (e.g. from fossil fuels to nuclear) could be sufficiently malleable to meet their rhetorical needs. That precedent notwithstanding, the phrase "A climate movement across the movements" used seemed to justify an urgent unity of diverse climate activists, along with heightened attempts to draw in those who should be using climate in their own specific sectoral work. The two beautiful words 'Climate Justice' are on many lips but I suspect the cause of unity may

either erase them from the final phraseology or water them down to nebulosity.

Beginning at an August 2014 gathering in Paris, a great deal of coalition building is occurring in France and indeed across Europe. The proximate goal is to use awareness of the Paris COP21 to generate events around the world in national capitals on both November 28-29th – just before the summit begins – and on December 12, as it climaxes. There was consensus that later events should be more robust than the first, and that momentum should carry this movement into 2016 (See Chapter 3). (The December 2016 COP22 will be in Morocco, a site where civil society is in conflict with the rest of the progressive world regarding what is considered Morocco's repressive, colonial control of the Western Sahara, which local Social Forum activists often defend.)

The initial signs at the Tunis preparatory meeting were upbeat.¹⁶ Christophe Aguiton, one of Attac's founders, opened the event:

In the room are Climate Justice Now! (CJN!), Climate Action Network (CAN), international unions, the faith community, and the newer actors in the global movement, especially 350.org and Avaaz. We have had a massive New York City march and some other inspiring recent experiences in the Basque country and with the Belgium Climate Express.

But, he went on, there are some serious problems ahead that must be soberly faced:

- there is no CJ movement in most countries;
- grounded local CJ organisations are lacking;
- we need not just resistances but alternatives; and
- there are some important ideological divisions.

Still, he explained, "We won't talk content because in the same room, there are some who are moderate, some who are radical – so we will stress mobilisation, because we all agree, without mobilisation we won't save the climate." This unity-seeking-minus-politics was reminiscent of a process four years ago in South Africa known as 'C17', a collection of 17 civil society organisations that did local preparatory work before the UN's 2011 Durban climate summit, the 'COP17.' Actually, fewer than a half-dozen representatives really pitched in throughout, and the big moderate organisations expected to mobilise financial resources, media attention and bodies ultimately did not deliver any of these. South Africa's Big Green groups and trade unions failed to take C17 ownership, to commit resources and to add the institutional muscle needed.¹⁷ Thousands came but the messaging was vapid and virtually no impact was made on the COP or on South Africa's own reactionary emissions policy. The final rally of 10,000 activists midway through the COP17 gave UN elites and local politicians a legitimating platform. Nor did we use the event to build a South African climate justice movement worthy of the name. So my own assessment of the 'state failure, market failure and critic failure' in Durban strongly emphasised the problem of excessive unity, without ideological clarity, institutional responsibility or political accountability.¹⁸

The solution? A critical part of it will be to think in ways that intersect, with as much commitment as we can muster to linking class, race, gender, generational, environmental and other analyses of the oppressed.

¹⁶ Quotes that follow are from my personal notes of the meeting.

¹⁷ I watched that process fairly closely, and with growing despondency. The first choice for a university counter-summit venue close by the Durban International Convention Centre was found to be unavailable at the last moment, so my Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal became an instant host for the 'People's Space.'

¹⁸ <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/durban's-conference-polluters-market-failure-and-critic-failure>

Thousands came but the messaging was vapid and virtually no impact was made on the COP or on South Africa's own reactionary emissions policy.

Maybe it will be different in France, because their movements are mobilising impressively, with projects like November 27-29 mass actions aimed at municipalities; a Brussels-Paris activist train; a 'run for life' with 1000 people running 4km each from northern Sweden to Paris; the 'Alternatiba' alternatives project with 200 participating villages from the Basque country up to Brussels which will culminate on September 26-27; and for getting warmed up, on May 30-31, an anticipated 1000 local climate initiatives around the country. Yet the local context sounds as difficult in 2015 as it was in South Africa in 2011. As Malika Peyraut from Friends of the Earth, France pointed out, national climate policy is "inconsistent and unambitious" and the country's politics are increasingly chaotic, what with the rise of the far right to 25% support in municipal elections." Worse, French society will be distracted by regional elections from December 6-12, and with national elections in 2017, "there is a high risk of co-optation," she warned. No politicians should have their faces near these mobilisations, suggested Mariana Paoli of Christian Aid (reporting from a working group), as COP21 protesters needed to avoid the celebrity-chasing character of the big New York march. Al Gore's name came up as one whose own corporate messaging was out of tune. But Avaaz's Iain Keith asked, "Hypothetically, what if the president of Vanuatu came to the march – should we refuse him?" Vanuatu is probably the first nation that will sink beneath the waves, and the recent Cyclone Pam catastrophe made this a twister question. Without a real answer, Paoli replied: "What we are trying to avoid

is politicians capturing the successes of movement mobilisation."

Behind that excellent principle lies a practical reality: there are no reliable state allies of climate justice at present and indeed there really are no high-profile progressives working within the COPs. It's a huge problem for UN reformers because it leaves them without a policy jam-maker inside to accompany activist tree-shaking outside. The UN head of the COP process is an oft-compromised carbon trader, Christiana Figueres. Although once there were heroic delegates badgering the COP process, they are all gone now:

- Lumumba Di-Aping led the G77 countries at the Copenhagen COP15 – where in a dramatic accusation aimed at the Global North, he named climate a coming holocaust requiring millions of coffins for Africa – and so was lauded outside and despised inside, but soon was redeployed to constructing the new state of South Sudan;
- President Mohamed Nasheed from the Maldives – also a high-profile critic at Copenhagen – was first a victim of US State Department's cables (revealed by Wikileaks) which documented how his government agreed to a February 2010 \$50 million bribe to support the Copenhagen Accord (just as Washington and the EU agreed that the "Alliance of Small Island States countries 'could be our best allies' given their need for financing") and was then couped by rightwingers in 2012 and, earlier this month, was illegitimately jailed for a dozen years;

- Bolivia's UN Ambassador Pablo Solon was boot-ed from his country's delegation after the 2010 Cancun COP16, where, solo, he had bravely tried to block the awful deal there, and not even the Latin American governments most hated by Washington – Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua – supported him thanks to Northern bullying;
- in any case a jungle road-building controversy (TIPNIS) soon divided Evo Morales' supporters, and in 2013 the COP's progressive leadership void grew wide after the death of Hugo Chavez and the battle by Rafael Correa against green-indigenous-feminist critics for his decision that year to drill for oil in the Yasuni Amazon (after having once proposed an innovative climate debt downpayment to avoid its extraction); and
- Filipino Climate Commissioner Yeb Saño had a dramatic 2013 role in Warsaw condemning COP19 inaction after his hometown was demolished by Super Typhoon Haiyan, but he was evicted by a more conservative environment ministry (apparently under Washington's thumb) just before the Lima COP in 2014.

If you are serious about climate justice, the message from these COP experiences is unmistakable: going inside is suicide. It is for this reason that the original protest narrative suggestions that CAN's Mark Raven proposed here were generally seen as too reformist. Acknowledging the obvious – "People losing faith in the broken system, corporations sabotaging change" and "We need a just transition" – his network

then offered these as favoured headline memes: "Showdown in 2015 leads to a vision of just transition to fossil-free world" and "Paris is where the world decides to end fossil fuel age." Yet with no real prospects of reform, the more militant activists were dissatisfied. Nnimmo Bassey from Oilwatch International was adamant, "We need not merely a just transition, but an immediate transition: keep the oil in the soil, the coal in the hole, the tar sands in the land and the fracking shale gas under the grass." That, after all, is what grassroots activists are mobilising for. Added Nicola Bullard: "This narrative is too optimistic, especially in terms of what will surely be seen as a failed COP21."

Bullard was a core Focus on the Global South activist in the 2007 Bali COP13 when Climate Justice Now! was formed based on five principles:

- reduced consumption;
- huge financial transfers from North to South based on historical responsibility and ecological debt for adaptation and mitigation costs paid for by redirecting military budgets, innovative taxes and debt cancellation;
- leaving fossil fuels in the ground and investing in appropriate energy-efficiency and safe, clean and community-led renewable energy;
- rights-based resource conservation that enforces Indigenous land rights and promotes peoples' sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water; and
- sustainable family farming, fishing and peoples' food sovereignty.

Behind that excellent principle lies a practical reality: there are no reliable state allies of climate justice at present and indeed there really are no high-profile progressives working within the COPs.

If you are serious about climate justice, the message from these COP experiences is unmistakable: going inside is suicide.

Just as valid today, these principles were further fleshed out at the April 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia, to include emissions cut targets – 45% below 1990 levels in the advanced capitalist economies by 2020 – plus a climate tribunal and the decommissioning of destructive carbon markets which have proven incapable of fair, rational and non-corrupt trading. Dating to well before the CJN! split from CAN in Bali, that latter fantasy – letting bankers determine the fate of the planet by privatising the air – remains one of the main dividing lines between the two ideologies: climate justice or climate action. A unity project is by no means impossible, and these are extremely talented organisers.

The world was left with the impression of vibrant climate mobilisation in far more difficult conditions on September 21 2014, after all. Cindi Weisner from Grassroots Global Justice Alliance reflected on the New York march, reminding how broad-front building entailed surprising trust emerging between groups – leftists at the base, big unions, Big Green – whose leaders in prior years would not have even greeted each other. From Avaaz, Keith reminded us of the impressive New York numbers: 400,000 people on the streets including 50,000 students; 1,574 organisations involved including 80 unions; another 300,000 people at 2650 events around the world; three tweets/second and 8.8 million FB impressions with 700,000 likes/shares. The next day's Flood Wall Street action was surely the most dynamic moment, what with the

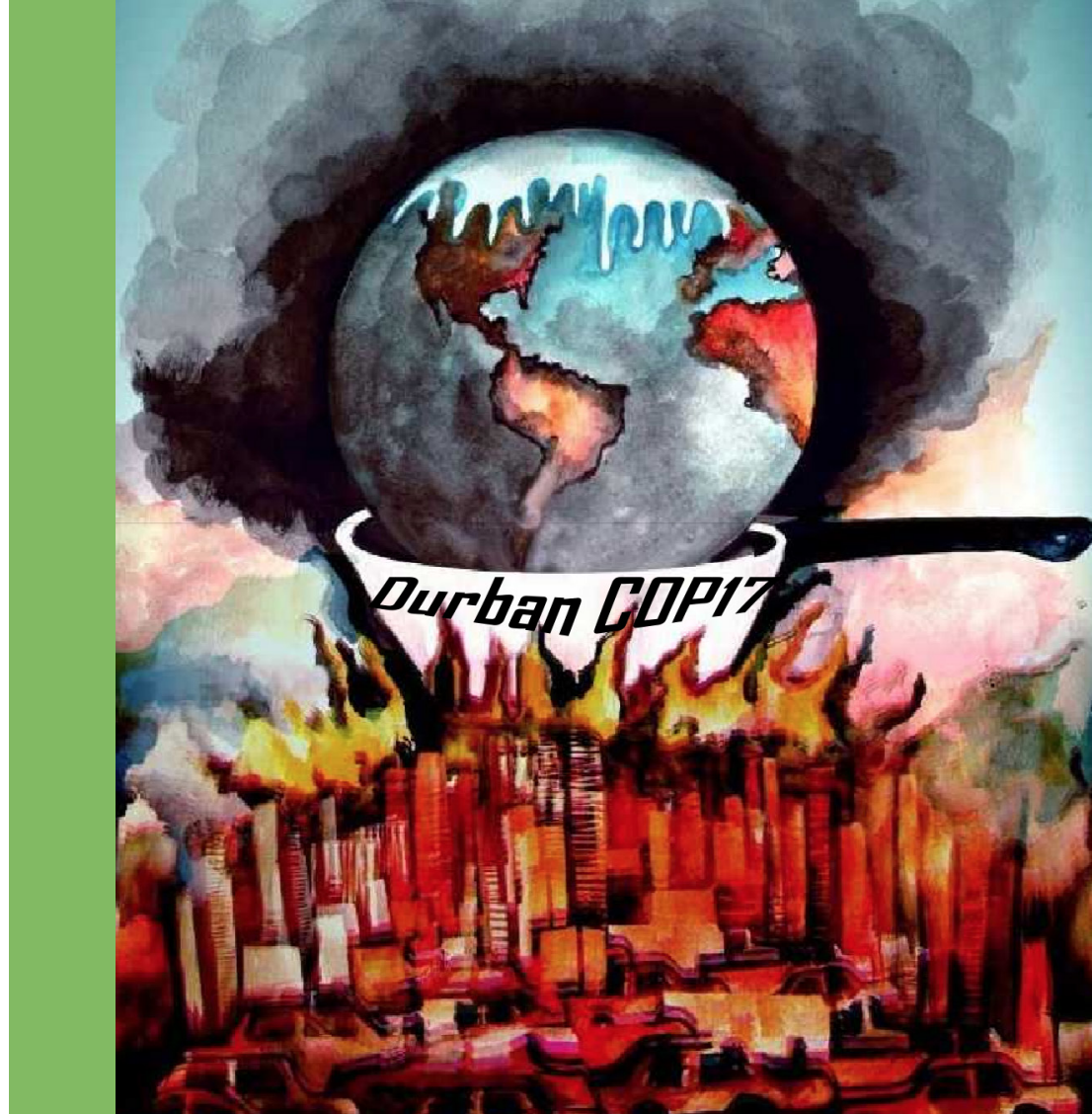
financial core of fossil capitalism under the spotlight of several thousand protesters. But with corporate and UN summits following the big New York march and without escalation afterwards, the elites' spin was dominant and ridiculously misleading. Barack Obama told the heads of state who gathered two days later: "Our citizens keep marching. We have to answer the call." Needless to say the UN summit's answer was null and void from the standpoint of respecting a minimal scientific insistence on emissions cuts.

Since the same will occur in Paris, concrete actions against the emitters themselves were suggested, including more projects like the Dutch 'Climate Games' which saw a coal line and port supply chain disrupted in mid-2014 (See Chapter 4). In 2015, protests are anticipated over coal in Germany's Rhineland and we will likely see direct actions at Paris events such as Solution 21, a corporate 'false solutions' event where geoengineering, Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), and carbon trading will be promoted. Likewise, ActionAid's Teresa Anderson reported back from a Narrative Working Group on lessons from Copenhagen: "Don't tell a lie that Paris will fix the climate. People were arrested in Copenhagen for this lie. No unrealistic expectations – but we need to give people hope that there is a purpose to the mobilisation." Most important, she reminded, "There is Global North historical responsibility, and those who are most vulnerable have done the least to cause the problem."

This is vital because in Durban, UN delegates began the process of ending the "common but differentiated

responsibility” clause. As a result, finding ways to ensure climate “loss & damage” invoices are both issued and paid is more difficult. The UN’s Green Climate Fund is a decisive write-off in that respect, with nowhere near the US\$100 billion annually promised for 2020 and beyond by then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. And, said Anderson, given the tendency of Third World nationalists to posture on this point, “Elites in both North and South are to blame, so it’s not a matter of pure geographical injustice. It’s the economic system that is driving climate change.” Looking at more optimistic messaging, she concluded in the report-back: “Powerful positive actions are in play. We are life – fossil fuels are death. Paris is a moment to build movements, to show we are powerful and will fight into 2016 and beyond to solve the climate crisis. It takes roots to weather the storm ahead.” Responding, former Bolivian negotiator Solon (now Bangkok-based director of Focus on the Global South) stated:

I think we need a clearer narrative: let’s stop an agreement that’s going to burn the climate. We already know that agreement exists. If China peaks emissions only by 2030 or if we accept Obama’s offer to China, we all burn. The Paris agreement will be worse than the draft we’ve seen. The point is not to put pressure for something better. It’s to stop a bad deal. We are against carbon markets, geoengineering and the emissions targets.



But perhaps the clearest message came from veteran strategist Pat Mooney of the research network called the etc group, describing to the mass meeting what he wanted to see in Paris: “It should start like New York and end like Seattle. Shut the thing down.” Back in 2009, just weeks before he died, this was what Dennis Brutus – the mentor of so many South African and international progressives – also advised: “Seattle Copenhagen!” The Paris Conference of Polluters also needs that kind of shock doctrine, so that from an activist cyclone a much clearer path can emerge towards climate justice in the months and years ahead.

In my experience, the world's most visionary CJ, post-capitalist politics are fused when Ecuador's Accion Ecológica eco-feminists find Indigenous movement allies and solidarity activists across the world.

Scale jumping

Global pessimism and local optimism: that's how to quickly explain CJ 'scale politics.' Or, better: paralysis above, movement below. This combination was on display again in Lima, Peru, in December 2014, at the COP20. That event provided an opportune time to re-assess global environmental governance as a site of struggle, one that has proven so frustrating over the past two decades. It was a moment to ask again, specifically, can hundreds of successful episodes in which communities and workers resist local GHG generation or seed local post-carbon alternatives, now accumulate into a power sufficient to shape climate negotiations? Will they be ready for Paris? Judging by even the remarkable events of 2014, my answer is, unfortunately, not yet. We need to become much stronger and more coherent in rebuilding the CJ movement, once so full of hope, from 2007-09, but since then in the doldrums – even though individual, mostly disconnected activist initiatives deserve enormous admiration, nowhere more so than in the Americas.

Lima came on the heels of two world attention-grabbing policy events: a United Nations special summit in September just after the New York People's March and Wall Street blockade, and the Washington-Beijing deal on a new emissions-reduction timetable. The COP20 offered a chance to gauge the resulting balance of forces, especially in the critical Andean countries where melting mountain glaciers and shrinking Amazonian jungles meet. Here, combinations of the world's most radical conceptions of nature's integrity

('Rights of Mother Earth', *sumak kawsay* and *buen vivir*) combined with concrete struggles to transcend the destruction of nature and its commodification.

In my experience, the world's most visionary CJ, post-capitalist politics are fused when Ecuador's Accion Ecológica eco-feminists find Indigenous movement allies and solidarity activists across the world. The Quito-based NGO had long argued the case for collecting the Global North's 'ecological debt' to the South and to the planet. But it was only when oil drilling was proposed in the Yasuni National Park – on the Peru border, deep in the Amazon – that the stakes were raised for both Accion Ecológica and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities. They lost the first rounds of the battle: first, shaming Germany and Norway into making payments to leave the oil in the soil (an initial \$3.5 billion was demanded, as a down-payment on the North's climate debt), and second, once the money was deemed insufficient, a national referendum to protect Yasuni (regardless of payments) was not treated fairly by Ecuador's extractivist ruling class. But international outreach continues. As Ivonne Yanez of Accion Ecológica explained,

Now we are trying to join with the movements to reclaim the commons, in an effort to start a dialogue with people across the world. We want to see anti-capitalist movements fighting together in a new internationalism, beyond the solidarity with affected peoples in the way it is traditionally understood.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Is-the-Climate-Justice-Movement-Ready-to-Scale-Jump-Our-Politics-20141204-0065.html>

The Yasuni struggle and others like it – e.g. Bolivia’s notorious proposed forest highway, TIPNIS – force onto the progressive agenda this uncomfortable dilemma: are the ‘pink’ governments of Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Nicolas Maduro in nearby Venezuela capable of generating serious eco-socialist policies consistent with their leaders’ rhetoric? Or instead, are the new elites irretrievably petro-Keynesian, petro-Indigenous and petro-Socialist, respectively, with radical climate politics foiled by their economies’ carbon rentiers?

In more conservative Peru, the regime of Ollanta Humala swept into power in 2011 on a pinkish electoral platform. Yet the mining sector has since boomed, with disastrous impacts in the highlands and Amazon alike. Recall that in 2009, the Awajun and Wampis Peoples and the Interethnic Association for Development of the Peruvian Jungle (Aidesep) blockaded roads in Bagua, leading to a confrontation with the military that left 38 dead and 200 wounded. As Aidesep’s leader Alberto Pizango put it, “Thanks to the Amazonian mobilizations I can say that today the indigenous agenda is not only inserted in the national level and within the State, but on the international level.” Yet Pizango and 52 others are in the midst of being prosecuted for that protest.

To his credit, Peruvian Environment Minister Manuel Pulgar-Vidal admits that thanks to the threat of the “forestry market of carbon, people are losing trust and confidence around that mechanism. People are thinking that it can create conditions to lose their land.”

Still, Pulgar-Vidal believes safeguards will be sufficient. At an Indonesian forest debate in May, he asked, “What kind of incentives can we create to bring the business sectors to the forest?” He praised Unilever as “a good example of how a private sector [firm] can play a more active role regarding the forest.” Expressing faith in the ‘green economy’, Pulgar-Vidal continued, “What we need to do is to address the problem of the value of the carbon bond around the forest. The current prices are creating a lack of interest... disincentives to have the business sector and the investor more close to the forestry sector.”

This sort of vulgar-capitalist COP hosting is not a coincidence. The four preceding COPs, in Poland, Qatar, South Africa and Mexico, witnessed dominant local state actors co-presiding alongside UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretary Christiana Figueres. Following the power logic within their regional power blocs, they remained universally addicted to hydro-carbon exploitation, with one common, logical COP result: total failure to move world capitalism away from the cliff-edge. Likewise, the UNFCCC appears addicted to market mechanisms as alleged solutions to climate chaos, even after the breakdown of the two main carbon trading schemes: The European Union Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS), which has suffered an 80 percent price crash since 2008, and the US where the Chicago Climate Exchange (self-interestedly promoted by Al Gore) suffered a fatal heart attack in 2011.

Nevertheless, the UNFCCC and World Bank express high hopes for a new generation of carbon trading and

Or instead, are the new elites irretrievably petro-Keynesian, petro-Indigenous and petro-Socialist, respectively, with radical climate politics foiled by their economies’ carbon rentiers?

in Paris, can United Nations negotiations reduce emissions?



²⁰Thanks to Edward Snowden's revelations about Washington's surveillance capacity, we learned how Stern and US President Barack Obama cheated their way through the Copenhagen climate summit in 2009 by listening in on the competition's cellphones, rendering hopeless a genuine deal that would enforce emission cuts. And thanks also to Chelsea Manning and WikiLeaks providing us those 250,000 confidential State Department cables, we know that the weeks after the Copenhagen fiasco were spent by Stern and his colleagues cajoling, bullying and bribing. They did so with such gusto that they even purchased (for a lousy \$50 million in aid) the tough-sounding Maldives Island leadership whose famous scuba-gear-adorned underwater cabinet meeting stunt in late 2009 dramatised that sinking feeling.

offsets in California, a few major Chinese cities and a layer of middle-sized economies including South Korea, Brazil and South Africa. In other words, ruling-class personalities still shape global climate politics far more than CJ activists, as witnessed in the futility with which the latter have attempted to influence the UN's Green Climate Fund (See Chapter 2). Between the coal, oil and mining barons who rule over recent COP hosts on the one hand, and a former carbon trader (Figueres) who rules the UNFCCC on the other, there has never been any possibility for getting the CJ perspective a seat at the global table.

The structural problem is simple: each national delegation comes to each COP with the agenda of maximizing the interests of its own corporations, which tend to prominently include those with industrial or fossil fuel assets. Hence their need to emit more and more

gases, and prevent a CO₂ ceiling from being imposed. A Conference of Polluters it will remain until that flaw is solved, or until the world elects governments possessing even minimal awareness of the climate threat and the political will to address it (the way they did in 1987 when the ozone hole's expansion was halted by the UN Montreal Protocol that banned CFCs). The COPs are also stymied because the US State Department's main negotiator, Todd Stern, looms over the proceedings like a smug vulture during a deadly drought.²⁰ With men like Stern at the helm, the COP20 broke the 'Climate Action Network' (CAN) and other NGO reformers' hearts, as have all others since Kyoto in 1997.

The UNFCCC's irrelevance at the time of its greatest need and responsibility will be one of our descendants' most confounding puzzles. After Copenhagen, illusions promoted by stodgy CAN member groups were dashed. As Bill McKibben put it, the presidents of the US, Brazil, China, South Africa and India (the latter four termed BASIC) 'wrecked the UN' by meeting separately and agreeing to eventually make merely voluntary commitments. Now add (Kyoto-reneging) Russia to the BASICs and, as the BRICS, the economic agenda signalled at their Fortaleza, Brazil summit in July 2014 boils down to financing infrastructure to ensure more rapid extraction; climate be damned. Still, the insolence of the Obama Administration outshines the BRICS, when cutting another exclusive side deal so soon before Lima and Paris. The November 12 climate pact with China clarified to activists just how much more pressure is needed from below if we are

to maintain warming below the 2 degrees danger threshold (not the 3+ degrees that Barack Obama and Xi Jinping settled on). Yet the bilateral deal actually reduces pressure to hammer out a genuinely binding global agreement with sharp punishments for emissions violations, plus the needed annual climate debt payments of several hundred billion dollars from polluters to climate victims.

As a result, rising activist militancy is ever more vital, as the window for making the North's (and BRICS') needed emissions cuts begins to close tight. I've been most surprised by the militancy emanating from what is probably the most difficult place to organise on climate outside China, the US. There, three networks – Climate Justice Alliance, Global Climate Convergence and System Change Not Climate Change – did an impressive job radicalizing the previously bland (Avaaz) discourses just before the People's Climate March in New York in September 2014. Two days later, 120 of the world's political leaders – with the notable absence of the Chinese and Indians – gathered 25 blocks away at the United Nations. The message they got from society was symbolised by the march route: instead of heading towards the UN building, the activists headed the other way, west. This directional choice was meant to signal that hope for action on climate change comes not from the apparently paralysed heads of state and their corporate allies, who again consistently failed on the most powerful challenge society has ever faced: to make greenhouse gas emissions cuts necessary to halt certain chaos.

Instead, momentum has arisen largely from grassroots activists, even those fighting under the worst conditions possible, amidst denialism, apathy, corporate hegemony, widespread political corruption and pervasive consumer materialism. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the place which according to Pew Research polling of major countries, suffers the second most poorly educated citizenry on climate (only 40 percent acknowledge it is a crisis): the US itself. (Keep travelling west and the country with the least knowledge of climate – only 39 percent are informed – emerges on the horizon: China. In Brazil, awareness is 76 percent.)²¹ So the main encouragement offered by the New York march came from the harsh terrain crossed, especially at gaudy Times Square: amongst the most culturally insane, ecologically untenable and politically barren on earth. The US not only suffers a congressional science committee led by Republican Party dinosaurs who deny climate change, but its civil society is populated by far too many single-issue campaigning NGOs unable to see outside their silos, defeatist environmentalists – many of whom are coopted by big business, and mild-mannered trade unions scared to engage in class and environmental struggles.

Nevertheless, it is in the US that the most extraordinary victories have been won by climate activists against coal-fired power plants (300 have either been shut or prevented from being constructed). In addition to a huge battle against Canadian tar-sand oil imports, which included 1,200 arrests at the White House in 2011, there are countless micro-struggles against

The structural problem is simple: each national delegation comes to each COP with the agenda of maximizing the interests of its own corporations, which tend to prominently include those with industrial or fossil fuel assets.

²¹ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/24/climate-change-and-financial-instability-seen-as-top-global-threats/>

²² That was surprising because the social media campaigning group Avaaz had paid for signs plastering New York subways in prior weeks, hinting at corporate greenwashing. “What puts hipsters and bankers in the same boat?,” one Avaaz advert asked, on a backdrop of ocean water, illustrating the commonality of our plight. This was also a reference to the October 2012 flooding of Wall Street by Superstorm Sandy, shutting off the subway as waters rose to the tune of \$60 billion in damages – a profound wake-up call to the climate-sleepy, politically backward island of Manhattan. In my experience nothing but trouble comes from inviting bankers into coalition. After all, they cannot even sort out their own industry’s messes, and evidence of their involvement in climate politics is appalling. Banker logic promotes carbon trading, in which the air itself is privatised and sold to the highest bidder. It has been a disastrous experiment in the European Union since 2005 where carbon credit prices fell nearly 90 percent amidst persistent scamming.

²³ <http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/09/19/how-the-peoples-climate-march-became-a-corporate-pr-campaign/>

fossil fuel extraction and refining sites, whose activists made up the most vibrant delegations at the march. Many of the battles involve black, Native American, Latino and low-income people, who because of an exceptionally wicked history of environmental racism have had to take leadership where the ‘Big Green’ NGOs comfortable in Washington DC have failed miserably: insisting on justice as a central component of social-ecological harmony. This movement named itself ‘Environmental Justice’ in 1982 when deadly toxins were dumped in a North Carolina landfill and African-American communities fought back. In earlier times, the cry was ‘Nimby’ – but as critical mass emerged and links became clear between oppressed people who saw that their plight was not just local racism but systemic ecocide, it became ‘Nope!’

In New York, a renewed Climate Justice Alliance was the main network connecting dozens of these struggles by people of colour, especially Indigenous Peoples, across North America. They offer a vision that includes a fairer distribution of costs and benefits of climate policy, and a transformative view of a world economy that must go post-carbon and post-profit if our species and countless others are to survive. What the march did, better than any other event in history, was demonstrate the unity of activists demanding genuine emissions cuts and government funding of an alternative way of arranging society. Whether public transport, renewable energy, organic agriculture oriented to vegetarian diets, new production systems, a shift in our consumption norms, new ways of developing cities (so as not to

resemble ghastly US suburban wastelands) and even ‘zero-waste’ disposal strategies, the huge crowd showed support for genuine post-carbon alternatives. Public health activists in the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power warned of resurgent opportunistic infections thanks to climate change. Anti-war activists connected the dots between global warming and Middle East and African oil, as well as renewed water wars. Democracy activists noted the Koch brothers’ and other fossil fuel corporations’ malign influence in Washington and state capitals. Dozens more such groups related their particular concerns to our more general survival.

Not a single sign I witnessed over six hours traipsing back and forth from start to finish promoted establishment ‘fixes’. Society has been bombarded with ‘false solutions’ by business and governments in climate policy debates: carbon trading, CCS (‘clean coal’), lacing the air with sulphur as a coolant, dropping iron filings in the ocean to create algae blooms (to suck up CO₂), biofuels which cause landgrabbing, nuclear energy, genetically modified organisms and other geo-engineering frauds.²² Many feared that for-profit ‘Green Economy’ gimmicks like carbon trading – resurgent now in California, China, South Africa, Brazil and Korea – would result from a big march lacking a central demand. As activist-writer Arun Gupta put it the day before the march, in Counterpunch ezine:

This is one of those corporate-designed scams that in the past has rewarded the worst polluters with the most credits to sell and creates

perverse incentives to pollute, because then they can earn money to cut those emissions. So we have a corporate-designed protest march to support a corporate-dominated world body to implement a corporate policy to counter climate change caused by the corporations of the world, which are located just a few miles away but which will never feel the wrath of the People's Climate March.²³

It was a valid fear, yet Gupta's critique proved excessively cynical. The prevalence of eco-socialist and anarchist marchers generated repeated anti-capitalist slogans. No one believes that the UN promise to 'put a price on carbon' can incrementally address the crisis, given how erratically the trading mechanisms have so far set that price, in a world continually battered by financial speculation. So the following day, several more thousand hard-core activists turned out at "Flood Wall Street," which the Occupy Wall Street movement helped prepare. The planning session I attended was beautifully illustrated by activists using the water metaphor as a way to show participants the ebb and flow of people, attempting to block roads and access to the stock market and nearby banks, amidst an anticipated police crack-down. Even though New

York City had a progressive Democratic Party mayor, Bill de Blasio, there continued to be persistent police abuses, what with the return of the notorious Police Commissioner, Bill Bratton. But on the Monday after the march, from 9am-6pm, around 3000 activists took first Battery Park at the island's southern tip, then achieved a seven-hour long occupation of Broadway at the site of the Wall Street raging bull statue. Though police ultimately arrested 100, what with the world's media glare they were under pressure from de Blasio not to bust heads in the process. From Cape Town, so too did Archbishop Desmond Tutu again call for divestment from fossil-fuel corporations, and reinvestment in post-carbon technologies.

But it was the surprise gift from New York to the world's climate justice movement that will be remembered longest: the hundreds of thousands who turned out plus a hundred thousand more across the world who had solidarity marches, showing conclusively that while there remains paralysis above, there is movement below. Climate justice received a new lease on life. What the movement does with this into the Paris COP21 and beyond is up to the creativity of the base, as it connects the dots to other issues, links Blockadia experiences, and scale jumps from local to global.

Instead, momentum has arisen largely from grassroots activists, even those fighting under the worst conditions possible, amidst denialism, apathy, corporate hegemony, widespread political corruption and pervasive consumer materialism.

The anti-politics of the Green Climate Fund: what is left to negotiate?

Sarah Bracking is a Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa and University of Manchester, UK.

Mainstream thinking on climate change governance is constrained within neoliberal policy frameworks, and within this framework it becomes increasingly financialised, despite the lack of evidence that the problems we are trying to address can be solved through financial means or institutions. Financialised policy is ubiquitous across a wide range of environmental policy areas, such as carbon trading, biodiversity offsets, REDD+, the CDM, but contributes little to averting climate catastrophe. At best, financialised policy produces a spectacle or illusion of care, a globalised narrative which is embedded and generated within traditional supranational institutions and new institutional architecture such as the Green Climate Fund. In these historic and emerging spaces formally counter hegemonic actors are now playing key roles. Incentivised by small victories over voting, participation, consultation forum and contribution powers at Board meetings, convenings and conferences, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) invest discursive efforts and energy into a process that ultimately consumes them, and distracts from other important representations of the issue and politics at hand.

For example, the last year has seen CSOs spending much energy trying to attract public and private finance into the Green Climate Fund (GCF) on behalf

of, and in cooperation with, the Board Members and Secretariat. They have also assisted on writing technical documents and assisting organisations in gaining the status of accredited entities. Inputs have been provided for the investment framework, safeguarding, ethics and integrity policy, targeting, voting procedures and country readiness, among many others. However, there remains the question of whether this is akin to activists being prisoners of an institution which does not, and may not in future, actually assist in positively affecting a decline in anthropogenic climate change.

The GCF was developed within the framework of the UNFCCC as a mechanism to redistribute money from “developed” countries to the “developing” world, to assist in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

By February 2015, the Investment Framework, for example, was being discussed in terms of “Definitions for activity-specific sub-criteria and a set of activity-specific indicators, taking into account the Fund’s initial investment framework, its initial result areas and initial results management framework, and decisions B.05/03, B.05/05 and B.06/07, as well as subsequent decisions on additional result areas for adaptation.¹

- 1 GCF, (2015) Further Development of the Initial Investment Framework: Sub-Criteria and Methodology, at http://www.gcfund.org/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/MOB201503-9th/07_-_Further_Development_of_the_Initial_Investment_Framework_20150223_fin.pdf
- 2 GCF (2015b) Status of Pledges for GCFs Initial Resource Mobilization (IRM) as of 30 April 2015, available from http://news.gcfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/release_GCF_2015_contributions_status_30_april_2015.pdf

But this travel and work programme represents not only path dependence from earlier decisions, but also an entrapment into a future of technical detail which will fail to have much impact on the effect and consequences of the Fund. Investment decisions remain ring-fenced in the private sector facility, or answerable only to overarching targets and goals in the investment framework and its (eventual) derivative investment contracts which will be required to be loosely referenced to the priority areas.

These effects at scale are already deducible from the institutional modalities adopted up to 2014: of a 'fund-of-funds' institution; a largely mitigation based expenditure model; using private sector-oriented results and evaluation technologies that allow fictive and dirty energy subsidies to predominate; of offshore, equity fund managers promoted to decision-makers over portfolio expenditures, combined with multilateral entities as gatekeepers and *compradors*, who will likely use the same offshore intermediaries down the funding pipeline as would the private sector to begin with.

So the questions are: what is left to negotiate for a radical climate justice movement? A question that must be particularly viewed in relation to the great absorption of time and energy it takes to participate, even in this captured way, and the valuable legitimacy that participation gives the GCF, even in the absence of it operating? At the time of writing (May 2015), it had generated US\$10.19 billion in pledges, of which US\$3.97 billion had been signed into contracts, while

seven entities were successfully accredited, including the UNDP, KfW and the Asian Development Bank. And yet it has captured the imagination and resources as a cure-all of leading environmental and climate justice NGOs and CSOs.²

But even more fundamentally, when it does operate, can this structure actually effect a greener future, or merely the grandfathering of current dirty energy and a big subsidy to multinationals and equity fund managers dressed up as "Green"? As Castree and Christophers pointed out recently, the type of built environment we need for living under climate change will cost trillions, not billions, and requires governments to legislate and manage, and go beyond post-politics – a disease of neoliberalism – and actually govern from Government.³ This need to conceptualise the Green Economy at a global scale is imperative given the relative failure thus far of climate finance to grow, in relation to the required needs of climate change mitigation and adaptation in terms of the environment and changes required to human built environments for a sustainable future.⁴ Castree and Christophers recently discussed this problem, and the viability of financial capital to perform a massive 'capital switch' in favour of a climate mitigating, climate adapting, new socioeconomic reconfiguration which rewrites humans relationship with ecology, reminding us of the growing evidence of the urgent necessity to do so. Their proposals require restructuring of global finance and government action to ensure redistribution of financial resources – not tinkering with yet one more climate fund at the edges.

- 3 Castree N and Christophers B (2015), "Banking Spatially on the Future: Capital Switching, Infrastructure, and the Ecological Fix", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105, 2, 1-9
- 4 Zadek S (2013), *Greening Financial Reform*, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/integrating-the-green-growth-imperative-and-financial-market-reform-by-simon-zadek>; Bracking, S (2015), "The Anti-Politics of Climate Finance: The Creation and Performativity of the Green Climate Fund", *Antipode*, 47, 2, ps. 281-302. See also, Pacala S and Socolow R (2004), *Stabilisation wedges: Solving the climate problem for the next 50 years with current technologies*, *Science*, 305, 968-72 Pacala S and Socolow R (2004), *Stabilisation wedges: Solving the climate problem for the next 50 years with current technologies*, *Science*, 305, 968-72; O'Neill, P (2013), "The financialisation of infrastructure: The role of categorisation and property relations", *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 6, 3, 441-57; Castree N and Christophers B (2015), "Banking Spatially on the Future: Capital Switching, Infrastructure, and the Ecological Fix", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105, 2, 1-9. See also: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014), *Climate change 2014: Synthesis report*, Nairobi, UNEP; Hallegatte S, Green C, Nicholls R and Corfee-Morlot J (2013), *Future flood losses in major coastal cities*, *Nature Climate Change*, 3, 802-6.

But even more fundamentally, when it does operate, can this structure actually effect a greener future, or merely the grandfathering of current dirty energy and a big subsidy to multinationals and equity fund managers dressed up as “Green”?

Suffice to say, in relation to this academic work, and that of a plethora of natural scientists, the model of the GCF coming into existence falls far short of this type of scale and delivery, and it is hard to see in the operating modalities anything significant that would change the behaviour of the private sector at scale. Instead, this model pretends to take a different form from the past experience of climate and development finance that it will not produce from its operating framework. It also offers us a future managed by financiers, who, despite being offered the job, are still failing to produce the resources required either in the Green Bond market, or in private/public partnerships, or via this form of anticipated ‘leveraged’ public funding. In fact, in financial terms, the GCF can be seen as a type of hedge fund, such that if all other financing fails from a market perspective for emerging new energy technologies, then the GCF may provide a leverage on the public fiscus, despite the evidence so far that no government seems particularly eager to contribute.

So how has this entrapment come about?

Concepts such as ‘international best practice’, ‘country-owned’, and ‘paradigm shift’ have been used to show how the politics of climate change is negotiated; how the promise of incremental reform becomes privileged over strategic withdrawal, structural change and the insistence on effective regulation.⁵ In other words, how the boundaries of the hegemonic neoliberal paradigm are constraining the issues into a financial-

ised approach to climate change despite there being a paucity of actual proof of this being able to work quick enough or at scale. In fact, when climate change CSOs are arguing and assisting in revenue generation and pledging for the new Green Climate Fund, there is a lack of an empirical analysis that spending of the increased revenue would indicate any improvement to a cleaner economy whatsoever, or whether by supporting this structure we are delaying or retarding the type of changes needed to actually address the problem of anthropogenic global warming.

The relationship between climate finance, what is spent in its name, and the environmental impact of those projects and programmes is really that weak. This is not to say that biomass energy generators, wind farms, solar panels and so forth do not work to reduce carbon emissions. It is rather that these types of investments are being added as a side dish to a feast in which the gorging of dirty energy cuisine is not abated as a consequence. For example, an analysis of the more established CDM pattern of expenditure in South Africa shows a concentration of beneficiaries in the minerals energy complex, forming the material basis for an internationalisation of public subsidy, in the form of CDMs, to traditional fossil-fuel based and infrastructure funds offshore.⁶

The Green Climate Fund design

The Governing Instrument for the GCF was approved by the COP to the UNFCCC on 11 December 2011 in Durban.⁷ It was conceived as something that would

5 Bracking, S (2015), “The Anti-Politics of Climate Finance: The Creation and Performativity of the Green Climate Fund,” *Antipode*, 47, 2, ps. 281-302

6 Bracking, S (2015), “The Anti-Politics of Climate Finance: The Creation and Performativity of the Green Climate Fund,” *Antipode*, 47, 2, ps. 281-302
Bracking (2012), “How do investors value environmental harm/care? Private equity funds, development finance institutions and the partial financialization of nature-based industries,” *Development and Change*, 43(1): 271–293.

catalyse a “paradigm shift” in climate finance toward low emissions development pathways; which would be able to raise much larger sums than current flows of climate finance; and that would grant or lend to both the public and private sector simultaneously; while also generating funds from both. It was designated as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the Convention. The “Governing instrument for the Green Climate Fund” makes reference to country ownership in relation to devolved direct access.⁸ However, some of the key concepts, such as “paradigm shift to climate resilient development”, “country ownership”, and even “climate finance”, have weak foundational definitions and little international legal or institutional precedent.

The Investment Framework approved at the seventh meeting in Songdo in May 2014 prioritised the delivery of private sector prerogatives. While committing to a 50:50 portfolio divide between adaptation and mitigation “over time” in its “portfolio targets”, the document also commits to a “significant allocation to the Private Sector Facility” without it being entirely clear whether this is accounted for before or after the 50:50 guideline is measured.⁹ By the seventh meeting “paradigm shift potential” looks very much like older definitions of the “catalytic” and “demonstration” effects of development finance from the 1980s and 1990s. These effects suggest that public funds can catalyse private sector counterparts by demonstrating a “good idea”, here indicated by “replicability”, “scalability”, “knowledge and learning” and the contribution of spending to an “enabling environment”.¹⁰

Resource mobilisation was begun in early July 2014, for an expected operational start in November 2014. In May 2014, the Fund was declared open for business, or at least open to begin an initial resource mobilisation process aimed at reaching capitalisation of between US\$10 and US\$15 billion by November 2014. However, on the 10th of June 2014, the Indian country representative, among others, noted at the contact group of the UNFCCC’s Ad Hoc Working Group for Enhanced Action under the Durban Platform in Bonn that the remaining lack of legal definition to such terms as “climate finance” and “additionality” still warned of the problem of financial fungibility, or re-classifying, of current Official Development Assistance (ODA) as “climate finance”. How could anyone tell if funds were “additional” or merely reclassified ODA?

The complexity of counting between promises, pledges, commitments, contracted and dispersed finance is compounded by some confusion over the differences between the categories, and ‘roll-overs’ within and between them, which add even more complexity to the counting game.

Many radical sounding concepts proposed by CSOs in 2011 were successfully migrated into the first Framework document in Durban 2011. This looked hopeful for a new type of climate finance capable of transformational change, yet, a transformation in the meaning of words, rather than practice, has occurred. For example, a reliance on the worth of “international best practice”, led to review exercises of other multi-lateral practice. Both the background papers for the

7 Green Climate Fund (GCF) (2012), Governing Instrument for the Green Climate Fund, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/pdf/GCF-governing_instrument-120521-block-LY.pdf [Accessed on 9th November 2013]

8 Green Climate Fund (GCF) (2012), para 47 Governing Instrument for the Green Climate Fund, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/pdf/GCF-governing_instrument-120521-block-LY.pdf [Accessed on 9th November 2013]

9 GCF (2014), Investment Framework, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/MOB201406-7th/GCF_B07_06_Investment_Framework140509_fin_20140509.pdf

10 GCF (2014:5), Investment Framework, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/MOB201406-7th/GCF_B07_06_Investment_Framework140509_fin_20140509.pdf, GCF (2014b), Initial Proposal Approval Process, Including the Criteria for Programme and Project Funding, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/MOB201406-7th/GCF_B07_03_Initial_Proposal_Approval_Process_fin_20140508.pdf

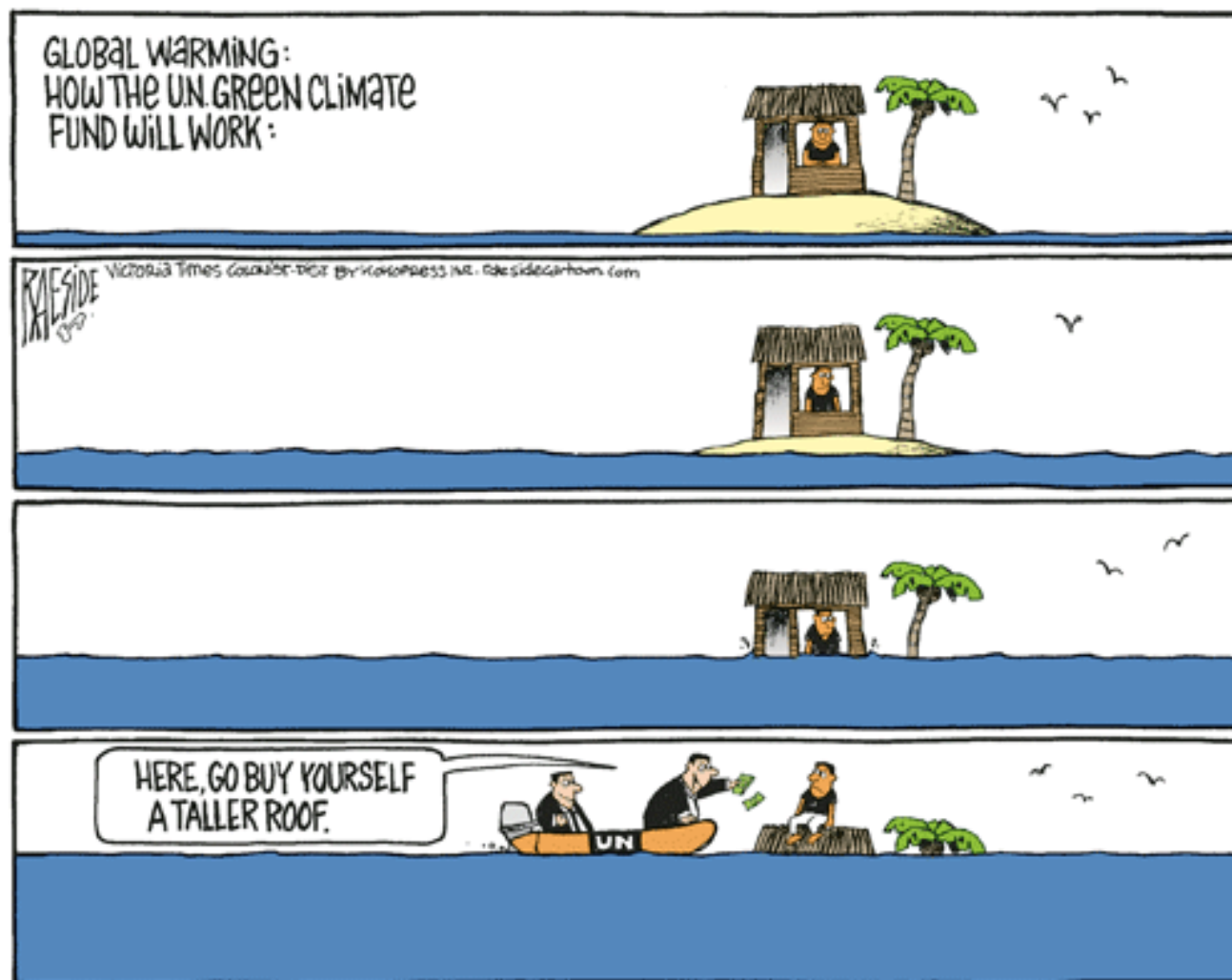
“Access modalities paper” and the “Allocation” paper followed this methodology of looking at how already existing Funds behave.¹¹ Both used the term “international” as unquestionably signifying excellence. The World Bank, as trustee, was allowed to become an embodiment of this “international best practice” and were influential in designing many operational procedures from its pre-existing funds, while the IMF safeguarding standards were adopted in May 2014, albeit as an interim measure, for at least three years.

However, the discursive signifier of “international best practice” is slow and opaque in generating detail on its operations. If it exists at all, international best practice might also be inferior to what one might expect. For example, accounting standards for climate or development finance do not exist, and the safeguarding and impact evaluation models currently employed by generic development finance institutions, from which climate funds seek to borrow, are thin and problematic, including the IMF system.¹²

11 GCF (2013b) Allocations Paper, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/pdf/GCF_B05_05_Allocation_fin_2013_09_30.pdf [Accessed on 9th November 2013]. See also: GCF (2013c) Allocations Paper, available from http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/pdf/GCF_B05_05_Allocation_fin_2013_09_30.pdf [Accessed on 9th November 2013]

12 Bracking S and Ganho, A (2011), Investing in Private Sector Development: What are the Returns? A review of development impact evaluation systems used by development finance institutions in Europe, Norwegian Church Aid, Oslo, 6th June, 2nd ed. From <http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/About-NCA/Publications/Reports/report-on-investing-in-private-sector-development/>

13 Bracking S, Brockington D, Bond P, Büscher B, Igoe J J, Sullivan S, Woodhouse P (2014), “Initial research design: ‘Human, non-human and environmental value systems: an impossible frontier?’”, LCSV Working Paper Series No. 1, available from <http://thestudyofvalue.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/WP1-Initial-Research-Design-final.pdf>; Bracking, S (2015), “The Anti-Politics of Climate Finance: The Creation and Performativity of the Green Climate Fund”, *Antipode*, 47, 2, ps. 281-302



Despite these weaknesses the CSOs present were relatively uncritical of what they were to inherit, arguably allowing capital and the powerful Board Members to reinforce their own position using the “superior” authority of consultants. Likewise, the Investment and Business modalities drew on the same methodology of global ‘experts’ selected opaquely and from the realms of finance. These would subsequently (June 2014) embed the ‘climate science’ in a black box, or calculative entity at the core of the working rationality of the new Fund, serving to guide future spending into some quite ad hoc priority areas.¹³

In short, the GCF has become a pooled private equity fund, with a firewall to stop the cognitive connection between what is needed to prevent catastrophic climate change, and what capital is prepared to do in the GCF and the non-commensurability between.¹⁴ As part of the production of the firewall, a believable threat of financial withdrawal was used by capital to force the problem framing in favour of neoliberal governmentality. The negotiation process has in fact been shaped, unconsciously and consciously, by various standpoints outside the proximate procedural process, allowing a large influence to be given to financial imperatives in decision-making, and a consequent lower influence given to climate science. Often, benefits to the corporate sector were heuristically aligned with the ‘right’ science for the planet, and juxtaposed, or put into an opposition with, the interests of ‘development’ and people. When ‘correctly’ framed, with benefits to corporate firms and banks dominant,

governments and ‘green funds’ made intonations about money being promised. Conversely, when returns to corporate firms and banks were more successfully negotiated out of predominant importance by some Board members, and developmental and environmental co-benefits framed high, these financial promises retreated. In other words, decision-making was financialised, which puts into question how far participation in such institutions as the Green Climate Fund can really further objectives of people-centred ecology.

Conclusion

Two clear outcomes are consequent upon the GCF’s ‘existence’ to date: the non-performance of actual climate change governance and expenditures from 2009 to 2014 (current global public expenditure on climate change by OECD members remains a derisory US\$9 billion in financial year 2013–2014) and the locking of CSOs concerned with the GCF into complex technical engagements which drain their resources and time, but which contribute to the performance of environmental care as non-material spectacle.¹⁵ Thus, returning to the question with which this paper began, does CSO participation improve results substantively, or are incremental improvements outweighed by the continued legitimacy that participation gives to the deeply flawed system of climate finance as a whole?

However, the non-performance of climate change governance must be our starting point in respect to

14 Igoe, J (2014), “Firewall” in Fredriksen A, Sarah Bracking, Elisa Greco, James J Igoe, Rachael Morgan, and Sian Sullivan, “A conceptual map for the study of value: An initial mapping of concepts for the project ‘Human, non-human and environmental value systems: an impossible frontier?’; LCSV working Paper Series No. 2, available from <http://thestudyofvalue.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/WP2-A-conceptual-map.pdf>.

Fredriksen A, Sarah Bracking, Elisa Greco, James J Igoe, Rachael Morgan, and Sian Sullivan, “A conceptual map for the study of value: An initial mapping of concepts for the project ‘Human, non-human and environmental value systems: an impossible frontier?’; LCSV working Paper Series No. 2, available from <http://thestudyofvalue.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/WP2-A-conceptual-map.pdf>

15 Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2013), Aid Activities targeting environmental objectives, statistics, available from <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RIOMARKERS> [Accessed on 26th April 2013]. See also: Igoe J (2013), “Nature on the Move II: Contemplation Becomes Speculation”, *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, 6, 1-2, 37-49

Non-outcomes suit the powerful, such that we are observing an 'anti-politics', where the appearance and performance of care and concern has taken over from the actual practice of beneficial policy and government action.

improving influence and traction at a global level. In this respect, it is unfortunate that many observers prefer to frame the problem as many neoliberals would, not as a problem of unequal power and a lack of democracy, but as a temporary problem of implementation, capacity, or resources. Non-outcomes suit the powerful, such that we are observing an 'anti-politics', where the appearance and performance of care and concern has taken over from the actual practice of beneficial policy and government action.

Within the GCF powerful countries, corporations and banks have extended their control over and non-delivery of climate finance, while civil society actors have argued over discourse, won small representational victories, and deepened their involvement in technologies of advanced liberal governance. CSO involvement in this has no direct relationship to furthering the objectives of ecological justice, not least because the technologies they are helping to design are legitimating devices that are thinly referent to science. The significance of operating modalities to eventual investment decisions and their substantive outcomes is also unknown, since inbuilt flexibility allows Board members some largesse in the commitment of resources, not least because of the non-fixity of key categories and concepts to date, and the amorphous and broadly conceived nature of monitoring, evaluation and results areas.

In short, the current form of CSO practice matters in a number of ways and can be improved. First, there is an opportunity cost, where time and energy spent

here are resources not being spent on building concrete movements in national contexts which would have the power to change national environmental policies and the behaviours of nationally-authored representatives in supranational structures. Second, having an inflated and not very well proved faith in the ability of supranational structures to change our future also detracts from efforts to build it ourselves in the everyday now. Third, participation within the GCF and indeed the COP process more broadly seems to lend itself to people believing that the problem of responding to climate change is financial, and that more money will help solve it. This leads to uncomfortable alignments with corporate power, where CSOs join a chorus asking for fiscal resources from states, many of whom are hard-pressed with funding social welfare. Alternatively, CSOs become involved in trying to persuade corporate entities to commit with financial resources. But there is little evidence that this will ever happen except in markets regulated to ensure a profit in their favour. Either way, the entrapment is in the language of financialisation.

At some point, as with broken fridges or old vehicles, it is better to stop spending further resources in mending them, but to consider a new model, or in our case, a whole new lifestyle designed to live with different technologies altogether. A practice of democratic government which can act on science and peoples' needs at a national and international level would be my first 'ask' in this respect, to assist communities to live differently; an ask which demands a peoples' based political movement to make it happen.

Withdrawing from observer status in supranational forum such as the GCF, or indeed the COP process, may be premature. However, intervention does need to be realigned to political movements beyond and outside the epistemic financial elite. As Quincy Saul lamented recently, “We need to stop chasing the ruling class around the world,” for the “big PR campaign, [where] they’re going to open up new markets for false solutions.....When are we going to stop just conference-hopping....putting up a big

pagoda, and having the “alternative people’s tent?” An alternative, according to Saul, is that “we need to build our own autonomous bases of resistance and prefiguration”.¹⁶ As part of this I suggest the need for a more critical realist analysis of what the GCF can and cannot do: it is not very green, its climate is business friendly and its funds are missing. Moreover, if it had money it may just trap us further into overly slow and insufficient climate change governance.

Third, participation within the GCF and indeed the COP process more broadly seems to lend itself to people believing that the problem of responding to climate change is financial, and that more money will help solve it.

¹⁶ Saul Q and J S Castro (2015), “A Discussion with Quincy Saul: On Climate Satyagraha”; Counterpunch, April 10th-12th available from <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/04/10/on-climate-satyagraha/>

Having the last word: towards Paris2015 – challenges and perspectives

Maxime Combes is a member of Attac France and Aitec.

He can be reached at maxime.combes@gmail.com, +33 6 24 51 29 44 and @MaximCombes.

Introduction

As the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, France to be held December 2015 approaches, NGOs, social movements and environmentalists are asking themselves a series of essential questions: What should we expect from the negotiations? Where can we exert influence? What can we do to avoid the failure of Copenhagen (2009)? What should we set as our objectives? How can we carry out in-depth work on the need for ecological and social change? What climate change initiatives should be at the top of the political agenda without giving more power to those who want to impose techno-scientific solutions and financial “innovations”? On what basis can we build a climate justice movement that will have a broad impact on society over and above the 2015 Paris conference? How can we best build on the demonstrations that were held on the 21st of September 2014 in New York City? How can we network with local mobilisations on the ground that are blocking extractive projects and for citizens’ initiatives experimenting and implementing sustainable and resilient alternatives in the here-and-now? The list of questions and discussions for those engaged with climate justice is indeed long.

Given that both the shape and the form of the most ambitious agreement that can be expected to be reached in Paris in 2015 (the level of emissions’ cuts, funding and legal form) is already evident and not nearly enough, this text argues why NGOs and social and ecological movements should stand back from the negotiations that are being held within the UN. We need to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes as those made in Copenhagen in 2009. We propose that activist and citizens’ energies concentrate on an agenda of their own, and in which the UNFCCC COP 21 is just one stage in a process of building a sustainable balance of power in favour of a large-scale ecological and social transition. This means not just limiting ourselves to defensive battles within the UN – waged in the name of the urgency of climate change, but rather to strengthen all the struggles and the offensive, transformational proposals that the “Blockadia” and “Alternatiba” dynamics are carrying forward. Following the demonstrations in New York City and elsewhere on September 21st, we propose that Paris2015 become “a Seattle of false solutions” and “a Cochabamba of ecological and social transition”. To do so we need to strategize beyond the UN negotiations and on how to have the final say.

1 Fabius Laurent, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs speech, presenting the IPCC report (30th September 2013) - <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/environnement-et-developpement/lutter-contre-le-changement/actualites-liees-au-changement/actualites-2013-liees-au/article/discours-de-laurent-fabius>

2 Hollande, François, French President speech at the New York global climate summit, 2014, september, spoke about carbon neutrality as “the level of greenhouse gas emissions compatible with the capacity of planet to absorb them” <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-lors-du-sommet-sur-le-climat/>

3 It is important to note that highly binding agreements are being negotiated in trade and investments

No legally binding agreement in sight!

The French Ministry of Foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, announced on September 2013 that the objective was to reach, “an ambitious, legally binding agreement that would allow the 2°C limit to be respected”.¹ In September 2014 in New York, French Prime Minister François Hollande stated that the aim was to achieve “carbon neutrality”.² Given what is on the table today, it is an understatement to say that things have gotten off to a bad start: If an agreement is reached in 2015, it will likely not be a legally binding one, nor one that rises to the situation. Barack Obama, for one, does not want a legally binding agreement that establishes international obligations and political commitments on climate.³ He stated last year that he prefers a legally flexible instrument that encourages states to define and announce their own commitments at regular intervals and in unilateral fashion in terms of emissions cuts, and funding for any given period.⁴ This so-called “naming and shaming” model is premised on allowing countries to achieve international self-satisfaction if their objectives are reached, and censure if they fail to do so. Yet history has shown us how lightweight and inconsistent such voluntary mechanisms are in contrast to legally binding commitments.

This is a turning point in the climate negotiations where nations will attempt to eliminate the potential for global commitments and objectives. For Barack Obama and US authorities, domestic affairs and international geopolitical balance are more important

than reaching a binding agreement on climate change. Other countries also share this position. Neither François Hollande nor Laurent Fabius, despite their previous rhetoric, formally contradicted them either in Paris or New York during the climate summit organised by Ban Ki Moon on the 23rd of September 2014.

No sign of any ambitious agreement!

If the findings of the IPCC report published on the 2nd of November 2014 are to be taken seriously, important cuts to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to be made by 2020.⁵ The UNEP report warns that human related-emissions should not reach higher than 44 gigatonnes of GHG by 2020 as “acceptable pathways that would allow a reasonable chance of remaining below the 2°C maximum limit increase.”⁶ However, the current trajectory leads to 57 gigatonnes of GHG by 2020. Despite this, no country is considering reviewing and increasing their commitment to cut GHGs by 2020 in order to reduce the 13 gigatonne gap between what is desirable and the reality of the situation.

Moreover, the first commitments made for the post-2020 period are very far from the IPCC recommendations. Thus the European Union has committed to cutting emissions by at least 40% by 2030, whereas the IPCC is calling for the EU to achieve this level by 2020.⁷ The US has recently committed to cutting emissions by between 26-28% by 2025;⁸ barely corresponding to a reduction of 0.4% compared with the baseline of 1990. China is committing to reach a maximum level

- 4 Les Echos, Obama veut contourner le Congrès pour avancer sur la négociation climat, http://www.lesechos.fr/27/08/2014/lesechos.fr/0203729354633_obama-veut-contourner-le-congres-pour-avancer-sur-la-negociation-climat.htm
- 5 IPCC, Climate Change 2014, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers, 2014 November, http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf
- 6 UNEP, The Emissions Gap Report 2014, http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgapreport2014/portals/50268/pdf/EGR2014_LOWRES.pdf
- 7 Civil society is demanding between 55 and 80% reduction in emissions by 2030 for the “developed countries”
- 8 Combes, Maxime, Climate : is the US-China announcement historic ? Not really, Mediapart, 2014, November 14, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/maxime-combes/141114/climate-us-china-announcement-historic-not-really>

9 Attac France, Climat : effets d'annonce et vrais renoncements, 2014, September 2014, <https://france.attac.org/actus-et-medias/salle-de-presse/article/climat-effets-d-annonce-et-vrais> See also: Hollande, François, French President speech at the New York global climate summit, 2014, september, declared: "The Green Fund will be a significant opportunity for companies to move towards energy transition. The green fund will also be growth opportunity," <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-lors-du-sommet-sur-le-climat/>

10 Goldenberg, Suzanne, UN green climate fund can be spent on coal-fired power generation, The Guardian, 2015, March 29, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/29/un-green-climate-fund-can-be-spent-on-coal-fired-power-generation>

11 World Meteorological Organisation, Record Greenhouse Gas Levels Impact Atmosphere and Oceans, 2014, September 9, http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_1002_en.html

12 Combes, Maxime & Haeringer, Nicolas, Face au changement climatique, une nécessaire clarification stratégique, Médiapart, 2014, September 19, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/transition-energetique/article/190914/face-au-changement-climatique-une-necessaire-clarification-strategique>

of emissions by 2030. This is the same as saying that they will break all their current records. The system proposed by the US, and now widely supported, allowing all states to set their own objectives leads to abandoning the idea of a maximum predefined shared carbon budget based on scientifically defined recommendations and needs. It calls into question whether the 2°C objective is being abandoned. Beyond the 2°C limit, climate change will become increasingly dramatic.

Not much funding in sight

No "ambitious" agreement is possible without substantial funding. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was an outcome of Copenhagen, but it has only just become a reality (See Chapter 2). US\$100 billion was "pledged" to fund the fight against climate change, adaptation and the consequences of extreme climate events, but only US\$2 billion was collected in New York. The amount announced by François Hollande, with much pomp and ceremony, is in fact derisory, and the way in which it will be used remains unclear and contested.⁹ Both the US and Japan have announced that they will pledge US\$3 billion and US\$1.5 billion respectively, without stating over how many years they will spread these sums. Other countries, the UK and Italy for example, have done likewise, without reaching the sum of US\$10 billion over four years. In other words, the total funds will be only 10% of what was initially pledged. Moreover, there is no guarantee that any future funds would be public, additional and grant-based. In fact, GCF financing will likely be made available as financial instruments such as conditional

loans designed for profit accumulation. Further, there is no guarantee that the funds will be available as a priority for the populations that need them most, and will not lead to adaptation for the rich at the expense of the poor. One can easily surmise a merging power structure when the GCF board refuses an explicit ban on fossil fuel projects.¹⁰

Should we call upon states to take action?

There is no shortage of data or scientific studies highlighting the need for urgent action. The most recent IPCC reports are very alarming. Not a single month goes by without shattering GHG or temperature records, as shown by the most recent figures published by the World Meteorological Organisation.¹¹ Data and expert scientific reports are piling up, but they are not triggering policies in response to such challenges. This shows that there is no automatic relationship between the accumulation of scientific knowledge on global climate change and the desire to make it a political priority. Political leaders are informed of the latest available data, but are still sadly opposed to committing to changing what is causing global warming – the unsustainable economic system we live in.

There are also many calls inviting "leaders" to "take action", most recently during demonstrations in New York on the 21st of September 2014.¹² These demonstrations, like those in Copenhagen in 2009, were both massive and determined. They were also diverse in terms of the demands from the different

groups that took part, including “Change the system, Not the climate”. Obviously, if we go beyond their declared intentions, the “leaders” who were present at Ban Ki-moon’s summit did not wish to address the deep underlying causes of climate change.¹³ It begs the question, are there any “climate leaders” in the UN? While international negotiations have been ongoing since the early 1990s, global emissions have increased since then by over 60% and are continuing to do so, year after year. Many blame emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil, leaving aside the issue of historical and differentiated responsibility. For example, France’s carbon footprint has increased by 15% in the last 20 years. Should we still be calling these “climate delinquents” to “take action”?¹⁴

Too many false solutions

When heads of state and governments “take action”, they tend to implement an agenda of false solutions. Such actions aggravate the situation by strengthening the hold of finance and multinational control over our economies, our lives and nature.

To increase the use of fossil fuels, there is an attempt to put a price on carbon through new market mechanisms and carbon finance; and this at a time when the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), the supposed pioneer of carbon trading has proven itself to be ineffectual, dangerous, costly and impossible to reform.¹⁵ To optimise carbon sequestration in soils and forests, there are proposals to experiment with new agro-forestry practices and techniques – including the devel-

opment of new genetically modified crops – and fund them through new carbon finance mechanisms.¹⁶ To help farmers in poor countries face the consequences of climate change, they are being sold sophisticated weather forecasting tools and insurance policies. Vast renewable energy investment programmes, especially in Africa, are being bestowed upon multinationals and financial markets, and will be launched to achieve mega-infrastructures aimed at providing electricity for big mining projects and industries that are often useless and ill-adapted to meet the needs of the people. The list of false solutions is unfortunately far too long to include in one article.

Should we desert the UN?

Although it looks unlikely that there will be any meaningful, legally binding agreement made in Paris in 2015, does this mean we should simply abandon the UN arena?¹⁷ Some people believe this to be the case and consider it ineffective for NGOs and movements to be involved; or worse still, are misled by continuing to be present at the negotiations. The argument is that their presence as well as being ineffective, is also legitimising space that leads to institutionalising and softening critical voices.

These criticisms are justified, especially because NGOs and movements have contributed to a popular illusion that the UN could really be an effective forum. On the other hand, others argue that abandoning the UN would leave free reign to those who wish to extend the power of multinationals, finance

13 Combes, Maxime, Mémorandum pour le climat de Ban Ki-moon, 2014, October 1, http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Memo_Sommet_Ban_Kimoon.pdf

14 In Durban in 2012, Anjali Appadurai, a Canadian student declared: “You’ve been negotiating since I was born” and “You forgot to make commitments, you lacked objectives, and you have broken your promises”

15 Collective Statement, Time to scrap the ETS, 2013, February, <http://scrap-the-euets.make.noise.org/KV/declaration-scrap-ets-english/>

16 Combes, Maxime, Climate Smart Agriculture, Vers une agriculture sous l’emprise de la finance carbone et des multinationales ?, 2014, September http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Note_Climate_Smart_Agriculture_vfin.pdf

17 Negotiations are going on under the Durban Platform, adopted in late 2011. According to the New York Times, Todd Stern, the chief US negotiator said in Davos in early 2012, “the Durban platform was promising because of what it did not say”. After all, revealed Trevor Houser, “there is no mention of historic responsibility or per capita emissions. There is no mention of economic development as the priority for developing countries. There is no mention of a difference between developed and developing country action”.

18 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1942, <http://www.un.org/fr/documents/charter/preamb.shtml>

19 Where you criticised it – as was our case – or supported it, the European leadership in the fight against climate change is based on two pillars: the objectives of cutting emissions and the carbon market - the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) – which is considered the key instrument for achieving these cuts. In 2014 the objectives in terms of emissions cuts for 2020 and 2030 are inconsequential and the carbon market doesn't work and can't be reformed. Regarding the ALBA countries, without even mentioning here the contradictions between their international commitments and national policies.

20 Climate issues are often perceived as distant from the daily action capacity of the majority of the population

21 Alternatiba, Alternatiba continue d'avancer, Médiapart, 2014, October 27, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/alternatiba/271014/alternatiba-continue-d-avancer> See also: Aguiton, Christophe, Après le succès de la marche pour le climat de New York, trois défis pour le mouvement pour la justice climatique, 2014, October 16 <https://france.attac.org/se-mobiliser/vers-la-cop21/article/apres-le-succes-de-la-marche-pour>

and techno-science. Withdrawing would leave governments to accept GHG and funding targets far short of what is required and would give a free hand to the private sector to control the UN bodies and programmes. Such a move would counter calls from civil society to have a body that stands for the interests of the “Peoples of the United Nations”.¹⁸

Within the UN: a series of defensive struggles

Given the above, it appears preferable to continue participation with the UN process, yet we still need to determine what we can achieve, under what conditions, and to be clear and realistic about these objectives. In taking a realistic and pragmatic approach, let us realise that these negotiations are not independent of geopolitical, economic and financial realities. Let us begin by recognising and accepting that most battles that can be fought within the UN are defensive ones – battles to limit our losses. Battles that aim for the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable to be taken into consideration. Battles to fight against the stranglehold of the private sector interests on the negotiations. These are all essential battles but they are defensive ones, in as much as they are linked to government-set agendas, and not objectives that NGOs, movements and people want.

These battles thus do not interest and do not serve to mobilise people beyond those already engaged; largely because they are generally couched in the coded language of the negotiations, and because they do not

speak to societal projects that are envisaged, promoted or defended. On the contrary, given the inaction of governments and the limited space for manoeuvring that geopolitics permit, frustration and discouragement cannot fuel citizen mobilisation. Further, these lost battles should not become the image or mottos of citizens' commitments. Finally, these battles are defensive because within the UN process there is no longer the possibility of a progressive bloc of actors who may be capable of upsetting the current neoliberal agenda embedded in the UN framework. The EU is no longer legitimate in playing an exemplary role, and while the ALBA countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela etc.) still pay lip service to strong positions they are no longer truly determined to change the negotiations in a deep and meaningful way.¹⁹ This is also true for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) that includes rich Island States like Singapore deeply involved in global capitalism.

From defensive to offensive struggles

So what is left? What can we do that does not compound discouragement and helplessness?²⁰ This is a huge question and has no easy or final answer. Obviously, recent mobilisations on climate, such as the massive NYC demonstrations or the success of the Alternatiba process are positive dynamics upon which to build.²¹ Nevertheless these are not the first successful citizen mobilisations in terms of the fight against climate change. By mixing a successful

demonstration (100,000 people), a high quality alternative summit and massive civil disobedience actions, citizen mobilisations at the Copenhagen conference were successful. And yet the majority of the NGO representatives, and social and environmental movement activists left feeling discouraged with the outcomes.

They went “to save the climate”, encouraged by a number of NGOs and opinion leaders who had turned Copenhagen into “the last chance summit”, so they could only be disappointed by the results of the negotiations; just like the majority of the people who had stayed home in their own countries, and were keeping a close eye on the conference. Yet the outcomes of the Copenhagen negotiations were foreseeable for anyone who considered the global geopolitical landscape. And climate change will no more be saved in Paris than it was in Copenhagen. No more than it will be possible to achieve an ambitious, binding agreement. Certainly, we can remain in denial and call yet again, as some people are doing, for mobilisation to “save the climate” in Paris, without specifying the outlines of the objectives we are setting. However, because the outcome of a possible future agreement and the commitments made by countries are for the most part already known, people are sure to be left disappointed. *Bis repetita* Copenhagen.

Another option is to anticipate the pending disappointment now. Yes, of course we need to “act”. But the movements for climate justice cannot wait for governments and the private sector to “do something”. They cannot limit their purview to the negotiation agenda.

No, what we want is to “change everything”!²² Not just for the fun of it. Not just because we prefer to set ambitious objectives rather than a strategy of small steps. Nor is it because we are fooling ourselves. We want to change everything because the situation calls for this. It is *our* development model not neoliberal capitalism that is unsustainable and that needs to be transformed into a system that does not reproduce a model of infinite growth, but a model that stands for harmony between human beings and nature, and that meets the needs of the majority.

“Change the system”, but with the right people!

Real solutions to the climate crisis have not been implemented because they forcibly clash with the dominant economic model and the ideology it represents. Energy efficiency, decentralisation and democratisation of energy systems, food sovereignty, small-scale agroecology, relocalisation of production and consumption, more egalitarian life-styles in a framework of political well-being, degrowth of the ecological footprint, economic cooperation and solidarity etc. are some of the places to start. Such real solutions are anchored in the principles of respecting major ecological balance and cooperation between people to build a shared future, whereas the policies of competitiveness and liberalisation place economic and financial profit before all else, including the needs of the climate and future generations.

Yet the outcomes of the Copenhagen negotiations were foreseeable for anyone who considered the global geopolitical landscape. And climate change will no more be saved in Paris than it was in Copenhagen.

²² Klein, Naomi, “This Changes Everything : Capitalism vs the Climate”, Simon & Schuster, 2014, September

We need to address the structural causes of climate change, but there can be no win-win game with those who defend an economic model based on fossil fuels, starting with the multinational oil companies.

²³Attac France & Aitec, Climate or TTIP, make your choice, 2014, December,

²⁴It would mean the implementation of a global carbon price through the connection of local, national and regional carbon markets and carbon taxes experiences.

²⁵Climate Justice Action was an activist network of direct action during the Copenhagen conference: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_Justice_Action Climate Justice Now! is, as CAN, one of the two international coalitions of networks and organizations, recognized by the United Nations: CJN highlights the importance of social justice and fights against the “false solutions”, including carbon finance - <http://www.climate-justice-now.org/fr/>

There can be no reasonable compromises with these unsustainable, productivist, development approaches if we want to “save the climate”. We need to address the structural causes of climate change, but there can be no win-win game with those who defend an economic model based on fossil fuels, starting with the multinational oil companies. We need to take this on board, and block them where their agenda is about so-called “making progress”. This holds true for the free trade agreements and investments that the EU is negotiating respectively with Canada (CETA) and the US (TTIP) that aim to extend the production and sales of unconventional oil (tar sand, shale oil and gas) on both sides of the Atlantic. These free trade and investments policies structure our economies and societies in such a way that we become locked-in to dependency on imports and exports of fossil fuels, while simultaneously limiting the ability to implement energy transition policies.²³ If we are to impose our solutions, we need to stop contributing to the agenda of “business as usual”. It is not in everybody’s interest to change the system. It is not in our interest for everyone to continue acting as they are.

Change our strategy: from COP 21 to Paris2015

Such deep societal and economic change will not be achieved in the blink of an eye nor will it be advanced at a UN conference like the COP 21. That is self-evident. Is it enough to delegitimise their perspectives and hide our aspirations under the blanket of realpolitik

and pragmatism in an arena that is so lacking in ambition and pathetic in its results? Even international institutions, such as the World Bank, have decided not to wait for an international agreement within the UN to start implementing climate projects; this therefore encourages us not to focus solely on the UN conferences.²⁴

We desperately need to refocus away from the UNFCCC, and stop getting lost in the technical aspects of the negotiations. This would leave open the requisite time and energy, to use Paris2015 as a key moment to accumulate the strength and energy to organise for the months that follow. This does not mean that we should stop taking an interest in the UN negotiations. On the contrary, it implies that we should use this opportunity to refocus our attention, impose our own agenda and wage a whole series of battles we can win that are not necessarily played out within the UN. In a way, shifting the focus away from the COP 21 to Paris2015 implies not lessening our struggles against climate change in the UN negotiations, but rather, extending them to include a whole series of existing issues and conflicts that are not systematically included.

From climate justice to Alternatiba and Blockadia

The post-Copenhagen evaluation carried out by Climate Justice Action and Climate Justice Now! identified that the construction of a global climate justice movement need not depend on the agenda of the global summits.²⁵ After the success of the

non-violent civil disobedience action Reclaim Power²⁶ on 16th December 2009, there was a commitment to decentralise and disseminate the organisation of peoples' assemblies at local and regional levels.²⁷ The aim is to fight projects that damage climate and implement direct solutions through translocal forms of solidarity – solidarity between struggles or alternatives that are anchored in local initiatives – as a vector towards the construction of a global movement. This is a huge challenge and is ever-present. Some challenges include: how can we relocalise and anchor our imagination and mobilisation towards experience and concrete realities, including in our daily lives and rediscover the power of acting together?²⁸ The power of our mobilisations and our capacity to include more people will be all the stronger if we are able to move beyond the logic of awareness-building and citizens' mobilisations that are undoubtedly too linked to an heuristic analysis of science and expertise; it's not enough to be aware that climate change exists to actually take action. The accumulation of scientific studies have not led to the implementation of the needed measures and policies nor have they led to generalised citizens' mobilisations. Further, they have likely led to incredulity more than a commitment to act.

Two citizens' dynamics are inspired towards the process of relocalisation of struggles and imagination, as they confront the structural causes of climate change. The first is grounded in the "frontline struggles" that aim to halt the extractive industries from expanding (from shale oil and gas to new mining projects), and the construction of new useless infrastructure that is

imposed and ill-adapted (airports, motorways, dams, stadia etc.). As a result of powerful mobilisations in North America against new pipelines for exporting tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, this new dynamic of international mobilisation has been termed Blockadia.²⁹ The second are the diverse concrete alternative experiences – be they local, regional or global – that put into practice deep changes in our unsustainable production models and consumption patterns. By using the name coined in October 2013 in Bayonne (the French Basque country) by Bizi!, and dozens of Basque, Spanish and French organisations, we could by extension, call this citizens' movement that is up and running, Alternatiba; it is taking various forms in the four corners of our planet.

These two dynamics clearly represent an eco-territorial turn in social struggles, to use the term coined by the Argentinian sociologist Maristella Svampa, who characterises the rise in struggles in Latin America that combine ecologist mobilisations and the practice of resistance and alternatives grounded in territories.³⁰ Territory is not to be understood in this sense as scraps to be saved from the damage of productivism, industrialisation or neo-liberal globalisation. Rather, it is a space for building resistance and alternatives; in other words the place for imagining and experimenting how to reach beyond the existing unsustainable economic, financial and technological models. Here there is no space for selfish attitudes like NIMBYism. Preservation, promotion and resilience of all territories make up the overall picture. To some extent, the mobilisation against shale gas in France and many

The accumulation of scientific studies have not led to the implementation of the needed measures and policies nor have they led to generalised citizens' mobilisations.

26 The Guardian, "Reclaim power protest march in Copenhagen," 16 December 2009. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2009/dec/16/reclaim-power-march-copenhagen>

27 Chapelle Sophie, Video of the Reclaim Power Action, Copenhagen, 2009, September, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3Jh5pyiR30

See also: de Marcellus, Olivier, CJA and CJA activist, Reclaiming Power in Copenhagen. A decisive step towards a global climate justice movement, <http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=88>

28 Lindgaard, Jade, *Je crise climatique*, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 2014

29 This is also the term chosen by Naomi Klein in her new book

30 Svampa, Maristella, *Consenso de los Commodities, Giro Ecoterritorial y Pensamiento crítico en América Latina*, <http://maristellasvampa.net/archivos/ensayo59.pdf>

They enlarge it because they are grounded in opposition to devastating projects that affect our daily lives, and in the development of experiences that improve them and provide us with a glimpse of tomorrow's world.

other countries that are calling for “Neither here nor anywhere”, especially when they are combined with the demands for a radical energy transition, are all part of this same logic.³¹

Enlargement and radicalisation for imposing an ecological and social transition

Although these two processes have distinctly different points of departure, they open up spaces that both enlarge and radicalise Peoples' dynamics for climate justice. They enlarge it because they are grounded in opposition to devastating projects that affect our daily lives, and in the development of experiences that improve them and provide us with a glimpse of tomorrow's world. These two processes therefore make it possible to include people that would otherwise not become involved in activist spheres; there is no need to be a climatology expert to become involved in these dynamics. And these processes both allow the juxtaposition of all kinds of practice, tactics and strategies.³²

Therefore, it is possible to become involved without having to conform to any activist mould – something often perceived and felt as being overly restrictive. This enlargement is also a process of radicalisation, although it does not forcibly involve “radical” participants: confronting the power of those who promote climate-destructive projects or the difficulty of rolling out concrete alternatives enables people to feel that the struggle against climate change cannot be solved by mere discourse.

Shale gas and oil, expanding the borders of extractivism, small and large useless projects, free-trade agreements and investments, projects that financialise nature, agro-industry, GMOs, nuclear power, increased inequalities, unbridled lobbying of multinationals, banks that profit from climate change, the list of local struggles and global battles go on. As do the battles to implement concrete alternative experiences: food sovereignty and small-scale agroecology, short distribution chains, relocalisation of the economy, job-sharing and fairer distribution of wealth, insulation of housing, social and ecological changes to production that ensure jobs are protected, the re-appropriation of the Commons, repairing and recycling, waste reduction, environmentally-friendly transport and sustainable mobility, eco-renovation, renewable energies etc. Blockadia and Alternatiba dynamics clearly state that ecological and social transition require deep structural changes. These changes are rejected by the elite who do not wish to see their political and economic systems changed, or to lose their domination and power. If we are to break the stranglehold of multinationals and corporate interests on our lives, nature and our future, we need to build and strengthen these struggles and alternatives so that they become unavoidable.

Make Paris2015 a “Seattle of false solutions” and a “Cochabamba of our solutions”!

Turning Paris2015 into a “Seattle of false solutions” implies working for it to become a watershed moment

31 Combes, Maxime Let's frack the fracking companies, EJOLT, 2012, September <http://www.ejolt.org/2012/09/global-frackdown-on-fracking-companies/>

32 The anti-fracking movement could not have achieved such successes if it had not been able to include different tactics and practices: legal actions, political pressure, grassroots mobilisation, national events, disobedience actions.

for climate justice, just like Seattle and Cochabamba were for the *Altermondialist* movement. The reference to Seattle is an echo of the civil disobedience needed to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the false techno-fix solutions promoted by the UN conferences. The reference to Cochabamba refers to a watershed struggle against multinational plans to privatise water that has led to over 180 cases of remunicipalisation of water in the world over the last 15 years.³³ This means making Paris2015 such a key moment in building an international movement for climate justice that will be able to mobilise in the long-term and grow in strength, accumulate small and large victories, while telling a story that mobilises people. It is less focused on “text in brackets”³⁴, and more on our own agenda; that of building our “actions and alternatives”.³⁵

The reference to Seattle is nothing new. Copenhagen in 2009, was already referred to as “a Seattle-like moment” as it was supported by a massive, dynamic citizens’ mobilisation that blended classical initiatives (demonstration, people’s summit etc.) and large-scale actions of civil disobedience (the Reclaim Power action on 16th December) and a rather successful linkage between what was happening inside and outside the negotiations. Nevertheless, the choice to hold actions and the big demonstration before and during the negotiations, seems to transmit the message that: “it’s up to you, the governments to act and fight efficiently against the effects of climate change.” This is the same as handing the government the keys, and waiting for them to act. And because they are not acting, not acting enough, or not taking the right actions,

fatigue and disappointment are always the feelings at the end of the day.

Having the last word!

Another strategy is to choose different times for mobilising so as to have the last word in Paris. If Paris2015 will be one stage in building mobilisation for climate justice, and we want it to resonate in such a way that will help our struggles move forward and gain strength, why not hold the most important mobilisation at the end of the negotiations? Thus the anger born of the mistakes and limits of the negotiations could feed into the demonstrations and massive civil disobedience actions that we could organise at the end of the negotiations. We want to stimulate all the energy during the very last days to put out the message, “you, the governments, are speaking and negotiating for the worst; you, the multinationals are using the negotiations to maintain your stranglehold on our future; we, the people are marching, acting to change the system and will never give up!” A proposal of this kind implies not giving up any hope of influencing the UN, states or the negotiations. Firstly, because it is possible to organise decentralised mobilisations of this kind throughout 2015, including at the beginning of the negotiations. On the other hand, because situating the massive mobilisations during the final days leaves the possibility open for derailing the negotiations if it is deemed relevant to do so.

But any such proposal tells a totally different story from that of demonstrating during the two weeks

³³ Poupeau, Franck, «La guerre de l’eau. Cochabamba, Bolivie, 1999-2001», *Agone*, n°26-27:133-140, 2002. See also: Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), Multinational Observatory and Transnational Institute (TNI). Here to stay: Water remunicipalisation as a global trend 2014, November 13, <http://www.tni.org/briefing/here-stay-water-remunicipalisation-global-trend>

³⁴ Literally “texts in brackets”. In negotiations the proposals of texts where all parties are not in agreement are bracketed. It has become a standard joke to make fun of the “bracketed” text that is often longer than the parts that have been validated.

³⁵ Literally “texts in brackets”. In negotiations the proposals of texts where all parties are not in agreement are bracketed. It has become a standard joke to make fun of the “bracketed” text that is often longer than the parts that have been validated.

It means an end to being the spectators and commentators that we have been in the last hours of previous negotiations, and using the uncertainty that surrounds us to become opinion leaders and imposing our ideas and our perspectives in a public space.

of negotiations with a view to bringing pressure to bear on the UN, states and the negotiations. If it were enough to demonstrate a few days before the end of the negotiations to influence the outcomes, Copenhagen, which was heralded as the biggest climate demonstration ever organised at the time, would have led to a different outcome. Leaving the biggest citizens' mobilisations to the end of the COP 21 in Paris 2015 implies giving ourselves the possibility of having the final word, rather than leaving it to others. It means an end to being the spectators and

commentators that we have been in the last hours of previous negotiations, and using the uncertainty that surrounds us to become opinion leaders and imposing our ideas and our perspectives in a public space. This would mean no disappointment or bitter taste at the end of the negotiations; quite the contrary, energy and determination can be generated and communicated by successful mobilisations. And this would allow us to build the future of the post-Paris 2015 in our countries, territories and respective sectors because "we will never give up!"

Acknowledgements: This text would never have been written without the many discussions within Attac France and the many associations and trade union organisations, researchers and experts in recent years. Specific thanks for the discussions, remarks, and critical comments of Nicolas Haeringer, Geneviève Azam, Christophe Aguiton, Jeanne Planche, Txetx Etcheverry and the many others that I cannot name here. All views expressed here are those of the author, who takes full responsibility for them. Special thanks to Judith Hitchman for the translation into English.



Hacking the COP: The Climate Games in Paris 2015

The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (LeLabofii) has been bringing together artists and activists to create new forms of creative resistance for more than 10 years. They can be reached at www.labofii.net, info@labofii.net and on Twitter @labofii

Introduction

It's December 2015. The COP21 has just opened in Paris. Armed with courage, a mobile phone and plans for creative mischief your team is ready to merge street and online action in the world's largest Disobedient Action Adventure Game, *The Climate Games*...

For its 19th experiment entitled #hackcop, *The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination* (Labofii), has been working with various climate justice movements (including 350.org, CoalitionClimate21, Corporate Europe Observatory, Climate Justice Action, Climate Express - Belgium, Groen Front - Netherlands and Reclaim The Power – UK) and cultural centres (Berliner Festspiele, ArtsAdmin - London, Vooruit - Ghent) to facilitate a series of Hackathons (i.e. an intense hands on workshop) to prepare *The Climate Games*.

To “hack” is to redesign the use of something, to make something do something it has never done before. The #hackcops aimed to transform the way we plan and carry out creative resistance towards climate justice, using the combined knowledge of citizens working together. Following an open call,

they brought artists, activists, designers, hackers and gamers together in an atmosphere of cooperation and self-management, using popular educational tools, games and horizontal decision making. Over 100 people worked together over three separate weeks to co-create *The Climate Games*, a new form of action that exists in between public space and cyberspace, the virtual and the real, the world of gaming and the world of activism.

The “Climate Games” framework

The Climate Games is a mass participation transmedia action framework which merges the street, disobedient bodies and the internet, creating a crowd sourced cartography of creative resistance in real time and real space. The concept was first developed in the summer of 2014 by Groen Front, and in July 2015 was replayed in the port of Amsterdam, with 20 teams taking actions to disrupt the coal and agribusiness industries. The #hackcops took this initial idea and have been developing and improving it for larger scale actions during the COP21.

During *The Climate Games* people are invited to form teams and try to score as many points as possible by

*“To hack
is to differ”*

Mackenzie Wark,
Hacker Manifesto,
2004

doing creative non violent direct actions across the gaming field, which in the case of COP21 will be Paris and local decentralised territories. Police and other security will be integrated into the game as “team blue”, whose task it will be to make it as challenging as possible for the other teams to score points. Those who have been sabotaging UN climate summits, those providing “false solutions” to the climate crisis and profiting from it – geo-engineers, the nuclear industry, carbon marketeers, industry lobbyists etc., will be the “grey team”. The beauty of the Climate Games is that it enables a whole diversity of different nonviolent action approaches to participate in its framework across a wide territory.

Actions will take place without central coordination. However, activists will be able to use an open-source smart phone app to report their actions anonymously and in real time by submitting photos and video material that will appear on a digital map of the gaming field as well as crowd sourcing the position of the opposing teams, Team blue and grey. Developers and coders have been building the mapping tool during the Hackathons and as well as secure anonymity features, the smart phone app also might include features like a momentum counter that speeds up the more actions that are reported and a feature that makes the phone vibrate when you are within 100m of the police or a corporate site. The map will be accessible through both the smart phone app as well as via the Climate Games website (www.climategames.net) and players without smart phones will be able to text in reports to a hub.

Players not in Paris will be able to take part through actions in their own locality or via online hacktivism missions.

Of course no games would be complete without a glitzy award ceremony. On the final night of the games a theatrical ceremony will take place in Paris and be live streamed for those who took actions across the world. Teams will be presented with prizes for striking gameplay, including *The Courage Is Contagious Cup* awarded to the team that explores the edges of its comfort zone, *The Award for Ultimate Unexpectedness* won for actions that take everyone by surprise, *The Pissed Myself Cup* for the acts of disobedience that make us Laugh Out Loud, *The Big Splash Cup* awarded to the team whose actions make news headlines, *The Copcop Spotters Badge* for those that report the most positions of Team blue on the map and last but by no means least, *The Most Effective Action Award* for the gameplay that results in a significant impact – such as immediate CO₂ reductions.

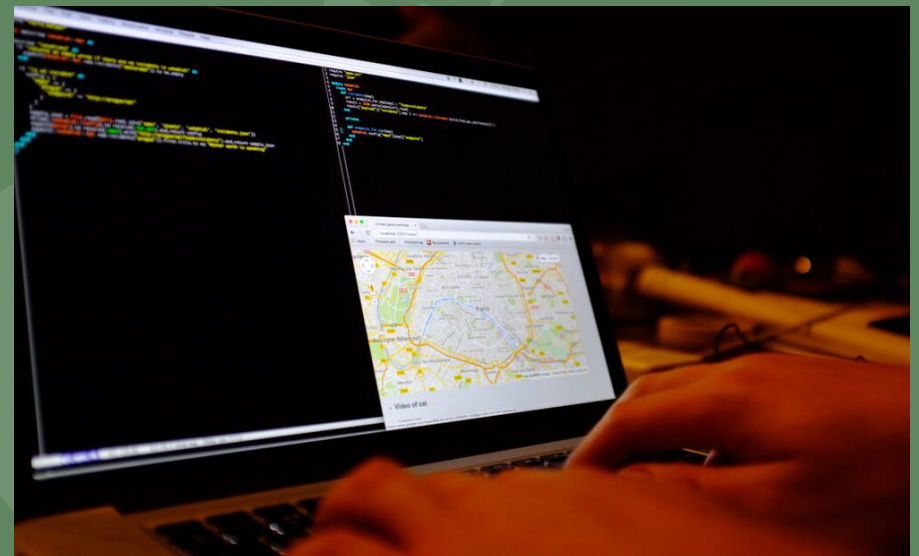
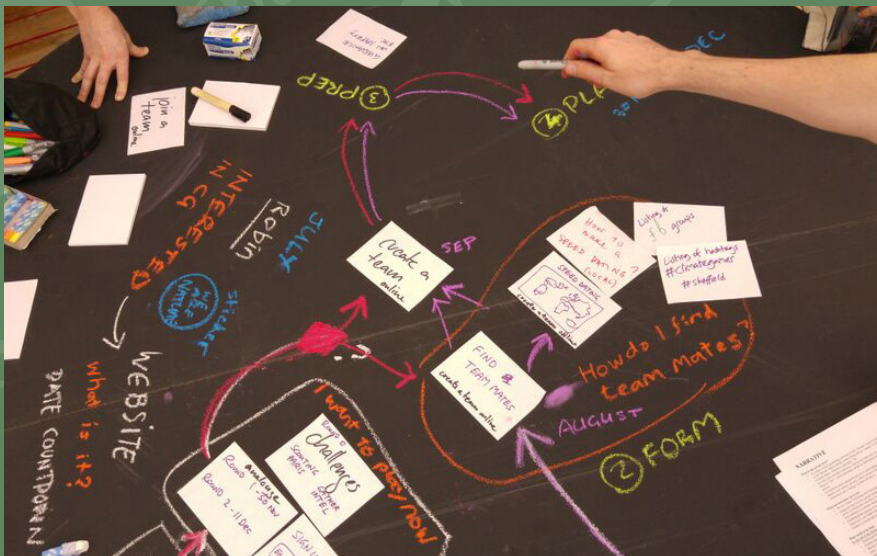
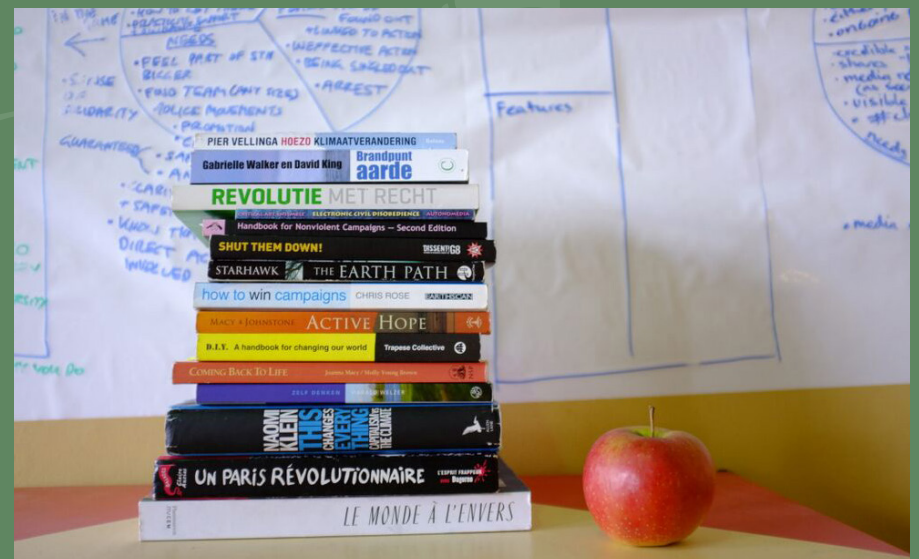
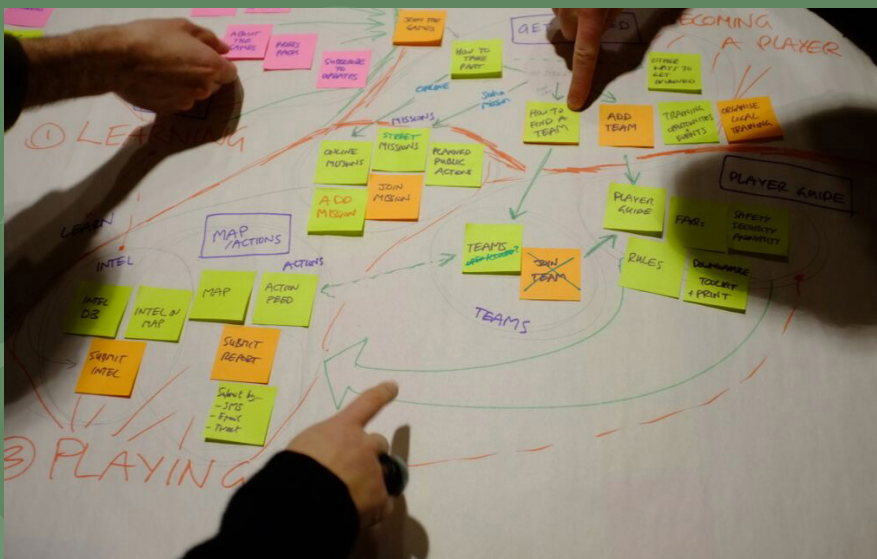
Get ready to Play

It's easy to take part in the Climate Games. First, form a team with your friends and register online (there is even an award for best team name), then plan some creative mischief in Paris, in your own habitat or online. Download the App and at anytime before and during the games you can feed the collective intelligence by anonymously reporting and mapping the opposing players on the global gaming field.

Take your action (in round 1 and/or 2) and report on it on the map to unlock the awards and give points to the entire game. And don't forget to come to or log onto the award ceremony at the end.

Round one of the Climate Games will take place on the 30th of November the day following the mass marches and on the opening day of the COP21. Its

theme will be the greenwashers and peddlers of false solutions. Round two will last 48 hours, beginning on the COP's last day the 11th of December and culminating with the mass disobedience on the 12th where tens of thousands will not only have the last word, but take the struggle for Climate Justice into their own hands.



Chapter 2

Strategic discourses and alliances

- 5 Climate justice: two approaches** by Joan Martinez-Alier 57
- 6 The common(s) denominator: oil and water on a common river** by Kevin Buckland 63
- 7 Labour and climate change: towards an emancipatory ecological class-consciousness** by Stefania Barca 74
- 8 Energy sovereignty: politicising an energy transition** by Pere Ariza-Montobbio 79
- 9 Desertec: the renewable-energy grab?** by Hamza Hamouchene 85

Climate justice: two approaches

Joan Martínez-Alier has been a Professor in the Department of Economics and Economic History in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in Spain since 1975. He is recognized as one of the founders of Ecological Economics and Political Ecology.

This review looks at Naomi Klein's book and Henry Shue's latest and perhaps finest books on climate justice. Shue approaches climate justice from a top-down perspective – examining the governance mechanisms that could lead to justice while Klein takes a bottom-up approach focused on movements of resistance claiming justice from below.

Henry Shue's *Climate justice: vulnerability and protection* is an excellent collection of essays written over twenty years.¹ Each article slightly shifts focus in response to the Conferences of the Parties (COPs), over the course of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), reports from the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) highlighting new issues that have appeared (such as acidification of the oceans), and the author's growing impatience with inaction at the United Nations and particularly in Washington DC. Geoengineering techniques, with their own set of moral and political issues, are mentioned, yet not analysed, while Naomi Klein dedicates one full chapter.² Henry Shue might concur with Naomi Klein that geoengineering is not plausible, and not even a desirable solution to climate change.

Shue is a well-known moral philosopher and expert on international relations, a US citizen and a fellow of



Merton College, University of Oxford. He has also written on war and torture. Shue started to write on climate change in the early 1990s. As many others, he was impressed by Anil Agarwal's and Sunita Narain's booklet, *Global Warming in an unequal world: a case of environmental colonialism* (1991), from which he borrowed a basic tenet of distributive justice in an environmental context, namely that there are subsistence or necessary emissions of carbon dioxide and there are "luxury emissions". The emissions from impoverished people from the use of biomass for food and

1 Shue, Henry, *Climate Justice: Vulnerability and Protection*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, xii+353 pp.

2 Hamilton, Clive, *Earthmasters. The Dawn of the Age of Climate Engineering*, Yale U.P., New Haven, 2013.

cooking cannot certainly be reduced. It would not be right to ask poor people to decrease their emissions, which they could only do by giving up meagre meals cooked with fuel wood or dung. The reduction effort should be made by the rich.

As the clearly written and beautifully argued book moves along, other new ideas appear, like that of “excess encroachment”. Excessive emissions of greenhouse gases imply a unilateral appropriation of sinks, whether they are new vegetation, oceans or the atmosphere as a temporary deposit. Not only are emissions historically and at present very unequally distributed, positive harm is also being done to the environment. Is there or could there be a system of international justice that could be applied, as in the case of crimes of torture or war crimes? For instance, lawsuits based on actual or potential damage caused by climate change have caused concern among governments of wealthy states or fossil fuel companies, as in the Kivalina village vs. Exxon court case (2008). Nevertheless, the US representative, Todd Stern, at the COP in Copenhagen in 2009 clearly stated that he recognised the US historical role in putting emissions in the atmosphere but his government had no sense of guilt or culpability, and he objected to the word “reparations”. However, contrary to this view, Shue believes that a principle of “strict liability” could become operative as it is already operative in the domestic environmental legislation in the US and the EU. Shue distinguishes between punishment and responsibility – rich industrial countries are certainly responsible for accumulated emissions.

‘Bottom up’ activism in the form of other court cases (Sousa Santos’ “subaltern legality”) or proposals from environmental groups in Nigeria and Ecuador since 1997 on “leaving oil in the soil” for local and global reasons, demands for repayment of the ecological debt and/or the climate debt to the Global South since 1992 (including payments for “loss and damage”, in the official parlance of the COPs), are left aside by Shue.³ They could easily be taken up. One can ask, why are they left aside? Why no mention of Ogonization and Yasunization? Why no mention of the fact that in Copenhagen, in the official conference, several heads of state and government mentioned the “climate debt”, or the “ecological debt”?

Olivier Godard has argued that insistence on repayment of the climate debt has not only irritated wealthy countries but has also been counterproductive for the success of international negotiations. Others have argued that using the climate debt to put pressure on the wealthy countries would be the best contribution from the global South in the negotiations. Shue does not engage with this debate in all its amplitude although he argues in favour of subsidies to be given for non-carbon energy sources for those suffering from “energy poverty”.

International agreements on climate change are needed to prevent harm. Uncertainties (whether real or “manufactured”) are no reason for inaction; we cannot reasonably ask for quantitative risk analysis of all contingencies. Shue makes these points, arguing also that economics of climate change does not provide

³ Warlenius, R., Pierce, G., Ramasar, V. Reversing the arrow of arrears: The concept of “ecological debt” and its value for environmental justice, *Global Environmental Change*, 30 (21-30), 2015

good guidance for action in international agreements. Shue believes more in non-marketable rights than in utility — that is, there are not always trade-offs. He appropriately mentions Cline and Howarth as economists who ask for very urgent action against climate change and who dispute the pertinence of a discount rate. So far so good. However (and this is a minor point), at the end he relents and praises Nicholas Stern's neoclassical description of climate change as 'the largest market failure' ever (instead of one of the largest infringements of rights ever). Shue rightly disagrees with the application of the Ramsey's rule of discounting (linked to the problem of the optimal or 'just' rate of savings) because we can no longer assume that there will be economic growth. However, Nicholas Stern also discounts the future (although much less than Nordhaus) precisely because of this assumption. Why does Shue not criticize Nicholas Stern's discounting?

The book proceeds by considering the virtues and the shortcomings of the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 that allocated property rights on carbon sinks to rich countries in exchange for a promise of small reductions in emissions. Kyoto was a relatively easy way out of a historical moral debt. However, it was not ratified by the US Senate. Shue proceeds to disentangle the meanings and modalities of state sovereignty showing how sovereignty cannot be used to escape international obligations in this field.

The book started by pointing out the great differences in carbon dioxide emissions between poor and

rich people. Shue rightly insists that climate policy is also energy policy. There are great differences in the use of energy between people. We all need a minimum of energy as food energy ("endosomatic" use energy, as Alfred Lotka said, or "vital energy" as Frederick Soddy, the Nobel Prize and also a fellow of Merton College, wrote in his books on energy and the economy). We also all need a minimum of "exosomatic" energy, and we must avoid taxes or cap-and-trade rules on emissions that might produce "energy poverty".

Many people in the world must and will still increase their energy use. Meanwhile carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have reached 402 ppm (it was barely 300 ppm when the anthropogenic greenhouse effect was described by Arrhenius in 1896). It took a long time for climate change to become a moral, economic and political issue. There is an unjust distribution of emissions, harm is and will be produced and the problem looms larger and larger because what matters is the accumulated stocks of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. So even if "peak carbon dioxide emissions" is reached (as in the former Soviet Union in 1990 or in Spain because of the economic crisis of 2008), this comes too late. The book ends on this realistic note, asking whether industrial civilization has committed an "unforgivable sin". Shue does not seem to be aware or think that it is significant that there is a climate justice movement. He could have acknowledged it, and tried to explain its promises or shortcomings, but he does not.

Another approach to addressing climate change

Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* is written in a different style. It is a powerful call from Canada for reinforcing the existing global movement for climate justice. The book puts climate change at the centre of politics on the road to the impending COP in Paris in 2015. It denounces the inaction of the United Nations during and after Copenhagen 2009, and the failure of top world politicians to face the issue. Naomi Klein first became interested in the climate debt in 2009 inspired by the young Bolivian ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Angelica Navarro. She concurs with Shue that Agarwal and Narain's discussions of climate injustice in 1991 were a powerful points of departure. She quotes Sunita Narain saying, 25 years later, "I am always being told — especially by my friends in America — that... issues of historical responsibility are something we should not talk about." Both Shue and Klein acknowledge that historical responsibilities are relevant.

Klein was at Copenhagen and protested alongside activists, but she has not been a keen follower of the COPs. She has read many reports, including IPCC reports, and she has travelled extensively. She explains with good humour her participation as an invited (or uninvited?) guest at the Heartland conferences reuniting politically motivated climate change deniers, and also at a retreat of top experts on geoengineering methods, like Ken Caldeira and David Keith, sponsored by the Royal Society in Chicheley Hall, a splendid country house in Britain shared on the same

days by the Audi motor company. She makes bitter fun of Nature Conservancy's oil drilling in a nature reserve in Texas to which it got access on the excuse of preserving Attwater's prairie chicken. She believes in the environmentalism of the poor and the Indigenous much more than in the environmentalism of the Big Green organisations. Shue has not (yet) heard of the environmentalism of the poor and the Indigenous.

Her book is written following the methodology of action-research. It explains her forays up to the barricades and blockades against open cast gold mining in Greece by the Canadian Eldorado company and against shale gas fracking in Romania by Chevron, against oil pipelines in Canada and into the marshes of Louisiana to inspect the damage from the BP spill. Drawing on the reports of EJOLT and other sources, she reconstructs the true story of the proposal to leave oil in the soil in Ogoniland in the Niger Delta and in the Amazon of Ecuador, and the founding of Oilwatch in 1995 which already combined local resistance to the fossil fuels industry with an emphasis on "unburnable fuels" that we should leave untouched if increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is to be avoided.

The book includes travel to the Alberta oil sand devastation and participation in the "cowboy and Indian" resistance to the Keystone XL and other pipelines where cowboys and the Indians were on the same side. It shows the resistance movements against fracking in France and elsewhere (because of methane emissions, and local harm to water and landscapes), and

also the resistance to mountaintop coal removal. Naomi Klein, no doubt, could have travelled even more, she could have visited other awful coal mines in India and China to reinforce her point on the potential convergence of local and global resistance to the fossil fuel industry. But she has travelled enough — and while writing this book she was also trying to have a baby, now a toddler, Toma. She went through a couple of miscarriages. She devotes some pages to these events so normal in women's lives but also so very demanding. It is unusual that they would appear in a book on climate justice but she wants us (her thousands of readers) to know her better as a person, to think about social reproduction and care, and also she wants to show the power of regeneration of life as shown in her own intimate experience.

The right to regenerate echoes George Bataille's optimistic view in *La Parte Maudite* (The Accursed Share) on the energy surplus created by flows of photosynthesis as opposed to the squandering of the finite stocks of fossil fuels. She is not a doomsayer. Her labours, her written work and documentaries are not only for the social movements at present, they are also for our children and grandchildren, and for the benefit of life on the planet. She quotes Article 71 of the Constitution of Ecuador on the Rights of Nature, including the obligation to respect and restore the regenerative powers of Nature. The "right to regenerate" is a keyword in this book.

While Naomi Klein calls explicitly for a global climate justice movement, she does not give detailed

instructions on how to get it going and how we should proceed. Should we go to Paris in 2015? There is no obvious need for this because many environmental movements already exist. However, perhaps some of us should also demonstrate in the streets of Paris. The movement against climate change must be open to other movements, for instance, a universal citizens' income that puts the whole socio-economic system in question. It must be a movement as vigorous and successful as anti-slavery was, and feminism has been, and even more.

The movement must be self-aware, placing climate change at the centre, "the thing that changes everything" — as she came to realise after her two previous famous books, *No Logo* (2000) and *The Shock Doctrine* (2008). If we are to continue suffering the insufferable COP meetings, if the radical languages of climate debt and ecological debt (and now, perhaps, of "loss and damage") are not accepted by wealthy countries in the international official meetings, it would be because the environmental movement became weak or was bought off.

Klein charts the decline of environmentalism from the 1960s onwards. In North America, after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published in 1962, it achieved some legislative and practical successes, listed in the book, and which were reinforced in the 1980s by the environmental justice movement that fought against environmental racism. Its strength was lost in the neoliberal era of Ronald Reagan in the US, and later with Stephen Harper in Canada.

We need to address the structural causes of climate change, but there can be no win-win game with those who defend an economic model based on fossil fuels, starting with the multinational oil companies.

The self-regulating market became a triumphant political slogan, today weakened in the wake of the financial and economic crisis of 2008. Schemes for carbon trading markets were proposed in Europe, but failed. She argues that it is therefore time for more radical policies — but they will not come from ineffectual politicians like Obama, or from the UN. It is *capitalism vs the climate*.

According to Klein (but not to Shue, who writes for academics and certified policy makers), the historical and very urgent task of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions falls mainly on the many grassroots movements that form networks drawing their strength from the battles on the ground against the private or public fossil fuel companies, against their wells, their pipelines and sea carriers, their refineries and thermal power stations. However, Klein's book is not only a call to action. It contains also careful explanations of the chemistry and the political economy of climate change in 70 pages of footnotes. It is an inspiring book. Towards its end (p. 449-450), Klein writes:

*In December 2012, Brad Werner... made his way through the throng of 24,000 earth and space scientists at the Fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco... Werner's own session... was titled "Is the Earth F**ked?"... Standing in front of the conference room, the University of California, San Diego professor took the crowd through the advance*

*computer model he was using... He talked about system boundaries, perturbations, dissipation, attractors, bifurcations... in complex systems theory. But the bottom line was clear enough... When a journalist pressed Werner for a clear answer on the "Is the Earth F**ked" question, he set the jargon aside and replied, "More or less". There was one dynamic in the model, however, that offered some hope. Werner described it as "resistance"... this includes "environmental direct action, resistance taken from outside the dominant culture, as in protests, blockades and sabotage by Indigenous peoples, workers, anarchists and other activist groups"... along the lines of the abolition movement and the civil rights movement... The likeliest source of "friction" to slow down the economic machine that is careening out of control.*

As Walter Benjamin might have said, such movements of resistance must go beyond exercising some "friction"; they must vigorously pull down the emergency brakes in the economic engine that is producing more and more greenhouse gases. The Anthropocene is the era in which humankind has become a geological force spoiling the face of the Earth, but it could still be the era where humankind, through its local and global resistance movements, stops climate change and helps regenerate the diversity and richness of life on Earth.

The common(s) denominator: oil and water on a common river

Kevin Buckland is an artist, activist organiser and the “Arts Ambassador” for the grassroots global network 350.org. He has worked with the International Youth Climate Network to promote creative communication and beauty in the call for climate justice. Videos, writings and participatory projects can be seen on his website.

In the first two weeks of September 2014, the SeaChange Journey, consisting of a flotilla of hand-made paper mache canoes journeyed the improbable waters of the Hudson River in the US, from Troy to Manhattan, New York weaving together stories of resistance and resilience on a voyage to the People’s Climate March in New York City. The crew adopted the motto, “We All Live Downstream”, attempting to create an activism of resistance against the transportation of fracked crude oil that expanded political space for a discourse around the commons. It was chosen because water is an accessible inroad to a discourse of the commons. It is easy to understand that all waters are connected – they circulate, infiltrate, rain, freeze and flow throughout the ages and throughout our bodies. All rivers flow to the ocean – what we do to the water, we do to ourselves. Looking at the SeaChange Journey as a case study of activism that enacts a frame of water-as-commons, this article will explore how such strategic positioning of “the commons denominator” allows for the framing of local conflicts in a global context, positions the protection of water as a proactive rather than defensive struggle,

and consequently widens political space for participatory and democratic processes of local autonomy.

The SeaChange Journey, inspired by **A Movement Without Demands**, a strategic critique of Occupy-WallStreet, aimed to embody the concept of “water-as-commons” where the commons is recovered as an inspiring tool that has the potential to both encapsulate and articulate social and environmental justice visioning:¹

“...what if the environmental movement against hydraulic fracturing were to envision a national campaign to declare the ground waters a commons? This not only would prevent gas companies from putting at risk the lives of millions, but it would immediately empower water management boards elected by local communities with unprecedented powers. How would these governing bodies be constituted and how would they be run? Following this logic, we may also ask similar questions in regard to education, healthcare, and the production of energy.”

Commons Denominator (noun): *A theoretical framing that allows for the mutually reinforcing articulation of disparate specific struggles in the Anthropocene through an expansive frame of “the commons”.*

Anthropocene (noun): *The current epoch of unprecedented anthropogenic planetary change.*

¹ Dean and Deseriis. “A Movement Without Demands?” Possible Futures. January 3, 2012. See also, Architektur, An. “On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides.” E-Flux. Web. 2010. And also, De Angelis, “Reflections on Alternatives, commons and communities or building a new world from the bottom up.” The Commoner N. 6. Winter 2003. And also, De Angelis, “The Tragedy of the Capitalist Commons.” Turbulence 2008. web.



Although the commons discourse stems from century-old land struggles, it is extremely suggestive applying this same argumentation to current struggles, articulating “resistance” as protective and caring acts of the commons we are intrinsically a part of: intellectual commons (education, copyleft, low-carbon technology transfer, wikileaks); democratic commons (right to assembly, free-speech, right to protest, right to ideological diversity); social (health care, cultural institutions, public space, internet); and ecological (water, soil, atmosphere, biodiversity). This articulation emboldens a mutually reinforcing rhizomatic structure whereby each front enhances and fertilizes the discourse of the others, rather than framing resistance as an ever-increasing list of often disarticulated struggles against something. By embracing “the commons denominator” in the context of global ecological and economic crisis, the suggestion is a counter-narrative to neoliberalism that can be mutually reinforcing and cumulative, seeding the ground to encourage an inevitable ecological transition towards localised autonomy. Movements around the world have begun to declare, “One struggle many fronts, one front many struggles”.

Oil and Water on a Two Way River

Our paper canoes sat low in the water – you could feel each wave like a new land rising beneath you, pulling you up and into some improbable future. For two weeks in September I lived an unlikely paper story: voyaging the two-way waters of the tidal Hudson River with a band of fellow dreamers

on canoes we had built from recycled paper. We saw the mist that rose over the river at sunrise and the steam that rose from Indian Point’s nuclear cooling tower; we heard the sound of a stork’s wide wings flapping above our heads and the warning whistle of explosive train-units as they hurtled past traffic intersections we learned the surface of the water and understood in its depths what might be lost: New York State is gambling its entire River: high stakes for another decade of living a dying American dream.

Our journey began in Troy, New York, chosen for its forgotten history of paperboat making rather than its name’s epic connotations. Our route followed the path of a “virtual pipeline” of crude oil transportation by Global Partners and Buckeye Partners LP, Fortune 500 corporations focusing on oil distribution in the Northeastern US. The crude oil is transported by a series of trains, barges and trucks from the fracked Bakken fields of North Dakota across the country, through Albany and Newburgh, and down past the New York Metropolitan area for refining. Currently 40 times more crude oil is already being transported down the Hudson River than four years ago.²

A series of proposals have been filed that would give permissions to build new crude oil transfer stations allowing both fracked crude oil and tar sands from Alberta to be processed in Newburgh/New Windsor and Albany, then loaded onto barges and sent downstream. “The problem we’re facing is that with the tremendous and increasing volume of crude oil being

² Gallay, Paul. “Getting Real about Growing Threats to Clean Water.” *Hudson River at Risk: Riverkeeper Annual Report.* 2014.

transported throughout the Hudson Valley, a spill is inevitable,” stated Kate Hudson of Riverkeeper, a local river defender organisation. Drinking water for over 250,000 people comes from the Hudson River – water is a right, not a privilege; it is the ecological ground for all life, not an unregulated highway for corporate profits. In December 2012, an oil tanker ran aground, carrying about as much oil as was spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster, and recently New York State has seen at least four derailments in the span of just three months.³ A spill anywhere along this “virtual pipeline” would mean disaster for the river. The oil that is not spilled and is burned means disaster for our climate. The result is a lose-lose situation.

On the very first day of the journey, local residents in Albany showed us where the long black trains are parked just yards from the apartments and playgrounds of a low-income African American neighbourhood, a clear demonstration of environmental racism. Railway workers call these “bomb trains” because the crude oil in the railcars are pressurised along the journey, becoming volatile and explosive. An explosion in Albany, like the one in Lac Megantic, Quebec in 2013, could mean up to 5,000 dead. A retired MetroNorth worker told us such a disaster was only a matter of time because austerity measures and privatisation reduced funds for maintenance of this century old rail infrastructure. These time bombs running along underfunded and rotting rail infrastructure are an accident waiting to happen. The under-resourced emergency response teams, also facing cuts, were clear that they would be unable to adequately respond to a rail explosion.



3 Mouawad, Jad (1994). “Bakken Crude, Rolling Through Albany.” The New York Times. February 27. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/business/energy-environment/bakkan->

[crude-rolling-through-albany.html?_r=0](http://www.northjersey.com/story/news/energy-environment/2014/03/30/oil-boom-boosts-flow-along-the-hudson-and-fears-of-spill-risk/702127)

4 Fallon, Scott. “Oil boom boosts flow along the Hudson, and fears of spill risk.” March 30, 2014. NorthJersey.com

Railway workers call these “bomb trains” because the crude oil in the railcars are pressurised along the journey, becoming volatile and explosive.

One of the feasts organised by SeaChange followed a presentation about the risks of the bomb trains. A grim presentation was delivered at the Newburgh Boat Club by Riverkeeper. Kayaks and long rowing canoes hung above our heads as images of explosions and charred railcars graced the screen. The presentation was interrupted by the screaming train whistles as they flew past intersections just yards from where we were sitting. Many of those in the audience live with the threat of this danger on a daily basis.

After the presentation we opened the large garage door and spilled out into the sunset riverside, the water was throwing orange light over the blue waves. The picnic tables were laden with a potlatch, and we sat eating and talking together. As dusk melted into night we saw the Aphrodite oil barge, with 9.6 million barrels of crude in her belly, swinging like an ominous pendulum up and down the river at regular intervals; just one part of the 25 million gallons of oil that makes its weekly journey down the Hudson River.⁴ The name, Aphrodite: goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation – scared us in its irony, just as the names of the proposed fracked gas pipelines that cross the Hudson are stolen from the communities who inhabited these lands and to this day protect them: Algonquin and Iroquois. The enclosures of neoliberal imperialism attempts to consume even our history, leaving its own singular mythology in its place.

As we neared the end of the journey, we caught an evening glimpse of Manhattan, its lights shone far in the blue distance like a cubist landscape. For three

days we quietly approached it, our paddles gliding into the shimmering water – the buildings growing slowly in scale until they towered over our small paper boats. We saw not only a city perched on the end of a river, but also a city at the end of a massive and hidden infrastructure. What had been invisible was suddenly all around us, we saw the combustion behind the illuminated and the zooming taxis and bright-light billboards of Times Square. Manhattan no longer seemed like some autonomous beast, rather an ageing boiler that requires constant fuelling.

Inside the skyscrapers, there are businessmen making grave gambles with things that do not belong to them. From their corner offices they privatise profits and collectivise risks – scraping the sky for personal profit. The grandiose myth of this city-that-never-sleeps requires a critical revisioning when understanding the risks required to keep it lit-up. Hurricane Sandy was a wakeup call as it darkened this city-that-never-sleeps. Approached from the water, New York City does not seem so invincible. It hangs low on the water, inviting a rogue wave to take a shortcut from the East River across to the brackish Hudson. The whole downtown was flooded by such waters only two years ago, darkening the skyline like a stain.

(There is no) Return to Dry Land

Soon after the SeaChange voyage arrived in Manhattan we were invited to partake in an Indigenous water ceremony of thanks and welcoming

before the People's Climate March. A hundred of us stood next to the shimmering *muh-he-kun-ne-tuk*, the-river-that-flows-both ways, with natives and non-natives, *hermano mayor* and *hermano menor*, from across Turtle Island. From Alberta to Ecuador, we gathered on a pier asking permission to come onto traditional native lands, we brought gifts, and water. Each group brought water from the land where they live; the water inside the glass and plastic bottles threw refracted light onto the wooden pier. We were told that in the traditional ceremony all the waters would be poured together, drank, and then released into the river we stood upon. But "progress" had taken its toll, and much of the water was too toxic to drink and so was kept aside – the modern "progress" of an ancient ceremony.

All the water was soaked in song by an old woman in a woven dress who covered her eyes as the words rained from her, drenching the crowd in its purity. The unpolluted waters were poured together and passed through the crowd, we each sipped from the improbable mixture of so many ancient particles finding themselves suddenly together. The mixed waters were given to a young man who received the waters from her hands and poured them into the mighty Hudson. The waters fell into the two-way-river, weaving themselves together in the river we journeyed upon just days before. The waters swirled off the rocks and piers of lower Manhattan as they swam their way past the harbour and into the single salt ocean. By now, these waters may once again be sky.

SEA CHANGE PORTS OF CALL

August 30 –
September 14, 2014

160 Miles in Human Powered
Vessels in 2 Weeks
A Climate Justice Flotilla

A fleet of full-scale paper boats is going afloat on the Hudson River, charting a course from upstate New York to New York City in a convergence of art and activism to coincide with the meeting of world leaders at the United Nations Climate Summit.



NEWBURGH-BEACON
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
« 7:30PM »

Potlatch, Performances and Presentation on Crude Oil Plans in Newburgh



NEW YORK CITY
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
« 7:30PM »

Landing Party!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
« 2:00PM »

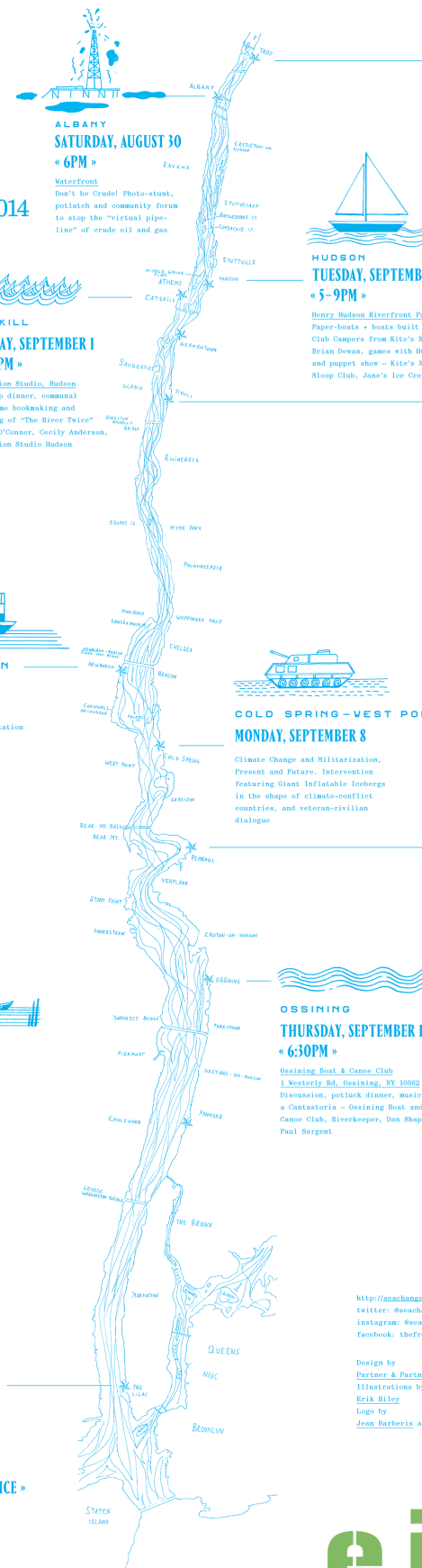
Circumnavigation of Isle of Manhattan – SeaChange Crew, NYC Boat Clubs

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 18, 19

The Floating Library at the Lilla – Sleazebag Preservation Project Pier 25, Hudson River Park, Manhattan Screenings, sharing, a landing ritual, and roundtables on art and climate change at the Floating Library – Hosted by Beatrice Glow and the Lilla

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
« BOAT BLOC FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE »

– SeaChange Crew, Boat Activists, Sailors, Artists, NYC Boat Clubs



ALBANY
SATURDAY, AUGUST 30
« 6PM »
Waterfront Don't be Crude! Photo-stunt, potlatch and community forum to stop the "virtual pipeline" of crude oil and gas

CATSKILL
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1
« 7-10PM »

Publication Studio, Hudson Fish soup dinner, communal dinner-time bookmaking and screening of "The River Twice" – Meryl O'Connor, Cecily Anderson, Publication Studio Hudson



HUDSON
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
« 5-9PM »

Honry Hudson Riverfront Park Paper-boats • boats built by Sloop Club Campers from Kite's Nest, music by Brian Dewan, games with Hudson Praxis, and puppet show – Kite's Nest, Hudson Sloop Club, Jane's Ice Cream

TROY
SATURDAY, AUGUST 30
« 9:30AM »

Launch Party followed by a procession to the city marina – Riverfront Park by the Farmer's Market

TIVOLI-BARD
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
« 5-9PM » & FRIDAY,
SEPTEMBER 5 « 11 AM »

Tivoli Banners and Signs Workshop: "Activism: Visual Activism and the People's Climate March" Workshop with Bard Students – Environmental and Urban Studies (EES)



COLD SPRING-VEST POINT
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

Climate Change and Militarization, Present and Future. Intervention featuring Giant Infallible Iceberg in the shape of climate-conflict countries, and veteran-civilian dialogue



PEEKSKILL-INDIAN POINT
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

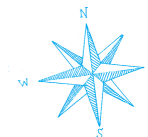
Why Nukes Are Not the Answer: Discussion and potluck meal – Riverkeeper, IPSDC, NIRS, Sloths Against Nuclear State, Yoko Tomohira

OSSINING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11
« 6:30PM »

Ossining Boat & Canoe Club 1 Westery Blvd, Ossining, NY 10562 Discussion, potluck dinner, music and a Cantastoria – Ossining Boat and Canoe Club, Riverkeeper, Dan Shapley, Paul Sargent

<http://seachange2014.tumblr.com>
twitter: @seachange2014
instagram: @seachange2014
facebook: theFreezees

Design by
Partner & Partners
Illustrations by
Erik Riley
Logo by
Joan Barberis and Cecily Anderson



All rivers flow to the same singular ocean, what we do to the water, we do to ourselves.

If you pay close attention on a tidal river, there are moments when you can feel the sea change beneath you. A split second when the river hovers, unmoving, neither ebbing nor flowing. Your boat lingers in a moment, but only for a moment. By the next time your paddle hits the water everything is in motion again, slowly at first, but surely. We are all in this pivotal moment as a global community. Whether we decide to push on against the current that is flowing increasingly against us, or we change course and let the wise currents pull us easily into a future that wants to be. We know this world is changing – chemically, politically, economically, socially, and physically – how we react to those changes is the only thing we still control.

Oil and Water Don't Mix

After the welcoming ceremony was over, a glass bottle full of water from the fracked lands of North Dakota remained. It shattered light like prisms onto the wooden pier; no one knew what to do with this water – there was no protocol in place for pollution. Oil and water do not mix, the water is invaded, violated by the oil, conquered, infected, and envenomed. A single drop of oil may render up to 25 litres of fresh water undrinkable. Pollution is inherently imperialist, a non-consensual invasion of a fluid commons. A single fracking well may produce up to a million gallons of highly contaminated water.⁵

The SeaChange Voyage was conceived to engage with this conceptual understanding of the defence of the expanded Commons. The medium was the message: the boats floated upon the very commons they protected, their free movement mirroring the endlessly moving waters they travelled. Water was chosen as the most tangible and accessible means to embody the fluidity of the social and ecological commons

based on shared access. One does not pollute *their* water, but *our* water, and *all* water. All rivers flow to the same singular ocean, what we do to the water, we do to ourselves. The toxic cocktail of chemicals used in fracking are not merely injected into the ground, but injected into a complex closed-loop cycle, that circulates and nurtures the entire planet, infinitely like the blood pumping through our arteries. The threats that fracking poses to infecting subterranean aquifers holds increasing importance as the impacts of climate change begins to take a stronger hold on our planetary systems. Additionally, each wave of the oncoming crises, each drought and flood, will re-raise the question of access and governance of this most basic resource. Whether we respond with increased enclosures or increased commoning depends upon how successfully we have asserted both our right to access and the necessity of protection embedded in and understanding of relational interdependence.

Three days later the streets of Manhattan were filled with 400,000 people marching against climate change. People trickled into the canyons of Manhattan

⁵ Clean Water Action: (<http://www.cleanwateraction.org/page/fracking>) [Last access: Month day, 2015]



to form a river of bodies, flowing, chanting, and believing. Birds and butterfly kites on strings danced above migrant and undocumented workers, housing justice organisers held photos of their communities that had been devastated by Superstorm Sandy, union workers cheered from a float with solar panels, domestic workers from the Philippines tired of cleaning up others' messes walked with a giant inflatable mop, scientists marched with a large blackboard explaining "the science is clear". Inside the People's Climate March an unprecedented diversity of issues found a place under the wide umbrella provided by the frame of the climate crisis. From across the nation, and the world, people were pulled together by the gravity of hope.

The day after the People's Climate March, 3,000 people returned to the streets dressed in blue to #FloodWallStreet, where 100 people were arrested in direct action to prevent the economic causes of climate change. The frame "FloodWallStreet" was conceived specifically to make connections between the impacts of climate change (Hurricane Sandy and

rising sea-levels), the financial causes of the climate crisis (Wall Street), and the collectivism of our resistance (hacking the "OccupyWallstreet" meme). The framing of an unpermitted action that linked the cause and effect with the resistance contained an understanding of climate change as a symptom of a politics of dissociation. Instead of gathering outside the United Nations where world leaders were meeting, the organisers shifted the frame to visibilise the corruption of the process by corporate interests rather than making demands of the process itself. By collectively articulating, and organising around, our common stake and responsibility, the focal issue became the processes by which decisions are being made, rather than simply the decisions themselves.

Within a framing of "the commons denominator", even the state violence in response to life-affirming disruptions of destruction may also be articulated as an enclosure of the commons. State repression of protests, evictions of public encampments, censoring, police brutality, and intimidation may be framed as

A drop of oil falls to the ground during a rainstorm. It hits the wet pavement, infecting the water around it with colour. The colours swirl into the gutter and drop "away".

incursions into the democratic commons. Ten of those arrested during FloodWallStreet brought a “necessity defence” to court, claiming their illegal actions were necessary because of the urgency of the situation. While Judge Robert Mandelbaum acknowledged that climate change causes “generalised and continuing harm,” he acquitted the defendants instead on the grounds of the 1st amendment based on the right to carry their message directly to its intended recipients.⁶ As the Anthropocene – the current epoch of unprecedented anthropogenic planetary change – expands the understanding of a universalised “global front line”, our energies to support imprisoned comrades and fight legal battles in the frame of the democratic commons, can shine the light on abuse of power that further reinforces this cohesive argument. Instead of viewing these actions as dividing movement energies towards defensive legal battles, but rather to see it as an offensive resistance.

Water Struggles Rising

The “progress” of neoliberalism has shrunk our world. Globalisation of governance imposed by the World Bank, NAFTA, WTO, more recently emissions trading schemes and now the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have expanded the enclosure of the commons to an unprecedented scale. We have been backed into a corner of neoliberalism’s global enclosure.

In the early months of 2000, the streets of Bolivia were flooded with people committed to protect their rights

to water. Conditions on a World Bank loan required the privatisation of Cochabamba’s water utilities, causing huge rate hikes. The agreement that gave Bechtel, an American Engineering company, the right to wells and even rainwater collection was in danger of falling into foreign private hands. The people resisted the violence provoked by the state and successfully expelled Bechtel. Bolivia’s water struggles are examples of victories for self-governance of water, in addition, the process opened political space for further victories around the commons.

Framing environmental struggles as commons is and has been occurring in many parts of the world. Notably, communities resisting mining in Peru and across Latin America are rejecting the failed promises of prosperity and are reframing their actions as struggles to pro-water under slogans such as “*Agua es Vida*” (Water is life) or “*El agua vale mas que oro*” (Water is worth more than gold). In December 2014, during the UNFCCC COP 20 in Lima, Peru, the city centre was plastered not with posters about “climate change” but with handmade posters of a woman with her fist in the air declaring: “We are a river, not just drops,” the graffiti scrawled across the city walls declaring: “*Agua Sí, Oro No!*” (Water yes, Gold no!), “*Agua es vida*” (Water is life), “*Baua Resiste!*” (Resiste Baua), “*El agua no se vende*” (Water is not for sale). The “*Marcha del Agua*” (March of Water) in 2012 brought communities in unified resistance together, marching across the country, struggling for local and common rights. By articulating “We are a river, not just drops” the movement identified with the medium it was protecting,

⁶ Nathanson, Rebecca.
“Climate Change Activists
Consider Necessity Defense.”
The New Yorker. April 11, 2015

acknowledging the fundamental relationship between the two and emphasising the social construction of society. Furthermore, by stating “Water Yes, Gold No!” the movements embedded inside an anti-capitalist critique with a deft articulation of the protection of nature, and further, the dependence upon this protection.

Various movements across Latin America (recently adopted by anti-fracking movements in the UK) are calling themselves “defenders” or “protectors” of water, rather than “activists” or “protesters”. While in some places, the “anti-globalisation” movement accepted the dominant framing imposed upon them as “alternative”, many current movements are beginning to assert authority by articulating their actions as defensive acts of collective caring. In this context, the protection of water is expressed as protecting life in nature, including our own lives. It is thus the incursions into this defined commons that becomes the “anti”: anti-democratic, anti-people, anti-water and anti-life; rather than allowing resistance to be the adversarial actor and framed as “anti” (anti-fracking, anti-pollution, etc.). In this way, movements shift from an adversarial framing that pits them against an “enemy” (“anti-fracking”, “anti-airport”, “Stop Chevron”, etc.). Such dichotomous relationships only reinforce the legitimacy of their position – for to hear two sides of a story makes it seem like there is an even debate. However, if instead of such contrarian framing we adopt an expansive framing around common struggles, our goal changes. This widening frame allows movements to broaden the spectrum of participation and consequently re-structures the debate from *what*

issues are at stake and *what* decisions are being made to *how* these decisions are being made, and *who* is making these decisions.

A commons discourse allows the climate justice movement to frame resistance from a place of compassion; we are angry not at the banker’s passionate greed but rather at his apathy – that one feels so disconnected they can nonchalantly condemn an entire river ecosystem to potential toxic torture. As water, and thus life, is articulated as a collective right, the polluters must confront this discourse by ever more forcefully proclaiming their own rights to *all* water. As seen in Bolivia, neoliberalism seeks an extreme enclosure of the commons so complete that it attempts to reach out and claim even raindrops as they fall to the ground. By asserting the rights to water, rather than just their resistance to privatisation, ecological defence framed around the language of the commons allows movements to embed proposals for alternative systems into their opposition.

Inspired by a common discourse

The SeaChange Journey was able to unite a diversity of struggles under its slogan “We All Live Downstream.” The project chose a specific issue (transportation of fracked crude oil) as a focus, but chose to organise around the wider frame of commons. This combination of localised struggle in a frame of “the commons denominator” functioned because “[commons and community]... are not elements of a fixed ideology, a dogma that we have to

subscribe to. They provide both an intellectual and political horizon that we can enrich through our practice and thinking in the context of concrete struggles.”⁷ Whereas an overtly “anti-fracking” frame may have fallen victim to NIMBYism, which would have focused on the protection of a particular river from a single threat, however, the wider framing around water as a public commons held an intrinsic critique of “Not Here, Not Anywhere.”

Inside this wide frame, the journey brought together a diversity of struggles that took part in organising feasts and gatherings: from local groups advocating for the improvement of local wastewater treatment plants, to groups resisting new electrical infrastructure construction, from communities preparing for sea-level rise on a tidal river, to environmentalists protecting endangered species. Along the SeaChange Voyage still further intersectionalities were found between communities fighting racialised environmental injustice in Albany, with the dangerous symptoms of austerity and neglect in the decaying rail infrastructure, and the lack of disaster response teams, with centenarian and community-based boating associations at risk of losing their boathouses to luxury hotels, and with fisherfolk who cannot eat their catch. Thousands from this diverse myriad of interests found a place inside “the commons denominator”, expanding the scope of access by expanding the articulation of interdependence. The diversity of the struggles involved expanded the understanding of localised water struggles as intrinsic parts of a global issue and helped each participating party to view their own issue as part of a wider struggle.

As we acclimatise to life in the Anthropocene we can see the scale of the symptoms of an imperialist world view all around us, indeed we can no longer see anything else – the very air *through* which we see is itself changed. Facing this common and global symptom, we are faced with the need to heal the root causes of the climate crisis that stretch back further than even the coal fires of the industrial revolution and the enclosure of the commons that preceded it, and are embedded in a worldview of disassociation.⁸ Inside this global frame, we can increasingly structure resistance around the root causes the climate crisis. In this process we pivot from a “movement” to a “movement of movements” – articulating and reinforcing a global social commons through our very resistance. The globally-localised and common crisis of climate change has the potential to allow all of us to understand even the structure of our resistance as an articulation of the commons we have lost, and thus our organising, even if delocalised, is itself a solution to rebuilding the social networks associated with collective space. By focusing on the social structure of the commons we expand the traditional place-based commons discourse to be instead focused on the inter-relationality of social relations (human, non-human, and resources) connected *to* space. When this understanding is placed inside the frame of the climate crisis, the shared commons becomes global and humans as internal constituents, rather than external actors.

The SeaChange flotilla and its organisation around water-as-commons advocated for the use of “the commons denominator” as an expansive organising

7 Merchant, Caroline. (1990). *Death of Nature. Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCol

8 Lingbaugh, Peter and Rediker, Marcus. *The Many Headed Hydra*. Beacon Press, Boston. 2000

frame for social movements in the Anthropocene. The scale of the climate crisis provides a narrative frame that is all-inclusive, for indeed, all of our world rests inside this same thin atmosphere. By articulating this expansive frame around its relational inter-dependence “the commons denominator” has the ability to frame the processes that allow for, and physically defend, pollution as incursions into the democratic commons while demonstrate how the act of polluting is a non-consensual incursion, generated by a dissociation and disconnect into a public domain. Furthermore, social organisation around such frames functions to reinforce the social commons, and allows resistance to function as a solution through the diverse community

it creates. Thus, such a frame embodies an alternative proposition *inside and intrinsic* to a discourse of resistance. Just as the medium upon which the fragile boats of the SeaChange flotilla travelled was itself the message, so the social struggles, organising, and resistance may themselves become the container to grow inter-relational commons.

Each day upon the SeaChange Journey the voyagers wrote a new stanza of a song that documented the travels and relationships, the song grew longer each day. The song helped us to paddle in unison and hold true to the course, and for the joy of being in small and fragile paper vessels in a rough and changing world, on an uncertain river in uncertain times.

*“All waters are
connected
Our struggles
are one
and the same.
We rise faster
than oceans,
For these
are epic days.”*

The author would like to acknowledge the great importance of Katharine Ainger, Amaranta Herrero, Selcuk Balamir and Leah Temper in the devoted editing of this text, and to the Mare Liberum Collective for opening our eyes to the anarchy of waters.

Labour and climate change: towards an emancipatory ecological class consciousness¹

Stefania Barca is a senior researcher at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, where she coordinates the Ecology and Society Lab (Oficina de Ecologia e Sociedade). Her current research interests focus on the environmental history of work and labour from a feminist perspective.

As feminist political economy has reminded us, not all work is controlled by capital and the market.

To fight climate change “we need everyone”, the New York City People’s Climate March claimed, but perhaps who we need most are the workers. We need workers and their organisations, and the labour movement to be on the side of climate movements. This may sound surprising and perhaps obsolete to some because we are so used to thinking that labour does not matter. Three decades of neoliberal policies, of TINA (There Is No Alternative) discourses, and of undeniable crises in the labour movement have convinced us that labour does not really matter in politics, nor in social science, and that other subjects, other identities, other movements, need our attention.

This tendency came as a reaction to earlier obsessions with the ‘working class’, sometimes understood in rather schematic and dogmatic ways, which obscured as much as they revealed. It is time now to get back to labour, not as a pre-determined social and political identity to turn into our privileged subject, but as a fundamentally new, multiple, diversified and fluid reality. Labour organisations have been violently and thoroughly shaken by capitalist globalisation in the last three decades, and their previous political

strength – where this existed – has been successfully destroyed through class war. In fact, while we were being convinced that class struggle did not matter anymore, capital continued to fight it and won.

So why should we, political ecologists, care about labour? First, because work is the fundamental interface between society and nature. All kinds of work: productive, reproductive, service, care, intellectual and immaterial work, preside over and regulate social metabolism – the exchange of materials and energy that sustains human life. Labour is not in command of this process, however, for capital is in charge in what eco-Marxists call the second contradiction of capitalism: the relationship between capital and nature. As a result, workers are often forced to endure various kinds of unsustainable, unhealthy and ecologically destructive work, in order to obtain a wage that allows them to survive in the market economy. This second contradiction takes place in workers’ bodies, and in their working and living environments.²

But two other major factors need to be taken into account.

¹ This text is taken from a talk given on January 22, 2015 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona at the public event, “How research enters social movements,” organised by ENT Environment and Management and the European Network of Political Ecology ‘Entitle’.

² Barca, Stefania. “On Working-Class Environmentalism. A Historical and Transnational Overview.” *Interface. A Journal for and about Social Movements*, 4.2 (2012): 61-80.



As **feminist political economy** has reminded us, not all work is controlled by capital and the market. In fact, this may be only the tip of the iceberg, made up largely of non-alienated work done outside the capitalist wage-labour system including: social service sectors, household work, community or kinship, co-operatives, charity establishments, through bartering or alternative currency, and small-scale or subsistence agriculture.³

This is a promising starting point for an **ecological revolution**, i.e. a revolution in the way production, reproduction and consciousness interact with each other, as theorized by many ecofeminist and agroecology scholars and activists, who consider food autonomy as the **revolution's point zero**.⁴ Therefore, if ecology can become a platform for a new (international) labour agenda, and if labour can become a leading subject of climate mobilisation, then reverting primitive accumulation would be a good place to start. Primitive accumulation has historically led to the separation of workers from the land and the overexploitation of both. A new kind of society might be built on forms of non-alienated work that sustains and enhances

life in all its forms, thus beginning with claiming new possibilities and new identities for workers with the aim of subverting the second contradiction of capitalism. The aim is to end unsustainable and ecologically destructive work and embrace new forms of social metabolism.

It is here that the second substantial factor can enter the debate, as disturbing as it may be, whereby the socialist experiment in Eastern Europe, China, and other contexts, left a legacy of environmental destruction and injustice. The reasons for this failure lay in the fact that “existing socialism” has been mostly based on forced industrialisation, internal and external colonisation and high-modernist environmental schemes and technologies competing in “creative destruction”, with those employed in capitalist regimes.

Therefore, it is not enough to replace capitalism and reduce social inequalities, because there is a need to abolish masculinist economic models, productivism, extractivism, GDP growth, war, racism, imperialism, colonialism and all that produces violence against people and their environments. The next step would

The aim is to end unsustainable and ecologically destructive work and embrace new forms of social metabolism.

3 Gibson-Graham, Julie-Katherine. **A Postcapitalist Politics**. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2006.

4 Merchant, Carolyn. “The theoretical structure of ecological revolutions.” *Environmental Review*, 11. 4 (1987): 265-74.

A larger, emancipatory process of cultural change is needed that allows new solidarities and alliances to form in order to re-claim the forgotten subject of labour outside domination/exploitation.

be to replace them with a completely new system of production and reproduction, one based not only on equality but on respect for life in all its forms. There is no shortcut through the current system.

In order to build a new system, historical materialism states, there is a need for an organised and conscious working-class, to take the lead. But the point I want to make here is that, for the working class to become the political subject of a new system of ecological relationships, a new consciousness must come about: an ecological class-consciousness, based on a renewed, multiple process of subjectivation, capable of turning the working-class into the leading historical subject for an emancipatory, and non-oppressive, green revolution.

In order to become the subject of this ecological revolution to come, labour organisations would need to profoundly transform themselves in a way that puts ecology centre stage in their political visions and strategies. The question remains whether this shift in labour politics is possible in our world as it is now.

The next question becomes, what kind of research is needed in order to help labour movements become this new political subject? What kind of researcher one should become in order to help usher in this new reality? This would need to be a transformative and self-transformative research project. Because it is not only the labour movements that need transformation, and in fact labour does not and cannot transform itself in a social vacuum. A larger, emancipatory process of cultural change is needed that allows new solidarities

and alliances to form in order to re-claim the forgotten subject of labour outside domination/exploitation. Something of the kind that the movie *Pride* recalls: a story in which gay and lesbian activists from London link their struggle for recognition to that of the coal miners of South Wales. The story highlights the effectiveness of bypassing many cultural and communication barriers and prejudices, thus demonstrating that new kinds of politics are always possible to build, especially when people and organisations are not stuck in the infinite reiteration of 'identity'. Further, the film exemplifies transformative politics that challenge identities, and carries a stronger capacity for liberation and revolution.

After decades of neoliberal politics which have nearly defeated labour on all possible fronts, there is a need to enhance workers' potential for self-transformation into new kinds of organisations with new kinds of visions and strategies. Since we cannot build a revolution without some kind of organisation and strategy, then we should strive to forge the ones that are best suited for the fight.

Fighting climate change is a challenge where the labour movements should be on the front line because workers are already at the front line on the war against capitalism and climate change. In addition to labour movements, Indigenous Peoples, small farming communities, the unemployed, and women of all groups are at the forefront of this front line. Therefore in organising to defend themselves, they defend humanity from ecological ruin. These types of struggles require a

⁵ Bergthaller, Hannes *et al.*, "Environmental Humanities" 5 (2014): 261-276.

profound transformation of labour's traditional visions and mottos, and of those from the Left in general.

How can research be of any use to this transformation?

Telling a different story

As scholars in the **Environmental Humanities** tell us, "Human beings cannot but act on the basis of collective memories, present convictions, and anticipated futures."⁵ Therefore, there is a need to build an alternative, emancipatory, collective memory from the work/environment relationship; one that goes beyond a common-sense labour/environment conflict. This is where history can play its role by helping to unearth metaphorical 'axes of war', i.e. memories of how the labour movement has been able, throughout history, to fight against the second contradiction and renegotiate the class conflict not only in terms of wages but also in terms of re-distribution of ecological costs – at the shop-floor level as well as at the level of public health and environmental regulation benefitting society at large. The task of the researcher is to recover this history of alliances between **workers and environmentalists**, rescuing personal and collective experiences from the obliteration produced by mainstream accounts of history, and unleashing powerful counter-narratives and liberation strategies. In other words, engaged research can help to decolonise historical knowledge from neoliberal visions of 'end of history' and TINA, where occupational blackmail is a very central argument.



Offering instruments for building new kinds of organisations

In the past two decades, activist research in communication, information and communication technology and social networking has played a crucial role in transforming ways and possibilities of organising, through the **Peer 2 Peer movement** and **Social Network Unionism** in general. These resources do not create a direct bargaining power, but enhance strategic visions and campaigning power; virtual unionism cannot replace local or national unionism, but can help it in self-transformation and building strength.

There is a need to build an alternative, emancipatory, collective memory from the work/environment relationship; one that goes beyond a common-sense labour/environment conflict.



The only thing that political ecologists need to avoid is looking away and ignoring labour, either because they think it is not relevant, or because they feel impotent to face its many weaknesses and limitations.

New forms of labour organising and networking in research/activism also include open-access publications, such as the journal **Interface** or for example, the magazine **Roar**. These new instruments have been helping to transform labour movements in the direction towards incorporat-

ing ecological issues, and especially in forging new alliances. Further, they have been crucial in creating the preconditions for a convergence between climate and labour politics. Some examples include the **Blue-Green Alliance** in North America, and the **One Million Climate Jobs Campaign** in South Africa. These new coalitions have been producing visible results, testified by the massive presence of trade-union organisations at the People's Climate March in NYC, for example, and by the incorporation of climate change issues within the agenda of the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) and of the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO).

Naturally, this is a complex, non-linear process of internal transformation, made up of different and sometimes contrasting components, which often encounters resistance from within. This is where political ecology research could enter the labour movement, as a perspective and an approach to understanding conflicts and struggles originated by ecological contradictions. Notably, these contradictions often enter the labour movement and divide it along various lines including: the local/national/global divide, the gender

divide, the North/South divide, the specialised/unskilled labour divide, the urban/rural divide, along with several types of ideological and identity divides.

Fighting climate change thus means different things to different trade unions. For the ITUC and ILO, it has meant adopting a "green jobs" strategy based on an Environmental Economics approach and advocating green growth. For anti-system-based unions such as the Spanish **Solidaridad Obrera**, it means a much more radical "green revolution" agenda, advocating for reduced working hours, re-commoning public services, reducing unnecessary material and energy consumption, re-localising production, democratic control of the economy, decentralised energy systems, and the union's participation in anti-fracking and similar mobilisations at the grassroots local level.

Political Ecology research must engage with these internal contradictions of labour/climate politics, and try to make sense of them by opening the black box of the "labour" subject. Some ways to do this start with understanding differences and shifting identities, criticising bureaucratic leaderships, taking a stance with certain specific visions and struggles within the movement, in order to usher in the desired transformations. There is a lot of new work to be done here, as well as new methods and tools with which to experiment and invent. The only thing that political ecologists need to avoid is looking away and ignoring labour, either because they think it is not relevant, or because they feel impotent to face its many weaknesses and limitations, and thus *de facto* reinforce the idea that there is no alternative to its current state of demise.

Energy sovereignty: politicising an energy transition¹

Pere Ariza-Montobbio was trained in Environmental Sciences between universities and environmental organizations in Catalonia (ICTA-UAB, ODG) and India (Atree, IFP) and holds a MSc and a PhD in Ecological Economics and Political Ecology. He lives in Ecuador, and works on agroecology, permaculture and energy sovereignty and is associated lecturer in FLACSO-Ecuador on the Socio-Environmental Studies Master's program.

Facing an unsustainable and undemocratic energy system, many voices are advocating an energy transition towards renewable energy, energy efficiency and absolute energy savings. Calls for an energy transition can be heard in diverse phrases such as "Climate Justice", "Keep the oil in the soil" or "100% renewable energy now". "Energy sovereignty" has appeared as a concept from which to stand, act and think about an energy transition.

What is energy sovereignty?

Energy sovereignty can be considered as the *ability* of a political community to have the authority to control, regulate and manage their own energy. Energy sovereignty can also be seen as the *right* of conscious individuals, communities and peoples to make their own decisions on energy generation, distribution and consumption in a way that is appropriate within their ecological, social, economic and cultural circumstances, provided that these do not affect others negatively (based on the definition from the Catalan Network for

Energy Sovereignty (XSE in Catalan), inspired by the La Via Campesina definition of Food Sovereignty).

Among the different uses of energy sovereignty a unified view aims to politicise the various political and institutional aspects of energy systems. Similar to the case of food, "energy sovereignty" is in contrast to "energy security" which is focused on guaranteeing abundant energy for running an economy regardless where the energy comes from and who is in control.

However, among the promoters of "energy sovereignty" there are different understandings around the significance of the words "energy" and "sovereignty", and by whom and for what purpose they should be used or exercised. Some key differences include viewing energy as a strategic resource or a commodity, compared to energy as a fundamental right, a common good or a basic flow for life. Similarly, there are differences in focusing the question on the energy mix as the structure of a primary commercial energy source compared to viewing an energy system as a complex whole between social, political, economic and ecological relationships. Further, there

¹ The reflections presented here are particularly inspired by debates, interviews and document analyses within and along the development of the "Energy, territory and energy sovereignty" research project in FLACSO-Ecuador. I especially thank professors, lecturers, students and all persons who participated in the workshop and seminar held in FLACSO Ecuador, Quito, 2nd and 3rd March 2015. Particularly to Tatiana Roa, Pablo Bertinat, Gerardo Honty, Eduardo Gudynas, Tadzio Muëller, Francisco Venes, Arturo Villavicencio, Teodoro Bustamante, Decio Machado, Gabriela Albuja, Patricia Gonzalez, Paul Lorca, Carolina Sinchiguano, Miriam Lang and Alberto Acosta.

2 We take this expression from the work of The Corner House, an organization that aims to support informed discussion and critical thinking on critical environmental social concerns, in their research on Energy security and Energy Alternatives generating useful information for democratic and community movements. "Energy security: For Whom? For What?", "Energy, Work and Finance", "Energy Alternatives. Surveying the territory" and "Energy as enclosure" are interesting and insightful reports. See here: <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/resources/results/ENERGY>

3 In 2010, 50% of all renewable energy facilities in Germany were owned by citizens (Wirth, Harry. "Recent Facts about Photovoltaics in Germany". Fraunhofer ISE (2015). Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/k9uyy4y>). 74 regions have already achieved the goal of 100% renewable energy. See: <http://www.100-ee.de/> and <http://www.100-res-communities.eu/>. Hamburg is an example of successful remunicipalization of electrical grids (Fei, Charleen and Ian Rinehart. "Taking back the grid: Municipalization Efforts in Hamburg, Germany and Boulder, Colorado". Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Washington DC (2014). Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/o85lnr6>). After Fukushima's accident in 2011, the German Government took the decision to entirely shut down 17 nuclear power plants by 2022. Currently, eight have been permanently shut down and nine are still active. Although the feed-in tariff and the preferential buying combined with social mobilization has allowed a renewable boom, it is important to highlight that the sustainability and environmental justice of PV solar manufacturing has the limitation of being "subsidized" by cheap energy and labor costs in China, where much of the PV manufacturing has moved.

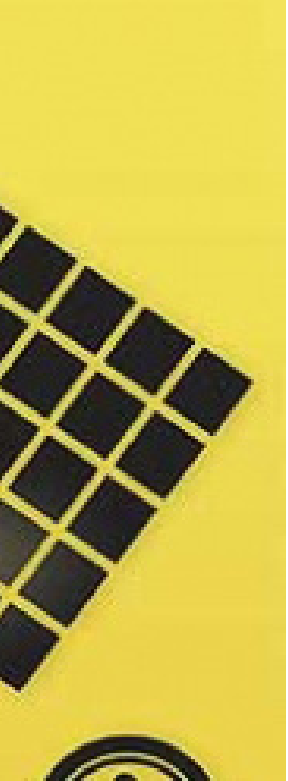


is a difference between Energy with a capital "E" as the abstract massive and uniform commercial generation of energy, as a function of capital accumulation, and looking at incommensurable and contextually diverse uses of energy, with a small "e".²

Around the various concepts of "sovereignty", there are also different approaches regarding participation and articulation between actors and scales. This discussion relates to fundamental political questions on the subjects of holds authority and the legitimacy of institutional agreements. In this way, there are contrasting views, such as the "energy sovereignty" understandings of progressive Latin American governments that interpret sovereignty to be in the hands of the state, or more concretely, the government. This view assumes that current nation-state structures and the associated liberal democracies are capable enough to make sound and fair decisions

about complex socio-environmental problems in multicultural societies, such as the provision and consumption of energy. In this view, the state structures sufficiently represent the will of society at large. This view tends to assume, as well, that a definition of energy as a "strategic resource" for development at a national level is agreed on by all plurinational communities in those countries.

Social movements, organisations, and governments have used the concept with different intentions, and contexts. For example, "*Energiesouveränität*" is one of the mottos of the "*Energiewende*" (energy transition) in Germany. A combination of a renewable energy law and historical social mobilisation around the anti-nuclear movement, and 100% renewable energy regions and communities have built a popular citizen-owned, renewable energy generation, energy municipalisation, with plans to abandon nuclear power.³



In Spain, the Platform for a New Energy Model, the Catalan Network for Energy Sovereignty and the Proposals for Energy Sovereignty in Navarra and Euskal Herria, are calling for energy democratization, campaigning against the utility oligopoly and energy poverty.⁴ *Som Energia*, as the first renewable energy cooperative in Catalonia and Spain, is promoting direct citizen participation in energy generation, distribution and consumption.⁵

Latin American countries have included “energy sovereignty” in their constitutions, laws and policies. Ecuador’s constitution refers several times to “energy sovereignty”, stating that it should be assured through economic and commercial policy (art 284, 304) guaranteeing the equitable distribution of resources (art. 334) and not at the expense of food sovereignty or the right to water (art. 15). These constitutional guarantees have been translated into national planning

objectives for *Buen Vivir*, including changing the country’s productive structure and the energy mix through hydroelectric projects, or building and improving its oil refineries. All with the aim to increase self-sufficiency in the energy supply.

Bolivia has included energy sovereignty in its constitution, in article 360, chapter III dedicated to hydrocarbons, focusing energy sovereignty in oil and gas nationalisation. Similarly, the government of Venezuela has understood energy sovereignty as the public property and control over fossil fuels, as part of the main principles of economic sovereignty of its constitution (articles 299 and 303, among others). Argentina has also argued for energy sovereignty when recovering public control over fossil fuel companies. Countries with few or no fossil fuel reserves, such as Uruguay give meaning to energy sovereignty by promoting a rapid growth in renewable energy supply.⁶

4 See these websites: <http://www.nuevomodeloenergetico.org/>, <http://xse.cat/>, <http://tinyurl.com/nxqwxdg> and <http://tinyurl.com/lnnaavo>

5 See the website: <https://www.somenergia.coop/es/>

6 Since 2010, Uruguay has received the largest investment in renewable energies in Latin America, US\$7 billion, 3% of its gross domestic product, a figure five times the average of the region. More than 80% of its electricity is generated today with renewables and the government is planning to reach 50% of renewables in the whole primary energy mix by 2016, through the promotion of public-private partnerships with private enterprises (many from Spain) without subsidies and with the aim to reduce the cost of energy. Wind energy is one of the most illustrative examples: from zero installed capacity in 2007, reaching 1300 MW in 2015.

7 Postnormal science situations arise when facts are uncertain, values are at stake, risks are high and decisions are urgent. In such a context an extended peer review community is needed to understand and assess the complex problems at stake and preserve science quality. Postnormal Science originated in the work of Silvio Funtowicz and Jerome Ravetz. The following reference is one of the first texts on the matter: Funtowicz, Silvio O. and Jerome R. Ravetz. "Science for the postnormal age" *Futures* 25.7 (1993): 739-755.

8 Progressive Latin American governments have issued plans and programs to transform the productive structure and their energy mixes with the aim to industrialize the countries with equity and wealth redistribution inspired by CEPAL's work in the 1990s. The evaluation of its success goes far beyond this short article.

9 Both the HidrolIntag proposal and the author of this article understand reforestation as a process of ecological restoration based on planting native species of different structural forest levels allowing ecological succession to establish a forest ecosystem, not a plantation.

Views on energy sovereignty from social movements, focus on decentralisation and direct citizen participation rather than delegate the management of energy infrastructure to the state. These movements aim to unveil the inequalities in access, decision-making, property and control. Thus, they connect the claim for an ecologically sustainable energy system with the claim for real democracy, understood as people's direct involvement on the generation, distribution and consumption of energy.

Similarly, questioning the control over energy opens the debate on the knowledge about energy use. Again there is a range of views, from technocratic central planning to the new approaches inspired by Postnormal science where energy discussions pass from a restricted technical, sectoral and specialist knowledge towards interdisciplinary and generalist knowledges.⁷ Instead of thinking that engineers should promote "energy literacy", the idea of an extended peer review community promotes the use of traditional and local knowledges to understand both energy accounting and needs, and their potential solutions.

In terms of uneven geographical development or unequal global exchange, there tends to be an agreement that energy sovereignty confronts neoliberal globalisation. Nevertheless, there are different consequences in prioritising nationalisation of extractive industries than to propose distributed energy generation to decentralise energy systems. Thus, the articulation between scales is another field of discussion. Social

movements tend to propose bottom-up strategies which try to reconcile scales and consider the diversity of distinct territories. Initiatives on energy sovereignty from governments are inclined to promote universal access to energy for all citizens regardless of the socio-ecological consequences of constructing large-scale infrastructure projects such as big dams, centralised grids and/or pipelines.

Energy sovereignty is conceived differently depending from which side of the global resource flow we are looking at. Energy sovereignty in the North is mainly proposed by social movements that are part of a wave of citizen concerns. They are movements against energy utilities making profit at the expense of energy poverty and the dismantling of renewable energy policies, as is the case in Spain. They are also part of a historical fight against nuclear energy. Energy sovereignty in the South originally rose out of strong grassroots movements in Latin America, but has largely been co-opted by governments with neostructuralist agendas.⁸

Although social movements continue to fight for a more grounded definition of energy sovereignty, governments are increasingly approaching it as a way to promote "energy security" ensuring national benefits. In this view, increasing royalties or renegotiating oil extraction contracts as service provisioning – as has been done for instance in Ecuador – contributes to energy sovereignty. Big dams built by Chinese companies with Chinese credits promote energy sovereignty if the dams are eventually owned by the

state. However, these policies are criticised by social movements for keeping and deepening extractivism and not overcoming rent-sharing development and increased external debt. For example, Intag communities in northwest Ecuador are confronting mega-mining activities and have proposed decentralised mini hydro-electric combined with agroecological projects, biodigestors and reforestation at the watershed level.⁹ Although not directly using energy sovereignty as a motto, this Hidro-Intag project holds a different view on energy policies than the one of the Ecuadorian government, and is part of the resistance to large scale copper mining.

There are diverse understandings of energy sovereignty in different dimensions and scales, so that facing such complexity and developing an integral perspective on energy sovereignty needs to confront several debates beyond a simplistic division between two paradigms: bottom-up and top-down. We know that climate justice requires simultaneous actions at different scales and by diverse actors. Radical changes in energy use require deep transformations in social institutions, reopening the debate about the role of the state and breaking the dichotomy of “public vs. private” in the commons. However, we should acknowledge the need for a broader political strategy that allows us to build new institutions that deeply embrace socio-ecological complexity instead of pragmatically resort to binary thinking and lineal and homogenised solutions as many public energy policies end up doing: reducing the problem to technology, efficiency and expert knowledge.



SOBERANÍA ENERGÉTICA

10 Even within the “status quo” and within a statist position, the articulation between internal (the effectiveness and fairness of national institutions) and external dimensions of sovereignty (international recognition, transboundary issues, and *Westfalian* external impositions) is not an easy task in the context of globalization (Lahoud, Gustavo O. “Una aproximación teórica a la Soberanía

Energética e Integración Regional Sudamericana”. CLICeT. Buenos Aires (2008)).

11 The maturation of agroecology, organic agriculture and permaculture principles is deriving in multiple biotechnologies available to design, implement and evaluate local and regional projects that regenerate and restore soil, water and plant communities and increase

socio-ecological resilience, solar energy harvest and carbon dioxide sequestration. Search for the work of Mark Shepard, Darren Doherty, Geoff Lawton, Sepp Holzer, Ben Falk, Eugenio Gras, Jairo Restrepo, Ignacio Simón, Sebastiao Pinheiro, Germán Vargas, Francisco Gangotena, Miguel Altieri y Clara Nichols.

12 A bioregional approach that conceives the management of energy at ecosystem scales, such as watersheds, can provide the basis for integrated management of resources and ecological processes. Healthy forests and agroforestry systems would regulate the water cycle providing the resource for mini-hydro and at the same time generate wood and biogas for cooking purposes. Such systems would function at local or regional level but their integration could provide space for researching about potential surplus and emergent properties. To try it, we will likely need, at least, both people's local government political control and a massive reclaiming of the enclosed common land.

13 We recall here The Corner House work: Hildyard, Nicholas, Larry Lohmann y Sarah Sexton. "Energy Security For What? For Whom?" The Corner House. February (2012) Disponible en: <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/sites/thecornerhouse.org.uk/files/Energy%20Security%20For%20Whom%20For%20What.pdf>

We need to acknowledge that within promoters of energy sovereignty either from social movements or from governments there are no pure and essential positions, and there are different views regarding the compatibility and (im)possible coexistence of bottom-up and top-down proposals. Distributed energy with smart grids can be used either for decentralisation or for building totalitarian and centralised control of citizens' energy use. So, there are different perspectives about the feasibility of transforming current institutions or the need for radical changes. Beyond the old "reform vs. revolution" debate, our challenges revolve around transitional strategies. *How are we going to make major change happen?*¹⁰ Beyond diversifying energy sources or increasing energy efficiency the problem lies on feasible (but not cooptable) strategies for a systemic change towards a new civilisation.

Socio-structural changes in the way that mobility, housing and food provisions are organised can generate important energy savings, larger than those achieved by improving and using new industrial technology-fixes. Bioarchitecture, agroecology, permaculture, restoration and regenerative agriculture

and microbotics are some examples of appropriate and appropriable technologies available to citizens.¹¹ These are technologies which challenge capitalist social relations and the ownership of the means of production. The use of these tools into a broader energy and land use planning framework can offer new opportunities which could play a bigger role in the future. Energy and food sovereignty should be part of an integral energy management (exosomatic and endosomatic) under decentralisation and municipalisation strategies. Simultaneous biodiversity conservation and food production (through agroforestry and silvo-pastoral systems) integrated to the provision of ecosystem services for renewable energies maintenance could provide a renewed paradigm in ecological urban and land use planning.¹²

Until now, discourse and concrete actions around energy sovereignty have been successfully based around opening space to bring energy out of the technical and bureaucratic realm towards the social, cultural and broadly understood political arena. The concept of energy sovereignty raises fundamental questions about the purpose and use of energy: Energy for whom? Energy for what?¹³

Desertec: the renewable energy grab?¹

Hamza Hamouchene is an Algerian campaigner, writer, researcher and a founding member of Algeria Solidarity Campaign (ASC), and Environmental Justice North Africa (EJNA), London-based organisations campaigning for peaceful democratic change in Algeria and for environmental and climate justice in North Africa respectively.

A plan to power Europe from Saharan solar projects seems to have stalled, but several large North African solar plans are still going ahead despite local concerns. Hamza Hamouchene asks, "Where did the Desertec project go wrong, and can desert solar power still play a role in a democratic and sustainable future?"

If you use social media, you may well have seen a graphic going around (see image below) showing a tiny square in the Sahara desert with the caption, "This much solar power in the Sahara would provide enough energy for the whole world!" Can this really be true? It is based on data from [a research thesis](#) written by Nadine May in 2005 for the Technical University of Braunschweig in Germany.

According to May, an area of 3.49 million km² is potentially available for concentrating solar power (CSP) plants in the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. She argues that an area of 254 km x 254 km (the biggest box in the figure) would be enough to meet the total electricity demands of the world. The amount of electricity

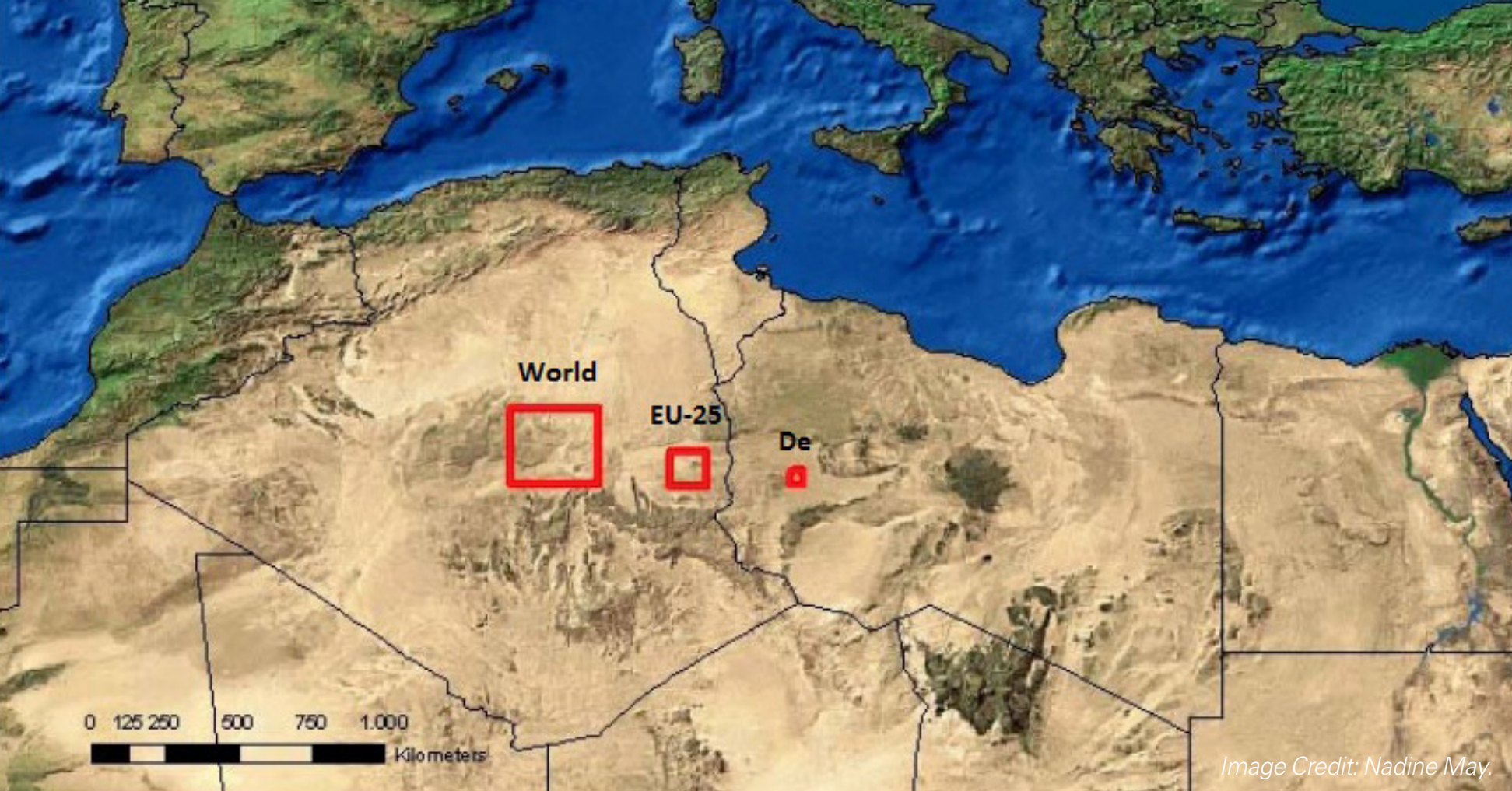
needed by the EU-25 states could be produced on an area of 110 km x 110 km (assuming the solar collectors could capture 100% of the energy). A more realistic estimation by the [Land Art Generator Initiative](#) assumed a 20% capture rate and put forward an area approximately eight times bigger than the May study for meeting the world's energy needs. Nevertheless, the map below is a good illustration of the solar power potential and how little space would be needed to power the entire planet.

This is not a new idea. Back in 1913, the [American engineer Frank Shuman](#) presented plans for the world's first solar thermal power station for Egypt's colonial elite, including the British consul-general Lord Kitchener. The power station would have pumped water from the Nile River to the adjacent fields where Egypt's lucrative cotton crop was grown, but the outbreak of the First World War abruptly ended this dream.

The idea was explored again in the 1980s by German particle physicist Gerhard Knies who was the first person to estimate how much solar energy was required to meet humanity's demand for electricity. In 1986, in

Given that Tunisia depends on Algeria for its energy needs and is experiencing increased power cuts, it is outrageous to proceed with exports rather than production for local use.

¹ This article was originally published in The New Internationalist: <http://newint.org/features/2015/03/01/desertec-long/>



a direct response to the Chernobyl nuclear accident, he arrived at the following **remarkable conclusion: in just six hours, the world's deserts receive more energy from the sun than humans consume in a year.** These ideas laid the groundwork for Desertec.

What is Desertec?

Desertec is intended to be a vast network of Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) in the Sahara Desert. Unlike decentralised solar panels on roofs powering individual homes, Desertec is on a far grander scale. It is envisaged as enormous CSP stretching over vast territories. Concentrated solar power will use

thousands of mirrors to focus a large area of sunlight on a steam engine. Networks of transmission cables will run northwards, where the electricity will power whole cities and countries. Millions of gallons of water are required to wash the desert dust from the panels and mirrors.

Championed by both the Desertec Foundation and Desertec Industrial Initiative – two different but related entities – the plans have grown and shrunk in recent years. The Industrial Initiative (Dii) promoted a €400 billion vision in which the Sahara CSP were linked to continental Europe through special high voltage, direct current transmission cables, promoting

20% of the EU's electricity supply. The Dii consortium was composed of multinational corporations like E.ON, Munich Re, Siemens and Deutsche Bank, as well as the Desertec Foundation – a network of politicians, business-people, academics and civil society members. But weak economics and opposition to the idea of exporting North African renewable energy to Europe has shrunk the mega-plans, and led to most members leaving the Industrial Initiative.

Currently, Desertec is still going ahead with plans in Tunisia, Morocco and **Algeria**. Desertec Foundation is backing **the Tunur project in Tunisia**, a joint venture between UK-based Nur Energy and a group of Maltese and Tunisian investors in the oil and gas sector. It explicitly describes itself as a solar power *export* project linking the Sahara desert to Europe. Given that Tunisia depends on Algeria for its energy needs and is **experiencing increased power cuts**, it is outrageous to proceed with exports rather than production for local use. Med Dhia Hammami, a Tunisian journalist investigating the energy sector, criticised the ongoing liberalisation of green energy production and transport in his country. This undermines public control by the state company Société Tunisienne d'Electricité et de Gaz, enabling direct export of electricity by private companies – deprioritising the national interest. He described the Tunisian state as submitting itself to private rather than public interests.

The Moroccan government succeeded in attracting funding for the two GW Ouarzazate CSP projects from European lenders (EU, European Investment Bank,

the French Development Agency and Germany's KfW), the Africa Development Bank and the World Bank. Just in September 2014, the latter approved a second loan of US\$519 million.

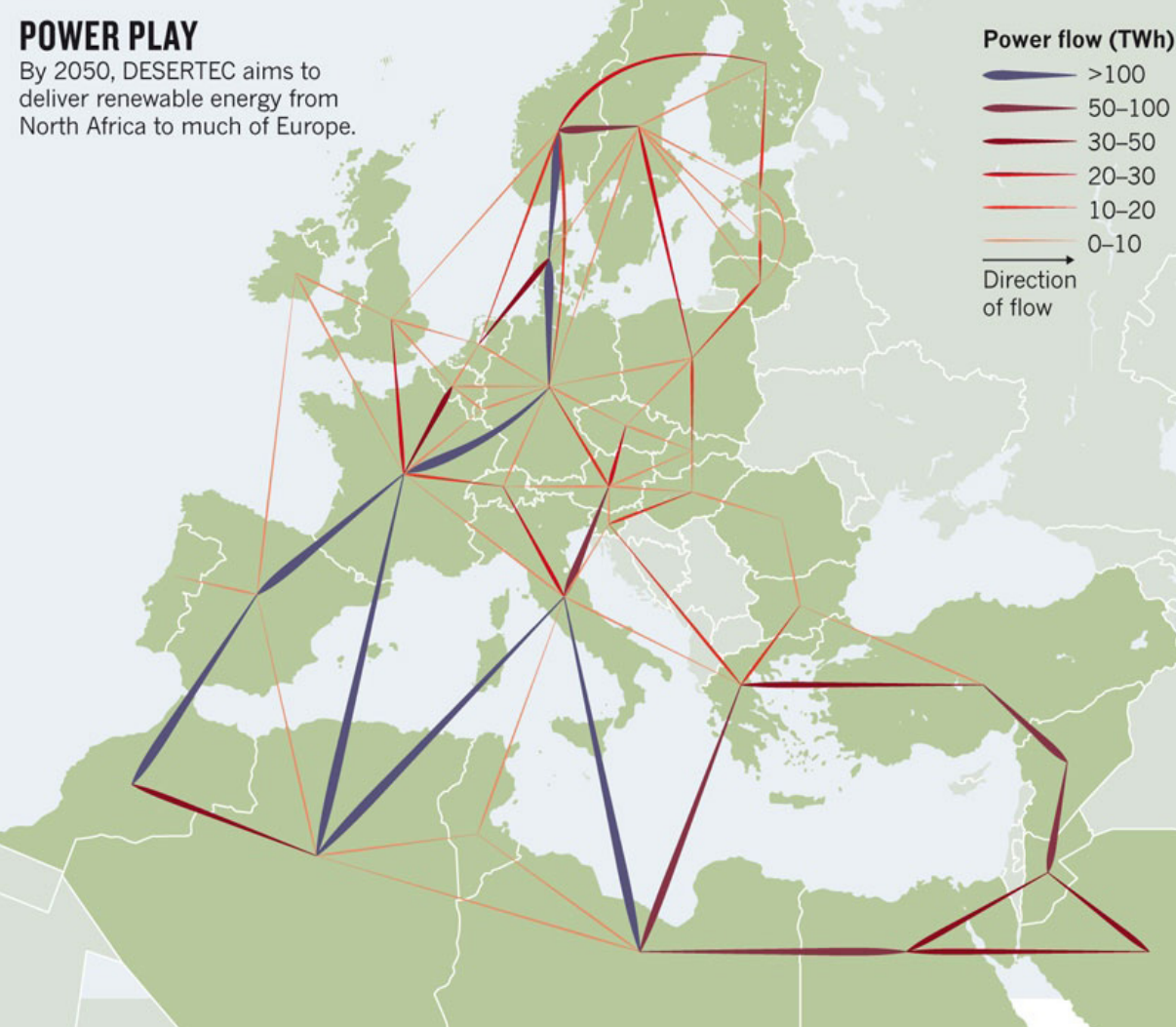
Meanwhile, the Moroccan government, with help from Dii consortium members, has attracted funding from international lenders to develop the world's largest concentrated CSP at Ourzazate. It was originally envisioned as an export project, but failed to secure Spanish government support for an undersea cable; the project is now promoted as a means for Morocco to increase its own renewable energy supply. However, the role of multinational companies in the project is still attracting criticism. M. Jawad, a campaigner from ATTAC/CADTM Morocco, is concerned about the increasing control exerted by multinationals on electrical energy production in his country. He sees projects like Ourzazate as a threat to national sovereignty in the clean energy sector, because crucial decisions that affect the whole population are being taken by a handful of technocrats, far from any democratic process or consultation.

To understand the thinking behind Desertec, it is useful to consider some history. Between 1998 and 2006, a set of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements were formed between the EU and Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Their stated aim was the "gradual liberalisation of trade" in the region and the establishment of a Mediterranean free trade area. A project with similar goals called the Union for the Mediterranean

This is the same language used by colonial powers to justify their civilising mission calling into question such megaprojects and the "well-intentioned" motives that are often sugar-coating brutal exploitation.

POWER PLAY

By 2050, DESERTEC aims to deliver renewable energy from North Africa to much of Europe.



A map of the most cost-effective distribution of renewable-energy sources in 2050, based on simulations run by the Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research in Karlsruhe, Germany.

(UfM) was championed by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy from 2008, to strengthen the “interdependence” between the EU and the southern Mediterranean.

This goal of “interdependence” is reminiscent of previous French Prime Minister Edgar Fouré’s famous coinage in 1956, “*L’indépendance dans l’interdépendance*” (independence in interdependence), a strategy promoted by successive French governments to maintain control and domination of the new “independent” African countries. The UfM is designed to follow in their footsteps, furthering EU economic interests

and control, and unrestricted access over energy resources. Promoting a renewable energy partnership is a priority core project towards achieving these goals.

It is within this context of pro-corporate trade deals and a scramble for influence and energy resources that the Desertec project is realised. It could play a role in diversifying energy sources away from Russia as well as contributing to EU targets of reducing carbon emissions. And what better region to achieve these aims than MENA, an area well endowed with natural resources, from fossil fuels to sun and wind? The unrestricted flow of cheap natural resources from the global South to the rich industrialised North, therefore maintains the profoundly unjust international division of labour; it seems that a familiar “colonial” scheme is being rolled out in front of our eyes.

This is a genuine and legitimate concern given the language used in different articles and publications describing the potential of the Sahara in powering the whole world. The Sahara is described as a vast empty land, sparsely populated; constituting a golden opportunity to provide Europe with electricity so it can continue its extravagant consumerist lifestyle and profligate energy consumption. This is the same language used by colonial powers to justify their *civilising mission* calling into question such megaprojects and the “well-intentioned” motives that are often sugar-coating brutal exploitation. Daniel Ayuk Mbi Egbe of the [African Network for Solar Energy](#) raised similar concerns in 2011. “Many Africans are sceptical about Desertec,” he said, “Europeans make promises, but

at the end of the day, they bring their engineers, they bring their equipment, and they go. It's a new form of resource exploitation, just like in the past." The **Tunisian trade unionist Mansour Cherni** also asked, "Where will the energy produced here be used...? Where will the water come from that will cool the solar power plants? And what do the locals get from it all?"

Sustainable development or status quo?

There is nothing inherently wrong or dishonest in generating vast amounts of electricity in the Sahara Desert. The goal of providing sustainable clean energy for the planet to fight global warming is to be lauded. But like any other idea, the questions of who uses it, how it is implemented, for what agenda and in which context it is being promoted, are of great importance.

Desertec was presented as a response to the issues of climate change, the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflicts in 2006 and 2009, fears of peak oil, and the **global food crisis of 2009**. However, it does not address any of the structural causes underpinning these issues. Presented as an apolitical techno-fix that would deal with threats without fundamental change, it aims to maintain the status quo and existing power relations that created the crises. Moreover, by presenting the Euro-Med region as a unified community (we are all friends now and we need to fight against a common enemy!), it masks the real enemy of North Africa, which is oppressive European hegemony and

Western domination, and repressive local elites that exploit the people for their own benefit.

Big engineering-focused "solutions" like Desertec present climate change as a **shared problem with no political or socio-economic context**. This perspective hides the historical responsibilities of the industrialised West, the class-based differences within countries, and the different vulnerabilities between countries of the global North and South. Desertec also legitimises the highly dubious idea of "green capitalism" and provides PR cover to major energy corporations, particularly oil and gas-fuelled regimes. Supporting big "clean energy" projects lets them present themselves as environmental protectors rather than climate culprits.

Desertec, the Arab uprisings and a community-centred approach

Any project concerned with producing sustainable energy must be rooted in local communities, geared towards providing and catering for their needs and centred around energy and environmental justice. This is even more important in the context of the Arab Uprisings and the demands of the revolutions: bread, freedom, social justice and national sovereignty. We must be careful of hastily jumping on the bandwagon and cheer-leading such centralised renewable megaprojects, if they are recreating the same patterns of control and exploitation as extractive energy projects.

Desertec also legitimises the highly dubious idea of "green capitalism" and provides PR cover to major energy corporations, particularly oil and gas-fuelled regimes.

Instead of providing a route to “develop” away from repressive governments, large-scale and centralised CSP give the state more power over the population, similar to current fossil fuel energy systems.

In the context of the Arab uprisings, **Desertec presented itself as a progressive pathway forwards.** Yet it cooperated with corrupt elites and authoritarian regimes, some of which have been overthrown since. The assumption that economic liberalisation and “development” necessarily lead to prosperity, stability and democracy is shamelessly reiterated *ad nauseam* as if neoliberalism and the (under-)development agenda of the West had nothing to do with the uprisings in the first place.

Projects involving large multinationals tend to take a top-down approach, increasing the risk of displacement, land grabbing, and local pollution. Despite the promises, such schemes rarely alleviate poverty or reduce unemployment. This has been a major failing of the Desertec initiative. **Only a few actors from the South of the Mediterranean were involved in its development,** and most of them represented public institutions and central authorities, not the local communities who would be affected by the project. Large CSP use vast amounts of already scarce water – this should be integrated with community use, and not as a relationship of plunder.

Another important critique is whether these projects transfer the knowledge, expertise, and designs of the renewable technology to the countries in this region. This seems unlikely given the multinationals’ usual reticence in doing so and questions of intellectual property around such technologies. One example, **the glass troughs (solar thermal collectors) for North African CSP plants are all made in Germany,** and the patents

for the glass tube receivers are held by German companies. Without fair access to such technologies, North African countries will remain dependent on the West and multinationals for future renewable development. This could prove very detrimental to national sovereignty in the long run.

Solar energy, a new rent for authoritarian regimes?

Instead of providing a route to “develop” away from repressive governments, large-scale and centralised CSP give the state more power over the population, similar to current fossil fuel energy systems. They also allow corrupt and authoritarian elites to generate economic rents at the expense of the people.

Algeria is a prime example. Oil and gas have provided income to the Algerian regime for decades, and are used to buy social peace and maintain its grip on power. As the brutal Algerian civil war (a war against civilians to be more accurate) was raging, with systematic violence from both the state and Islamist fundamentalists, BP finalised a contract worth US\$3 billion in December 1995, giving it the right to exploit gas deposits in In Salah, located in the Sahara, for the next 30 years. Total completed a similar deal worth US\$1.5 billion one month later, and in November 1996 a new pipeline supplying gas to the EU was opened, the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline through Spain and Portugal. **These contracts undoubtedly bolstered the regime as it exerted systematic violence across the country and at a time of international isolation.**

Tied to Algeria through huge investments, these companies and the EU had a clear interest in making sure that the repressive regime did not go under and supported the Algerian regime's 'Dirty War' of the 1990s.

A renewable megaproject like Desertec that ties European economies to corrupt MENA governments would create exactly the same kind of problems. Whether fossil fuelled or renewable, energy schemes that do not benefit the people where the energy is extracted, that serve to prop up authoritarian and repressive regimes, or that only enrich a tiny minority of voracious elites and multinationals, are scandalous and must be resisted.

Advocates for benign-sounding clean energy export projects like Desertec need to be careful they are not supporting a new "renewable energy grab": after oil, gas, gold, diamonds and cotton, is it now the turn of solar energy to maintain the global imperial dominance of the West over the rest of the planet?

Rather than embracing such gargantuan projects, we should instead support decentralised small-scale projects that can be democratically managed and controlled by local communities that promote energy autonomy. We do not want to replicate the fossil fuel tragedy and therefore we must say, "Leave the sunlight in the desert for its people"!

Rather than embracing such gargantuan projects, we should instead support decentralised small-scale projects that can be democratically managed and controlled by local communities that promote energy autonomy.

Chapter 3

Resistance to extractivism: stemming the flow

- 10 Women from KwaZulu-Natal's mining war zone stand their ground against big coal** by Faith ka-Manzi and Patrick Bond 93
- 11 Leave the bones of Mother Earth in place: the liabilities left behind from Colombian coal exports** by Andrea Cardoso 98
- 12 Not one more well!: corruption and Brazil's pre-salt expansion** by Marcelo Calazans, Tamra Gilbertson and Daniella Meirelles 104
- 13 Fracking as environmental load displacement: examining the violence of unconventional oil and gas extraction** by Lena Weber 110
- 14 Decolonizing and decarbonizing: How the Unist'ot'en are arresting pipelines and asserting autonomy** by Leah Temper and Sam Bliss 116

Women from KwaZulu-Natal's mining war zone stand their ground against big coal

Faith ka-Manzi is a community scholar at the Centre for Civil Society, is also the founder of Fossil Free KZN. **Patrick Bond** directs CCS, is senior professor of development studies at UKZN, and authored *Politics of Climate Justice* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012).

Skeletons of cattle and other animals litter a desolate looking land once lush with vegetation. The phenomenon of drought has never been experienced as badly, say the Indigenous People of this ancestral land of the Zulus known as Fuleni.

A major coal company is being blamed. Johannesburg-based Petmin, which has operated in Somkhele since 2007. Early on, it dug out graves of ancestors to get at the rich anthracite. But in doing so, the Johannesburg firm removed the bones without requiting the long-rested spirits of the dead, in violation of sacred traditional protocol. Residents remain livid.

Hundreds of people removed from their land around Somkhele were also abandoned by their traditional and elected leaders. Bought-off chiefs and politicians decided to side with the Johannesburg tormentors, thus permitting the rapid pollution of nearby water, land and air.

Coal barons versus communities and conservation

The man in charge of Petmin is Ian Cockerill. No small fry, he was once the boss at both AngloCoal and

Gold Fields. His corporate biography claims he is, "Chairman of Leadership for Conservation in Africa, a not-for-profit initiative in partnership with the South African Parks Board."

Cockerill may need this kind of green sugar-coating because of the poison pills he dishes out in Somkhele, both to residents and animals in the nearby game park just 17km from his massive coal mine. The Hluhluwe-iMfolozi nature reserve is Africa's oldest formal park. It is also the area where the Black and White iMfolozi Rivers join, which two hundred years ago, King Shaka Zulu declared to be his royal hunting ground.

Today another firm, Ibutho Coal, is repeating the same destructive exercise in a larger zone of Fuleni about 20km south west of Somkhele, a mere 40m from the border of the park. Last month, Ibutho's mysterious leaders – including Peter Gain and Tom Borman, who have ties to the world's leading mining house, BHP Billiton, and world's main commodity trader, Glencore – tried again to descend quietly and stealthily like thieves against the people of Fuleni to devour their land in search of coal.

Ibutho Coal filed a 'Fuleni Scoping Report' with the government on March 3rd, renewing a license to dig

coal over an area hundreds of kilometres wide. But it was clearly lacking integrity, according to the Global Environmental Trust's Sinegugu Zukulu: "My worry is that while the report mentions the need to consult communities further, it is often a mere box ticking exercise for mining companies to be granted the green light."

Zukulu is also a leader in the struggle to beat back an attack by an Australian mining house at the world's tenth largest titanium reserve, at Xolobeni on the Wild Coast beaches a few hundred kilometres south of Fuleni. He was a close ally of the Trust's founder, the revered conservationist Ian Player. Before passing away late last year, Player insisted on a combined campaign strategy to link animals' survival with better conditions for Somkhele and for the Fuleni villages bordering Hluhluwe-iMfolozi, where for decades he worked to bring white rhinos back from near extinction.

If a massive coal mine is established on the border of the iMfolozi Wilderness Area which Player established, increased ease of access by rhino poachers will quickly doom hundreds more of the endangered animals, Zukulu's colleagues at the Trust predict.

Women Stand their Ground against Big Coal

In the village of Ocilwane, certain to be destroyed by Ibutho's mining strategy, community activist Mam Khuluse insists, "that the coal should be left in the hole." She is a survivor of forced removals which took place in 1961 in Cwaka, near the port city of Richards

Bay from where the Somkhele coal is exported. Khuluse is unwilling to be moved again, and along with others in her community, she is fighting for their land not to become ravaged like Somkhele.

It is one thing for the women victims of mining to tell their stories, and another for one to see this personally. One site visit was in conjunction with a "Women Stand their Ground Against Big Coal" regional exchange in January. It was evident that the land women have been dependent upon for aeons has been destroyed. Women who toil as cooks and care-givers, as small farmers and as gatherers of wood and water from nature now cannot feed their families: nothing grows anymore, except aloes.

The women date this long drought to Petmin's arrival. The desolation is striking when contrasted with the huge, profitable estates owned by white farmers and sugarcane companies just 50 kilometers away, towards the sea.

In most of sub-tropical KwaZulu-Natal, vegetation is green and healthy. In Somkhele, in contrast, there are no beans, maize, fruits, nothing but a skeletal land, dry like death. The Somkhele residents' water was essentially confiscated by the mine. It is now a trickle-down resource, provided by a water truck once a week or even a fortnight.

In a nearby lodge the water coming from the tap in the bathroom was black like ash. The owner was asked what he thought about the mine. He was perturbed by the question since it brings occasional business, but

Sister solidarity against mining: from KZN to the eastern DRC

At a recent International Women's Day gathering in Durban organised by Fossil Free KZN, Khuluse and others from Ocilwane and Somkhele shared experiences with sisters from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo who are now refugees facing xenophobic attacks.

One reason they are refugees is that South African companies like AngloGold Ashanti have worked hand-in-glove with warlords in the DRC to extract minerals such as the coltan we use in our phones, according to Human Rights Watch. The results included 5.4 million conflict-related deaths there from 1998-2007 alone, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In the same area near the Uganda border, the nephew of the South African president, Khulubuse Zuma, somehow won access to a \$10 billion oil concession from DRC president Laurent Kabila in 2010, working closely with Kabila's other close ally, the notorious Israeli mining tycoon Dan Gertler.

Conveniently, in 2013 the SA National Defence Force placed more than 1,500 troops there to improve the investment climate.

Do ordinary workers and shack residents in Durban who are attacking our Congolese sisters and brothers have any understanding of the reasons so many have had to flee to our country?

he listened when told about the attention Somkhele is getting as a result of activist campaigning.

He admitted that Somkhele's air is full of dust from coal ash. People suffer frequent respiratory disorders when inhaling chemicals used in coal mining. In this area, a large share of the residents are still recovering from the deadly grip of HIV/Aids (they get medicines now thanks to Treatment Action Campaign lobbying). But the coal mine's air-borne particulates spread more diseases like TB, taking many more from HIV+ to full-blown AIDS status.

It suddenly dawned on the lodge owner why his business friends who gathered at his pub for drinks were

more often complaining of chest pains and breathing difficulties.

The situation in Somkhele is dire, with houses developing cracks because of frequent blasting at Petmin's mine. In the next villages in the mining companies' firing lines, Ocilwane and Ntuthunga, the time has come to fight back.

But activists like Khuluse and Zukulu and their community organisations, NGOs and environmental networks are badly underfunded. And it is here that the link between coal, climate and our liabilities in the Global North comes full-circle.

At the UKZN Centre for Civil Society, scholars of reparations are looking at how a climate debt paid to anti-coal activists might work.

Paying the climate debt

The tragedy of Somkhele is partly that the region's drought is an early manifestation of climate change, which will hit African peasant areas like Fuleni as hard as anywhere on earth. Burning coal is a leading cause of climate change. Somkhele anthracite goes to the electricity parastatal Eskom to burn so that mining mega-corporations get extremely cheap power for their digging and smelting. BHP Billiton's electricity price is R0.12 per kilowatt hour thanks to corrupt apartheid-era deal-making renewed after 2000.

Somkhele coal travels on huge trucks 60km southeast to Richards Bay where along with 80 million tonnes of other coal, it is exported to major buyers in Europe, India, China and the Middle East. In these places, is the burning of coal accompanied by awareness about the damage done upstream, back in the Fuleni area?

These links are gaining visibility thanks to *The Guardian's* climate campaign, clicktivists at Avaaz, and the crowd-source funder Grrrowd who are all helping to put the Fuleni struggle in the spotlight. But if international climate activists also join in, that may be decisive. Coal prices are at very low levels – around \$60/tonne, down from \$140/tonne four years ago – and it won't take much to persuade investors to divest from coal companies like Petmin and Ibutho, especially if they are linked to the threat against the people and animals of Fuleni.

At the same time that the Climate Justice movement calls on the Global North to pay a 'climate debt' that

is legitimately owed to African drought victims like Mam Khuluse, the struggles of activists like these against coal will rebound to help the whole world combat climate change.

At the UKZN Centre for Civil Society, scholars of reparations are looking at how a climate debt paid to anti-coal activists might work. The present system of payments for greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation via the Korea-based Green Climate Fund is already a failure on multiple levels, and the 'loss and damage' liability accounting countries have pushed for in the United Nations climate summit since 2012 is being blocked by rich countries.

Instead of relying on the elites to start this process, a people-to-people solidaristic strategy is needed, initially. More successors are needed to the heroic but unsuccessful 'leave the oil in the soil' campaign for Ecuador's Yasuni national park. Launching the strategy in 2007, environmental and Indigenous-rights activists suggested Northern governments pay the Quito government \$3.5 billion to avoid drilling the Amazonian paradise.¹¹ Activists put the 'climate debt down-payment' on the civilised world's agenda.

Sadly, the neoliberals running the German aid ministry killed it, alongside Ecuador's rulers who behind the scenes were already inviting a Chinese oil company to prepare to drill. Instead of directing solidarity climate-debt payments to governments that cannot be trusted, should the recipients not be people like Mam Khuluse?

¹¹ For a review of some movements fighting to leave the oil in the soil see: <http://www.ejolt.org/2013/05/how-to-yasunize-the-world-dont-burn-the-unburnable-fuels/>

But in South Africa, political will is nearly nil – something that must change. So we join with communities in Fuleni, conservationists protecting white rhinos, environmental justice activists, and forward-thinking trade unionists like the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. A ‘Million Climate Jobs’ campaign has already been launched to find a just transition for so many Eskom coal or BHP Billiton smelter workers who can contribute to our society’s renewable energy instead of to climate change.

The challenge to coal companies to leave the coal in the hole seems like a losing battle if it is only to be waged by economically poor women in rural areas who are disadvantaged by traditional patriarchy and a

lack of resources to fight this battle. Still, hope now rises that the Fuleni campaign will inspire more climate activists and many more ordinary citizens who do not like seeing such extreme environmental injustice along the lines of race, gender and class.

While toppling a Cecil John Rhodes statue in a symbolic way is excellent for the psyche of all of us, the next step must be toppling his deep-rooted legacy. There is no more obvious place where RhodesMustFall than in what is termed the Minerals-Energy Complex. That complex is epitomised by the way coal destroys Fuleni communities, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi’s rhino conservation, and the world’s climate.

Instead of relying on the elites to start this process, a people-to-people solidaristic strategy is needed.



Leave the bones of Mother Earth in place: the liabilities left behind from Colombian coal exports

Andrea Cardoso is a Professor at the University of Magdalena, Santa Marta, Colombia and a PhD student at the ICTA Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

The Indigenous Peoples in the Colombian Caribbean view coal deposits as the bones of Mother Earth

- 1 IEWCA-World Coal Association, Coal Matters, 2012, <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyWorld2014.pdf>.
- 2 Mao Yushi, Sheng Hong, and Yang Fuqiang, The True Cost of Coal (China: Greenpeace, The Energy Foundation, WWF, 2008). See also, Palmer, M. A., Bernhardt, E. S., Schlesinger, W. H., Eshleman, K. N., Fofoula-Georgiou, E., Hendryx, M. S., ... Wilcock, P. "Mountaintop Mining Consequences," Science, 2010; Epstein, P. R., Buonocore, J. J., Eckerle, K., Hendryx, M., Stout Iii, B. M., Heinberg, R., ... Glustrom, L., "Full Cost Accounting for the Life Cycle of Coal," Ann NY Acad Sci 1219 (2011): 73–98, doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2010.05890.x.; SE Bell and R York, "Coal, Injustice, and Environmental Destruction Introduction to the Special Issue on Coal and the Environment,"

Introduction

Coal is one of the three main energy sources in the world. Coal, peat and oil shale were responsible for 43.9% of global CO₂ emissions while over the last decade coal has been the world's fastest growing energy source.¹ However, coal mining has a negative impact on the environment and human health throughout the extraction, transportation and combustion stages.²

In 2013, Colombia was the fifth largest net exporter of coal, after Indonesia, Australia, Russia and the US.³ Although most of the world's 50 coal-producing countries use coal for domestic energy production, Colombia is a special case because it exports over 90% of its coal.⁴ The coal exported by Colombia comes mainly from the Guajira and Cesar states in the Colombian Caribbean region. Coal production in Colombia has increased by 63% since 1999, with 89 million tons in 2014. Cesar's coal production has increased by 83%: from 9.7 million tons in 2000, to 57.1 million tons in 2013. Cesar's production overtook Guajira, traditionally the largest exporter, which in the same period increased its production by 48%, to 37.8 million tons in 2013.⁵

Colombia's coal mines, like many industries in the country, are filled with stories of displacement, terror, paramilitary violence and many fatal accidents. International organisations, have denounced human rights violations in coal mining areas, particularly due to cooperation between coal mining companies and paramilitaries. Mining companies have taken advantage of this alliance while paramilitaries have expelled thousands of inhabitants from areas where coal mining permits have been granted.⁶

Coal is one of the most important drivers of the numerous conflicts related to extractive industries particularly in the Caribbean Colombian region. These conflicts around the country principally affect the most impoverished and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.⁷ La Guajira, home to the biggest mine, remains one of the country's poorest states, with two out of three people living in poverty. Export-led exploitation is not benefiting the local population, as the resistance of local and Indigenous communities show. Meanwhile, with coal prices plummeting even faster than oil prices, government justifications for mining-led development are ringing increasingly hollow. This paper uncovers the political economy of coal

mining in Colombia to show who is benefiting and to make the argument that for the local population, for the country itself, and for the planet, it is time to leave the coal in the hole.

The coal mining boom in Colombia and its conflicts

The expansion of large-scale coal mining in Colombia is driven by a combination of a boom in the international demand for coal and governmental neoliberal policies that consider mining as a way to bring about “development”. Through the Mining Code (Law 685 of 2001), the government promotes mining as a public utility with social interest in all branches and phases; arguing that coal extraction advances industrialisation, generates national and local development, increases exports, creates jobs, and state income. The Mining Code limits government participation to a regulatory role and leaves mining operations in the hands of the private sector.⁸

In Guajira and Cesar states, several multinational companies were granted open-pit coal mining concessions to extract and export coal over the past 20 years. The three main companies operating in the region are: Cerrejón (led by a multinational equally owned by BHP Billiton, Anglo American and Glencore-Xstrata) which reported 44% of total coal export in 2013; Drummond (a US-based company) responsible for 31% of total coal exports in 2013; and Prodeco (a subsidiary of the Switzerland-based Glencore-Xstrata), which exported 16% in 2013.⁹

The Colombian Constitution declares that the sub-soil is owned by the state. Under the Mining Code, however, the mining authority may authorise the exploitation of minerals through mining concessions. Consequently, landowners are forced to sell their lands, generating displacement and violating fundamental rights. Research demonstrates how coal mining companies in Guajira and Cesar are the agents behind the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous Wayuu and Afro-descendant communities.¹⁰ While some communities were relocated because of mining expansion, other communities located close to the mines have been displaced due to dire environmental pollution and social conditions. Many communities have lost their traditional territories and cultural heritages.

The main impacts from coal extraction in the Colombian Caribbean region are: deterioration of flora, fauna and water sources; air pollution that generates an increase of respiratory diseases; social and cultural heterogeneity due to labour migration; displacement of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and rural populations; loss of traditional agriculture; growth of “misery zones”; increased civil unrest such as union strikes and protests.¹¹

In Cesar, social movements continue to denounce high levels of air pollution, resulting in respiratory disease, and river diversions – critical for local food security. Eusebio Garcia, coordinator of the environmental negotiation with mining companies stated at La Jagua de Ibirico:

Organization & Environment, 2012, <http://oae.sagepub.com/content/25/4/359.short>.; Emily Morrice and Ruth Colagiuri, “Coal Mining, Social Injustice and Health: A Universal Conflict of Power and Priorities.,” *Health & Place* 19 (January 2013): 74–79, doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2012.10.006.

- 3 IEA-International Energy Agency, “Key World Energy Statistics,” 2014, <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyWorld2014.pdf>.
- 4 J. Wilde-Ramsing and Kristóf Rácz, *Colombian Coal in Europe: Imports by Enel as a Case Study*, 2014.
- 5 SIMCO, “Sistema de Información Minero Colombiano,” 2015, http://www.upme.gov.co/generadorconsultas/Consulta_Exportaciones.aspx?idModulo=4.
- 6 PAX, *The Dark Side of Coal. Paramilitary Violence in the Mining Region of Cesar, Colombia* (The Netherlands: PAX for Peace, 2014).
- 7 Mario Alejandro Pérez-Rincón, “Conflictos Ambientales En Colombia: Inventario, Caracterización Y Análisis,” in *Minería En Colombia IV: Control Público, Memoria Y Justicia Socioeconómica, Movimientos Sociales Y Posconflicto*, ed. Luis Jorge Garay, vol. 4 (Bogotá, Colombia: Contraloría General de la República, 2014), 492, http://www.colombiapuntomedio.com/Portals/0/Archivos2014/Biblioteca2014/Libro_mineria_vol_IV_serie_final.pdf.

8 Julio Fierro, Políticas Mineras En Colombia (ILSA Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativo, 2012). See also, Alvaro Pardo, "La Conflictividad Por El Territorio, El Control de Los RNNR Y La Renta Minera. El Choque de Las Locomotoras Mineras En Colombia," in *Minería En Colombia II: Institucionalidad Y Territorio, Paradojas Y Conflicto*, ed. Luis Jorge Garay (Contraloría General de la República de Colombia, 2013), 143–91.

9 IEA-International Energy Agency, "Key World Energy Statistics," 2014, <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyWorld2014.pdf>.

10 A Chomsky, GM Leech, and S Striffler, "The People Behind Colombian Coal: Mining, Multinationals and Human Rights," 2007.

11 Fabio Silva, "Las Paradojas de Una Bonanza: Impactos de La Actividad Carbonera En Los Departamentos Del Cesar Y Magdalena," ed. F Silva (Santa Marta, Colombia: Universidad del Magdalena y Colciencias, 2010).

12 Cristian Ternera, "El Carbón En El Cesar. Entre Abundancias, Miserias Y Conflictos: Etnografía de Una Realidad," in *Las Paradojas de Una Bonanza: Impactos de La Actividad Carbonera En Los Departamentos Del Cesar Y Magdalena*. Universidad Del Magdalena Y Colciencias., ed. F Silva (Santa Marta, Colombia. 235p., 2010).



*[...]Coal has brought us nothing good. . . . coal has only brought misery, poverty, famine. . . . we want things to be like they were before when we were a rice farming village. We were farmers and lived happily, we had a healthy environment, but today the irrational situation of coal mining concerns us. Coal mining is destroying the environment and water sources, all agricultural land and the source of our livelihoods, including the Perijá forest reserve where the water sources, aquifers and springs are located.*¹²

In 2012, the mining company Cerrejón began a diversion project of the Ranchería River, announcing that 500 million tons of coal under the river would generate royalty income for the local community. In Guajira, the Wayuu Indigenous Peoples protested against the diversion of the Ranchería river stating that for the past 30 years of mineral exploitation they had not seen any royalty income invested in their territory. La Guajira has a 64% poverty rate, the highest in Colombia. No population in the region has an sufficient water supply. Hospitals are often on strike because salaries have not been paid. Education ranks last in the country, and 50% of the Wayuu children suffer from malnutrition.

The deviation of the river undermines the survival of the Wayuu people.¹³

Because of the controversies around the diversion of this river, Cerrejón decided to suspend the project. However, in 2014 they announced another diversion project on a branch of the Ranchería called the Bruno stream. As a result of this total lack of respect for the previous years of struggle the Wayuu Indigenous people responded with:

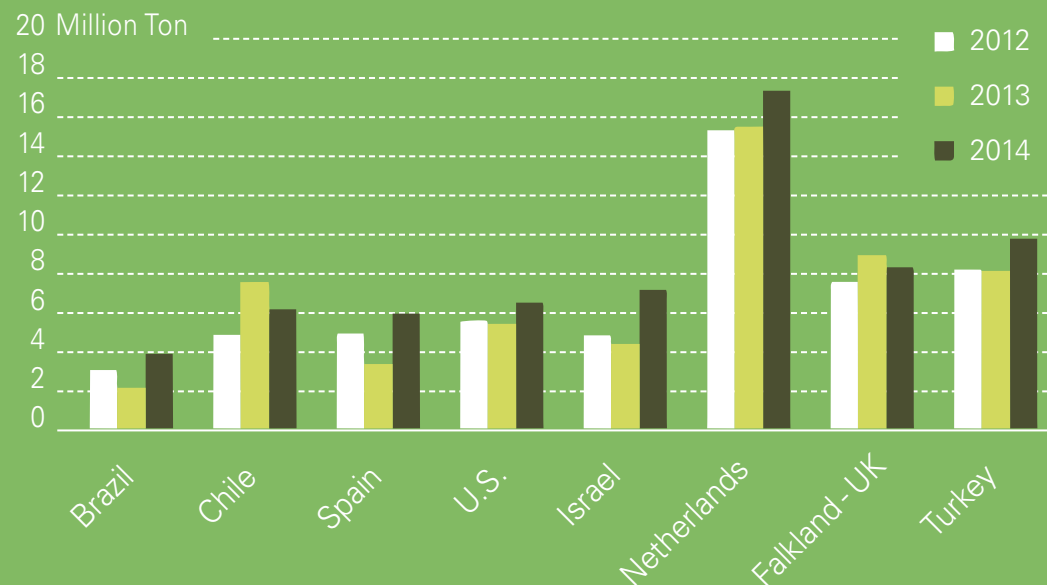
CERREJÓN ENOUGH! of that media discourse where you boast as our green ally. Who do you think you are, Cerrejón? With your mining you have diverted rivers, mountains and displaced communities. And now you intend to divert the Bruno stream... NO MORE!... Stop lying Cerrejón, because when there is thirst, the first to feel it is the land and if the land is thirsty, it cannot feed us, and it is precisely the thirst and hunger that affects those who live in La Guajira. The government is outraged because of the malnutrition and drought in La Guajira, but it does not condemn the assassins of our rivers, our culture, our people ... I tell you and I warn you, it's my voice and all the people seated in the peninsula of La Guajira: **¡NO TE METAS CON EL BRUNO NI CON NINGUNO!**¹⁴

Lack of transparency: European imported Colombian coal

By 2014, Colombia continued to increase coal exports to 85Mton, while coal prices decreased 40%-50%. Most of the coal was exported to Europe (62.3%). In particular to the Netherlands (20.21%), Turkey (11.45%) and the Falkland Islands – UK (9,74%). While coal prices were plummeting, Colombia increased coal exports to these countries (See figure 1). The burning of the 85Mton on a global scale resulted in an estimated total emissions of 220.15 CO₂ tons (85 x 2.59).

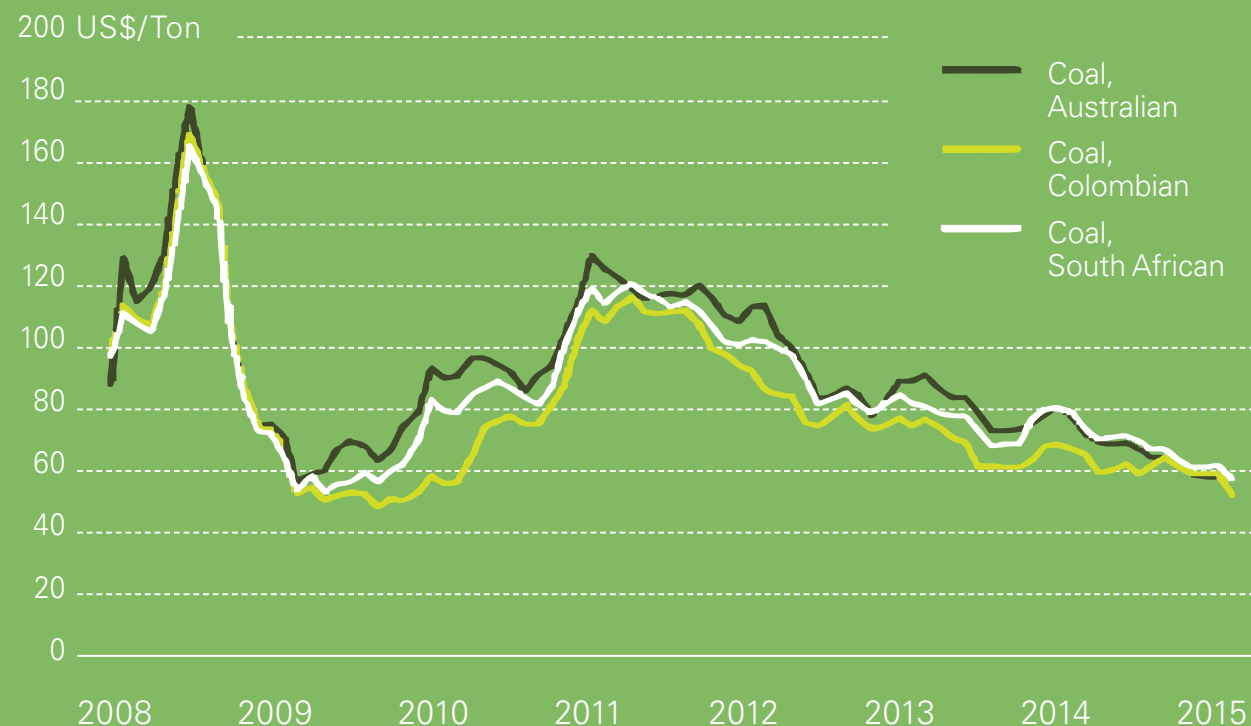
Colombian coal destined for Europe is controversial in various European countries. Cerrejón, Drummond

Figure 1. Colombia Coal Export by Country destination



Source: SIMCO- Colombian Mining Information System, Knoema databases¹⁵

Figure 2. Coal Prices in nominal US\$



13 Letter from Vicenta Siosi Pino an indigenous Wayuu woman to the President Juan Manuel Santos. 2012 http://www.observapaz.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=200:carta-de-una-indigena-wayuu-al-presidente-juan-manuel-santos&catid=2:propuestas-de-paz-de-las-organizaciones&Itemid=22

14 Letter from Miguel Iván Ramírez Boscán, Wayuu Indigenous to Cerrejón mining company. 2014 <http://www.las2orillas.co/tu-te-crees-cerrejon/>

15 Knoema. Coal Prices: Long Term Forecast to 2020 | Data and Charts. <http://knoema.es/xfakeuc/coal-prices-long-term-forecast-to-2020-data-and-charts?action=export&gadget=37121f8b-131e-d4e0-914d-18de508014ff#>



Source: Censat.org

Why not leave the coal in the hole if the environmental liabilities are higher than the market price of coal?

hasl have documented the socio-environmental liabilities that occur at each stage in the life cycle (extraction, transport and combustion) and at different scales (local, national and global) of each ton of extracted coal.¹⁸ The key socio-environmental liabilities identified arise from pollution, public health risks, water table depletion, land and ecosystem services losses, community displacement, sacred territories and cultural heritage loss, damages from transportation and shipping, and coal reserve loss.

The economic valuation of these liabilities determines that each ton of extracted coal in Cesar produces socio-environmental liabilities at the national level valued between US\$100.87/ton – US\$147.52/ton (updated to 2014 prices) during the extraction phase and until transportation to harbor for export.¹⁹ These results are almost double compared to the market price of one ton of thermal coal, which in 2014 fluctuated between US\$56.5/ton - US\$71.3/ton (Figure 3). These values far exceed government royalties earned from coal concessions (See Figure 3). In Colombia coal mining companies must pay 10% of the coal price as royalties (different from tax on profits) for a production over 3 million tons per year.

Since 100% of extracted coal in Cesar is exported, further liabilities related to including transportation

and Prodeco sell almost 70% of their production to European power plants including those operated by: E.ON, GDF Suez, EDF, Enel, RWE, Iberdrola and Vattenfall. Research from the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) have reported that Colombia is the single largest source of coal used in Dutch power plants, while Russia, the US, and South Africa play a smaller role in supplying Europe with coal. SOMO's reports revealed a "chronic and acute lack of transparency in the coal supply chain, effectively shielding coal-importing power companies from association with the adverse social and environmental conditions at the mines supplying them with fuel."¹⁶

European organisations, such as "Pax for Peace", state that European energy companies importing coal from Colombia should have the responsibility to investigate whether human rights are met. They state that two actions are necessary: First, to place a moratorium on European energy companies from buying coal if these companies do not respect human rights and, secondly, to include transparency in the coal chain into international agendas.¹⁷

16 J Wilde-Ramsing and T Steinweg, *The Black Box- Obscurity and Transparency in the Dutch Coal Supply Chain*, ed. Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, 2012.

17 J. Wilde-Ramsing and Kristóf Rácz, *Colombian Coal in Europe: Imports by Enel as a Case Study*, 2014.

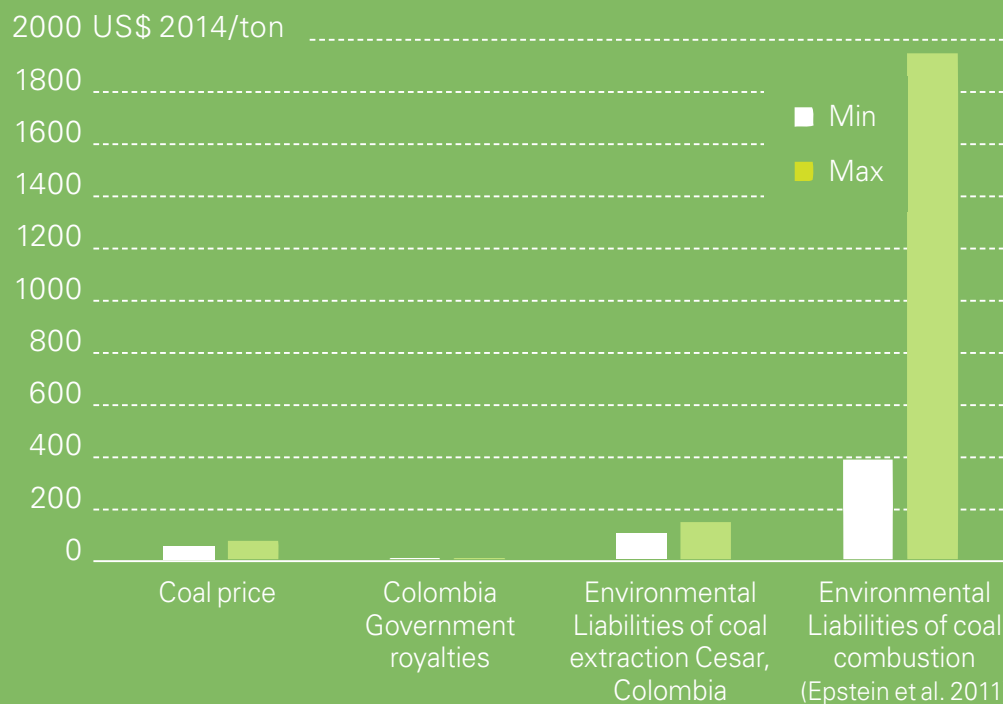
18 Andrea Cardoso. *Behind the life cycle of coal: socio-environmental liabilities of coal mining in Cesar, Colombia*, Forthcoming 2015.

to markets and combustion would significantly raise the costs of coal use, and would be estimated at US\$ 388.72/ton – US\$1,959.86/ton.²¹

Only examining the impacts at the national level, we see that a ton of coal from Cesar exported to Europe, the US or Asia, has other impacts beyond the uncompensated socio-environmental liabilities that have been estimated between US\$100.87/ton – US\$147.52/ton. Numerous impacts cannot even conceivably be calculated in monetary terms and should be accounted for in their own languages of valuation. These include displacement of local communities, infringement of territorial rights, health problems, frustration in the communities, irreversible depletion to the water table, biodiversity and ecosystem services losses, and human lives, among others.

Throughout the entire coal life cycle it is the local communities who bear the heaviest social and environmental costs. It is no coincidence that it is often those from the most impoverished communities, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the case of Guajira and Cesar; while on the other end of the life-cycle, the combustion of coal affects the communities at the surrounding areas of the power plants and on top of this also contribute to climate change whose impacts also accrue in highly unequal ways, prejudicing the most vulnerable.

Figure 3. Coal Price vs. Coal mining socio-environmental liabilities



Yet even a purely economic calculus, that takes into account the irreversible losses of coal reserves, water tables and biodiversity and ecosystem services leads to the need to question the coal boom in Colombia. Given the mismatch between the meager financial benefits and the disproportionate liabilities that are many times the magnitude of income, and which are increasingly exacerbated as coal prices drop, raises the question to both the Colombian government and to the world, why not leave “the bones” in the hole?

¹⁹ Ibid.

²¹ Based on the estimation given in Epstein, Paul R. et al. “Full cost accounting for the life cycle of coal.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1219.1 (2011): 73-98. They included the loss of public health, pollution and damage on climate change in their accounting of costs associated to coal combustion in electric power stations .

Not one more well!: corruption and Brazil's pre-salt expansion

Marcelo Calazans is the Director of FASE-ES, Brazil, Tamra Gilbertson is a Co-Director of Carbon Trade Watch and Daniela Meirelles is a Researcher at FASE-ES, Brazil.

1 IEWCA-World Coal Association, *Coal Matters*, 2012, <http://www.worldcoal.org/resources/coal-statistics/coal-matters/>.
A-International Energy Agency, "Key World Energy Statistics," 2014, <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyWorld2014.pdf>.

2 Mao Yushi, Sheng Hong, and Yang Fuqiang, *The True Cost of Coal* (China: Greenpeace, The Energy Foundation, WWF, 2008). See also, Palmer, M. A., Bernhardt, E. S., Schlesinger, W. H., Eshleman, K. N., Fofoula-Georgiou, E., Hendryx, M. S., ... Wilcock, P. "Mountaintop Mining Consequences," *Science*, 2010; Epstein, P. R., Buonocore, J. J., Eckerle, K., Hendryx, M., Stout lii, B. M., Heinberg, R., ... Glustrom, L., "Full Cost Accounting for the Life Cycle of Coal," *Ann NY Acad Sci* 1219 (2011): 73–98, doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2010.05890.x.; SE Bell and R York, "Coal, Injustice, and Environmental Destruction Introduction to the Special Issue on Coal and the Environment," *Organization & Environment*,

In 2005, the Brazilian oil company, Petrobras discovered hydrocarbons below the geological salt layer in the Tupi field located in the Atlantic Ocean off-shore of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In 2006 a consortium of Petrobras, BG Group, and Petrogal drilled in the Tupi field and discovered an estimated 5-8 billion barrels of oil equivalent resources in a pre-salt zone.¹ The pre-salt oil and gas lie below an approximate 2000m deep layer of salt, which is below an approximate 2000m layer of rock at a depth of 2000-3000m below the Atlantic.² Further exploration found hydrocarbon deposits in the pre-salt layer extended through the Santos, Campos, and Espírito Santo basins located off-shore of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo states.

This type of oil and gas extraction may be considered one of the most "extreme energy" sources existing today.³ These deep ocean deposits located 300km from the coast in often severe oceanic conditions require substantial investments to extract. The profound depth and pressure involved in pre-salt extraction presents significant technological hurdles requiring a wide range of specialists, high-tech equipment, and infrastructure.⁴ Further, pre-salt oil extraction in Brazil has prompted grave environmental and social impacts

stemming from increased pollution on land and sea, health impacts, land struggles, violence, corruption and massive country-wide protests.⁵

According to what is now accepted as scientific certainty, two-thirds of fossil fuel reserves must remain untouched in order to avoid catastrophic climate change.⁶ UN leaders claim they will deliver a new climate protocol to address the impending climate crisis during the COP 21 set for Paris in December. History has shown that corporations wield their tremendous power to influence the climate debate, from REDD+ projects that evict Indigenous Peoples and forest dwellers for land grabs, to failed carbon markets that pay out windfall profits to the biggest polluters.⁷ As the oil industry expands, even with the downturn in oil prices, it is clear that a meaningful outcome will not be adopted in Paris. The interests of extractive industry lobbyists and powerful financial actors will ensure that this new climate protocol will have no teeth. There is hope but it will not be found at the negotiation table at the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris. It is already found in the streets and on the lands where people continue to resist powerful corporations entrenched in an unjust economic system.

Impacts of the Brazilian petroleum boom

The Brazilian government and petroleum regulators were reeling after the pre-salt off-shore petroleum discoveries in 2006. After months of controversial negotiations, on August 31, 2009, President Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva sent four draft bills to Congress proposing a radical overhaul of the existing regulatory and operational structure of the petroleum industry. The reforms would guarantee a percentage of the new petroleum money to be used for social and education programs and the Brazilian government to retain a majority share to create a semi-public oil industry.

Lula declared, in a famous speech in 2008, that “The Petroleum is ours, it belongs to the people, not Petrobras or Shell” mirroring the former decree from the Vargas administration that the “Petroleum is ours” 69 years earlier.

At the outset, the petroleum financing silenced many sectors of civil society by linking the Brazilian state oil company, Petrobras, to most social and political activities, from culture to agriculture through promises of small grants. The pledged petroleum funding succeeded in silencing opposition, and served to divide social movements and communities with occasional kick-backs for social movement leaders, while large amounts of money were funnelled to the oligarchy.⁸

Petrobras and the government propaganda that ensued, settled on “potential” projections of between 50, 35 and 28 billion barrels in pre-salt reserves, which generated a euphoria in Brazilian society based on the

equation-fetish: Oil = social rights. The possibility of a Brazilian “Welfare State” was dangled in front of the citizens, with promises of healthcare, education, housing, sanitation, and land reform, to be “guaranteed” with the new oil power and Brazilian royalties.⁹ The argument seemed to follow a logic that, had it not been for oil, the governments would never be able to guarantee the rights of all. But since there was petroleum, it was necessary to take away the rights of some, that is, traditional people, and precarious workers, the rights of nature, the inhabitants in the vicinity of large projects – a violent and unilateral environmental injustice.

In 2000, the oil sector accounted for 3% of Brazil’s GDP, 13 years later it **reached 13%**, a significant increase from both the Lula governments (2003-2006 and 2007-2010) and the first Dilma Rousseff government (2011-2014). The supply of new oil and gas exploration blocks (including shale) were on hold for five years, from 2008 until 2013, due to **imposed royalty laws**, which highlighted the fragile Brazilian federal pact between states considered “producers” and “non-producers” of oil.

The **royalty laws debate** saw governments and authorities from the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo and São Paulo (which hold the greatest concentration of both the GDP and pre-salt oil deposits), fight to maintain petroleum royalties as “producers”. The governmental officials from these states argued that they needed the money to pay for the myriad social and environmental impacts associated with



8 Alfredo Saad-Filho, “Brazil: Economic Policy, The Protest Movement and the Dêbacle of the Workers’ Party (PT)”, Global Research, 30 March 2015. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/brazil-economic-policy-the-protest-movement-and-the-debacle-of-the-pt/5439462>

9 See the photo essay: “Like oil and water: struggles against the Brazilian “green economy”, Carbon Trade Watch and FASE-ES, November 2013. <http://www.carbontradewatch.org/multimedia/like-oil-and-water-struggles-against-the-brazilian-green-economy>

The pledged petroleum funding succeeded in silencing opposition, and served to divide social movements and communities with occasional kick-backs for social movement leaders, while large amounts of money were funnelled to the oligarchy.

¹⁰ Plano Decenal de Expansão de Energia – PDE, <http://www.epe.gov.br/pdee/forms/epeestudo.aspx>

¹¹ Apex Brasil, “Brazil: a huge oil and gas market at the tipping point for world renowned success,” Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, 2014. <http://www.apexbrasil.com.br/uploads/Final%20Updated%20Folder%20O&G%202014.pdf>

¹² Petrobras Magazine, “2013 results and new pre-salt record: 412,000 bopd,” 2014. <http://www.petrobras.com/en/magazine/post/2013-results-and-new-pre-salt-record-412-000-bopd.htm>

¹³ Petrobras Magazine, “Oil and natural gas production in January,” 2015. <http://www.petrobras.com/en/magazine/post/oil-and-natural-gas-production-in-january.htm>

oil exploration: contamination, leakage, the swelling of small and medium-sized cities, and destruction of marine environments to name a few. They were well aware of the risks inherent in a petroleum-state. As seen elsewhere around the globe, power and corruption are entrenched in the fossil fuel industry.

Since the discovery of off-shore in Espírito Santo in 2006, the most significant investments from the Lula and Dilma governments have been concentrated in the petroleum and gas sectors. For example, the *Plano Decenal de Energia* (Ten Year Energy Plan) is an R\$951 billion investment consisting of 70.6% for the oil and gas sector, 22.5% for electricity and 7% for biofuels.¹⁰ Petrobras received investments of US\$220 billion in its Business Plan 2014-2018.¹¹ Os **Planos de Aceleração do Crescimento** (PAC 1 and PAC 2; Growth Acceleration Plan) and the *Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico* (BNDES), orchestrated investments into projects including: building ports, shipyards, pipelines, refineries, fertilizer plants, and logistics facilities on and off shore to name a few. This large-scale infrastructure was implemented at an accelerated pace, at high risk, and at all costs.

The government’s political alliances with the most conservative sectors both in parliament and in the composition of ministries resulted in weakened forest and mining codes, slashed environmental legislation, non-implementation of the territorial rights of Indigenous and traditional Peoples, fishers, Quilombolas, as well as precarious and outsourced labour on petroleum rigs. These adjustments were

pushed through by corporate interests, bribery and political corruption based on the game of partisan participation in the power pact from powerful elites including: Odebrecht, Camargo Correa, Queiroz Galvão, Andrade Gutierrez, among others.

Oil price economic non-sense

The fall in the price of oil coupled with the corruption scandals eroded the false promises of the petro-dream. Although the government claims the oil industry can still be profitable with a barrel **price of US\$45**, this is among one of the reasons that Petrobras has declared a **Plano de Desinvestimento** (Divestment Plan) including the sale of assets and privatisation. The company will sell off fertilizer factories, decrease investments in ports and refineries, and decrease investments in other countries, focusing even more on domestic oil and gas exploration. Petrobras is responsible for 92% of the national production, 75% which comes from offshore pre-salt petroleum.¹²

Although the current downturn in the price of oil may be temporary, the price is volatile and even when low, this does not prevent the expansion of the oil industry or the burning of fossil fuels. However, in Brazil, amid these crises, the production of oil and gas continues to break records, reaching 3 million barrels of oil equivalent per day in January 2015, of which 27% was offshore pre-salt (800,000 bpd).¹³

However, the fall in the price of oil from US\$115 in June 2014 to US\$48 in January 2015, coincided with a

deep political crisis in the hegemonic power pact since the 2003 Lula government began. After nine years of the petroleum boom, the inevitable occurred – corruption, embezzlement, and lies. Just before the Dilma election, investigators launched the Operation *Lava Jato* (Car Wash) that uncovered the money laundering scheme suspected of moving more than US\$3.5 billion – the biggest known corruption scandal in the country culminating from the largest oil contractors financing political parties and Petrobras financing.¹⁴

Discontent with Brazilian policies grew by March of 2015, erupting in millions taking to the streets to protest government corruption. The Dilma government was slammed by the right and Brazilian society fell into a complex debate pitting the right against Dilma's PP (*Partido Progressista*).¹⁵ Corruption was predictable regardless of what government would have been in power – left, right or centre. Even worse, the turmoil in the political landscape carried ghosts, with some advocating for a military dictatorship as a means to stop the corruption.¹⁶

Wide-spread dissent and uproar against political corruption was inevitable as the wealthiest 10% of Brazilians receive 42.7% of the national income and the poorest 34% receive less than 1.2%.¹⁷ Couple this with the **high homicide rate in Brazil**, and more than half of the recorded environmentalist murders in the world, the increased resource exploitation from pre-salt oil increases corruption and violence are just some of the challenges Brazilians face as the country catapults into a new extraction-fuelled development phase.¹⁸

National sovereignty vs. territorial sovereignty: the case of Espírito Santo

As a result of the location and wealth of natural resources, Espírito Santo (ES) is historically one of the most important export regions in Brazil including: mining products, paper-pulp, marble, granite and iron. Most of these exports began during the military dictatorship. As a region devastated by an export economy and industrialization, the discovery of the second largest pre-salt oil field just off the coast of ES was met with mixed emotions by the local people. Any toxic tour made in the oil areas to the north and along the Atlantic Coast of Espírito Santo would be witness to the following:

- The expulsion of traditional communities, preventing a robust local economy
- Constant leaks and contamination of oil onto land, rivers and streams
- Devastation of the marine environment and fishing territories
- Collapse of social policies: health, housing, education, sanitation – in the districts and “petroleum” cities

Since the first Lula government, hundreds of companies involved in the oil and gas sector have invaded ES, supported by investments from BNDES, the PAC 1 and 2, and companies such as Petrobras, StatOil, Shell, Total, Chevron, and Jurong. The state promotes and encourages the oil industry by offering new exploration blocks, prioritising the oil and gas sector in

¹⁴ *Ministério Público Federal*, “Results of Operation Lava Jato,” accessed 9 May 2015. <http://www.lavajato.mpf.mp.br/atuacao-na-1a-instancia/resultados/todas-noticias>

¹⁵ Samantha Pearson and Aline Rocha, “One million join anti-Rousseff protests in Brazil,” *Financial Times*, 16 March 2015. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/fff8df34-cb1e-11e4-bac3-00144feab7de.html>

¹⁶ Antonis Vradis, “Brazil can’t afford to ignore protestors when they’re calling for the military,” *The Guardian*, 17 March, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/17/brazil-protesters-military>

¹⁷ IBD report, “Country Program Evaluation: Brazil 2007-2010”, Inter-American Development Bank, 2011. <http://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/5544/Country%20Program%20Evaluation%3a%20Brazil%202007-2010.pdf;jsessionid=3C88CED4F5FC92F32C52A33818D75AE7?sequence=14>

¹⁸ Brazil has the highest murder rate of environmentalist in the world. See for example: “Deadly environment: the rise in killings of environmental and land defenders”, *Global Witness*, 2014. <https://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/deadly%20environment%20embargoed.pdf>

As a region devastated by an export economy and industrialization, the discovery of the second largest pre-salt oil field just off the coast of ES was met with mixed emotions by the local people.

¹⁹ See the photo essay: "Like oil and water: struggles against the Brazilian "green economy"; Carbon Trade Watch and FASE-ES, November 2013. <http://www.carbontradewatch.org/multimedia/like-oil-and-water-struggles-against-the-brazilian-green-economy>

²⁰ Wendy Laursen. "FPSO blast: Last three bodies recovered," Maritime Executive, 3 March 2015. <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/fpsoblast-last-three-bodies-recovered>

²¹ See more information at: Friends of the Earth press release. "Denouncing the brutal murder of two fishermen from Rio de Janeiro," FOEI, 29 June 2012. <http://www.foei.org/news/denouncing-the-brutal-murder-of-two-fishermen-from-rio-de-janeiro> and <http://www.carbontradewatch.org/multimedia/en/category/photo-essays/like-oil-and-water/petroleum-brutality?lang=en> Support AHOMAR: <http://www.sindpescarj.org.br/>

energy policies, destroying land rights, accelerating licenses without proper precautionary research, and by continuing to manipulate the consultation process.

The complex financial transactions consisting of sub-cartelized clusters operate in a partisan labyrinth and function by exploiting on-shore and off-shore petroleum, performing seismic surveys, drilling new wells, installing pipelines, oil and gas terminals, building port terminals and shipyards, and occupying large areas of land. The crisis may have slowed some things down, but the process is well underway.

Along the Atlantic coast in the north of ES, petroleum extraction devastates large areas of the remaining *Mata Atlântica* Forest and marine biodiversity. The oil expansion subjects fishing territories, Quilombolas, *campesinos*, Indigenous Peoples, and small urban districts into "sacrificial zones". The living conditions of the local people are destroyed while the resistance is expelled, persecuted and criminalized.¹⁹

Petroleum workers risk their lives on offshore platforms. Explosions and faulty equipment are common, for example in February 2015 an explosion on the platform FPSO killed nine people off the coast of Aracruz, ES.²⁰ Workers are subjects to dangerous working conditions, equipment irregularities, regulation failures, lack of equipment maintenance, lack of enforcement and so on. The local, prevailing environmental racism, and the violence from the state police, often associated with private militias, is exacerbated, as in the emblematic case of the AHOMAR fishing murders in conflict with Petrobras

in Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro in 2012 during the Rio+20.²¹

Furthermore, cities and districts that have lived with the oil industry for decades, such as the north of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, clearly demonstrate that oil income is not distributed equally throughout society, but rather has generated a local elite that re-concentrates wealth and power. Against the unbridled expansion of new oil blocks and exploration wells, people do not have the right to say no. The expansion is done in the name of national sovereignty, but with no respect for territorial sovereignty.

An urgent appeal from activists and communities in ES: "Not one more well! For the right to say No!"

In Brazil, after following the social and environmental injustices and conflicts related to oil and gas in several states of the federation, through linking national and regional networks, a strategic campaign and debate has emerged.

We consider it essential to act against the expansion of the oil model, because the auctions to bid for new drilling areas will not stop, nor will the environmental injustices. Defending the territories where there is resistance to these projects serve to create barriers and obstacles to this expansion, reduces its rapid pace and associated risks, and leads to a deeper questioning of the uses and lifestyles that "justify" this expansion creating a strategic agenda for dialogue within Brazilian civil society.

This strategy is a way to begin an exchange with fishers, Quilombolas, local citizens, farmers, academics, artists, students, activists in defence of “oil-free territories”. The phrases: 1) “Not one more well!” And 2) “For the right to say No!” can be articulated in the campaigns for the rights to fishing territories, Indigenous and Quilombola Peoples, and for pesticide-free foods.

“Not one more well!” questions the expansion and the false motives. Behind the petro-economy it does not imply that “right here and now” we will stop using oil and gas. And in this way does not imply immediate unemployment for the workers in the oil chain. Nor does it claim that it is possible to immediately stop using cars and fertilizers and so on. “Not one more well!” is rather a strategic appeal against further expansion, to provoke thinking towards an urgent decrease (and more discriminating selection) of fossil fuel use for environmental and climate justice.

“For the Right to Say No!” goes deep to the heart of the debate on Prior and Informed Consent, after all, there is no use to have a Prior and Informed Consent without the right to say no – a phrase coined by the feminist movements in the 1980s, more relevant than

ever, given the petroleum *phalocracy*. The sexism, racism and violence embedded in the petroleum expansion in Brazil’s territories is an explicit indication of the depraved level of market-based and corrupt “democracies”. A new society and a new energy model will only be possible if we can stop the unchecked expansion of the oil “civilization”. There will be no energy transition without a transition away from the petroleum model.

Although mobilizations for Paris are underway, many activists, organizations and movements will stay at home and continue these critical resistances on the ground. With solidarity to those in Paris that will take to the streets, it is important to note that those who cannot go – or choose not to go – also seek international solidarity as they fight the power at the source. In this light, it is our hope to build a wider consciousness to the importance of local and grassroots mobilization and resistance in the Global South. Without these hard-fought struggles at the root of a brutal extraction infrastructure, any mobilization is futile. Therefore, building deeper understandings and placing increased importance on local struggles should be a focus for future climate and environmental justice dialogues.

“For the Right to Say No!” goes deep to the heart of the debate on Prior and Informed Consent, after all, there is no use to have a Prior and Informed Consent without the right to say no – a phrase coined by the feminist movements in the 1980s, more relevant than ever, given the petroleum phalocracy.



Fracking as environmental load displacement: examining the violence of unconventional oil and gas extraction

Lena Weber recently completed her Master of Science degree in Human Ecology at Lund University. She is interested in the relationships between systemic oppression, climate change, academia and environmental justice organizing.

This article draws heavily from Friends of the Earth Europe's December 2014 report [Fracking Frenzy](#) and the EJOLT Environmental Justice Atlas ([EJAtlas.org](#)) to highlight environmental justice concerns surrounding foreign-sponsored fracking in low-GDP countries. The article first outlines the risks of shale gas extraction in the context of climate change before delving into a case study centred on fracking in Algeria. The article goes on to propose the concept of environmental load displacement as a useful tool to understand the unequal distribution caused by the impacts of fracking and climate change, and concludes on a somewhat hopeful note, touching on the potential for international solidarity and local movements as a way to defend against the environmental and social consequences of unconventional gas extraction.

Not so clean: how fracking exacerbates climate change

The exploration and extraction of unconventional fossil fuels is taking place at the same time as awareness about the need to urgently prevent the worst consequences of the climate crisis increases. Expert analysis across the board has confirmed our rapid approach

towards dangerous tipping points and calls for decarbonising our energy systems. Shale gas exploration is justified as a strategy to transition to greener economies, and promoted as a low carbon transition fuel. However, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reports that at least two thirds of fossil fuel reserves must be left unexploited to avoid 2°C warming, and the fracking industry development's implications for climate change prove natural gas to be no exception.¹

Natural gas, which contains high levels of methane, does have a lower carbon footprint than many other fossil fuel sources when it is burnt, but it can generate high levels of emissions over the course of the production and transportation cycles as a result of methane leakages. These leaks are a legitimate concern, due to the much higher failure rate of fracking's unconventional well drillings compared to conventional wells, and these risks increase further in low-GDP countries with lower capacities to monitor environmental standards. The IPCC warns that methane has a global warming potential 86 times higher over a two-decade time frame than CO₂, and so while considerable debate does exist, many international agencies agree that the fracking industry cannot achieve the claimed climate benefits.²

1 Gheroghiu, Andy, Antoine Simon and Helen Burley. "Fracking Frenzy." Friends of the Earth Europe, December 2014. https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/fracking_frenzy_0.pdf

2 Ibid

In addition to concerns surrounding methane leakages, the IEA predicts that CO₂ emissions in the context of shale gas expansion will increase at a global scale, fitting in with a long-term trajectory of overall CO₂ emissions causing a temperature rise of over 3.5°C. Therefore, natural gas cannot be seen as a clean fossil fuel, but instead should be seen as exacerbating the risk of dangerous climate change via increased CO₂ emissions, impeding development of cleaner forms of energy, tying global economies to a new decades-long fossil fuel trajectory, and delaying movements towards decarbonisation. In short, fracking projects risk perpetuating unequal environmental degradation with both short and long-term social and environmental consequences.³

Case study: fracking in Algeria

In January 2015, large-scale demonstrations spread to Algiers from the Sahara after the Algerian government announced that the first shale gas well by Total, a French multinational oil and gas company, would be drilled in Salah. This came several years after Algeria first stated plans to tap into its shale gas reserves, the third largest in the world, with the intent to supply the European gas market. To this end, Algeria's hydrocarbon company, Sonatrach, has entered into agreements with a number of multinational companies, including Shell, ENI, Total and Talisman (headquartered in the US and the Netherlands, Italy, France, and Canada, respectively). A hydrocarbons law amended in 2012 made it easier for foreign companies to invest

in the shale gas sector, allowing for tax breaks and variable royalty taxes. The first exploration wells were drilled in 2011 in the Ahnet basin near Tamanrasset.⁴

Environmental justice activists in Algeria have expressed concern over the large amounts of water needed for fracking in an already water-scarce country, in addition to the potential for toxic chemicals to pollute groundwater and aquifer reserves. The Algerian Solidarity Campaign has urged decision-makers to take into consideration citizens' basic rights to water, noting that while water shortages remain a major grievance, the drilling method requires 15 to 20 million litres of non-saline water for each fracturing, equivalent to the average daily consumption of a city of 40,000 people. The director of fossil energy development at Algiers Ecole Polytechnique has argued that the injection of 15,000 cubic metres (530,000 cubic feet) of water per well, with a well expected to be drilled every 100 metres in some areas, would be catastrophic for a country with such water scarcity, and that it could destroy the Saharan ecosystem.⁵

Fracking as environmental load displacement

Alf Hornborg argues that industrial development and maintenance requires a constant input of energy, which results in unequal exchanges between industrial centres and national and global extractive sectors.⁶ Georgescu-Roegen posits that if we apply the concept of entropy to this unequal exchange, we can better understand how the creation and maintenance

3 Ibid

4 Simon, Antoine and Lena Weber. "Resistance to Fracking Projects in Algeria." Environmental Justice Atlas, accessed February 5, 2015. <http://console.ejatl.org/conflict/resistancetofracking-projectsinalgeria>

5 "Algeria Goes Shale Gas Route." *News24*. November 11, 2012. <http://www.news24.com/Green/News/Algeria-goes-shale-gas-route-20121111>

6 Hornborg, Alf. "Footprints in the Cotton Fields: The Industrial Revolution as Time-Space Appropriation and Environmental Load Displacement." In *Rethinking Environmental History: World-system history and global environmental change*, edited by Alf Hornborg, John Robert McNeill, & Juan Martínez Alier, 259. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006.

- 7 Georgescu-Roegen (1971) Ibid
- 8 Hornborg, Alf. "Footprints in the Cotton Fields: The Industrial Revolution as Time-Space Appropriation and Environmental Load Displacement." In *Rethinking Environmental History: World-system history and global environmental change*, edited by Alf Hornborg, John Robert McNeill, & Juan Martínez Alier, 259. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006.
- 9 Hornborg, Alf. "ZeroSum World: Challenges in Conceptualizing Environmental Load Displacement and Ecologically Unequal Exchange in the World System." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 50 (2009): 237-263.
- 10 Klare 2001 in Hornborg, Alf. "Footprints in the Cotton Fields: The Industrial Revolution as Time-Space Appropriation and Environmental Load Displacement." In *Rethinking Environmental History: World-system history and global environmental change*, edited by Alf Hornborg, John Robert McNeill, & Juan Martínez Alier, 260. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006.
- 11 Gheroghiu, Andy, Antoine Simon and Helen Burley. "Fracking Frenzy." Friends of the Earth Europe, December 2014. https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/fracking_frenzy_0.pdf
- 12 Ibid
- 13 Earthtrends. "Climate and Atmosphere—Syrian Arab Republic". UNEP. http://www.unep.org/dewa/westasia/data/knowledge_bases/syria/Reports/WRI/Cli_cou_760.pdf

of technological and cultural structure in cores (areas where monetary wealth and resources tend to congregate) results in increasing material and energetic 'disorder' in peripheries (areas generally exploited for their resources for the benefit of cores).⁷

This framework provides a foundation for understanding the tendency for environmental problems to be distributed unequally across different sectors of the global population, and can be divided into two key components. First that the core extracts energy and materials from the peripheries, and second, that it then displaces the resulting energetic and material disorder back to the periphery.⁸ Cores and their peripheries can be as geographically close as two neighbourhoods within the same city, or as far apart as a high-GDP European country and a small Pacific Island nation. A classic example of this relationship on the global scale could be a colonial power (core) extracting material wealth and resources for its own industrial and cultural maintenance from its colony, the periphery, which is then forced to deal with the resulting environmental and social chaos from the extraction process. This uneven deterioration of the natural environment due to global power relations is, in essence, environmental load displacement.⁹

As documented in this case and elsewhere in the EJ Atlas, fracking projects in Algeria and other low-GDP countries are often backed by companies headquartered in Western Europe and North America. These trade relationships reproduce the increasingly obvious, though certainly not recent, tendency for high-GDP industrial powers to rely on fossil fuels extracted

from the global periphery.¹⁰ Ironically, fracking has been banned in parts of the European Union such as France and Bulgaria due to concerns about local environmental impacts, but European energy companies continue to operate in economically poorer countries, even with documented experience showing that risks can significantly increase in regions where the capacity for implementing and enforcing environmental and health protection is generally lower.¹¹

Friends of the Earth Europe has argued that it is likely, based on the experience of industry behaviour in other fuel related activities, that fracking in countries like Algeria would contribute to further environmental degradation, corruption, human rights violations, social conflicts and poverty.¹² Furthermore, much of the fracked gas in Algeria would be sold back to the European market to be consumed there. Fracking in this context risks acting as a case of global environmental load displacement, wherein European industry would be supported via extracted resources from Algeria, causing environmental and associated social consequences in the latter. In this instance, the risk of environmental degradation due to fracking is being partially displaced from Europe and North America and relocated to countries like Algeria, while companies and natural gas consumers in countries like France would continue to benefit from fracking without experiencing many of the negative localised consequences such as water pollution and overexploitation.

When considering the connection between fracking and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, we can see a secondary environmental load displacement due to

the longer term displacement from the impacts of climate change. Western Europe and North America are the regions responsible for the historic bulk of climate change-causing GHG emissions. In 1998, the EU and US combined emitted 30.66% of global GHG emissions¹³, while in 2009, the US emitted 17.67 tonnes *per capita* of CO₂ emissions compared to a global average of 4.49 tonnes *per capita*. Further, in 2009, Europe emitted 7.14 tonnes *per capita*, with France at 6.30 tonnes, while Algeria only emitted 3.33 tonnes *per capita*, well below the global average.¹⁴ The climate change impact that a global intensification of shale oil and gas production would likely have is significant. This poses a major risk to many low-GDP countries, which are already impacted by climate change and predicted to experience some of the most severe consequences. In purely economic terms, by 2030, when the cost of climate change and air pollution combined is expected to represent 3% of global GDP, the world's economically poorest countries are projected to pay the highest price, restricting GDP growth by up to 11%.¹⁵ In Algeria, expected impacts of climate change include decreased water resources, lower agricultural yields, and increased desertification, to name a few. However, on a global scale, Algeria has contributed less than 0.5% of all global GHG emissions.¹⁶ Evidently, the environmental load of climate change is distributed unevenly and will likely continue to be so in the future.¹⁷

The sinister reality of environmental load displacement is the resulting violence. This violence can manifest slowly, as in birth defects and rising cancer rates due

to toxic waste over several generations, or quickly, as in brutal police repression against local environmental justice movements. In the case of Algeria, as in other countries, we can see implications for both 'slow' and 'fast' violence. Nixon describes 'slow violence' as "violence that occurs gradually", "delayed destruction" that is "dispersed across time and space".¹⁸ GHG emissions emitted during the fracking process act as a form of slow violence due to the elongated temporal and spatial span of the impacts.¹⁹ The changing climate we are experiencing today is partly a result of GHG emissions over one hundred years ago, while the impact from extraction and burning fracked fossil fuels will continue to be felt for decades or centuries to come. Fracking compounds the slow violence of climate change by contributing to 'fast violence', as well; one recent example of the brutality of this 'fast' violence is the killing of a young Algerian activist by police during an anti-fracking protest on January 4th of this year.²⁰ Clearly, the repression and contamination of environments documented in the EJ Atlas fracking cases exemplifies environmental load displacement through impacts on local populations both immediately and in the long-term.

Conclusion: resistance and alternative solutions

As of early 2015, thousands of Algerians had taken part in protests across the country, calling for national dialogue and a halt to all shale gas operations. The government's initial response included forcefully

14 "World carbon dioxide emissions data by country: China speeds ahead of the rest" *The Guardian*, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/jan/31/world-carbon-dioxide-emissions-country-data-co2#data>

15 "2nd Edition Climate Vulnerability Monitor." DARA International, 2012. <http://www.daraint.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/CVM2ndEd-FrontMatter.pdf>; Harvey, Fiona. "Climate Change is Already Damaging Global Economy, Report Finds." *The Guardian*. September 26, 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/sep/26/climate-change-damaging-global-economy>

16 Sahnoune, F M. Belhamel, M. Zemat, and R. Kerbach. "Climate Change in Algeria: Vulnerability and Strategy of Mitigation and Adaptation." *Energy Procedia* 36 (2013): 1286-1294. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876610213012319>

17 Gheroghiu, Andy, Antoine Simon and Helen Burley. "Fracking Frenzy." Friends of the Earth Europe, December 2014. https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/fracking_frenzy_0.pdf

18 Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011: 2

19 Davis, Brian. "The Slow Violence of Fracking in Argentina." *Occupy*. November 3, 2014. <http://www.occupy.com/article/slow-violence-fracking-argentina>

20 Simon, Antoine and Lena Weber. "Resistance to Fracking Projects in Algeria." Environmental Justice Atlas, accessed February 5, 2015. <http://console.ejatl.org/conflict/resistancetofrackingprojectsin-algeria>

GHG emissions emitted during the fracking process act as a form of slow violence due to the elongated temporal and spatial span of the impacts

21 MEE Staff. "Algeria Shelves Shale Gas Plans Until 2022 Amid Fierce Protests." *Middle East Eye*, February 13, 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/algeria-shelves-shale-gas-plans-until-2022-amid-fierce-protests-1248201658>

22 Buckland, Kevin. "Oil and Water on a Common River: A Paper Boat Journey in the Early Anthropocene." *Forthcoming*.

23 Simon, Antoine and Lena Weber. "Resistance to Fracking Projects in Algeria." *Environmental Justice Atlas*, accessed February 5, 2015. <http://console.ejatl.org/conflict/resistancetofracking-projectsinalgeria>

24 Lamri, Rachida. "Mass Movement, Blockades Halt Fracking in Algeria." *Earth First Journal*. February 13, 2015. <http://earthfirstjournal.org/newswire/2015/02/13/mass-movement-blockades-halt-fracking-in-algeria/>

25 Ibid

dispersing a sit-in in Algiers and arresting around 12 participants, as well as banning a protest on January 17th. Tragically, as mentioned before, clashes with the police took at least one life, 21-year-old Mohamed El Noui, who died during a protest on January 4th. On January 27th, 2015 Algeria announced a moratorium on shale gas exploitation until at least 2022 with potential for a complete scrapping of the plans to drill. Prime Minister Sellal announced the decision on state television, saying, "[b]etween shale gas and water, the Algerian people will choose water; you think the Algerian state would be crazy enough to endanger the lives of its citizens?"²¹ With this statement, the Prime Minister seemingly joined increasingly frequent calls from around the world, including Algerian activists, centering anti-fracking and climate justice discourses on the issue of access to water.²² Despite these announcements, anti-fracking demonstrations continued. Many people reportedly feared that the government's promises were hollow; Prime Minister Sellal previously stated in July 2013 that no actual fracking would take place until 2024, and that current drilling was just part of necessary surveys.²³ It appears that these fears were well-founded. On February 8th, 2015 the head of Algerian-owned Sonatrach announced that shale gas development plans would continue in collaboration with foreign multinationals.²⁴

Fracking in Algeria elucidates the uneven burden faced by low-GDP countries that will bear the brunt of anthropogenic climate change and many negative consequences of fracking, though they have historically played a very small role in GHG emissions and

are likely to consume less fracked fossil fuels than high-GDP countries. In essence, the environmental load of fracking and climate change is being displaced, increasingly on a global scale. This is not a new story: low-GDP countries, many of them former colonies, have a long history of dealing with displaced environmental loads from high-GDP countries, many of them colonisers. For example, France only stopped testing nuclear weapons in Algeria in 1966, years after Algerian independence.²⁵ Today, in the context of neo-imperialism, these unequal power dynamics are manifesting in new corporate channels, but the result of environmental load displacement remains eerily the same: France has constitutionally banned fracking in its own backyard while French corporations and consumers continue to invest in fracking in Algeria. In fact, while many environmental justice movements in high-GDP regions have consistently rallied around a philosophy of 'neither here nor there', others have failed to do so. When anti-fracking movements within high-GDP countries focus only on halting fracking activities within their own national borders, they risk displacing the environmental load of those projects elsewhere, falling prey to an 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality which can reproduce unequal exchange on a global scale.

It is also important to consider that the impacts of fracking and climate change will not be experienced homogeneously even within low-GDP countries. Climate scientists and activists have warned that Indigenous Peoples and small scale farmers, groups often represented in fracking project areas, will be

especially hard hit.²⁶ At the same time, there is hope in the wide diversity of resistance strategies and anti-fracking solidarity around the world. Indigenous leaders impacted by Shell fracking activity in Ecuador are working with Indigenous leaders in Argentina faced with illegal fracking in their own territory, while academics in Mexico are authoring investigative studies documenting the negative impacts of fracking and challenging the dominant discourse, while highways around the world are being blocked, documentaries produced, and coalitions formed.²⁷

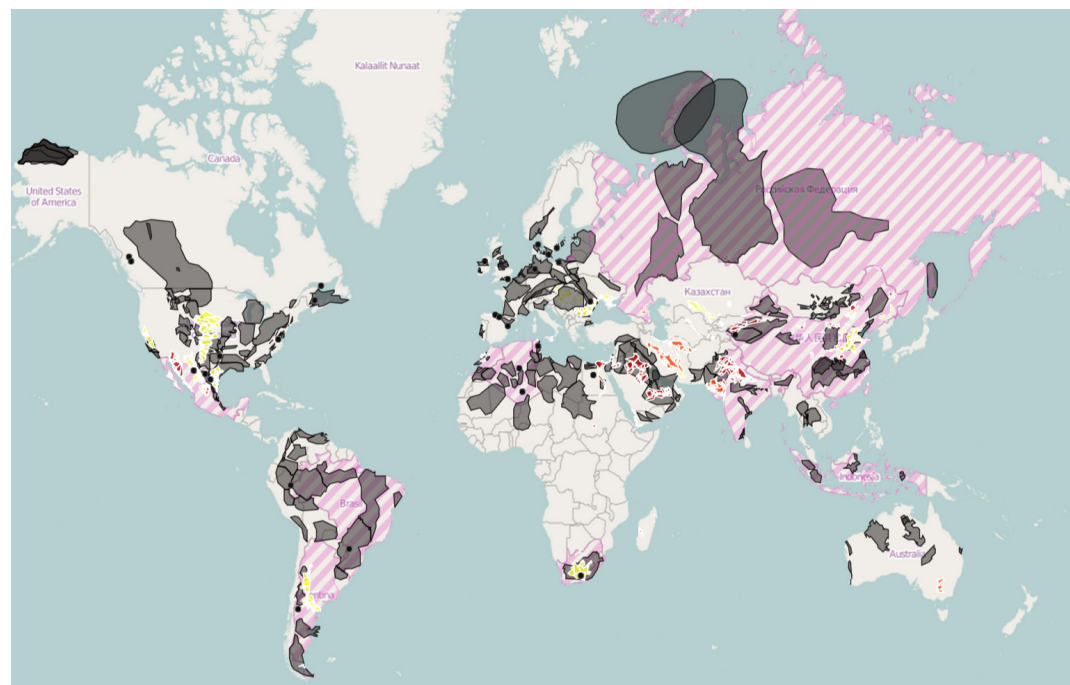
In reference to shale gas extraction, Friends of the Earth Europe is demanding member states of the EU and European financial institutions to stop politically and financially backing the development of shale projects both at home and abroad. Friends of the Earth has

also called for the reallocation of financial and political support for shale gas projects in low-GDP countries to go instead towards development of renewable energy, as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. Meanwhile, the Algerian Solidarity Campaign (ASC) is also pushing for their state government to focus on economic diversification in order to decrease dependency on natural resources and to instead develop other sectors, specifically renewable energy.²⁸ Looking forward, the international community must be cognizant of the demands of local resistance movements and, in Europe and North America in particular, push their own governments and locally headquartered multinationals to stop displacing the environmental load of fracking not only on national scales, but also at the global level.

26 Gheroghiu, Andy, Antoine Simon and Helen Burley. "Fracking Frenzy." Friends of the Earth Europe, December 2014. https://www.foe-europe.org/sites/default/files/publications/fracking_frenzy_0.pdf

27 Environmental Justice Atlas. *EJAtlas*. ejatlas.org

28 Simon, Antoine and Lena Weber. "Resistance to Fracking Projects in Algeria." Environmental Justice Atlas, accessed February 5, 2015. <http://console.ejatlas.org/conflict/resistanceto/frackingprojectsinalgeria>



Decolonising and decarbonising: How the Unist'ot'en are arresting pipelines and asserting autonomy

Leah Temper is the editor of the Global Atlas of Environmental Justice (ejatlas.org) and the Director of USC-Canada's Seeds of Survival Program, Global South (usc-canada.org).

Sam Bliss writes about environmental and economic justice issues for Grist and other publications. He is currently a Fulbright fellow studying economic inequality in Spain under "unplanned degrowth".



Introduction

The 22,000-square-kilometer territory of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation lies directly in the path of several proposed oil and gas pipelines. The Canadian government and industry plan to unlock the vast energy resources in the Alberta tar sands and the fracking fields in northeastern British Columbia (BC) and deliver them to international markets through ports in Kitimat and Prince Rupert on BC's west coast.

The fossil-fuel transport projects would create an "energy corridor" – a key component of Canada's quest to become a global energy superpower. However, the Unist'ot'en Clan of the Wet'suwet'en people have built a blockade on their ancestral land, living in an intentional community directly in the planned route of the proposed pipelines.

One of the instigators of this planned expansion is the Natural Gas Pacific Trails Pipeline (PTP) project, originally scheduled to break ground in 2012. In November 2011 the Unist'ot'en escorted drillers and other PTP employees off their territories. The Clan again evicted surveyors from their territory on 20 November 2012, by presenting them with an eagle

feather, the first and only traditional notice of trespass, then built roadblocks limiting all access to their territories. The Clan state they were not properly consulted, and that the pipeline contributes to expanding controversial shale gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing ("fracking"), which uses and destroys enormous volumes of fresh water. They aim to be operating in solidarity with neighbouring communities who want to stop all pipelines, reverse climate change, shut down tar sands and maintain their opposition to what they claim are false solutions to climate change via carbon markets, carbon, forest and biological offsets and REDD+ in the Global South.¹

The geopolitical stakes are considerable. BC plans to become a major exporter of shale gas from hydraulic fracturing fields in the Horn area of BC through a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) economic strategy estimated to be worth some CA or US\$78 billion.² On the line: billions of dollars and 19 LNG projects, including five natural gas pipelines, and three LNG facilities planned to be operational by 2020.³ Yet the PTP and the LNG infrastructure is just one of several pipeline projects that make up the planned "energy corridor" — the Canadian petro-state ultimately has its sights

- 1 <https://unistotencamp.wordpress.com/no-offsetting/>
- 2 <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/bc-first-nations-slam-brakes-premier-s-lng-plans>
- 3 <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/lnginbc/>

set on marketing tar-sands oil globally without first passing through the US.⁴

Developing such major pipeline infrastructure entails numerous distributive consequences; from refining capacity, and vessel traffic to increased emissions and potential for spills. Pipelines distribute pollution and the route chosen for Enbridge and other gas and tar-sands related infrastructure will spatially organize environmental inequities in Canada and distribution of risk well into the future.⁵ “Fossil capitalism” inherently presents other associated inequalities, such as the costs of climate chaos, adaptation and related socio-ecological changes, which simultaneously manifest in concrete locations but also have global consequences.

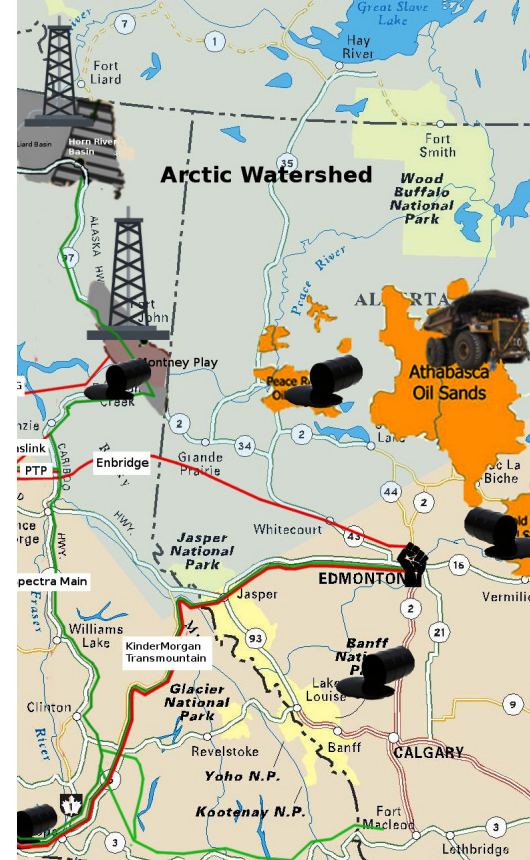
The estimated 170 billion barrels of crude oil in the bitumen of the Alberta tar sands represent 95 percent of Canadian oil reserves and 12 percent of global reserves. Once greater pipeline capacity “unlocks” these vast petroleum resources, the resulting greenhouse gas emissions would push climate change beyond tipping points, meaning “game over” for the climate, according to the former director of NASA’s Godard Institute, James Hansen.⁶

While the Enbridge oil pipeline, which would bring tar-sands oil from Alberta to the BC coast, has generated heated opposition from many of the 50 Indigenous nations whose territories it would cross, other First Nations have signed onto the “natural” gas pipelines. This may be partly because their concerns regarding the distribution of risk has been assuaged by industry

representatives who tell them that in case of a spill the gas would simply evaporate. In contrast, the position of the Unist’ot’en camp is counter to a NIMBY (not in my backyard) approach that would reduce their resistance simply to concerns for the distributive impacts on their territory alone. They are uncompromising; neither PTP nor any other pipeline including Enbridge Northern Gateway, Coastal GasLink, or BG/Spectra will be allowed through their territories. This complete opposition to all pipelines – existing, proposed or approved to expand – is a powerful act of defiance and has generated support from environmentalists and climate-justice activists around the world. In this way the camp has become a potent symbol against extractivism.

The Unist’ot’en camp is a space that actively endeavors to create a living anti-capitalist alternative, mutually informed by both an ancient system of values on how to create sustainable relationships with the material world as well as engaging with transformative politics of decolonisation that seeks to revalue, reconstruct, and redeploy Indigenous cultural practices while deconstructing colonial and capitalist power structures through a transformative praxis.⁷

To understand how the Unist’ot’en camp is holding up billions in investment, keeping millions of barrels (and cubic metres) of fossil fuels under the ground, preventing countless tonnes of emissions and protecting the sacred-headwaters, the article will first explore the special legal context of Indigenous communities within Canada and then explore the resistance methods



4 McCreary, Tyler A., and Richard A. Milligan. 2014. “Pipelines, Permits, and Protests: Carrier Sekani Encounters with the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project.” *Cultural Geographies* 21 (1): 115–29.

5 Scott, Dayna Nadine. 2013. “The Networked Infrastructure of Fossil Capitalism: Implications of the New Pipeline Debates for Environmental Justice in Canada.” *Revue Générale de Droit*.

6 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/10/opinion/game-over-for-the-climate.html?_r=0

7 Napoleon, Val. 2013. “Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders.” In *Dialogues on Human Rights and Legal Pluralism*, edited by René Provost and Colleen Sheppard, 229–45. *Ius Gentium: Comparative Perspectives on Law and Justice* 17. Springer Netherlands.

“Fossil capitalism” inherently presents other associated inequalities, such as the costs of climate chaos, adaptation and related socio-ecological changes, which simultaneously manifest in concrete locations but also have global consequences.

of the camp. Finally, the article describes some elements of the politics and living practices in the camp.

The Legal approach

We are not interested in asserting aboriginal rights. We are here to discuss territory and authority. When this case ends and the package has been unwrapped, it will have to be our ownership and our jurisdiction under our law that is on the table. – Delgam Uukw

The Unist’ot’en have a long history of resistance against colonialism. With the Gitksan First Nation, they blockaded logging in their traditional territory in the late 1980s, an action which culminated in the groundbreaking Delgamuukw court case whereby in 1984, the Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en went to court to assert their sovereignty, legal jurisdiction and aboriginal rights over some 58,000 square km of their territory. The case was a landmark in several respects. It established that the First Nation’s territorial sovereignty, pending proof of surrender by treaty, is a legitimate and outstanding constitutional question that still remains to be resolved by the court. The case was also significant because after initial objections, the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en were able to use their oral histories as principal evidence in the case.

In the case of the Wet’suwet’en, oral history is transmitted through the *Kungax*, a spiritual song, dance or performance where the “recital[s] of the most important laws, history, traditions and traditional territory of a House... is repeated, performed and authenticated

at important feasts.” In the case of the Gitksan, it is through the *adaawk*. It was in the feast hall throughout their history where they would tell and retell their stories, pass on important histories, songs, crests, lands, ranks, and properties from one generation to the next, and identify their territories to remind themselves of the sacred connection they have with their lands.⁸

Richard Overstall explains how in the case of the Gitksan, these histories serve as an embedded law that evolved as the result of people observing the consequences of their behaviour over time.⁹ When the behaviour is disrespectful of spirits, animals, and others, the consequences are dire and are often recorded in *adaawk*, especially if the behaviour alters a lineage’s relationship with its territory. The *adaawk* thus have a role as legal precedents that inform later conduct.

It is significant that these feasts, hosted by the women in the Wet’suwet’en as a matrilineal society, were actually prohibited by the Criminal Code of Canada until 1951, under what may be one of the most illustrative examples of the many forms of cultural genocide that the colonial state has inflicted upon First Nations.¹⁰

The Delgamuukw trial opened up a space for decolonialising practices, yet at the same time it revealed the limitations of the formal justice system as a medium for the realisation of self-determination and more broadly for the social and environmental justice that those in the camp and climate justice activists are claiming. It demonstrated the different conceptions between indigenous and settler cultures on human-ecological relationships.¹¹

8 Borrows, John. 1999. “Sovereignty’s Alchemy: An Analysis of Delgamuukw v. British Columbia.” *Osgoode Hall LJ* 37: 537.

9 Richard Overstall, “Encountering the Spirit in the Land: ‘Property’ in a Kinship-based Legal Order” in John McLaren, ed., *Despotic Dominion: Property Rights in British Settler Societies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

10 Borrows, John. 1999. “Sovereignty’s Alchemy: An Analysis of Delgamuukw v. British Columbia.” *Osgoode Hall LJ* 37: 537.

11 Bedford, David, and Thomas Cheney. 2013. “Labor, Nature, and Spirituality: Human Ecology and a Left-First Nations Politics.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 24 (3): 204–16.

The Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan understand humans as fundamentally interconnected with ecology. The plaintiffs, Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw describe in their opening address a view of the world as a differentiated unity, of which humans are only one part. There is no strict human-nature dualism from this perspective.¹² They write, "The Western world-view sees the essential and primary interactions as being those between human beings. To the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, human beings are part of an interacting continuum, which includes animals and spirits. Animals and fish are viewed as members of societies, which have intelligence and power, and can influence the course of events in terms of their interrelationship with human beings."¹³

This Indigenous philosophy shapes notions about ownership and jurisdiction over land and resources.¹⁴ Yet the court was not able to "recognize nature" in the relational perspective that the plaintiffs asked: the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en understanding of the human relationship with the natural world, and flowing from that, their understanding of property rights, was irreconcilable within the worldview of the settler society and its legal system.

Nor was the court able to extinguish its own authority, as recognising the sovereignty of the tribes would have undermined the court's ability to impose its law on occupied territory. Thus, while the Delgamuukw trial served to deconstruct the courtroom through the use of oral history, the spellings of Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en names, presentation of their own maps, aiming through this to recreate and redraw the

boundaries of the colonial system that is the courtroom, it revealed the limits to the decolonisation that can happen within a courtroom when the state's authority to impose its law is actually what is on trial.

Confronted with the paradox of seeking remedy and justice through the colonial courts, the Unist'ot'en camp has disavowed a rights-based discourse that can only be accorded by what they perceive as an occupying power, in favour of the assertion of their responsibilities to the territory and their ancestral and natural law. As Mel Basil, a longtime supporter of the camp, says "I don't have a right to these fish – I have a responsibility to this river and I will not let that responsibility be diminished."¹⁵

The following sections outline how the Unist'ot'en camp has asserted this responsibility on the land.

Direct action

There are many understandings of direct action. In Canada, one definition holds that direct action, in contrast to the official politics described in the previous section, can be understood as political mobilisation outside state institutions. It excludes legal action and institutionalised protest, such as petitioning, lobbying and litigation. It includes land occupations, road blockades, resource extraction deemed illegal by the state, marches and demonstrations.¹⁶ In other terms, direct action can also be understood as a political tactic that legally or illegally disrupts the public interest in order to attract awareness or action to an issue or cause.¹⁷

Aiming through this to recreate and redraw the boundaries of the colonial system that is the courtroom, it revealed the limits to the decolonisation that can happen within a courtroom when the state's authority to impose its law is actually what is on trial.

¹² Wa, Gisday, and Delgam Uukw. 1992. *The Spirit in the Land: Statements of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, 1987-1990*. Reflections.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Bryan, Bradley. 2000. "Property as Ontology: On Aboriginal and English Understandings of Ownership." *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 13: 3.

¹⁵ Personal correspondence

¹⁶ Morden, Michael. 2015. "Right and Resistance: Norms, Interests and Indigenous Direct Action in Canada." *Ethnopolitics* 14 (3): 256–76.

¹⁷ Wilkes, Rima, Corrigall-Brown, Catherine and Daniel J. Myers. 2010. "Packaging Protest: Media Coverage of Indigenous People's Collective Action." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 47 (4): 327–57.



18 The 1969 white paper proposed the abolition of the Indian Act, with the aim of ending the special legal relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state through the elimination of *Indian* as a distinct legal status and by regarding Aboriginal peoples simply as citizens with the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other Canadians. This white paper was met with forceful opposition from Aboriginal leaders across the country and sparked a new era of Indigenous political organizing in Canada.

19 Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Activists use direct action as a means of taking matters into their own hands when legal or political roadblocks prevent a satisfactory resolution.

The roots of contemporary collective action by First Nations in Canada are often traced back to 1969, the year the White Paper was published.¹⁸ According to Glen Coulthard, this marked the beginning of a new era of social mobilisation that is still ongoing.¹⁹ Particularly in Canada, since this time, the blockade has been an important tactic for halting both the flow of resources out of Indigenous territories that are in dispute, as well as for raising attention to a variety of causes through disruption of “business as usual”. Blockades, such as those against logging for example, are often intertwined with seeking recognition of Aboriginal rights and titles through the courts.

Blockades can be seen as a spatial tactic of resistance that operate both through instrumental and symbolic power. Instrumentally, “The blockade is... used to regulate movement where movement itself is in dispute. More often than not, the massive and unsustainable out-movement of capital and commodities from traditional territories is the focus of the blockade... Blockade is frequently seen as a means of physically halting that flow.”²⁰

Blockades are particularly effective in this regard in Canada (compared for example to the US for example) due to the particular geography of colonisation in Canada, whereby its low population density and rugged terrain mean that pockets of unprocessed resources such as timber or metals are hauled out long distances and dispersed infrastructure creates choke-points where the movement of materials can



be physically blocked.²¹ Because these resources are often located on First Nations territories, they maintain privileged access to the arteries of economic flows and as such exercise incredible leverage to put at risk the “critical infrastructure” that transports natural resources and manufactured goods from mines, oil fields, hydro-electric facilities and factories to international markets.²²

It is worth mentioning that the legality of road blockades on Indigenous territory is highly contested. That is, a number of legal decisions suggest that many blockades may be justified denials of illegal trespass.²³ In this view, the blockade is as far from an act of “civil disobedience” as are the actions of a householder who is defending her property against trespass.

Blomley argues that beyond blocking the flow of resources that invest the blockade with its tremendous

strategic power, the blockade holds a “symbolic effect to the extent that it marks out two spaces... (mapping) out a boundary and, in so doing, distinguishes an ‘Indian’ space from a ‘Euro-Canadian’ space.” Yet counter to Blomley, in the case of the Unist’ot’en camp, this assertion of place and control of space represents much more than a symbolic action.

Beyond the disruption of the flows of capitalism and the denial of the movement of resources out of the territory, the blockade can (temporarily in most cases but in some cases for extended periods) create a space for the control and practice of Indigenous economic and political authority in the face of the cultural and economic dislocation forced upon them for over a century. In the case of the Unist’ot’en camp, it has enabled a space to practice and assert sovereignty and enact the responsibility to their lands.

Blockades can be seen as a spatial tactic of resistance that operate both through instrumental and symbolic power.

²⁰ Blomley, Nicholas. 1996. “‘Shut the Province Down’: First Nations Blockades in British Columbia, 1984-1995.” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 111: 5–35.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Pasternak, Shiri. <http://www.mediacoop.ca/story/economics-insurgency/15610>

²³ A turning point, judicially speaking, was the extended dissent of J.A. South in *BCAG v Mount Currie Indian Band*.



"We will not remove our Gateway (not a blockade). A gateway into understanding truth and meaningful decolonization."

Unist'ot'en Camp

The Unist'ot'en checkpoint and Free Prior and Informed Consent

Since 2009, the Unist'ot'en have been manning what they refer to as a check-point rather than a blockade to prevent trespass by industry and government interests that aim to develop projects without their consent. Representatives of the Wet'suwet'en delivered eviction notices to Apache Oil and Enbridge stating that the companies are "not permitted onto unceded lands of the Wet'suwet'en; are not permitted to place their greed ahead of Indigenous self-determination; are not permitted to destroy and exploit the lands; are not permitted to disregard the safety and health of communities; [and] are not permitted to disregard [our] Law!"²⁴

Freda Huson, spokeswoman for the clan, wrote a letter "to the illegitimate colonial governments of Canada and British Columbia, and to all parties involved in the proposed PTP project" that stated, "This letter is to issue a warning of trespass to those companies associated with the PTP industrial extraction project and against any affiliates and contractors infringing upon traditional Wet'suwet'en territory... any further incursion into their territory [interpreted] as an act of aggression against their sovereignty and that violators will be held accountable."²⁵

Following this, the first cabin of the camp, home of Freda Huson, a member of the Unist'ot'en house of the Gilseyhu, (Big Frog) Clan, and her husband Toghestiy, of the nearby Likhts'amisyu (Fireweed) Clan, was built directly on the GPS coordinates of the proposed route of the Pacific Trails Pipeline (PTP), which they refer to as "the trailblazer of the prospective energy corridor." PTP aimed to transport fracked shale gas through a 42-inch diameter bidirectional pipeline 463 km from B.C.'s northern interior to a liquefaction plant and also an export terminal on the coast called Kitimat LNG.

This strategy of physical obstruction has claimed some victories. The PTP project was initially shared by EOG Resources, Encana Corp., and majority owner Apache Corp. of Houston, Texas. In 2013, EOG and Encana sold their shares in the project to Chevron Canada, a subsidiary of Chevron Corporation, which moved into a 50% ownership position along with Apache. In 2014, Apache also pulled out and as of May 2015, PTP was on hold with Chevron lacking a new partner and no confirmed Asian buyers. This recent withdrawal of Apache was heralded as a victory feting that all of the original investors (Encana, EOG and now Apache) have now abandoned the project.²⁶

However, several competing projects are still in the "pipeline" and trying to gain access to the territory. Foremost among these is **Coastal Gaslink**, a 650-km natural gas pipeline that TransCanada plans to connect to the CA\$12 billion "LNG Canada" terminal in Kitimat, in partnership with Shell, PetroChina, Korea Gas and Mitsubishi.²⁷

²⁴ "Statement by Laura Holland, Wet'suwet'en Nation at the Vancouver Rally in Support of the Unist'ot'en Vancouver Media Co-Op" 2015. <http://vancouvermediacoop.ca/story/statement-laura-holland-wetuweten-nation-vancouver/14735>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Apache Corp Abandons Kitimat LNG Project, <http://unistotencamp.com/?p=1013>

²⁷ <http://www.transcanada.com/coastal-gaslink.html>

Reimagined Free Prior and Informed Consent

The checkpoint in the Unist'ot'en camp is controlled via a wooden bridge across the Wedzin Kwah (Morice River), 66 kilometers up a logging road from Houston, BC (see map). This river serves as a border between Canada and the traditional territory of the Unist'ot'en, one of five Clans that make up the Wet'suwet'en Nation. The checkpoint is marked by a large, painted-plywood sign that reads "STOP. No access without prior consent."

To cross the bridge and enter the camp, every visitor must go through a "reimagined free prior and informed consent (RFPIC)" protocol established by the Unist'ot'en camp collective.²⁹ This protocol is modified from ancient protocols where visiting peoples would ask permission to enter the traditional lands from the Chiefs and Matriarchs of the hosting lands.³⁰

The protocol entails four questions that are sent to visitors when they give advance notice of their arrival.

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. Have you ever worked for government or industry that has harmed this territory?
4. How will your visit benefit the Unist'ot'en people?

According to the camp members, the RFPIC should be seen as an act of reclamation of a process that has been "taken ... strangle hold by the Corporations, NGO's, Governments and other Colonial Bodies." This is because FPIC is increasingly used as a

mechanism to facilitate and legitimate development projects "where the 'C' in FPIC is increasingly redefined as 'consultation', precisely because the principle of consent, if taken seriously, does imply the right to say 'no' and the power to veto."³¹

Counter to this appropriation, the Unist'ot'en claim that the protocol is not a new process but based on Traditional Laws that were asserted via protocols like this on the lands for thousands of years.

The Wet'suwet'en also had to present themselves as such when travelling to neighbouring peoples' lands to conduct trade, protocols, build and maintain peace, assist with allies battles, and attain resources or trade work. Visiting nations would be required to dance their stories while waiting on the canoes to show to the host nations that they truly are who they say they are (as the dance would have been seen through historical trade relations).³²

In this way, the RFPIC is a living breathing (re)assertion of the Traditional Laws of the Wet'suwet'en. As Mel Basil writes:

"Free Prior and Informed Consent is not gone, lost or eroded. It has been asleep. The knowledge of conducting them is still active. It must be asserted by the Indigenous Peoples' of these lands. It is not a mere document at the UN office awaiting to be implemented by statism. It is living breathing protocols that must be asserted by peoples who live off the land, connecting to the spirit of the ancestors and upholding Natural Laws."³³

"I am not so concerned with how we dismantle the master's house, but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses."

Leanne Simpson, Dancing on Our Turtle's Back.²⁸

²⁸ Simpson, Leanne. *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2011.

²⁹ Leah Temper visited the camp in summer of 2013 and Sam Bliss visited for a week in 2015.

³⁰ Free Prior and Informed Consent Protocol <http://unistotencamp.com/?p=121>

³¹ Franco, Jennifer. 2014. *Reclaiming Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the Context of Global Land Grabs*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. http://landjustice4wa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/reclaiming_fpic_0.pdf.

³² Free Prior and Informed Consent Protocol <http://unistotencamp.com/?p=121>

³³ Ibid.

“We’re not environmentalists; we just protect the land because we know the land sustains us.”

Freda Huson, a member of the Unist’ot’en Clan

Yet physically obstructing the growth of the fossil-fueled economy is only half of the Unist’ot’en Camp’s mission. In addition, the Unist’ot’en Camp is working to develop the sort of shared community needed for fighting climate change, both in building resilience against environmental change and kicking fossil fuel addiction.

The Ecology of Indigenous Resistance

Freda Huson, a member of the Unist’ot’en Clan, and Toghestiy, of the nearby Likhts’amisyu (fireweed) Clan, says the primary motivation for starting the camp was to give their people the opportunity to reconnect with the land their ancestors have lived on, and lived off of, since time immemorial. Because they also happened to be building a cabin right on the GPS route of Enbridge’s planned Northern Gateway tar-sands pipeline (not an accident by any means), and in an area threatened by numerous other pipeline proposals. The camp has also attracted climate activists from around the world.

“People that care about the environment know we’re protecting the environment,” says Huson. She’s careful not to include her people in that category. “We’re not environmentalists; we just protect the land because we know the land sustains us.”

Despite burning fuel to complete the camp’s 130 km round trip for supplies from town, in many ways the community lives a far lower-impact lifestyle out in the northern wild. Rather than purchasing new

manufactured products, nearly everything at the camp is donated or collected from Western society’s effluence of affluence.

Residents collect water daily from the Wedzin Kwah, a river pure enough to drink from directly. Without freshwater pumped directly into buildings, folks use water much more carefully, such that twelve people’s cooking, cleaning, and drinking for day can be fulfilled by about 40 gallons’ worth of plastic jugs – a quantity that even the most efficient showerhead runs through in just 20 minutes.

The compound’s small greenhouse hosts veggie starts that will move to the permaculture garden once the ground thaws. Beyond growing produce, residents harvest wild plants and hunt, trap, and fish for subsistence, preserving foods through traditional and modern methods in the camp’s root cellar and smokehouse. “I love cooking with traditional ingredients,” says Ambrose Williams, a Gitksan anti-pipeline activist who has spent considerable time at the Unist’ot’en camp. “I’ve been a chef most of my life, and being able to cook with moose and deer and beaver – in not a traditional way but using modern techniques – is really inspiring for myself, because I’m starting to re-see what it means to be cooking.”

To power the camp, solar panels atop the camp’s main cabin collect electric energy in a row of 12-volt batteries. When the sun disappears for too long and the electricity storage runs low, camp residents must fire up a gasoline-powered generator to keep the lights on. This relationship with the energy system fosters

an ecological awareness that is lost through city life, where energy is delivered to homes and can be harnessed by the flip of a switch.

Wood, which the camp uses for heating and much of its cooking, is among the most polluting fuels for these purposes. Yet, when people have to harvest trees from the forest, dry out logs for months, chop them up, build a fire, and keep it burning, they learn to use this renewable energy resource in a much smarter way. It can be argued that many energy-efficient “smart” technologies in fact further disconnect their users from the environment, since they’re often designed to conserve resources automatically, without any user interaction.

In this way, the materiality of being at the camp connects visitors to the Earth and to each other. Exploring the territory, building new structures, making music together, sharing meals, and reflective conversations about our world in crisis brings together visitors from all walks of life. The community is a sober space, which does not make the evenings any less fun, just easier to remember in the morning.

In the so-called developed world, the development process as such creates a worldview, uprooted from any particular place, that makes us ignorant of ecology and blind to our ignorance, completely unaware of dependency on “the environment” for, well, everything. Almost everything is learned indirectly – from books, friends, social media, and the like – rather than with the senses. Non-Indigenous ways of knowing are detached from environmental realities.

The Unist’ot’en Camp embodies the possibility of a world where citizens wake up in the morning and do the work they love, whatever that may be, without commuting each day to alienating jobs to earn wages to pay for shelter and food.

Many people first got involved with the Unist’ot’en Camp because the political stance is clear and no nonsense – there will be no pipelines built on Unist’ot’en land. But they soon realise that the camp is much more than just a blockade. It is a place of learning, of healing, of connecting with nature, of breaking with the legacy of colonisation. Now this work will be expanded and consolidated through the establishment of a healing centre. The community is currently trying to [crowdfund](#) CA\$40,000 to make the healing centre a reality.

The Unist’ot’en Camp Healing Centre will focus on Indigenous youth. The healing centre will contain counselling rooms, meeting rooms, a kitchen and dining hall and sleeping quarters. The first phase of construction, commencing this spring, will be the kitchen and dining hall, which will serve everyone who comes to the Unist’ot’en Camp.

Without romanticising or essentialising Indigenous society, the recognition of Indigenous skills and perspectives that Western culture ignores can be an invaluable source of knowledge. Indigenous Peoples tend to value long-term sustainability and resilience over growth and efficiency, perhaps because Indigenous Peoples learned to live prosperously within the ecological limits of their territories rather than continually colonising new areas from which to steal resources.

In the so-called developed world, the development process as such creates a worldview, uprooted from any particular place, that makes us ignorant of ecology and blind to our ignorance.



The resistance of the Unist'ot'en, does not depend on the state to grant rights to nature, but upon communities asserting their environmental responsibility through direct action.

The fact that Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Nations' hereditary Chiefs are among the oldest continually held titles of any society on the planet, according to First Nations scholar Antonia Mills, a professor at the University of Northern British Columbia, is testament to this intergenerational vision. By contrast, it's been about 200 years at most since the widespread adoption of coal revolutionised Western society, enabling production and consumption to grow like never before.

Conclusion

The Unist'ot'en living blockade illustrates the underlying clash of values that pits movements of resistance to fossil fuel extraction against a capitalist growth economy that can only take nature into account by converting resources into commodities or by putting prices on "ecosystem services".

Indigenous demands for self-determination such as those claimed by the Unist'ot'en aim towards a structural transformation of colonial and capitalist systems of domination of nature and subjugated peoples. Such movements, in the words of Taiiake Alfred, are informed by "a set of values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western Liberalism and free market capitalism; that honour the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive authority, and the deep interconnection between human beings and other elements of creation."³⁴

Such pronouncements may not have much resonance within the negotiation halls of the COP21 meeting in Paris, where the future of the planet ostensibly hangs in the balance. Yet, when one visits the camp, living off the land, eating moose or hedge-hog recently hunted and smoked, picking huckleberries, one gets the feeling that this remote corner of the planet is as close as one can get to ground zero in the battle over how global energy infrastructure will be shaped.

The resistance of the Unist'ot'en, does not depend on the state to grant rights to nature, but upon communities asserting their environmental responsibility through direct action. In the words of the camp organisers, "Indigenous Peoples must be uncompromising and be thoughtful of how their knowledge can teach the rest of the world to degrow as a society. The Laws of the Land are Natural Laws and Indigenous Laws. These laws can be self regulated by all, not only the Indigenous Peoples. There can still be an abundance enjoyed, but no longer at the expense of peoples whom we don't see across the world."³⁵

³⁴Alfred, Taiiake. *Peace Power Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999.

³⁵Free Prior and Informed Consent Protocol <http://unistotencamp.com/?p=121>



ej  it