

STATE OF POWER 2017

Organizing cultures of resilience:

activism in the Anthropocene

- Kevin Buckland



The biological, chemical, social and political reality in which all humans beings live is changing our planet and our culture exponentially. This is the Anthropocene – a new geological age characterized by the critical impacts of human activities on the Earth's systems. As the physical world around us is transformed, so too movements for social change must evolve if they are to have the structural integrity to survive the coming waves, winds and wars.

Introduction

I stumbled into the climate justice movement, somewhere between resisting the war on Iraq and realizing that there was a clear need in any movement for a guy who was good at painting banners. As an arts organizer I was in an interesting position for, as one colleague said, 'You have no power, but everyone wants to work with you'. Over the past decade, my position led me through many diverse and divergent parts of the Global Climate Justice Movement: from UN Summits to rural indigenous land occupations, from massive youth skill-shares to academic conferences, from mainstream NGO coalitions to squatted anarchist collectives. This has been a transformative time, both for myself and for the nascent Climate Justice movement – it often felt like we were coming of age at the same time.

As a cultural organizer, I became increasingly aware of the diversity of organizing cultures I was engaged in, and how those different structures affect the work I am able to do. What has struck me as a cultural worker has been not only the way most movements either devalue or 'celebritize' cultural work almost as much as mainstream capitalism, but how little movements take the time to intentionally cultivate divergent cultures or understand themselves as cultural actors. Inside our own movements, I have seen both the glimpses of revolutionary equality and rigid militaristic patriarchal hierarchies. Slowly, I have begun to see my work differently, less as an artist and more as part of developing culture as an approach to organizing.

The word 'apocalypse' comes from the Greek, 'apokaluptein', meaning 'to reveal'. As the world faces ongoing and exponential ecological crises, we will see which structures have the integrity to function on scale with the climate crisis and survive in the Anthropocene.

This is a call for anyone working on social change in the age of climate crisis to stop and look carefully at *how* we are working together, rather than just *what* we are working on. If our movement of movements is to withstand the coming storms, floods and fires, we need to be addressing our own incoherencies, lest they open fissures in our structures at every weak point. Let us be intentional about our cultural legacy; the organizing structures that thrive in the Anthropocene may just be the ones to write the next chapter of human history.

Activism as usual?

Time for a quick reality check. The world's temperature has risen by 1.2 °C² and further warming is already locked into our global ecosystem. Scientists predict that two-thirds of wild animals will be lost by 2020.³ Each of these factors will cause unprecedented and unpredictable chains of

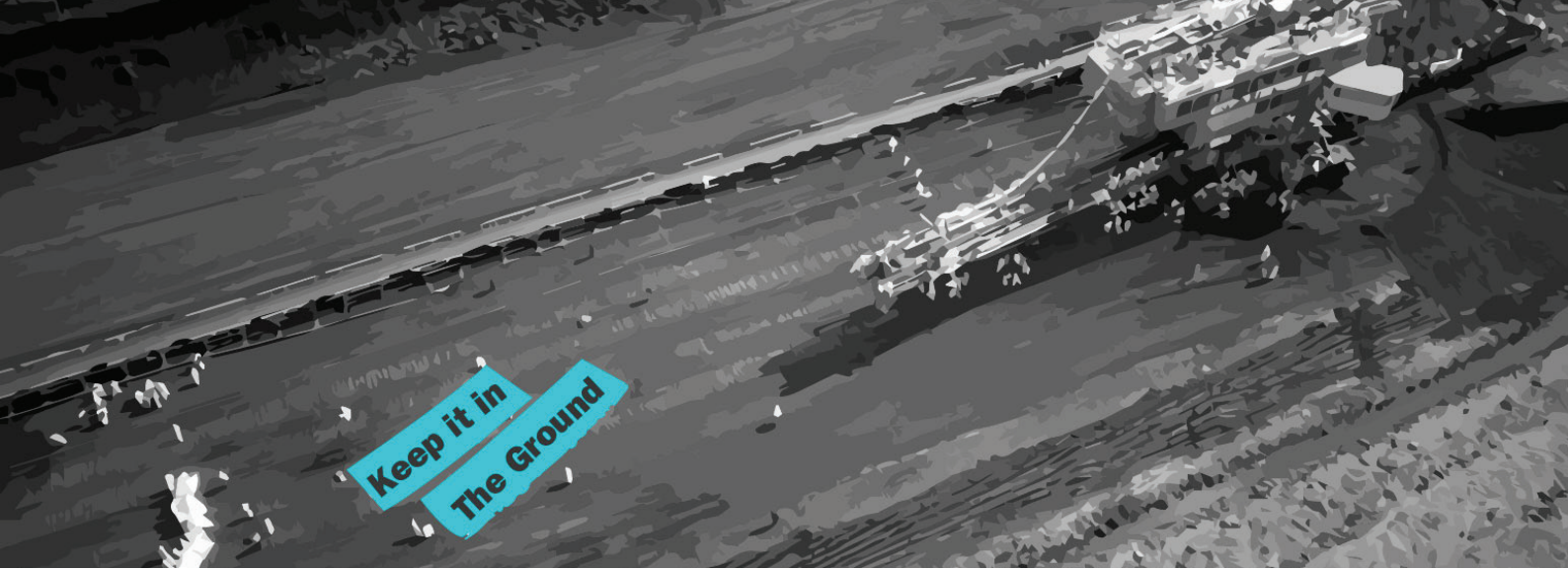
events on a scale never before seen in human history. Farmlands are turning to desert as wildfires pump more CO₂ into the atmosphere, coastal communities will increasingly be rendered will have to be abandoned or will become uninsurable, and ocean acidification is causing reactions along global food chains. The three years of drought that preceded the spike in food prices and the destabilization of Syria have shown us a glimpse of the challenge of simply surviving on a tougher planet. Take a moment to let the discomfort of those thoughts sink in. Get used to it – this isn't going away. The rest of your life will be defined increasingly by an accelerating political and ecological destabilization of unimaginable scale.

For our movements to thrive and survive, we need to look deeper into the long-term cultural change that may be what can hold humanity together in the coming centuries.

In the most optimistic scenarios, climate change may eventually be reversible, but it is not avoidable. Change is inevitable, and it is already upon us. While the crisis cannot be avoided, however, disaster can. The main question regarding the severity of the Anthropocene will be how human beings organize in this unpredictable and hostile terrain. As such, the Anthropocene can be understood not as an issue but a context: it is the world we do and will inhabit – internalizing this knowledge will allow movements to build resilience that prepares for coming destabilization. For our movements to thrive and survive, we need to look deeper into the long-term cultural change that may be what can hold humanity together in the coming centuries.

It is in this stark context that global movements for change need to pause and look at the implicit values of their own organizing cultures and tackle the current contradictions between values and structure. Simply racing ahead in a world of 'activism as usual' mirrors the neoliberal blindness of 'business as usual'. Yet, while transnational corporations (TNCs) are moving from being climate denialists to articulating themselves as part of the solutions, many environmentalists are still 'fighting' climate change as if it could actually be defeated. For example, a popular slogan of the global climate justice movement – 'system change not climate change!' – illustrates the false dilemma in which the movement seems to be trapped. While this slogan was originally useful in pushing for systemic societal changes, it must now also evolve to acknowledge a future world in which it is impossible to avert climate change. The true work to be done comes from examining the relationship between 'system change' and 'climate change' rather than trying to secure the triumph of one over the other. If climate change is inevitable, so then is system change; this poses great opportunities for movements in the Anthropocene, but also great challenges.

If our movements are to have the structural integrity to thrive in this disrupted reality we must create coherence between form and rhetoric, values and structures, and acknowledge the profound difference between merely articulating and truly enacting these values. Already this is happening, and as movements in the Anthropocene begin to inhabit their politics, they tilt from being diverse protest movements towards being a truly revolutionary force that articulates and enacts a cultural alternative to global capitalism.



Decentralized organizing on a global frontline

A thousand of us rushed into a lignite coal mine, swarming the machines. We were nervous; the police could come from anywhere. This was Ende Gelände, a mass direct action horizontally organized around an 'action consensus'. We were organized into a scalable structure that had grown exponentially over recent years: 'buddy' pairs joined to form affinity groups, affinity groups joined together to form 'bloques', 'bloques' joined together to form fingers. Today we were four fingers and 5,000 people.

We all had a common objective, but each 'affinity group' acted autonomously within the parameters of the action consensus. Shutting down a coal mine is a collective project, it doesn't matter who gets in – it just matters that enough get through to stop the machines.

The climate crisis is happening alongside new tools for decentralized communication that have transformed the ways we organize and push the 'culture' of activism into new arenas, innovating new forms of disruption and protest. This technological decentralization is redefining the scope of *how* we resist and organize, not only *what* we resist. A new generation of activists has come of age in the place-based uprisings of the Arab Spring, Spain's 15M/*Indignados* movement, the US and then global Occupy movement, Turkey's Gezi Park, Ukraine's EuroMaidan, Taiwan's Umbrella Revolution, France's *Nuit debout*, and many others. This is a generation of radicalized dreamers who were called out to the participatory assemblies of the parks and plazas by strangers using decentralized communication platforms. There is an understanding that ideas and proposals can come from anywhere and anyone.

With this decentralization of power, there is vastly more space for experimentation and innovation as diverse individuals collectively throw things at their walls to see what sticks or replicates. In a globally connected culture, new forms can spread quickly; cross-pollinating, mutating and merging new tactics into the mainstream of resistance cultures. In doing so, the climate justice movement is evolving with new decentralized digital forms of organizing and increasingly insisting that 'real life' follow such horizontal models. In contrast, many large 'mainstream' organizations still maintain one-directional tactics of traditional social change: the rally, march, petition, etc.

One notable example from recent years is the emergence of the Climate Games format – a decentralized, affinity-group based 'online/offline disobedient action game' that is bringing mass activism into the digital age. Originating in Amsterdam as a direct-action strategy, the Climate Games expanded to organize around the COP21 UNFCCC Climate Conference in Paris.⁴

The attacks of November 2015 radically disrupted organizing plans around the conference, offering an insight into what organizing in a destabilized future may mean. Most centralized plans made by the Climate Coalition and mainstream organizations were either disbanded or simply failed. Yet, despite the disruption, the Climate Games format succeeded in completing more than 200 actions, including coal mine blockades, bank occupations, radio frequency takeovers, speech disruptions, and a fair amount of lone-wolf graffiti. Selj Balamir, a Climate Games organizer, elaborated: 'We realized that big organizations tend to break down when they are hit by a shock. As a small affinity group, you can revise your plans over a bottle of wine in the evening.' The Climate Games succeeded, in part, because of the coherence between rhetoric and form that are lacking in conventional approaches to mass organizing. Balamir further commented on the successful string of direct actions: 'It is truly distributed through network-based politics – it's peer-to-peer disobedience. Proof that we are a rich and diverse convergence of movements that support one another, not just people saying "we are a big climate movement".' The games format has also proved replicable, with the recent *TTIP: Game Over* action in Brussels attracting more than 500 people with 50 different groups carrying out decentralized actions all across Europe.⁵ If the climate justice movement is striving for resilient, decentralized, autonomous communities, these same structures must be woven into its tactics – building coherence between tactics and politics, resistance and resilience, protest and prefiguration.

The organizing culture of the climate justice movement is also being pushed towards transformation as more large mainstream organizations, understanding the gravity of the current crises, are increasingly advocating civil disobedience and direct action. This trend is inspiring, as it becomes an embodied politics based upon actions rather than just discourse or conventional lobby-based advocacy. But, disobedience should be understood as more than just a tactic to be used sporadically – it is also a political decision towards empowering a politics of autonomy. By collectively agreeing to break laws, groups are declaring their own ability and legitimacy in defining what is and should be legal, collectively creating and enacting new norms and agreements on their own terms.

Disobedience should be understood as more than just a tactic to be used sporadically – it is also a political decision towards empowering a politics of autonomy.

Yet, for many mainstream organizations disobedient organizing points to a structural paradox. Direct action organizing is, to state the obvious, a call to disobey. But how can any organization coherently ask people to disobey other structures of power while demanding obedience within its own hierarchical structures? Are such groups merely advocating for disobedience to a *particular* hierarchy, rather than to *hierarchy* as a form of power? Are groups actively working for 'system change' or merely looking to change who runs the current system? Perhaps it is time for movements to strive towards inclusive, participatory and co-creational systems of organizing, where objectives are co-created and consensually agreed and thus no one is required to 'obey'.



Diversifying and decolonizing narratives

None of us saw the Paris attacks coming. That single night blew apart our organizing plans, fracturing the months of negotiations and compromise that held together a frail but wide coalition. Groups were frantic to make climate still seem relevant in the context of a radically militarized 'State of Emergency'. The result was that most NGOs hastily added the words '...and peace!' to the end of their slogans, but it still seemed slightly irrelevant to the feeling on the streets.

On the cold morning that was supposed to have been the biggest climate march in European history, an international group of grassroots indigenous activists gathered outside the Bataclan theatre – the main centre of the attacks – and held a powerful healing ceremony to make visible the connections between the attacks and climate change. Dallas Goldtooth of Indigenous Environmental Network said: 'We as impacted frontline communities are quite familiar with tragedy, we understand what it means to have great loss.'⁶ The violence had not derailed them because it aligned with their worldview. This acknowledgement struck a chord, and a short video from this small ceremony became the first media from COP21 to go viral.

Technology is decentralizing storytelling and mobilizing power, leading to a huge increase in the number of communities and individuals who are able to tell, share and enact their own stories on a new scale. This change has favoured the margins, as smaller and more transformative groups are able to engage more effectively in shaping wider movement narratives. In recent years, indigenous and frontline groups have played a consistent role in telling and creating their own stories, pushing a profoundly radical discourse from the edges to the mainstream of the global climate justice movement. Coupled with the movement's growing and widening understanding of power and privilege and 'taking leadership from the most impacted', this trend has been transforming its politics.

Indigenous and frontline experience with centuries-long struggles to defend diverse worldviews is also affecting how the climate justice movement understands the scale and timeline of organizing on climate issues, and is acting as a powerful magnet that pulls mainstream movement discourse towards deep systemic analysis and long-term change. Such a worldview, which places the current crisis inside a deep history of structural injustice, can provide what neoliberalism has been unable to – a coherent view of the world that aligns with reality.

Yet, while mainstream movements increasingly working to raise frontline voices, an important tension between the structures of horizontal movements and hierarchical organizations has repeatedly been shown by organizations' inability or incapacity to engage in meaningful and

supportive frontline work. There is a structural contradiction as top-down organizations seek to support bottom-up organizing. Hierarchies are defined precisely by a lack of individual autonomy, since decisions are centralized and taken far away from those directly affected by or doing the work, while meaningful support for frontline work demands precisely the opposite – taking leadership from those who are most affected. In practical terms, this means questioning a long history of imperialism and unexamined privilege, in order to decentralize and share power.

Such structural readjustments are necessary not only for matters of historical responsibility but because indigenous resistance proves not only that ‘another world is possible’ but that ‘other worlds already exist’ to challenge the monoculture of neoliberal global capitalism. Winona LaDuke of *Honor the Earth* recently said,

One of our people in the Native community said the difference between white people and Indians is that Indian people know they are oppressed but don’t feel powerless. White people don’t feel oppressed, but feel powerless. Deconstruct that disempowerment. Part of the mythology that they’ve been teaching you is that you have no power. Power is not brute force and money; power is in your spirit. Power is in your soul. It is what your ancestors, your old people gave you. Power is in the earth; it is in your relationship to the earth.⁷

A reciprocal worldview, deeply connected with both history and nature, can have great impact on helping and healing the imperialist and extractivist inheritance of mainstream white-led movements.

The Anthropocene means we’ll increasingly be hit by the intersection and convergence of natural and human crises; racism, sexism, and imperialism will either be addressed or compounded. If we lose the opportunity to collectively construct a cohesive narrative that places all of these systems in the same shared context, we will never be able to put out these fires one by one. As long as we are divided we will not be strong enough. We need to be constructing cumulative rather than competitive movements. If the climate justice movement is to take seriously its own rhetoric of ‘leadership from the most impacted’, healing and decolonizing must begin inside our own movements. This burden of decolonization cannot be placed upon the shoulders of the oppressed, rather it is the privileged who need to deconstruct and democratize their own power. If we do not engage deeply on this inner cultural work, we are destined to create a whole new set of problems as we ‘solve’ the climate crisis.

At the same time that we were gathered in ceremony outside the Bataclan theatre, another delegation of international indigenous activists were fighting on the streets of London. They weren’t fighting the police, but Avaaz and the London People’s Climate March organizers who had invited frontline communities to head the march. When they showed up with a banner that read, ‘Still fighting CO2lonialism: Your Climate Profits Kill’, the march organizers spent the rest of the day trying to minimize their presence – placing large animals in front of them, trying to hold them back, and even calling private security on them. An ‘Open Letter from the Wretched of the Earth Bloc...’ to the march organizers recorded the experience:

‘However, the agreement [we had with you] it seems was contingent upon us merely acting out our ethnicities – through attire, song and dance, perhaps – to provide a good photo-op, so that you might tick your narrow diversity box. The fact that we spoke for our own cause in our own words resulted in great consternation: you did not think that our decolonial and anti-imperialist message was consistent with the spirit of the march. In order to secure our place at the front, you asked us to dilute our message and make it “palatable”.



Cultures of care

When the winds of Hurricane Sandy abated they left a deep inequality. Those who had means to escape the destruction had done so. Those who didn't had no choice but to stay. The Occupy movement, long criticized for its lack of demands, now had a clear demand: keep people alive. With a scalable decentralized structure already in the movement's DNA, #OccupySandy kicked in before the storm waters had receded.

When I walked into the #OccupySandy hub – at a church in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn – I asked how I could help and was pointed to a growing mountain of black garbage bags piled in the corner and told these donations needed sorting and redistribution. I started opening the bags, trying to apply order to the chaos so that the most needed supplies – warm jackets, blankets, hats and good shoes – could be distributed first. New shipments arrived every few minutes. Other volunteers asked me how they could help, and over the next eight hours we transformed the piles of bags into a neatly categorized warehouse of emergency supplies. We repackaged bags and dispatches sent them out to Staten Island, the Far Rockaways, Redhook and beyond in loaned vehicles that still had some fuel in their tanks. Above us hung a crude banner that read, 'Mutual Aid, not Charity'.

When I finally left the church, others easily filled my place. The urgency necessitated decentralized autonomy – we all had decisions to make and were trusted to make them as best we could. It was almost two weeks before I saw any governmental organization arrive on the scene.

The climate crisis reflects not just a physical, but also a social and spiritual crisis. To be effective in the Anthropocene we need to be working coherently on all scales at the same time: inside ourselves, inside our groups, inside our communities, and inside our global ecosystem. The increasing individualism of modern capitalism has deeply damaged our collective capacity to respond to changes and many activists respond to the urgency of the climate crisis by pushing past their own limits. This has led to serial burnout that has greatly shortened the lifespan of the first generations of climate activists, crippling the movement's ability to accumulate experiential knowledge.

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We are now seeing the trend of 'sustainable activism', moving from the individual to the collective, as ever more movements and organizations are understanding that their personal and collective health is essential to the long-term impact of their work. Some of this work has also grown out of treating the trauma that can come with direct action and physical violence of state repression. The conversation has widened

beyond the work of healing personal trauma and towards an understanding of the collective trauma we have all undergone through centuries of capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism.

This process of decolonization can be seen both as resistance and resilience, both healing and sabotage that can start to deconstruct a toxic system from the inside rather than fighting it as an external enemy or seeking to escape it. Acknowledging we are both part of the problem and of the solution provides a complex but realistic understanding of the world around us – the healing is both internal and external, the sabotage both individual and collective. The interest in restorative work is arising at a time when regenerative agriculture and permaculture are redefining how humans view their relationship to the Earth, reframing human impact as a potentially positive force for the health of ecosystems and reinstating their symbiotic and mutually dependent relationships.

This focus on internal and deep collective health is a notable step for a movement that has traditionally been very good at articulating the thousand things it is against, but not in proposing a convincing alternative that engages with global capitalism. Addressing Occupy Wall Street at Zuccotti Park, author and activist Naomi Klein declared:

What climate change means is that we have to do this on a deadline. This time our movement cannot get distracted, divided, burned out or swept away by events. This time we have to succeed ... I am talking about changing the underlying values that govern our society. ... That is what I see happening in this square. In the way you are feeding each other, keeping each other warm, sharing information freely and providing health care, meditation classes and empowerment training. My favourite sign here says, 'I care about you'. In a culture that trains people to avoid each other's gaze, to say, 'Let them die', that is a deeply radical statement.⁸

One project that has been highly successful in promoting cultures of 'Sustainable Activism' sits in an isolated valley beneath the Spanish Pyrenees. For years, the ecological-inspired retreat centre, Eco-Dharma, has been offering workshops '...to empower individuals and communities to tread a path where committed social engagement goes hand in hand with radical personal transformation',⁹ and has trained thousands of activists across Europe, many of whom are now offering their own courses and incorporating deep ecology into their own practices. Ecodharma has been so effective not just because of its content but also because of its slow-but-steady holistic approach to activism. Such slow alternatives may not yet be even showing up on radars, but it is in this fertile underground where the seeds of tomorrow are planted.

By switching focus from the productive work of campaigning... towards the reproductive work of cultural change, activism moves ... towards real personal and collective transformational experiences.

This strong focus on process work is crucial as activism begins to challenge the assumption of 'productivism' latent in many western activist movements. By switching focus from the productive work of campaigning, communication and advocacy towards the reproductive work of cultural change, activism moves beyond performance for a public (a political caste, mainstream media or general public) and towards real personal and collective transformational experiences.

To do this, perhaps we can look to the far right, which has been far more successful in recent years than 'protest' movements in enacting radical change. In a post-Brexit Britain, and with

Donald Trump as (at the time of writing) incumbent commander-in-chief of the world's largest armed forces, the failure of the political left can perhaps be traced to its inability to provide an exciting vision about a fair and liveable future as part of a coherent narrative of radical change. Without a clear vision in a tumultuous world, is it any surprise that people are looking backwards towards a brighter future that may be 'great again'? Yet, if we are to provide such a vision and avoid the personality cult of populism, it means that left-wing radicalism must be a process for engagement, rather than a political programme.

By reinterpreting social change as a relational process, movements can begin to embody an alternative future characterized by a culture of care, and model new forms of extra-capitalist relations. In an age of climate crisis, this culture of care takes on a global dimension – and the need for collective care and 'mutual aid, not charity', as articulated by #OccupySandy, will be embedded in every coming ecological crisis. With a shift towards sustainable activism, movements are beginning to 'be the change they wish to see in the world'.

Warning: hierarchy may have unwanted side effects

I saw a major change happen as the NGO I was working for, originally started by a few friends, tried to "professionalize" as it grew to become a global player in the climate movement. It broke my heart to see the direction it was headed. Those at the top of the hierarchy added a "Human Resources" department, who – not coming from social change movements – approached the project of managing us with a neoliberal efficiency. This department was set up by those at the top of the organization, and their choices illustrated the lack of confidence in horizontality that tends to characterize those at the top of power structures. This new department implemented a number of sweeping changes, including an annual performance review to determine whether or not one continued at the organization, and on what salary. A nervous sense of precarity crept into the organization – people began to stop voicing their complaints as they themselves felt less secure in their own positions.

Suddenly, open and public discussion about how the organization should run was individualized and hidden. People were asked to individually bring any complaints to HR who would quietly refer them to whoever should hear them. As such, this bureaucratic department completely invisibilized organizational frustrations until everyone felt as if they were alone in their feelings. The result was a loss of any collective space for decentralized horizontal organizing around our own structures – everything had to be channelled through the hierarchy. Results-based activism became how we were evaluated, reinforcing a need for short-term results over slower but deeper movement work. People became nervous about talking about their failures and learning at the organization slowed.

The "culture of care" had been transferred from the workers to a purely bureaucratic and depoliticized part of the organizational hierarchy. Rather than understanding the culture of the organization to be the core of its political project, our capacity to collectively develop ways of working together was relegated to a department that didn't see structure itself as a political choice. To the HR department, hierarchy was simply the way things were done. The department did undertake consultation processes with employees on issues such as maternity leave, vacation time, etc., but the workers never made the final decisions and the true question of organizational structure was never on any of the Google forms. Any structure in which one must ask permission of those in power to challenge power is trapped inside its own structure.

As global movements bend towards understanding the true depths of the crisis we face, and consequently the true depths of change necessary, we see an emerging gap between groups who merely advocate for, or articulate, an increasingly systemic critique and groups that work to embody, model and practise systemic change through their organizing cultures. Hierarchies are slow to change, are not scalable and break down in crisis. Many movement organizing cultures more closely represent the world we are attempting to dismantle than the world we articulate: rigid hierarchical structures, short-term planning cycles, cultures of overwork and competition.

Hierarchy creates the traditional paradox of any system of power: those who are able to make structural changes are those with the least to gain from doing so, creating situations where a worker's position is dependent upon pleasing, rather than challenging, the dominant power structures within an organization. Such organizing structures make large, salaried hierarchical organizations a very conservative force inside global movements. This is important because the massive amounts of money, access and capacity that such organizations bring to global movements act as a powerful weight that is holding movements to 'activism as usual' and back from their full transformative potential.

Yet, many of these same organizations herald the need for worker- and user-controlled decentralized energy systems, energy cooperatives and disobedient actions. How can one coherently be advocating for decentralized, democratized and autonomous systems without also striving to embody these same values? Organizations such as 350.org, and other 'Big Greens', are increasingly filling an important niche in global movements as they create opportunities and space to pull in new activists through participatory campaigns, training, skill-shares and resource sharing. Yet, as some of the 'Big Greens' begin to move their huge resources to be more movement-facing and collaborative it is important that the seismic differences in their structures be acknowledged and addressed. If a hierarchical organization declares, such as 350.org's homepage does, 'We're Building A Global Climate Movement', it is important to have a clear vision of how that 'Global Climate Movement' will be organized – because the differences between these organizing models cannot be overstated. If such organizations sincerely aim to engage with social movements, they need to nurture democratic organizational structures that better reflect and interface with scalable movement structures.

How can one coherently be advocating for decentralized, democratized and autonomous systems without also striving to embody these same values?

An immediate priority for all movement organizers should be a process of aligning internal structures to reflect agreed values.

The first step is to challenge the organization's underlying assumptions by making the structure of the organization itself up for debate. If the structures by which groups make decisions cannot be questioned, how can groups expect to create anything but superficial change?

In practical terms, start conversations with co-workers: Should people working at your organization vote on your next Executive Director? Should your annual budget be determined collectively? How should you decide how many hours to work? Asking such questions can transform social change organizations from advocacy groups towards becoming intentional communities that embody real social and cultural change. The onus of achieving structural change does not rest only with those in power, rather it is the urgent duty of all workers inside hierarchical structures to themselves rebuild, reshape and co-create the society in which they work. This internal work should not be seen as separate from the work for transformative change; rather, it must be considered to be the work of transformative change, for maintaining structures not created by their users is preserving a culture of oppression.



Climate change as culture change

'... just as many machines reset themselves to their original settings after a power outage, human beings reset themselves to something altruistic, communitarian, resourceful and imaginative after a disaster, that we revert to something we already know how to do. The possibility of paradise is already within us as a default setting.' Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*¹⁰

As the world dives head-first into the coming centuries of exponential political and environmental instability, movements for social change need to look into themselves – individually and as a movement of movements – to begin to heal the myriad structural injustices that manifest themselves as climate change, and to incubate new relationships with our earth and each other within our own structures of resistance. This process demands introspection and an examination not only of our personal cultural inheritances, but also the urgent need to heal toxic inherited structures inside ourselves and in our movements. Workers for social change have the responsibility to actively engage in organizing cultures that democratize justice ahead of the coming crises.

Movements are not only spaces of resistance, but they are incubators where future cultures are already being experimented and tested. Our movements' desires to foment alternative futures – encouraging democratic, prefigurative and decentralized solutions – may actually have less to do with solar panels and community gardens than with nurturing scalable and democratic organizing cultures that can be shared with allies, volunteers and partners in ways that improve access to autonomy as we move together into an exponentially tumultuous future.

The deepening transformations of global movements in the Anthropocene hint at a maturing movement culture that is rising to take its place in history, inhabiting its politics and shifting from diverse protest movements towards being a global revolutionary force. But until our movements truly embody the politics they articulate, we will only be scratching the surface of the true depths of change that is so desperately needed.

About the author

Kevin Buckland is an activist who has spent the past 9 years working with diverse actors of the global climate justice movement, primarily as the Global Artist Coordinator with 350.org (2009-2015). He has worked to elevate the role of the arts and artists inside the climate justice movement, by supporting activists in more successfully engaging with artists, and supporting artists in being more strategic with their social engagement. As a writer he has self-published “Breathing Gezi”, a first-hand account of the Gezi Park occupation, and published numerous blog-posts and essays with 350.org, redpepper.org.uk, counterpunch, treehugger.com, Eject Report and others. You can follow him on twitter @change_of_art and instagram @coloresamor

Endnotes

1. While “Anthropocene” means literally “age of human beings” there is also academic support for designating the current period as the “Capitalocene” or “age of capital” to refocus on the impact of the current economic model run by a small sector of humanity, rather than our species as a whole. For more information, see Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne. 2015.
2. <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/provisional-wmo-statement-status-of-global-climate-2016>
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/27/world-on-track-to-lose-two-thirds-of-wild-animals-by-2020-major-report-warns/>
4. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Conference of the Parties.
5. <https://ttipgameover.net/blog/en/>
6. www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9irE6q6LtQ
7. www.sacredecology.com/honor-the-earth/
8. <https://www.thenation.com/article/occupy-wall-street-most-important-thing-world-now/>
9. www.ecodharma.com
10. Solnit, Rebecca (2010) A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster. New York: Penguin Books.

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This essay appears in TNI's sixth annual State of Power report. This year, it examines the cultural processes that are used by corporations, military and privileged elites to make their power seem 'natural' and 'irreversible'. It also explores how social movements can harness creativity, art and cultural forces to resist and to build lasting social and ecological transformation. Visit www.tni.org/stateofpower2017 to read all the essays and contributions.



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