Global Climate Justice Activism: "The New Protagonists" and their Projects for a Just Transition
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Abstract

The contributors to this volume have provided ample evidence to support calls for fundamental, transformative change in the world-system. If there remained any doubts, their analyses show that the capitalist world-system threatens not only the well-being of a majority of the world's people, but also the very survival of our planet. Indeed, the urgency of the ecological and economic conditions that many people now face and the immense inequalities that have become more entrenched require that scholars become more consciously engaged in the work of advancing social transformation. Revolutionary change is emergent in movement spaces where people have long been working to develop shared analyses and cultivate collective power and agency by building unity among a diverse array of activists, organizations, and movements. We discuss three examples of transformative projects that are gaining increased visibility and attention: food sovereignty, solidarity economies, and Human Rights Communities. If widely adopted, these projects would undermine the basic processes necessary for the capitalist world-system to function. With these projects, defenders of environmental and social justice not only work to prevent their own (further) dispossession by denying capital its ability to continue appropriating labor and resources from working people and communities, but they also help deepen the existing systemic crisis while sowing the seeds of a new social order.

The contributors to this volume have provided ample evidence for fundamental, transformative change in the world-system. If there remained any doubts, their analyses show that the capitalist world-system threatens not only the well-being of a majority of the world's people, but also the very survival of our planet. The findings presented here validate claims that have been made by popular struggles for many decades, and we hope that their precision and robustness will help motivate more robust action for radical change.

In this chapter we argue that the urgency of the ecological and economic conditions that many people now face and the immense inequalities that have grown and become more entrenched require that scholars move outside our familiar territory and embrace more deliberately the work of advancing social

transformation. Using the knowledge we have about the outrageous injustices of the capitalist world-system, we need to be part of the project to imagine what a new world-system might look like and to identify ways to advance such a vision. Activist groups led by the most impacted frontline communities have long been working to do this, but their efforts must be supported by people from all walks of life.

Clearly "revolution" won't look like the version told in our history books. Success in taking over the state apparatus without larger transformation of the world-system is not likely to improve the economic or ecological prognosis for any given people in a significant way; in fact most radical movements are not engaged in projects to take over the state. Addressing climate change requires dramatic actions at a global level to encourage and enable similarly dramatic changes in localities everywhere. For this to occur, more scholars must engage with the question, "What would a revolution look like today?" A necessary follow-up to that question is "*Who* will change the world, and *how*?"

We begin to offer some thoughts on these questions based on Smith's participatory research[1] and Patterson's active involvement with environmental justice activists over more than a decade. We believe revolutionary change is emergent in movement spaces where people have long been developing shared analyses and theories of global social change and helping cultivate collective power and agency by building unity among a diverse array of activists, organizations, and movements. But the marginalization of radical movements and their discourses, and the related failure of scholars to engage fully in the task of helping prioritize the needs of the world's dispossessed and to legitimize and augment their voices has meant that this work remains invisible in both the academy and in mainstream thinking and discourse.

The preceding analyses leave us wondering about what pathways exist for altering long-term historical processes of ecological unequal exchange and the global structures that reproduce these. What would a transformation of the existing world-system look like, and how might people take steps to move us in that direction? We propose that we look for answers to these questions to the groups that have worked most deliberately and urgently to advance system change, specifically the global environmental justice movement and its global networks. These movements have contributed to the emergence and spread of a number of concrete projects—and networks supporting these projects—that manifest practices that could fundamentally alter the global economic and political order.

The transformative projects discussed below reflect just some of the more prominent ones to emerge in recent years, and these projects continue to gain increased visibility and attention. They include food sovereignty, solidarity economies, and Human Rights Communities—projects that engage

overlapping networks of environmental and economic justice advocates. These projects merit our attention as potentially system-transforming ones because they would—if widely adopted—undermine basic processes that are necessary for the capitalist world-system to function. In other words, they target those very processes that enable capital accumulation and thus the reproduction of the capitalist world-system. With these projects, the system's opponents not only prevent their own (further) dispossession by denying capital its ability to continue appropriating labor and resources from working people and communities, but they also help deepen the existing systemic crisis (see Chase-Dunn 2013). The latter is accomplished in part by exacerbating the crisis of profitability but more importantly by showing that there are indeed alternatives to capitalism, undermining the system's hegemony and legitimacy.

Marxist analysts have identified a number of processes deemed essential to capitalist accumulation and the sustained operation of the modern world-system. These include, among others, depeasantization, proletarianization, commodification, globalization, imperialism, and techno-managerialism. By empowering local agents, celebrating rural and indigenous cultures, resisting materialism and militarism, and privileging local knowledge and lived experience, the activist projects explored below serve to reverse basic logics and practices of globalized capital. They represent what Icaza and Vazquez refer to as "decolonizing, epistemic struggles" (Icaza and Vazquez 2013: 689), or what Dalsheim views as forms of "counter-conduct" that help put forward multiple "heterotopias," or spaces where "hegemonic structures are *represented*, *contested* and *inverted*" (Forthcoming:XX emphasis original).

According to Icaza and Vázquez (2013), "epistemic struggles," are where activists "are producing and theorizing other forms of the political, other economies, other knowledges" that lie outside dominant, anthropocentric market and state institutions. These struggles are seen as advancing more dignified life-worlds (Icaza and Vázquez 2013: 684). Often such struggles remain less visible even in the scholarly research on social movements, since they go beyond the premises of modernity and operate in alternative epistemic and institutional frameworks (Conway forthcoming; Esteva and Prakash 1998). Thus, before we discuss the three types of transformative projects being advanced by global activists, we provide a brief and partial history of what has become known as the climate justice movement. This movement brings together the "new global protagonists" for climate justice, who have helped disrupt the stalemated climate negotiations and catalyzed the emergence of new counter-hegemonic alliances.[2]

The New Climate Justice Protagonists

The "new protagonists" of the climate justice movement are people from what are known as "frontline communities" engaging in direct action and other forms of protest in response to climate change and the forces driving it. Naomi Klein's 2014 book has drawn popular attention to the diverse grassroots struggles of indigenous peoples and other communities most impacted by fossil fuel extraction and energy generation. And the 2014 Peoples Climate March in New York was a watershed in demonstrating the critical role and leadership of low-income communities of color in the climate justice movement. However, as we shall see, there is a long history of frontline community engagement to generate popular pressure and alternative projects that disrupt and help transform the existing, carbon-intensive system and allow for what activists call a "just transition" to a low-carbon society.[3]

The environmental justice movement has emerged in communities of color over recent decades in response to the ecological injustices explored in the contributions to this volume and to the long-standing and increasing inability of the capitalist system to provide for the basic needs and security of the people and communities who bear the greatest costs for the system's operation. The global movement has emerged from several strands of organizing in different parts of the world, but in the United States it grew out of an explicit critique of the mainstream environmental movement, which had "blatantly omitted" the environmental claims being made by communities of color and indigenous groups (Taylor 2010: 6).

Two important global developments in the early 1990s helped create the conditions that brought together and amplified the voices of people of color in global environmental politics, contributing to expanding the transnational conversations and connections that form the foundations of contemporary thinking and organizing around environmental justice and its powerful critique of global capitalism. First, by the 1990s, transnational organizing by indigenous groups had developed, in part through the repeated opportunities indigenous leaders had to meet, including formal United Nations meetings addressing discrimination against indigenous populations by member governments. These international networks helped convene the Indigenous Alliance of the Americas Continental Gathering, "500 Years of Indian Resistance," in Quito Ecuador in July of 1990. Representatives from 120 Indian Nations and organizations met for several days to develop a declaration that called for indigenous people to come together to defend their autonomy and control of their territories. They recognized the task as one that required a fundamental transformation of dominant institutions alongside deliberate efforts to build alliances with other groups who supported indigenous demands for autonomy:

The achievement of this objective is a principal task for Indian Peoples however, through our struggles we have learned that our problems are not different, in many respects, from those of other popular sectors. We are convinced that we must march alongside the peasants, the workers, the marginalized sectors, together with intellectuals committed to our cause, In order to destroy the dominant system of oppression and construct a new society, pluralistic, democratic and humane, in which peace is guaranteed. (Indigenous Alliance of the Americas, 1990)

The articulation of shared aims and alliance strategies brought together a globally networked community from a largely diverse array of indigenous groups whose primary allegiance and energies are firmly connected to their traditional lands. The 500th anniversary of Christopher Colombus's arrival in the Western hemisphere created an opportunity for indigenous peoples to come together as global actors to articulate their demands and find ways to resist further violence to their livelihoods and cultures. Global organizations and networks of indigenous peoples have, since this time, continued to expand and develop in coherence, strategic capacity, and influence (Brysk 1994; Becker 2011; Hall and Fenelon 2009; Morgan, 2007; P. Smith Forthcoming). Reflected in this document are some of the core ideas that have and that continue to guide today's environmental justice movements, including: the need for leadership to emerge from those most impacted by capitalism; the recognition that the key struggle is over fundamentally different ideas about how to organize society and humans' relationship with the earth; the centrality of local autonomy and control over local territories; and the idea that changing the status quo requires work to build diverse alliances that support and amplify the leadership and voices from frontline communities.

A second development that helped focus and amplify the voices of people of color in global political arenas is the emergence in the years leading up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development of international discussions about the importance of biodiversity and about international strategies for its preservation. These conversations impinged directly on communities of color in particular, since the models for addressing biodiversity preservation being advanced by elites impacted directly the access of indigenous communities and other groups—often those in the global, people of color, majority—whose very livelihoods rely on access to land and natural resources. Such communities tend to utilize forests and other ecosystems in much more limited and therefore sustainable ways than do industrial societies, yet their access to traditional lands and commons was threatened by proposals for

biodiversity preservation being discussed in global arenas (Alston and Brown 1993; Escobar 2008).

Simultaneously in the United States, practitioners working to analyze and address the racial disparities in public health risks in the United States were coming together with others working on racial and environmental justice to convene the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. in 1991. This meeting resulted in the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#),[4] which articulated connections between racial inequities and environmental degradation and outlined steps towards environmental justice. Following the Summit, organizers attended and brought these Environmental Justice Principles to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, sharing their analysis and developing relationships with global activist networks (Chavis 1993). Significantly, the principles also provide guidance for multi-racial and cross-sectoral coalition-building. U.S. activists that are part of environmental justice (EJ) networks have remained exceptionally involved in helping connect grassroots organizing efforts in the United States with global sites, including both the World Social Forum process and the inter-governmental negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The fruits of some of these initial mobilizations around environmental justice can be seen most visibly in a number of later developments. First, in 2007 the inter-state system was shaken up by a major engagement of more radical environmental justice activist groups in the official negotiations around the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The involvement of these groups led to a split in the civil society alliances mobilizing around the global climate talks, and a vibrant new Global Climate Justice Alliance was born (Hadden 2015; Bond 2012).

Second, following the failed climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009, Bolivian President Evo Morales hosted more than 30,000 representatives of governments and civil society groups at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba. Morales's move represented a dramatic shift from the status quo politics of inter-state relations. By inviting popular movements to engage on an equal basis with government representatives, the World Peoples Conference challenged the prevailing power relations in inter-state politics and created a space for the development of a counter-hegemonic alliance of state actors and social movements. Although the Conference was not well reported in the United States, its final, People's Declaration was a paradigm-changing statement that represented a radical shift in global political discourse. Not only did it name the global capitalist system as the cause of climate change, calling for its abolition, but it also made social movements, rather than states, the primary agents responsible for carrying forward the declaration. The

document highlights many of the solutions to the climate crisis put forward by radical movements (WPCCC 2010).[5] Among the actions the Declaration calls for are: popular referenda on how to respond to the climate crisis; attention to "climate debt" and reparations; the creation of a global climate tribunal to hold powerful countries and polluters accountable; advancing rights for Mother Earth; and replacing capitalism's growth logic with the indigenous notion of *buen vivir*. Although these demands are not likely to find much reception among the most powerful global actors—and indeed Morales's efforts to introduce these in the United Nations General Assembly have not, so far, advanced—the fact that they offer a real alternative to the capitalist logic creates room for popular "political imagination" and engagement with concrete ideas about how to address the climate crisis. Over recent years, movements have converged around some of these proposals and brought their transformative ideas from frontline communities to a much broader, global audience (Smith 2014).

Third, subsequent international climate negotiations have provided spaces where climate justice activists have come together to advance their thinking and strategic alliances, even as government talks have remained deadlocked over how to respond to the climate crisis (Goodman and Salleh 2013, 418; Bond 2012). In spaces such as the World Social Forum, which hosted a 2012 Thematic Social Forum on Climate Change[6] in advance of the inter-governmental 20-year review conference called "Rio+20," activists came together to build a transnational identity and to unite their struggles around demands for environmental and climate justice. At the 2012 WSF Thematic Forum, activists countered the official "green economy" platform called "The Future We Want" with their own alternative, "Another Future is Possible"[7] (Goodman and Salleh 2013; Smith 2014). Subsequently, climate justice networks convened at the Climate Space at the 2013 World Social Forum[8] in Tunisia and again for the People's Climate March in New York in September 2014. In these spaces, activists have worked to refine and advance the kinds of projects discussed below that seek to respond to the needs of people and communities facing imminent threats from a changing climate. They have built a more coherent and cohesive shared analysis and sense of unity that has made them a presence in the global climate struggles. They have consistently put forward and helped translate for a culturally- and class- diverse audience the ideas that have been integral to environmental justice from its very origins, including the idea that those most impacted by capitalism must lead the struggles to a more just world order (see, e.g., Patterson 2013; Podesta and Smith 2014).

Thus, the "new Climate Justice Protagonists" include actors previously invisible or marginalized in global debates, including peasants, indigenous peoples, immigrant workers, and urban communities

(see, e.g., Salleh 2012; McKeon 2015). Together, they are advancing a theory and a strategy for changing the capitalist system. They are doing so in part by responding to the immediate needs and threats to livelihood they now face. But as they struggle for survival, they are experimenting with projects that illuminate paths to a more just and equitable as well as a more ecologically sustainable world-system for all. And they are working to build a broader movement for environmental justice and human rights.[9]

Contemporary Projects for World-System Transformation

As noted above, global capitalism depends upon its ability to exploit workers and the environment, and thus it has generated processes of depeasantization and urbanization that provide ready pools of workers for industry and to free up rural land for industrial uses. In addition, the system's energy-intensity and need for constant growth demands its continual expansion into ever more remote territories in search of new energy sources. This makes the system itself a perpetual threat to people and the environment—especially, and beginning with, those living in remote and often ecologically sensitive areas (Harvey 2009; Harvey 2012; Sassen 2014). Their long-term experiences of dispossession have made indigenous peoples a particularly powerful agent leading movements for global transformation. Not only do members of these "frontline communities" start from a position of having little to gain from the system and much to lose from its perpetuation, but as a result of the movement-building work that has been happening over more than two decades, they also bring a common and coherent set of alternative visions and practices that appeal to a wider population that is finally coming to recognize the inherent limits and contradictions of capitalism.[10] As these varied communities have come together to share their analyses and build their networks, they have found a source of unity and power as well as growing confidence from their complementary ideas about alternative and appropriate ways to organize human society (see Salleh 2012; Escobar 2015).

Inter-related processes of global capitalism—including globalization (or delocalization), proletarianization, depeasantization, commodification, and industrialization—not only are exceptionally threatening to indigenous people and people of color, but they also reinforce hierarchies and divisions among people and between humans and the earth. As analyses of unequal ecological exchange have made abundantly clear, such divisions facilitate the externalization of the social and environmental costs of capitalist production, displacing such costs away from those who benefit and onto the environment, communities of color, workers, and the larger society (i.e., producing ecologically unequal exchange).

Through various strategies, projects of the environmental justice movement help disrupt capitalism's competitive logic and the resulting ecologically unequal exchange by promoting cooperative practices that inhibit externalities by, for instance, reducing the distances between sites of production and consumption, redefining development and core social values, and valorizing the work and identities that have been devalued by prevailing capitalist logics. These projects help advance community resilience by nurturing social cohesion and harmonious relations with the earth.

The following section provides brief summaries of some of the ways the environmental justice movement has responded to ecological and other threats. These initiatives are among the most prominent of those articulated by climate justice activists and related networks and organizations. Their prominence is reflected in the fact that they have attracted support from a large and diverse array of social sectors and activist networks, many of which first encountered these ideas through global activist spaces such as the World Social Forums. This observation alone demonstrates the critical importance to the work of global transformation of movements' *creation of autonomous spaces and networks* where counter-hegemonic and anti-systemic actors can converge and develop sustained mechanisms for communication and cooperation.

Food Sovereignty

The food sovereignty movement emerged in the 1990s through the leadership of La Via Campesina, a world-wide network of peasant organizations and small farmers that began in Latin America.[11] Food sovereignty advocates seek to transform the global food regime into a people-centered food system where all people enjoy "the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities."[12] Food sovereignty activists demand the re-localizing control of land and food systems so that global food markets and global trade rules cannot undermine the ability of local producers and communities to shape decisions about their own subsistence and well-being.

Food sovereignty offers a profound challenge to the prevailing logics of global capitalism. At its core is an ecocentric rather than anthropocentric understanding of the world, which demands food systems that operate in harmony with natural systems, countering capitalism's logic of industrialization. In addition, food sovereignty privileges human and non-material wealth over capital/material wealth. Essential to such a system is the valuing of food providers and the work of food production as well as a deep respect for the rights of farmers and other people and natural systems that contribute to the production of food. Ensuring the rights of food producers and consumers requires the localization of

food systems and local democratic control over land and other resources, countering logics that have fueled urbanization. Local control over food systems requires expanding and valuing knowledge and skills related to food production and the cultures and social relations surrounding it. Thus, food sovereignty activists are both engaged in projects to advance models of localized food production while also advancing broader cultural and political movements against globalized capitalism.

Local knowledge and traditions can provide much-needed information about how communities can live in harmony with their respective ecosystems—it can help reverse the devastating impacts of the anthropocentric and consumerist logics of global capitalism. As expressed in the World Social Forum's *Another Future is Possible*,

> ...food sovereignty, designed as a comprehensive form of agricultural production that defends small-scale and indigenous farming to provide food, dignity, identity, and gender equality. These proposals also aim to nurture processes for the reconstitution of life territories and include demands for agrarian and fishing reforms that will once again give a key role to family farmers, fishing communities, their cultures, and ways of life. These proposals are articulated around three points: 1) family farmer and fishing knowledge, goods, and culture; 2) trading rights and regulations from the local to the global; and 3) joint participation and social oversight of the production system (World Social Forum 2012: 19).

What is interesting in the ways activists articulate the notion of food sovereignty is how closely intertwined their understandings of food and food production are with culture and identity. In the above quote, we see that the ability to produce the quantity, quality, and types of food that are both nourishing and culturally appropriate is linked to basic human rights and dignity and to community.

Food sovereignty's emphasis on gender equality and eco-centrism defies the hierarchies of patriarchy and anthropocentrism that are integral to the capitalist world-system. In addition, it challenges the hegemonic logic that privileges the global over the local, urban over rural, and modern/industrial over traditional. Thus, although it embodies a set of concrete practices and strategies, food sovereignty has a significant cultural dimension that enhances its appeal to diverse constituencies and helps provide an ideological foundation that nurtures and reinforces counter-hegemonic practices and lifestyles. The types of practices employed by food sovereignty advocates include, for instance, local seed banks; small-scale energy and irrigation systems; small-farmer cooperative and social organizations to support

both production and distribution; urban buyers collectives and community supported agriculture initiatives; community gardens; research and extension efforts; among others (Figueroa 2015, Snipstal 2015).[13] Each of these practices, we argue, represents contributions to community resilience by placing greater control over food production and access directly in the hands of the people who are growing and consuming food. They enhance community food security while building and strengthening local markets and community infrastructures, and they counter global capitalism's logics of industrialized production and globalization by favoring more ecologically sustainable farming methods and reducing the distance between producers and consumers. By ensuring that consumers and producers share more direct community ties, this strategy reverses globalization's tendency to lengthen the distance between consumer and producer and thereby to externalize social and environmental costs. More localized production thus enhances working conditions and encourages environmental stewardship. It also makes producers and consumers less vulnerable to disruptions in global energy prices and supply chains—which are likely to increase in the face of energy scarcity and climate change.

In addition, food sovereignty helps valorize farming and small scale production, countering capitalism's modernizing logic and discourses that stigmatize and devalue peasant lifeways. Indeed, a key element of food sovereignty strategy is the celebration of peasant farmers—who in the modernizing logic of capitalism were meant to become a relic of the past, their work being replaced by machines (McKeon 2015). Via Campesina's name translates as "peasant's way," demonstrating the conscious intention of food sovereignty activists to provide an alternative to global capitalism.

Thus, the concept of food sovereignty fundamentally challenges dominant ontologies and epistemologies by not just offering an alternative way of thinking about food systems but by reconceptualizing basic identities, cultural values, and social relations (see, e.g., Cormie Forthcoming; P. Smith Forthcoming). La Via Campesina challenges the dominant notions of peasants as artifacts of a pre-modern age and celebrates the traditions and cultures of actually existing peasants, promoting "repeasantization" as a solution to capitalism's multiple crises (McKeon 2015). It also reinforces the values of living in harmony with the earth, local production, and traditional foods and practices—values which capitalist globalization rejects. This strategy is a direct response to the experiences of both rural and urban communities who have been dispossessed by processes of depeasantization (and its complement, proletarianization) and urbanization (McMichael 2008). The food sovereignty movement thereby valorizes the identities and the local knowledge of peasants and others who are part of what Goodman and Salleh refer to as the "meta-industrial class":

Without doubt, the global majority of meta-industrial workers—urban women carers, rural subsistence dwellers, and indigenes—are hit hard by the exploitation and dispossession of ecological exhaustion. They also share the experience of exclusion and diminishment by social stratification and cultural bias. […] Yet, meta-industrials are victims only to hegemonic eyes. In a time of multiple crises, there is an urgent need for political decisions informed by ecologically embedded modes of existence. Women and men with 'holding skills' have a head start in constructing the parameters of a 'bio-civilisation' [.…] As the focus of counter-hegemonic politics shifts from production to reproduction, 'another labour class' comes forward with unique capacities for regenerative knowledge. (2013 : 421)

In other words, the marginalization and exclusion of subaltern groups by the capitalist system has denied our society critical knowledge and experiences that are essential to our survival. Food sovereignty helps center the knowledge and voices of marginalized groups and to re-define values and priorities for a more just and ecologically resilient society. It re-defines principles for producing and distributing food that reinforce community and environmental sustainability over markets and economic growth. Thus, food sovereignty is seen as a tool for social transformation and as a social process as much as a political platform (Snipstal 2015). Describing the Healthy Food Hub in an African American community on Chicago's south side, Figueroa concludes that food sovereignty projects are "not about 'chasing our piece of pie in the new green economy.' [They are], rather a point of entry into a larger project: to build forms of community wealth that can provide [marginalized groups] with much-needed autonomy and resilience against the forces that continue to lay waste to their communities" (Figueroa 2015:500).

The food sovereignty movement disrupts the logics and discourses that perpetuate global capitalism by centering human rights as a challenge to the prevailing order. Clayes (2015:456) calls food sovereignty a "full-fledged rights-based paradigm," which, according to McMichael, "denaturalizes the 'global food system' by establishing (rights-based) claims of small producers to their own local food systems—which account for up to two-thirds of the world's food" (2015: 437). Moreover, McMichael concludes, "combining a politics of rights and representation enables the construction of a counter-narrative to a mono-cultural development narrative, in a long-term crisis of unsustainability and inability to feed populations other than global consumers" (2015: 445). It privileges local claims to land and its produce, challenging globalization's logic of scale at the same time as it valorizes the identities and

lifeways of peasants and small-scale producers. As food sovereignty advocates generate practical alternatives to global capital, they are simultaneously building new cultural frameworks that both challenge the geoculture of the capitalist world-system and help orient actors' decisions and actions around widely shared values. This both contributes to their ability to mobilize diverse alliances and supportive constituencies while chipping away at the legitimacy of the existing order that subordinates human rights to material/economic goals.

Alternative Models for Economy and Society

The dramatic changes required to seriously reduce greenhouse gas emissions cannot be imposed in an authoritarian way, but rather they must be seen as necessary and legitimate. Thus, as Goodman observes, "climate change forces a wholesale re-democratisation of social relations, prefiguring new dimensions of economic democracy, intergenerational democracy, and transnational democracy" (2009:511-512). The projects we examine reflect this analysis and each of them advances more democratic political and economic practices and norms. Additional activist projects reflected in the work of frontline communities seeking to challenge globalized capitalism and advance more just and ecologically sound alternatives come under varying labels of solidarity economy, eco-villages, just transition, and human rights cities. As the terms applied to these projects implies, these initiatives help re-orient the practices of participants and support *community and individual* survival through non-capitalist, democratic and egalitarian relationships and value systems. They challenge the competitive and discriminatory practices that are integral to global capitalism and present workable alternative models that are being enacted in communities around the world. As Escobar observes,

> The emphasis on the re-invention of communities is a powerful argument to deal with the amazingly pervasive practices keeping 'the individual' (anchored in markets and consumption) in place as the pillar of society and for imaging alternative regimes of relational personhood, in which personhood is also redefined within the *tejido* (weave) of life always being created with non-humans. (Escobar 2015: 460)

The projects described below, in addition to food sovereignty—which is often a key element of these other projects—reflect and articulate operating principles, values, and logics that support community-building and counter the logics of the prevailing capitalist order.

The notion of solidarity economy is probably the oldest of the examples provided above, and this project envisions and enacts economies based on cooperation, sharing, and on living with enough[14]

rather than on competition, exploitation, and wealth accumulation. Solidarity economy projects include cooperatives, publicly owned banks, participatory budgeting, and other projects that facilitate production and exchange that reinforce community and ecological sustainability. They do so by decommodifying exchange relationships and challenging capitalist logics of industrialization and urbanization that have contributed to capital accumulation by separating people from their labor and land.

Ecovillage projects are intentional community models that prioritize social, economic and ecological sustainability. Ecovillage participants seek to develop and institutionalize alternatives to ecologically destructive systems for the provision of transportation, food, energy, water, and waste-management. Inherent in this model is the belief that the breakdown of traditional forms of community, wasteful consumerist lifestyles, destruction of natural habitats, urban sprawl, industrial farming, and over-reliance on fossil fuels are trends that must be changed in order to avert ecological disaster and create richer and more fulfilling ways of life. Ecovillages are small-scale communities that seek to minimize their ecological footprints and support alternative regenerative practices. Many advocates also seek independence from existing infrastructures, although others pursue more integration with existing infrastructure. Whether urban or rural, ecovillages tend to integrate community and ecological values within a principle-based approach to sustainability (Van Schyndel 2008). Johnathon Dawson, former president of the Global Ecovillage Network, describes the five basic elements of ecovillages as: grassroots- rather than government-led; community living is valued and practiced; community self-reliance for basic necessities such as food, water, etc. (vs. government/centralized support) is prioritized; a strong sense of shared values—often characterized in spiritual terms—is nurtured, as is the aim of generating replicable models and educational experiences for others (Dawson 2006).

Explicit in the idea of ecovillages is that they can be replicated and scaled up. Indeed, as many participants quickly learned, achieving their goals requires changes in the larger set of relationships within a (bio)region. Thus, the vision of the EcoDistrict model is that of just, resilient and sustainable cities, from the neighborhood up. The concept of EcoDistricts is based on "urban regeneration and community development rooted in a relentless commitment to authentic collaboration and social, economic and ecological innovation that reimagines the future of cities" (EcoDistricts, 2016).

The Just Transitions project is a more recent development, and it draws from these elements described above to bring groups together to support more concerted action to address the needs of communities that are being impacted by climate change. As its name implies, Just Transitions initiatives seek to ensure that the costs of climate change are not disproportionately borne by low-income people

and people of color. As articulated in environmental justice networks, this project, perhaps more explicitly than the others described above, integrates an explicit rejection of the capitalist world-system and a conscious commitment to building an alternative system:

> Eliminating a socio-economic system requires a profound mass movement that changes socio-political systems and alters human behavior, particularly the behaviors that guide our collective choices about who decides what we produce and consume, what we produce and consume, why we produce and consume it, and why what we produce and consume is distributed in the unequal and inequitable manner that it is. In effect, we need a mass movement for a Just Transition and we have to build it![15]

In June 2013, the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), a collaborative of more than 35 grassroots organizations in low-income and communities of color around the United States, launched the Our Power Campaign: Communities United for a Just Transition. The goal of the Our Power Campaign is to "bring together frontline communities to 'build the bigger we' for a just transition toward local, living economies."[16] The idea of just transition refers to the notion that the costs of shifting to a low-carbon society as well as of the experiences of climate change must be shared in a just and equitable way. CJA works to strengthen relationships between these frontline communities facing a variety of environmental threats and other sectors of progressive organizing, including environmentalists, labor unions, food sovereignty organizations, among others. Such alliances help raise public consciousness about the real costs of fossil fuel-intensive capitalist production on communities. Consistent with the environmental justice principles discussed above, the alliance works to ensure that people most impacted by economic and environmental crises lead efforts to resist and transform their conditions. The CJA organized assemblies at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit (2010) and sent delegations to international climate conferences, including those in the context of the United Nations and the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Bolivia in April, 2010. The Our Power Campaign grew from the discussions and analyses that emerged from these varied gatherings of activists and their engagements with other movements. A leading example of the application of Just Transition principles is the work led by Cooperation Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi. The Jackson Just Transition Plan incorporates the models of equitable and ecologically sustainable societies reflected in the ideas of solidarity economy, ecovillages, and human rights cities and outlines concrete goals and steps activists

plan to take as they advance their vision of just transition.[17] As is unfortunately too frequently the case, residents of Jackson are motivated as much by the struggle for survival—a struggle that requires explicit attention to dismantling structural racism—as by value preferences for a system that is more just and that operates in harmony with nature.

The final example of projects for an alternative world-system is that of human rights cities. Human rights cities are "cities that explicitly refer to international human rights norms in their activities, statements or policy" (van den Berg and Oomen 2014:13). Such cities have been on the rise in recent years due partly to pressures caused by economic globalization such as migration and urbanization, financial crisis, and the devolution of state authority. Local authorities typically have greatest influence over human rights protections. Yet, international human rights treaties are negotiated among national governments, and national authorities are ultimately responsible for their implementation. At the same time, globalization has put increased pressure on cities to compete for limited financial investments and to prioritize economic growth. In response to the new threats and opportunities at the local level, human rights advocates have been working to shift development discourse by demanding "rights to the city." The human rights city model offers mechanisms for holding municipal officials accountable to human rights standards that are widely resonant in the larger society. As communities face intensified pressures from the forces of globalization, such locally-based movements advancing human rights claims are gaining momentum (van Lindert and Lettinga 2014).[18]

Recognizing that the prevailing capitalist system has done little to effectively address social problems such as poverty and social exclusion—and indeed that it creates and exacerbates these problems—human rights cities advocates contend that a human rights framework can help shift the debate away from competitive, market-oriented agendas that undermine social justice. It does so by mobilizing diverse community actors in support of a vision of a city that places social justice and community needs ahead of economic growth and "development." Human rights cities, like ecovillages, treat grassroots communities as the protagonists of change and agents of community survival and resilience. Of course, there remain important divisions among human rights advocates, and some models of human rights cities embrace reformist, individual rights-oriented approaches that don't threaten the prevailing capitalist order. However, the mobilizations of low-income people of color over recent decades have nurtured a vibrant and growing critical stream of human rights city organizing that is helping bring greater convergence to the human rights cities movement.[19] Building upon principles established and promoted by the environmental justice movement, human rights cities articulate

demands for a "people-centered human rights" that challenges conventional legalistic notions of rights and grounds rights claims in the needs of people and communities (Chueca 2016).[20] In practice, human rights cities engage residents in the collective work of envisioning a city based on the goal of maximizing human rights rather than profit. Long experience and documentation of environmental racism, moreover, has incorporated within human rights city organizing the idea that the protection of the natural environment (sometimes referred to "rights of Mother Earth") is integral to ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights.

      The following table summarizes some of the main strategies or projects that are reflected in these strands of organizing we report on here, identifying the specific ways they help challenge the perpetuation of ecologically unequal exchange.

Table 1: Movement Strategies and Projects that Disrupt Environmentally Unequal Exchange

Project	Strategy	Implications for EUE
Food sovereignty	Enhancing local control of food production and distribution	Opposes capitalist appropriation of land and re-asserts "traditional" identities and cultures over modernist ones.
EcoVillages	Enacting and promoting models of community living that reduce ecological footprints.	Disseminates eco-centric ideology and inter-generational time-frame; Develops and supports alternative models and counter-hegemonic practices that maximize community and ecological well-being.
Just Transition	Building economic power of historically oppressed populations and connecting local movements with global climate justice networks.	Reduces greenhouse gas emissions while challenging racial and class hierarchies. Fosters anti-racist, solidarity economy ideology and builds community capacity for collective action.
Human Rights Cities	Organizing city policies around human rights principles/community well-being rather than markets/ economic growth	Challenges hegemony of markets and economism in municipal policy and planning. Supports and disseminates alternative models of community governance.

In sum, all of the projects we describe are examples of how social movements are modeling alternatives to capitalism and building "political cultures of opposition and creation" (Foran 2016). As Foran notes,

"Movements become even stronger when to a widely felt culture of opposition and resistance they add a positive vision of a better world, an alternative to strive for that might improve or replace what exists." As the social and ecological crises fuel opposition to the existing order, we may see expansion in the movements advancing these alternatives to capitalism and ecologically unequal exchange.

Discussion and Conclusion

Analysts of ecologically unequal exchange have provided ample evidence of how the modern world-system imposes disproportionate environmental costs and risks on less powerful groups—particularly those on the periphery of the world-system, people of color, and low income people. In this chapter we have showed how frontline communities experiencing the most harmful impacts of ecologically unequal exchange have long resisted systematic inequality and exclusion by developing projects to enhance environmental justice and community resilience. Such movements—often locally-rooted—have contributed to the emergence of a global environmental justice movement that has wielded growing influence in recent years. Frontline communities have become the new protagonists of climate justice, articulating alternatives to capitalism that have attracted a growing array of adherents. By offering concrete ideas for reversing processes integral to the continuation of the capitalist world-system, and by privileging values and idea-systems that fundamentally challenge the geoculture of the modern world-system, these actors offer promising insights into the question of "what is to be done?".

Nevertheless, however appealing and compelling these models are, unless large numbers of people learn about them and have ready ways to participate, they will not alter the ecological or social crises we face. Moreover, efforts to promote cooperation and build social cohesion may become more complicated with the deepening of social and ecological crises. In addition, there remains the ever-present threat that movement projects will be coopted subverted by elites, through schemes such as the "green economy." By appropriating movement language, elite forces can create the sense that they are addressing the crisis and produce both a reduce sense of urgency and confusion on the part of the general public.

Therefore, continued movement-building aimed at building diverse, multi-racial and multi-class relationships, and ongoing work to build the culture of opposition and creation is essential to enabling these projects to have the resources and support they need. Activist groups must continue to work at

reaching "the middle" in order to bring transformative values and practices into the mainstream (Pastor and Prichard 2012). This requires creative attempts to develop communications capacity that can break through the mainstream corporate media monopoly to reach a wide range of people. Scholars can play essential roles working within movements to help activist networks build diverse coalitions that help create bridges among diverse groups and encourage mutual learning. They can also help movements develop strategic thinking and learning about how best to advance institutional and cultural change. Our experience working with movements reveals a need for greater support for the work of documentation, synthesis, and analysis of ideas and lessons generated from movement actions. And scholars' professional skills with communication can complement activists' own political communication skills to reach a broader public. Those hoping to reverse long-term processes of unequal ecological exchange can do so by helping draw more attention to the work of movements led by frontline communities and by contributing to efforts to better understand how their projects can be replicated and widely disseminated so that they nurture emerging alternatives to the capitalist world-system and a more just and ecologically sustainable world.

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Notes

[1] Smith served on the National Planning Committee of the U.S. Social Forum as delegate from the International Network of Scholar Activists, as well as in local and national level efforts to help link global campaigns to more localized settings (see, e.g., Smith et al. 2011; Smith 2012).

[2] Parts of this chapter draw from our contribution in *Resilience, Environmental Justice & the City*, Edited by Beth Schaefer Caniglia, Manuel Vallee, and Beatrice Frank, "Environmental Justice Initiatives for Community Resilience: Food Sovereignty, Just Transitions, and Human Rights Cities."

[3] The notion of "just transition" first emerged from labor activists seeking to ensure that reducing the carbon-intensity of the economy did not disadvantage the most vulnerable workers. However, interpretations of just transition have varied between moderate and radical elements of the environmental justice movement. The groups of which we write embrace a more radical activist frame calling for large-scale social transformation that addresses both institutionalized racism and social exclusion while aggressively reducing greenhouse gas emissions (see Evans and Phelan 2016).

[4] http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html

[5] A second meeting called the World Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Defense of Life was held in Tiquipaya in October 2015. An estimated 15,000 people attended that meeting, which was explicitly aimed to shape the Bolivian government's negotiating stance at the Paris climate talks later that year (see http://www.jallalla.bo/en/ ;

[6] http://rio20.net/en/iniciativas/another-future-is-possible/

[7] http://rio20.net/en/iniciativas/another-future-is-possible/

[8] http://ggjalliance.org/road2paris

[9] For perspectives from leaders in this movement about the challenges of movement-building and cross-racial organizing, see: Environmental Racism: Views from the Frontlines of the Climate Justice Struggle—January 2015 http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/global/climatechange_dialogueseries.

[10] Of course, within these frontline communities there remain serious divisions over appropriate strategies, and often community leaders and members prefer efforts to benefit from participation in the prevailing capitalist order, including cooperation with extractive industries, over resistance.

[11] http://viacampesina.org/en/

[12] http://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290

[13] See also http://www.navdanya.org/.

[14] There is resonance here with the Indigenous notion of *buen vivir* discussed above.

[15] http://ggjalliance.org/just-transition-assemblies

[16] http://ggjalliance.org/ourpowercampaign

[17] http://www.cooperationjackson.org/blog/2015/11/10/the-jackson-just-transition-plan

[18] For more background on Human Rights Cities, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_City

[19] Smith has been part of an emerging network of human rights city leaders that has been convening within the framework of the U.S. Human Rights Network. This network has recently become more formalized by creating a national steering committee and planning regular national Human Rights City convenings (see: http://www.ushrnetwork.org/our-work/project/national-human-rights-city-network).

[20] http://www.ushrnetwork.org/resources-media/born-struggle-implemented-through-struggle