

**Frontlines of Crisis, Forefront of Change:
Climate justice as an intervention into (neo)colonial climate action narratives and practices**

by

Katie Arthur
M.A. English Literature and Politics, University of Glasgow, 2015

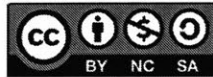
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Submitted to the Department of Comparative Media Studies/Writing On May 12, 2017
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Comparative Media Studies.

Abstract

Indigenous peoples, Small Island States, the Global South, women, youth, and the global poor, all face disproportionate impacts from climate change, a fact captured in the adage “the least responsible are most vulnerable.” Recognising the Global North as the instigators and benefactors of a carbon economy built on the continuing oppression and exploitation of black and brown communities, in this thesis I highlight the on-going colonial violence involved in both extractive industry and the mainstream climate action movements of the Global North. I look at the stories we tell about climate change and how they legitimize a colonial structuring of power: from mainstream media coverage of the London Climate March in 2015 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) newsroom editorials. I investigate how communities and grassroots organisations are using radical media strategies to articulate climate justice as a transformative decolonial intervention from the frontlines of Standing Rock to the financial district of London. I follow the argument of activist groups including The Wretched of the Earth, the UK Tar Sands Network, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and the Indigenous Environmental Network; that climate action will be unfair and ineffective until it recognises the intersecting systems of power which created and maintain the inequalities of the colonial carbon economy. I argue that radical media strategies, on the streets and on the airwaves, are central to the articulation of climate justice and the contestation of hegemonic meanings of climate action that legitimise colonial violence.

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Introduction

“For the love of...” narrative legitimacy: Contesting the meaning of climate action at the London Climate March 2015

i. Frontlines of Crisis, Forefront of Change

Only a few weeks after an attack by members of Islamic State (IS) and with France still imposing a national state of emergency, Paris hosted the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The two-week conference was also destined to make history, with 195 countries and 150 heads of state gathered to decide on a “landmark” climate deal for 2020.¹ Despite the on-going ban on public protests in Paris, people across the globe took to the streets to urge their world leaders to take action. On the 29th November 2015, the day before the opening of the COP21, London saw 50,000 people march for Climate, Justice, and Jobs.² It was the largest demonstration of approximately 2,500 taking place across the world to show public support for international climate action.

¹ *The Guardian*, “Climate Talks Open in Paris,” (Liveblog: 09:31), in “World Leaders Call for Action at Paris Climate Talks – As It Happened,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 30th November 2015. Accessed: 16th April 2016 <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/live/2015/nov/30/paris-climate-summit-world-leaders-meet-for-opening-day-live?page=with:block-565c24a7e4b03bf401a0c033#liveblog-navigation>)

² Adam Vaughan, Karl Mathiesen, Emma Howard, and Claire Phipps, “Protesters gather around the world for a strong climate change deal,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 29th November 2015.) Accessed: 16th April 2016 <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/nov/29/protesters-gather-around-the-world-for-a-strong-climate-change-deal>

Gathering at Park Corner in the midday frenzy of London congestion, the People's March had organised a variety of blocs to "showcase the breadth, diversity, and creativity of the climate movement."³ The big names were present, with prominent NGOs like Friends of the Earth, GreenPeace, and Avaaz filling out the "Climate" section of the march, whilst both the Labour and Green parties made appearances. Radiohead's Thom Yorke DJ'd on a bus, fashion designer Vivienne Westwood wore a silly paper hat, and the sandal-wearing, vegetarian, shock-winner of the Labour leadership election, Jeremy Corbyn turned up in his signature flat cap and windbreaker combo.⁴



Image 1: Photo of the Global Frontlines bloc leading the London Climate March 2015, shared by The Wretched of the Earth on Facebook. (2nd December 2015)

³ Climate Justice Jobs, "Blocs on the March," (Web: *Climate Coalition*, 2015) Accessed: 16th April 2016 <http://climatejusticejobs.org.uk/blocs-on-the-march/>

⁴ BBC News, "COP21: Thousands join London climate change march," 29th November 2015. Accessed: 16th April 2016 <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34957789>

Yet, the march was not to be lead by these big names or recognisable faces. Instead, the front had been officially designated to “The Global Frontlines bloc” under the name “Frontlines of Crisis, Forefront of Change”.⁵ Organising this bloc was grassroots activist collective “The Wretched of the Earth” (WotE). For the march, the WotE was constituted of and supported by organisations including the Algeria Solidarity Campaign; Argentina Solidarity Campaign; Black Dissidents; Colombia Solidarity Campaign; Environmental Justice North Africa; Global Afrikan People's Parliament; Global Justice Forum; Indigenous Environmental Network; Kilombo U.K; London Mexico Solidarity; Movimiento Ecuador Reino Unido (MERU); Movimiento Jaguar Despierto, PARCOE; The London Latinxs; South Asia Solidarity Group; and This Changes Everything UK.

It was surprising, therefore, that as the communities that constitute The Wretched of the Earth began to gather on Park Lane to prepare for their place in the march, dressed in black with their handmade banners and signs, they encountered “a most colourful form of sabotage”⁶ from none other than the march organizers themselves. As members of Black Dissidents reported in their blog:

Our place had been given to a group of people dressed in animal headgear. After having invited the Pacific Island and Sami people to lead the bloc, you [the march organisers] then took away the main banner of the march and asked them to hold signs instead. The banners made by indigenous communities were covered up. Signs that proclaimed indigenous and global south communities as the ‘Wretched of the Earth’ and charged ‘British Imperialism causes climate injustice’ were to be removed in favor of those that projected a more ‘positive message.’⁷

⁵ Climate Justice Jobs, “People’s March Form Up Order,” (Web: *Climate Coalition*, 2015). Accessed: 16th April 2016
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Vj6fwC9PwIvDGVCHPbl2KZnJbOu2Ca2ZjNiSDM7VyQg/edit#gid=40560065>

⁶ BLACKDISSIDENTS, “Open Letter from the Wretched of the Earth bloc to the organisers of the People’s Climate March of Justice and Jobs,” (Web: *BLACKDISSIDENTS*, 2015). Accessed: 16th April 2016
<https://blackdissidents.wordpress.com/2015/12/16/open-letter-from-the-wretched-of-the-earth-bloc-to-the-organisers-of-the-peoples-climate-march-of-justice-and-jobs/>

⁷ BLACKDISSIDENTS, “Open Letter from the Wretched of the Earth bloc to the organisers of the People’s Climate March of Justice and Jobs”

The authors of the blog continue: the organizers' "decision to overshadow the indigenous communities' banner and to replace our bloc with animals indicates at best your historical amnesia, and at worst your own colonial mentality." More broadly, they point to how it "highlights the willful hypocrisy of the climate movement in the global north."

For those in the Global Frontlines bloc the day would continue to be one of harassment, assault, and struggle: a "violent tussle."⁸ An article by Black Dissidents Joshua Virasami and Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert details how throughout the entirety of the march the organizers used several dehumanizing tactics to erase the presence of The Wretched of the Earth. Signs and banners highlighting the climate injustice of European colonialism were stolen and removed for not fitting "the message of the day." The coffin props used to commemorate the victims of climate change warranted police intervention as a "health and safety hazard." The staged "die-in" at the BP headquarters resulted in the bloc being kettled by police called by march organisers, so the march could continue uninterrupted. At the beginning, organizers had attempted to replace the Global Frontline bloc as the head of the march. At another point, the organizers slowed down the march to try and separate the Global South bloc from the march altogether.⁹

What motivated these acts of violence? What legitimized this enactment of silencing and erasure? What is it that separates the anti-imperial narrative from that of the UKs most well known (and well-funded) climate change campaigners and NGOs? In many ways these questions point to another: how does the symbolic annihilation of the presence and message of The Wretched of the Earth illuminate a critical absence in the UK climate change conversation? And inversely, how are The Wretched of the Earth constructing what may be

⁸ Joshua Virasami and Alexandra Wanjiku Kelbert, "Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement," (Web: *New Internationalist*, 1st December 2015.) Accessed: 16th April 2016
<http://newint.org/blog/guests/2015/12/01/darkening-the-white-heart-of-the-climate-movement/>

⁹ Virasami and Wanjiku Kelbert, "Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement"

considered a decolonial or decolonizing intervention¹⁰ in the UK climate change conversation? Using these questions as a point of departure, this chapter argues that the narratives and strategies constructed, deployed, and enabled by *The Wretched of the Earth* constitute a much needed critical intervention into the dominant framing of climate change and understandings of climate action in the UK.

In positing these questions the London Climate March becomes a site of symbolic rupture, the embodied struggle of and for narrative legitimacy. I explore the narrative contestation that was enacted throughout and after the march in order to establish the stakes, and stakeholders, in these contesting narratives. I use textual analysis to review how the media shared by march organizers, Climate Coalition, and prominent NGOs including GreenPeace, WWF, FotE, Avaaz, endorse certain meanings of climate action that stand in contrast to *The Wretched of the Earth*'s promotion of climate justice. I also analyze how these frames were picked up, amplified, and contested by the mainstream media in their coverage of the event to explore not only how systemic narrative privilege unfolds in the British media ecosystem but also how a range of media are utilized by different actors to resist symbolic domination.

John Downing's theorization of radical media describes social movements as "one of the most dynamic expressions of resistance," performing cultural work both as key actors in generating radical alternative media and as key audiences stimulated and mobilized by its content.¹¹ Downing argues "placing radical alternative media within this larger context of state power, hegemony and insubordination is a necessary step toward understanding them."¹² Downing's theory illuminates how the forms of protest and radical media production

¹⁰ See: Appendix II

¹¹ John Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*, (California, Sage Publications Inc: 2001), p.23.

¹² Downing, *Radical Media*, p.19.

enacted by *The Wretched of the Earth* contribute to an alternative sociopolitical imaginary that enables the subaltern and fights colonial violence. Candis Callison's ethnographic research into how meanings of climate change are constituted and contested provides a methodological outline to evaluate how *The Wretched of the Earth*'s production of meaning is translated, or not translated, into broader media ecologies.¹³ In contrast to Callison's work, which provides insights into the political economy of meaning for different stakeholders from scientists to journalists to Christian evangelists to indigenous peoples, I argue for the necessity of centralizing decolonial voices too often marginalized in mainstream media narratives.

ii. For the Love of... Lets Act on Climate Change

The Climate Coalition proudly proclaim that, alongside sister organizations Stop Climate Chaos Cymru and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, they are the "UK's largest group of people dedicated to action on climate change and limiting its impact on our communities."¹⁴ The coalition has support from over 100 member organizations, totaling more than 15million individuals across the UK. The group is steered by NGO giants Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, Greenpeace, WWF-UK, Christian Aid, RSPB, Tearfund, CAFOD, and UK Youth Climate Coalition. In the run up to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st Conference of the Parties in Paris, The Climate Coalition began developing a new narrative for a national two year campaign which aimed "to influence political decisions determining the UK and Europe's response to climate change in the crucial period 2014-16." The focus was to be on "reactivating traditional supporters and engaging new, harder to reach

¹³ Candis Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts*, (Duke University Press: USA, 2014)

¹⁴ The Climate Coalition, "Who are we?" (Web: *TheClimateCoalition*, 2015). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://www.theclimatecoalition.org/about-us>

audiences” with messaging needing to “appeal to a diversity of groups and be flexible enough for use by a broad coalition.”¹⁵

Working with climate change communications NGO Climate Outreach in order to assess audience responses to proposed messaging, The Climate Coalition settled on “For the love of...” as a message of inclusivity and immediacy. The selection of four particular audiences, “small ‘c’ conservatives,” “trade unions,” “community optimists,” and “NGOs,” for the narrative workshop indicate that the aim was to achieve a broad and accessible framing strategy that would enable participants from a range of backgrounds and with a range of beliefs to mobilize around the issue of climate change. The emphasis on these broad groups, without consideration of minority and frontline perspectives, means that despite the “disproportionate impact of climate change on less developed countries and future generations” being a “central concern” to the NGO group, stressing “climate change is here and now”¹⁶ is positioned as central to mobilizing climate action across demographics.

Getting people to mobilize over visceral, concrete things that they love (like football pitches) was seen as the best way to allow climate change to resonate with a broad cross-section of people. Climate Outreach conclude that:

“The most popular message – and the only one that broadly worked for conservatives – was the ‘things we love’ frame, but only if coupled with very practical, tangible examples (unplayable football pitches/flooded homes/avoiding car journeys to be healthier/coastal erosion/local countryside), not vague and abstract concepts (wildlife/prosperity/better lives). These conditions were identified across the audience groups.”¹⁷

The statement emphasizes that this is the only frame that works for the conservative target audience. Whilst the “thing we love” frame does allow a range of actors to mobilize around

¹⁵ Climate Outreach, “How narrative workshops informed a national climate change campaign,” (Web: *ClimateOutreach*, April 9th 2014). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://climateoutreach.org/resources/how-narrative-workshops-informed-a-national-climate-change-campaign/>

¹⁶ Climate Outreach, “How narrative workshops informed a national climate change campaign,” p.9, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

the issue of climate change by constructing it within a format easily personalized, it does so at the expense of an ethical consideration of the objects we chose. The “flooded football pitches” that instigate the British everyman to climate action are not the same imperative as questions of life and death that catalyze resilience across the Global South.

This is embodied in The Climate Coalitions 2014 online video “For the love of...”¹⁸ which showcases several relatable individuals and what they “love.” From Michael’s love of London, to Richard’s love of fishing, to Kiri’s love of summer, to Daphne’s love of her grandchildren, the named individuals speak to us through a blur of gentle lighting and soft-focus Instagram aesthetics accompanied by light banjo music. In montage style the video then goes on to show how each of those things is going to be affected by climate change, before asking the audience “What do you love?” The video marginalizes any kind of global perspective. It states that “Temperature rises in Cote d’Ivoire & Ghana could wreck cocoa harvests and send chocolate prices soaring” (see Image 4) with words plastered over black bodies, a mere background prop in this theatre of white entitlement. Ignoring that the citizens of these African countries will face questions of survival exacerbated by climate change, the luxury commodity of chocolate, with its own violent colonial history, takes center stage.

By attempting to make the framing as accessible as possible, The Climate Coalition negate the British colonial legacy and its links to the oppression of peoples, extractive industry, and climate change. The erasure equates flooded football pitches with flooded fields for subsistence farming, constructing a false equivalence that both relies on and reifies white privilege. We see this again in the now defunct website, which asks how sea-turtles, skiing, and tea will be affected by climate change but fails to mention the disparate impact on

¹⁸ The Climate Coalition, “For The Love Of...” (Web: *YouTube*, 24th June 2014). Accessed: 25th April 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka_kQUvojeI

communities in the Global South.¹⁹ Not only is this failure of recognition an enactment of colonial violence but it is also a commitment to ineffective action on climate change. The failures of the campaign emphasize the need for inclusive diversity in the framing and messaging strategies of climate change actions. Without the inclusion of decolonial voices and perspectives, we will perpetuate a system of colonial violence even as we attempt to take action against it.

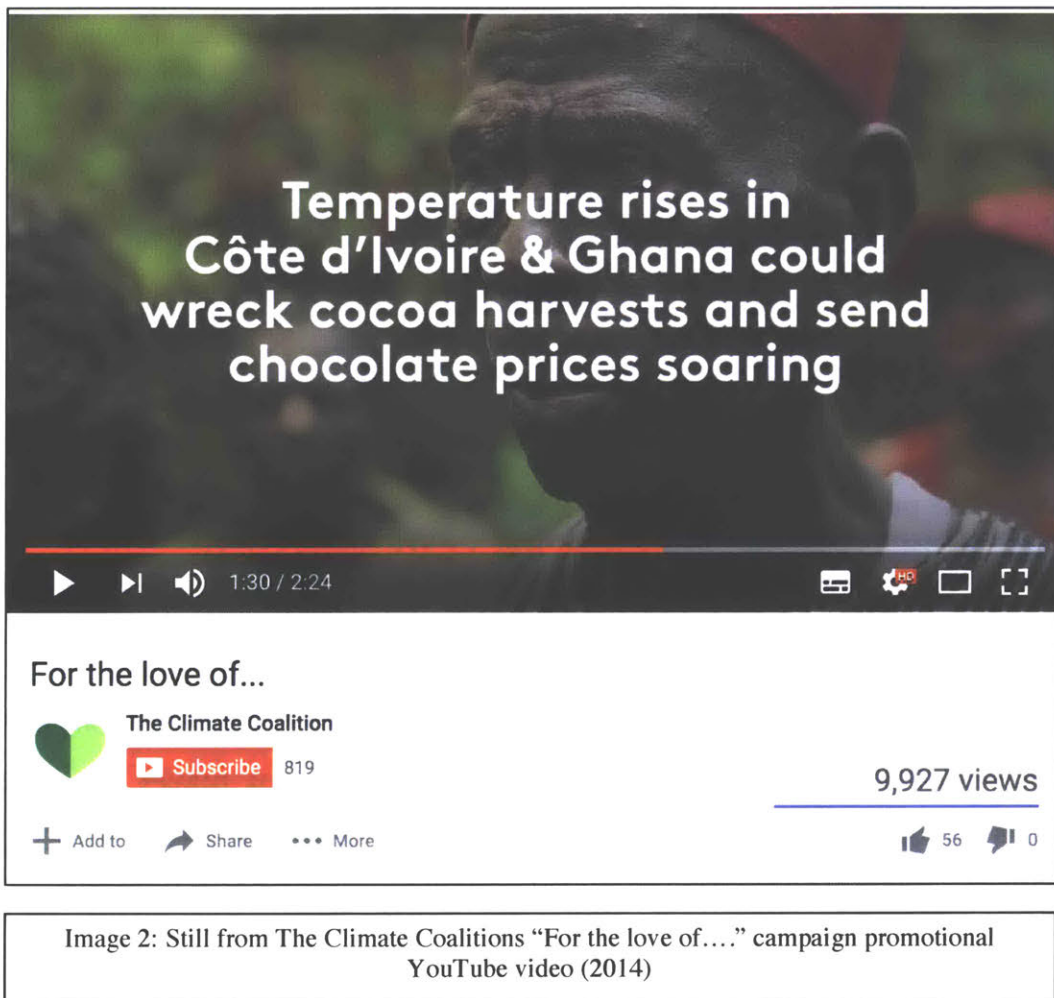


Image 2: Still from The Climate Coalitions “For the love of...” campaign promotional YouTube video (2014)

¹⁹ Climate Coalition, “For the Love of... Stories,” (Web: *Climate Coalition*, December 2015) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://web.archive.org/web/20151221071212/http://fortheLoveof.org.uk:80/stories>

iii. For the Love of... White Privilege

Indeed, *The Wretched of the Earth* scathingly called out “For the love of...” as the unifying message of the London Climate March. Taking their name from the 1961 book by Frantz Fanon, the community organization act in solidarity with decolonial struggles across the world as well as social justice issues at home. Fanon’s book provides a stark critique of the myth of “progress” as an ideological ploy of exploitation:

This European opulence is literally a scandal for it was built on the backs of slaves, it fed on the blood of slaves, and owes its very existence to the soil and subsoil of the underdeveloped world. Europe's well-being and progress were built with the sweat and corpses of blacks, Arabs, Indians, and Asians. This we are determined never to forget.²⁰

In this vein, the activist group promotes a keenly intersectional approach to climate action that recognizes the intertwining of colonialism and racism with the demands of capitalism through land-grabbing, extractive industry, and the exploitation and genocides of peoples.

In their article, Virasami and Wanjiku Kelbert point to the different perspectives that symbolize the current distance between the struggles of the Global North and Global South against climate change. They wrote: “The NGO narrative appealed to the perpetrators again, asking them to ‘do something’. Their narrative read ‘We do this #ForTheLoveOfSkiing.’”²¹ This highlights the passive agency involved in the dominant narrative of the London Climate March, where appealing to companies, governments, and systems negates individual responsibility and promotes “corporate environmentalism” as identified by Wright and Nyberg, maintaining “business as usual” and stifling “radical engagement” with transformative action.²² This in turn allows us to not have to recognize our privilege, the

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Pilcox, (New York, Grove Press: 2004), p.53

²¹ Virasami and Wanjiku Kelbert, “Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement,” (2016)

²² Christopher Wright and Daniel Nyberg, *Climate Change, Capitalism and Corporations*,

every day benefits we receive from an inequitable system, whilst displacing the necessity of climate action onto other actors. Interestingly, a participant in the narrative development workshop foreshadowed this critique saying, “‘everyone’ is implicated in the use of fossil fuels”: “we” are all “profiting in a way.”²³

Worse than this refraction of accountability is the white, middle-class iconography used to promote engagement with the climate struggle. Virasami and Wanjiku Kelbert draw attention to this by zoning in on the use of “#ForTheLoveOfSkiing.” Their point highlights that those who can afford to go skiing are the least likely to be affected by immediate climate change and the most likely to be responsible for it in terms of relative individual carbon footprints. “#ForTheLoveOfSkiing” becomes a damning indictment of how thinly climate change has been given meaning in these groups:

[W]ell before you started caring about polar bears and recycling, colonised and postcolonial peoples were already fighting to reclaim and heal their connection with the earth and all its life forms that were so brutally violated by European colonialism and extractive industries.²⁴

To save the climate for your package holiday in the mountains is to miss the vital point, because that package holiday in the mountains is a privilege that relies on the same logics of exploitation and the same history of oppression that is destroying the habitability of the planet. Until we recognize the inherent links between both, we fail to address either. In contrast to #ForTheLoveofSkiing, the narrative of the Wretched of the Earth “is one which has a context wide enough to contain the solidarity needed for systemic change. It is one which doesn’t compartmentalize the struggle into climate, racism, migration. **It acknowledges that to be truly insurrectional, one must be intersectional.**”²⁵ Unlike the

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.27, p.172.

²³ Climate Outreach, “How narrative workshops informed a national climate change campaign,” p.8

²⁴ BLACKDISSIDENTS, “Open Letter from The Wretched of the Earth,” (2016)

²⁵ Virasami and Wanjiku Kelbert, “Darkening the White Heart of the Climate Movement.” [Emphasis added]

broad message of the Climate Coalition, which in its personalization both reifies and excuses the individual, *The Wretched of the Earth* demands systems change through collective action.

Their intervention, therefore, highlights the discursive delimitations of the climate change conversation in the UK. As the spectrum of voices is reduced, our ability to imagine alternatives recedes also. *The Wretched of the Earth* highlight the potential for different meanings of climate change and climate action. In many ways, climate justice and intersectional solidarity allow the creation of new entry points into climate action, by transcending borders and showing the immediacy of the problem. By constructing an alternative narrative of climate change, therefore, *The Wretched of the Earth* endorse new meanings of climate change that require alternative forms of agency for climate action. In doing so the group reconfigures the UK climate change conversation to recognise and redress the intersecting logics of exploitation that perpetuate systematic material and symbolic disempowerment.

iv. Calls to action

The decolonial narrative of climate justice articulated by *The Wretched of the Earth* offers a separate and contesting locus of resistance, more disruptive and more radical than meanings of climate action we are accustomed to. Climate justice means going beyond what may be considered “comfortable” issues, like renewable energy, to look at new economic systems, including the permanent redistribution of wealth and power through methods like reparations. As such, *The Wretched of the Earth* enact a public contestation of the meaning of climate action. An example of this discursive negotiation can be seen in the Facebook events

for the London Climate March. Contrasting the People’s March event²⁶ with The Wretched of the Earth’s²⁷ we see how their differing utilization of imagery and rhetoric refer to different discursive enactments of power.



Image 3: Facebook event for the London Climate March by organisers The Climate Coalition.

The People’s March event (see: Image 3) is headed by an image of a cartoon girl in bright primary colours: yellow skin, pink hair, and a green love heart surrounding one of her whirlpool rainbow eyes. Behind her head a bright light, like the sun, is seen emerging and lightens the dark space that engulfs the rest of the banner. In contrast the Wretched of the Earth’s event opts for murky greens and washed out reds. Their banner uses the symbol of the raised fist of solidarity and resistance, with the words “IT’S TIME.” Their text is imposed upon an image of gathered black and brown bodies with their fists raised in the air. In this imagery we can begin to see the rhetorical construction of their framing and the symbolic landscapes these images draw from. The People’s March focuses on the individual as a locus

²⁶ People’s March for Climate, Justice and Jobs, “TODAY 12PM: The People’s March for Climate, Justice and Jobs,” (Web: *Facebook*, November 2015.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://www.facebook.com/events/516078015212179/>

²⁷ The Wretched of the Earth, Movimiento Despierto – MJD, Black Dissidents, Argentina Solidarity Campaign, “The Wretched of the Earth – A Global Frontlines Bloc @People’s March for Climate, Justice and Jobs,” (Web: *Facebook*, November 2016.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://www.facebook.com/events/1500302780295862/>

of resistance, the light beaming from behind the young girl. This emphasis on the individual reifies the neoliberal paradigm of the self as responsible, the atomized subject as primary social agent. In contrast, the WotE's event is seen as literally built on the collective action of (post)colonized communities.

The bright colours of the People's March event banner reflect their emphasis on "hope." Despite recognizing the uneven impact of climate change, their event description pushes for the positive, arguing that "real solutions" are "already" happening and the march is a show of "the people who are ahead." Despite pointing to the role of "political will" and "corporate interests," as well as acknowledging the disparate impact of climate change on those least responsible, the description largely draws from the hegemonic narrative of climate action in the UK. The primacy of the individual is supported by the expressed dichotomy of decisions being taken "on our own" and "together," the collective only ever the expression of separate individuals. The language of "corporate environmentalism"²⁸ and neoliberal entrepreneurship is echoed through the description of "real solutions" and buzzwords like "infrastructure." Borrowing the language of the "humanitarian crisis," the description draws a line between "here and abroad" even as it attempts to connect them.

Unlike the dissociated nouns of the People's March, "people," "society," "humanitarian crisis," which are spun around the collective as the grouping of individual subjects, The Wretched of the Earth's event (see: Image 4) consistently uses the collective possessive pronoun "our" and the plural pronoun "we." In doing so the group constructs the world, and the struggle, as shared: The repetition of "we will be" foregrounds the collective action in a shared future. The description points to the "colonial logic of 'Western development'" as responsible for "social and environmental conflict" and they encourage the intersectional in the understanding of "our struggles for justice around the world... [as]

²⁸ Wright and Nyberg, *Climate Change, Capitalism and Corporations*.

interconnected.” The grammatical structuring of the description brings colonial violence to the fore, refusing to allow climate change to be removed from its historical context as part of an on-going system of exploitation and oppression.

The description also reframes the COP21 in Paris, as “about who lives and who dies, about whose lives matter and whose are disposable.” The focus of the divide between “us” and “them” is configured around power. The march then becomes a rally to “decry the impending genocide.” To frame climate change as systematic murder gives us a new lens to understand both the history and actuality of climate change away from the neoliberal paradigms of uneven development and corporate environmentalism. Threads of uncertainty are unpicked by the notion of the deliberate: the weighing of whose lives matter, whose stories matter, whose reality really counts²⁹ - these are not circumstantial accidents, but deliberate consequences of historically specific regimes of truth and structural distributions of power.



Image 4: Facebook event for The Wretched of the Earth Global Frontlines Bloc at the London Climate March 2015.

²⁹ Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last*, (San Francisco: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997)

Understanding climate change in this way gives new impetus to climate action; it configures an understanding of the struggle for the planet as one that is centered upon a struggle for humanity. Highlighting the mechanisms of power that enable the colonization of peoples as well as transnational extractive industry and other climate disruptive behaviors shows the intersecting logics of oppression which have come to define the global status-quo. The group defies the hegemonic meaning of climate action in the UK conversation as well as the discourses of neocolonialism and exploitation it implicitly relies upon. By refusing the discursive truth of development, the group unhinges the pivot upon which capitalist exploitation relies. Climate action becomes climate justice.

By examining the contrasting imagery utilized by The Wretched of the Earth and The Climate Coalition through their Facebook accounts I have illuminated the different visual and syntactical deployments that configure these contested meanings of climate action. In many ways the tensions identified between the two forms of outreach symbolize the points of friction embodied during the march. The Wretched of the Earth highlight that it is not simply a question of saving polar bears, or loving nature, nor of “helping” communities most impacted by climate change with top-down science and paternal aid. The Wretched of the Earth urge us to recognize and readdress our privilege. The group teaches us to learn from frontline struggles and alternative knowledge systems across the world, demanding those who consider themselves allies to strive to better stand in solidarity with these fights, including standing in opposition to the extractive industries and exploitative corporations that are this colonial power made real.

v. Systemic distributive privilege in media coverage

Despite 50,000 people hitting the streets, coverage of the London climate march was limited in the UK, with online articles from the major legacy outlets employing a global overview and focusing on well-known celebrities, punny signs, and extravagant costumes. *The Guardian's* live blog did cover The Wretched of the Earth's "die-in" outside BP, however the only context given was that the action was "for the Global South."³⁰ The same tweet from a Guardian correspondent was later incorporated into an online article, which described the die-in stunt as "lying on the ground... to highlight the impact of global warming in the developing world."³¹ Whilst the lack of explication in the tweet may be explained by the mediums limited characters, the lack of engagement with the decolonial narrative in the article suggests that news routines in mainstream media outlets just do not make space to untangle these contesting meanings. Both discursive norms and material means restrict journalistic interventions into the spectrum of discussion.³² As a consequence of this mainstream outlets tend to reify the boundaries of discourse and the systemic power of those it privileges.

A video by a different Guardian correspondent of a performance by an indigenous Sami group made it into both the live blog and the article, with the coverage stating that the group, "who say their way of life is threatened by climate change, sang on stage in London."³³ There is an interesting syntactical deference here, as the reporter displaces authorial accountability onto the Sami group: "who say." Sidestepping in this way constructs

³⁰ Claire Phipps, Adam Vaughan and Oliver Milman, "Global climate march 2015: hundreds of thousands march around the world –as it happened," (Web: *The Guardian*, 29th November 2015) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/live/2015/nov/29/global-peoples-climate-change-march-2015-day-of-action-live?page=with:block-565b25dde4b0fbf505ff935e#liveblog-navigation>

³¹ Vaughan et al., "Protesters gather around the world for a strong climate change deal"

³² Aeron Davis, "Public Relations, news production and changing patterns of source in the British national media," *Media, Culture and Society* 22 (2000), 39-59, pp.43-45.

³³ Vaughan, Mathiesen, Howard and Phipps, "Protesters gather around the world for a strong climate change deal"

an ontological ambivalence between what the group “say” and what *is*, in turn underwriting indigenous voices with uncertainty. The BBC avoided this in their limited coverage of an indigenous protestor from New Zealand, Mickaele Maiava. Environmental correspondent Claire Marshall writes the “geography [of the Tokelau territory] puts it at sea level, and the rise in sea level is rendering the land where he plants crops useless.”³⁴

Marshall’s coverage emphasizes ontological certainty and a sense of causality by combining the independent clause within one sentence. Her use of the present participle “is rendering” also creates a sense of presence and consequently a sense of urgency. However, Marshall erases both the anthropic element in the causality of the rising sea levels and the societal infrastructures that restrict Maiava’s voice and his ability to act. Marshall acknowledges that Mickaele “said his people had been shouting about climate change for years,” but leaves the premise for their exclusion unquestioned and even reproduces the indigenous space as one of alterity by describing him as “[w]earing a traditional head dress.” Without space to unravel the nuances and contradictions within and between the voices of indigenous and (post) colonized communities on climate change, they become reduced to over-simplistic and un-representative truths to be employed at the service of other knowledge systems. Moreover, despite these glimpses into broader narratives of climate change, overwhelmingly the voices of established, professionalized NGOs took the fore across coverage.

When compared to *The Wretched of the Earth*’s own coverage of the day, we can see that the mainstream media consolidate and extend the actions of professionalized NGOs at the march, silencing the voices of those who speak a decolonial critique. Both the NGOs and the mainstream media privilege a certain message or framing of climate change that fits within their knowledge systems. The presence of *The Wretched of the Earth* illuminates the

³⁴ BBC News, “COP21: Thousands join London climate change march,” (Web: *BBC*, 29th November 2015) Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34957789>

values involved in the construction of objectivity. The exclusion and erasure of the Global South march bloc, and the discursive truth they represented, shows the necessary violence involved in this construction of objectivity, its fragility and artifice. The Wretched of the Earth benefit from no insider perks or close links with mainstream media sources, engaging instead with a close-knit network of activist groups and radical media outlets that position themselves in stringent repudiation of the mainstream liberal governance and media that has failed them.

Foucault reminds us that “[t]here is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.”³⁵ In order to examine how power is enacted through these discourses and silences, “we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized.”³⁶ We can argue that the UK’s mainstream media outlets promote a discursive truth of climate change that relies on the “scientificity” of knowledge production in the Global North. In responding to the narrow ideological agendas of the political elite, the mainstream media in the Global North enact a silencing of certain voices on the meaning of climate change and in turn limit our understanding of how to act. When these sources speak about climate change, if, indeed, they do at all, then they do so within discursive limitations of what climate change means.

The perpetuation of this exclusion through mainstream media means The Wretched of the Earth have to employ alternative strategies to combat their systematic erasure. As such, The Wretched of the Earth tend to employ embodied protest tactics, hitting the streets to march, strike, “die-in,” occupy, and memorialize. Neil Gavin has pointed to how the exclusion of activist groups from media coverage both informs their tactics and determines

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p.27.

³⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p.27.

their continued exclusion, as groups strive for visibility through “highly disruptive actions” which garner “unflattering or uninformative” coverage.³⁷ Research has suggested that groups can increase their ability to intervene in the news cycle by providing reliable information that encourages closer links with media sources.³⁸ However, The Wretched of the Earth are not seeking legitimacy within current news beats but instead strive to redefine what is considered legitimate.

Consequently, The Wretched of the Earth used alternative and radical media sources, like the independent co-operative magazine the *New Internationalist*, to share their stories of the march and navigate their lack of visibility. The group also built on this through their own channels, using online blogs via free sites like WordPress to publish, and social media networks to circulate and promote content. The affordances of digital media can be seen as central to the groups’ strategy of contesting hegemonic narratives of climate change, as will be explored further in Chapter 2. Utilizing alternative and radical media outlets allows The Wretched of the Earth to perform the cultural work of reconfiguring the framing and understanding of climate change away from the knowledge-production of the Global North and the specific science and scientific values it privileges. In turn this strategy delegitimizes the apparent “universalism” and “objectivity” of these knowledge systems by illuminating the forms of exploitation and oppression these discourses embed and make real.

This section has shown that digital media has become central to the groups’ ability to contest the hegemonic narratives (re)produced by mainstream sources across platforms. Alternative media becomes a mode to contest the distributive privilege of narratives of climate change that negate the issue of colonial power. Mainstream media provided limited

³⁷ Neil T. Gavin, “Pressure Group Direct Action on Climate Change: The Role of the Media and the Web in Britain –A Case Study,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12 (2010), 459-475, p.470.

³⁸ Davis, “Public Relations, news production and changing patterns of source in the British national media,” p.50.

coverage of the march, and even more limited coverage of the Frontlines of Crisis, Forefront of Change leading bloc. Even when included, the perspectives and voices from the Global South were marginalized. The brevity of the journalistic form in the digital age combined with the lack of resources journalists have and the editorial norms and values that are demanded of authors meant that coverage performed the hegemonic negation of the link between colonialism and climate change. The Wretched of the Earth utilize definitively and defiantly “outsider” tactics to carry their struggle on the streets to the airwaves, using alternative and radical media sources, including their own online channels.

vi: Conclusion

This chapter has argued for the need to include decolonial perspectives on climate change and climate action. Using the London Climate March as a site of discursive tension, I have explored how climate action comes to be meaningful: from the narrative development workshops that endorsed The Climate Coalitions “For the love of...” framing strategy to the inherent distributive privilege of the mainstream media coverage. Textual analysis methods have illuminated the perpetuation of colonial power within the hegemonic constructions and distributions of climate change. Identifying points of tension and contestation both on the ground and online highlights how The Wretched of the Earth are enacting a decolonial intervention into the UK climate change conversation. By utilizing “outsider” strategies and alternative media coverage, the group is telling its own history and imagining its own future.

Foucault once said that the “essential political problem” for the intellectual was “ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth.”³⁹ In many ways this

³⁹ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” interviewers: Alessandro Fontana, Pasquale Pasquino, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 109-133, p.133.

chapter attempts to vocalize just that: the possibility, and necessity, of a new politics of truth in the UK climate change conversation. It argues *The Wretched of the Earth* constitute a critical intervention in the UK climate change conversation that not only deserves academic attention but is, in fact, vital to an effective understanding of, and action on, climate change. This requires a methodology that can posit the voices of the Wretched as the Earth, and those they stand in solidarity with, as truly central. Consequently it is of obvious detriment to this chapter that it contains no interviews or ethnographic research from within these spaces. The chapter uses textual analysis to explore how meaning is constructed and distributed, narrativised and consolidated, made fraught and contested. Whilst this methodology provides insights into the systemic privilege contained within the construction and distribution of discursive truths within the UK climate conversation, it does not pertain to insights greater than that.

As Dilar Dirik reminds us with her quote from Sitharthan Sriharan: “privileged leftists often help produce and reproduce the very forces they claim to be against in the actions they perform.”⁴⁰ Indeed, in her essay “Marginality as a Site of Resistance,” bell hooks has spoken of how the academic will often pose that they “can talk about you [the subaltern] better than you can speak about yourself.”⁴¹ It may be the case that I have fallen into a colonial authorship of the voices I am attempting to amplify. I would in no way endeavor to argue that I am above that criticism, as much as I have tried to avoid it throughout this thesis. I have tried not to speak on behalf of the myriad struggles of indigenous, (post)colonized, displaced, and resettled peoples. Rather, I hope this thesis acts as part of the amplification of

⁴⁰ Dilar Dirik, “Challenging privilege: on solidarity and self-reflection,” (Web: *ROAR*, 4th May 2016.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://roarmag.org/essays/privilege-revolution-rojava-solidarity/>

⁴¹ bell hooks, “Marginality as a Site of Resistance”, in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Ferguson et al., (Cambridge, MIT Press: 1990), pp. 241-43.

their voices into more spaces. I hope it urges you, the reader, to listen to these voices directly and convinces you of the necessity of their structural inclusion.

The following chapters will explore how different groups, from London based activist group the UK Tar Sands Network to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North Dakota to the COP21 negotiating team for Nicaragua, are mobilising climate justice to fight for climate action that is intersectional and equitable. Throughout I have attempted to make the claims of *The Wretched of the Earth*, the UK Tar Sands Network, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH), along with the indigenous and (post)colonial resistance and frontline struggles they represent, accessible and meaningful to those of us who have not been previously exposed to them. I argue that it is critical to action on climate change that the climate movement aligns with these fights; that those in positions of structural privilege recognize our responsibility and complicity in colonial power.

As a white, working-class woman from the UK, whose experience of climate activism growing up included the effort to introduce recycling to her secondary school and participation in her universities' environmental initiative, I did not know, let alone expect to write about, the links between colonialism and climate change when I came to write my thesis. The past two years of listening, and really hearing, have fundamentally altered my understanding of climate action. When I spoke to organizer, writer, and poet Sai Murray he spoke of how, in activist spaces, those with privilege, those with voices heard most often, are encouraged to "move up" by "moving down." Sai explained that the Sisters Uncut collective, based in London, had rewritten the activist adage to "move up and move up" to recognize that what is perceived as "moving down," actively listening, reflecting, and supporting, is, in itself, a way of moving up to the struggle.

It is time for us to move up.

Chapter I

From nature conservation to carbon trading: the colonial construction of environmental protection in the British public imagination

i. Talking climate change in the UK

As readers we must return to the historical construction of environmental protection in the British public imagination in order to fully comprehend the decolonial intervention into the contemporary climate change conversation. Maxwell Boykoff locates “climate change” as first unfolding as an issue in the British public sphere in the late 1980s, with mass media turning to “climate scientists and policymakers as authorized and expert ‘claims-makers’” at that time.⁴² It was perhaps Margaret Thatcher’s efforts to speak on climate change, embodied in her 1989 address to the United Nations,⁴³ that brought the politics of climate change to light on the world stage and in the homes of British citizens. Indeed, Carvalho and Burgess show how the “cultural circuits” of broadsheet climate change coverage in the UK are strongly linked to editorial positions that seek to reify or resist political agendas and the discursive strategy of top governmental figures: “Dangerous climate change is thus both politically defined and ideologically constrained.”⁴⁴

This pattern of knowledge circulation continues in today’s media landscape, with the Pew Research Center finding that legacy media fell well short in climate change coverage compared to new media.⁴⁵ Other research points to the limited framing of climate change

⁴² Maxwell T. Boykoff, *Who Speaks for the Climate? Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2011), p.13.

⁴³ Margaret Thatcher, “Speech to United Nations General Assembly (Global Environment),” (Web: *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 8th November 1989). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/107817>

⁴⁴ Anabela Carvalho and Jacquelin Burgess, “Cultural Circuits of Climate Change in U.K Broadsheet Newspapers, 1985-2003,” *Risk Analysis* 25:6 (2005), 1457-1469, p.1467.

⁴⁵ Boykoff, *Who Speaks for the Climate?*, p.169.

used by TV in particular.⁴⁶ Despite Boykoff's claim that since the turn of the millennia more actors are now "authorised" to speak on climate change, with the issue often "widely reported through mass-media outlets" and coverage growing "more sophisticated,"⁴⁷ tracking coverage of climate change and global warming in 9 UK newspapers from 2000 to 2016 shows that although the average amount of yearly content has increased, coverage peaked during the controversy surrounding the failure of states to reach an international climate agreement during the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP9) in December 2009.⁴⁸

Boykoff's analysis of UK tabloids illuminates how British news articles on climate change "were predominantly framed through weather events, charismatic mega fauna and the movements of political actors and rhetoric, while few stories focused on climate justice and risk."⁴⁹ The role of the mainstream media in shaping public opinion on climate change becomes evident when we consider that recent YouGov polling on attitudes towards climate change have shown that the British public are "more concerned about the effects on wildlife than on humans."⁵⁰ The restrictive implications of the imagery of climate change that dominates the British press, such as the lone polar bear, have been well documented.⁵¹ Indeed, Doyle argues that the "cultural discourses" of climate change in the UK, Europe, and

⁴⁶ Saffron O'Neill, Hywel T. P. William, Tim Kurz, Bouke Wiersma, and Maxwell Boykoff, "Dominant frames in legacy and social media coverage of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report," *Nature Climate Change* 5 (2015), 380-385

⁴⁷ Boykoff, *Who Speaks for the Climate?*, pp.13-14; 180; 175.

⁴⁸ A. Nacu-Schmidt, K. Andrews, M. Boykoff, M. Daly, L. Gifford, L., G. Luedecke, and L. McAllister, "United Kingdom Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming, 2004-2016," (Web: *Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of Colorado*, 2016.) Accessed: 3rd April 2016 http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/media_coverage

⁴⁹ Maxwell Boykoff, "The cultural politics of climate change discourse in UK tabloids," *Political Geography* 27:5 (2008), 549-569.

⁵⁰ Will Dahlgreen, "British less ambitious on climate change than Europeans," (Web: *YouGov*, 1st December 2016). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/12/01/brits-less-ambitious-climate-change/>

⁵¹ Kate Manzo, "Beyond Polar Bears? Re-envisioning Climate Change," *Meteorological Applications* 17, (2010), 196-208.

USA have problematically externalised the natural world from human life,⁵² rendering climate change a problem defined by geographical, temporal, and even ontological distance, where humans are portrayed as outside of its effects.

ii. **The radical separation of the Human in European Enlightenment thought**

We can locate this radical dichotomisation of the human and the natural in the European Enlightenment.⁵³ Naomi Klein writes that the “roots of the climate crisis date back to core civilizational myths on which post-Enlightenment Western culture is founded – myths about humanity’s duty to dominate a natural world that is believed to be at once limitless and entirely controllable.”⁵⁴ The theory and practice of extractive industry that Naomi Klein refers to as “extractivism” wrote the natural world as an infinite resource for humans to exploit. Not only does extractivism underpin “civilisation narratives about endless growth and progress” but it also fosters the “colonial” notion of sacrifice zones, complete with a racial and cultural hierarchy that leaves black and brown bodies, indigenous communities, nations of the Global South, and the global poor, deemed expendable.⁵⁵ The logic of

⁵² Julie Doyle, *Mediating Climate Change*, (Farham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011).

⁵³ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, (New York: Continuum, 1997 [1944]).

J. Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 3rd edition, (USA: Sage, 2013).

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014)

Amitav Gosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate change and the Unthinkable*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

⁵⁴ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, p.159

⁵⁵ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, p.170

extractivism both arises from and underpins the Scientific Revolution, the colonial project, and the Industrial Revolution:⁵⁶ three pivotal events in the building of the British nation-state.

In the words of Adorno and Horkheimer, Enlightenment is “the philosophy which equates the truth with scientific systematization,”⁵⁷ the “form of knowledge” that not only “supports the individual most effectively in the mastery of nature”⁵⁸ but also demands the epistemological distinction between them. The socio-historical specificity of this paradigm is seen through the many communities who live and see themselves within nature.⁵⁹ From the traditional practices of Native Americans⁶⁰ to the struggle against a changing climate by transnational Inuit organizations,⁶¹ from the hunting methods of Zimbabwean villagers⁶² to the attempts of the Indian state of Kerala to live sustainably,⁶³ there is no radical segregation of human and nature. Instead, nature is seen, to varying degrees, as both inherently intertwined with the variety of human activities that come to constitute it as well as independently formed beyond human interpretation and mediation.

⁵⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.4, 83.

Klein, *This Changes Everything*, p.170.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.85

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.83.

⁵⁹ Gosh, *The Great Derangement*, p.64

⁶⁰ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003)

⁶¹ Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter*

⁶² Clapperton Mavhunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), p.5.

⁶³ Bill McKibben, *Hope, Human and Wild*, (USA: Little Brown and Company, 1995)

iii. The colonial conservation strategies of the British Empire

The Enlightenment dichotomisation of the human and natural world informed and legitimised the imposition of colonial British policies for environmental protection. The radical epistemological segregation of humans from the natural world, as outside and above nature, in turn demands and relies on the violent ontological segregation of these categories. The colonial logic Cronon has identified in the construction of natural ““virgin, uninhabited lands”” in North America through the genocide and forced removal of Native Americans,⁶⁴ can be seen pervading strategies of environmental protection that attempt to conserve that deemed as natural through the removal of what is understood as human. The creation of Nature Reserves and National Parks, for instance, stems from the colonial practice that often displaced indigenous communities under the premise of protecting ‘natural’ flora and fauna from ‘detrimental’ human interference.⁶⁵

Clapperton Mavhunga’s work details the implications of the imposition of the Enlightenment dichotomization of human and nature through National Parks in a post-colonial Africa. Focusing on Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, Mavhunga’s piece pivots on the violent removal of local residents for the purpose of “nature conservation” as an act of “ecological imperialism.”⁶⁶ Established under British colonial rule in 1928 as a “game reserve,” “Hwange is an example of how people were violently removed from their homelands of choice and dumped in arid, infertile and pest-infested peripheries to make way

⁶⁴ William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), p.79

⁶⁵ Neumann quotes a park manager as writing: ““The interests of fauna and flora must come first... those of man and belongings being of secondary importance. Humans and a National Park cannot exist together.” Rod Neumann “Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in the Mt. Meru Area of Northwest Tanzania,” *Land Degradation and Rehabilitation* 3 (1992), 85-98, p.90.

⁶⁶ Mavhunga, *Transient Workspaces*, p.21.

for nature conservation.”⁶⁷ The colonial imposition of environmental protection not only severely disrupts the livelihoods of indigenous peoples but also results in fewer informal protections for wildlife species by forcing a reconfiguration of localised human relations with nature.

As Rod Neumann argues, all conservation strategies have winners and losers, determined by the political economy that establishes them.⁶⁸ Neumann’s ethnographic research in the National Park of Arusha, Tanzania, established in 1960 under the British colonial administration, highlights the detrimental way the conservation strategy alienated the indigenous communities of the Meru people and in turn resulted in the decline of wildlife species in the area, including a 50% decrease of the elephant population by the 1980s. Nature conservation became a means to deny villagers access to resources in the park,⁶⁹ re-writing “the official version of history” so that “efforts to protect or restore customary rights can never be more than acts of theft or trespass.”⁷⁰ The distinction between the human and natural also declares some human life as expendable, with local villagers feeling that the government “places the rights of animals above those of humans.”⁷¹

Colonial power relations continue to dictate conservation as the removal of the human in order to maintain the natural, following the European Enlightenment view that humans are outside of nature. As Christine Walley’s ethnography of Tanzania’s Mafia Island Marine Park in the 1990’s illuminates, these legacies persist in post-colonial states. Residents of the islands told Walley “they hated the park, stating it was waging a ‘war’ against them and their

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁸ Neumann “Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in the Mt. Meru Area of Northwest Tanzania,” p.95.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.92-3.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.96.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.95.

livelihoods.”⁷² The priorities of “development” through the “ecotourism” trade and conservation as defined by international bodies dominated by the Global North came to outweigh and exclude the needs of Mafia Island’s residents.

iv. Carbon offsetting as colonial practice

Today, carbon offsetting destroys local communities through a similar colonial logic of displacement. The cap and trade system of carbon offsetting, including the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) created by the Kyoto Protocol, allows countries to earn certified emission reduction credits (CER) to be traded. The market mechanism itself relies on the excessive production of emissions by the Global North, attempting to create a monetary rebalancing of the unequal production and consumption of fossil fuels. Market mechanisms for carbon offsetting have been criticized as privatising the atmosphere, negating pressures for high-emitters to ensure permanent emission reductions, as well as enabling a “green-washing” of the carbon consuming privileges of the Global North.⁷³ Following this, such international carbon offsetting schemes have been found to underpin “neo-colonial mythologies” that obscure the geopolitical distributions of emissions.⁷⁴

Moreover, carbon offsetting, vehemently endorsed by the UNFCCC through initiatives like Climate Neutral Now and REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), has been found to involve the violent displacement of local peoples

⁷² Christine Walley, *Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park*, (USA: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.6.

⁷³ Kevin Smith, “The Carbon Neutral Myth,” *Carbon Trade Watch* (2007), 1-80.

⁷⁴ Larry Lohmann, “Carbon Trading, Climate Justice and the Production of Ignorance: Ten examples,” *Development* 51, (2008), 359–365.

in the land acquisition of carbon sink areas.⁷⁵ Proposed and realised REDD+ projects have included land grabbing and deforestation of Indigenous territories in Ecuador, forest and community enclosure in Peru, legally untenable projects in Papua New Guinea, and clear-cutting forests in Honduras.⁷⁶ The voices of those whose homes are being destroyed and whose livelihoods are being threatened are systematically ignored. Lands are floated on the stock exchange and sold to international buyers who green wash projects to make money from exploitation of the land and the carbon credit system.

The international community justify REDD+ projects under the premise of environmental protection by comparing plans to hypothetical worst-case scenarios. Consequently, projects often involve deforestation projects including timber-logging and industrial farming. Indigenous communities face the denial of land rights and resources. Colonial narratives of development, racially loaded rights to resources, and transnational corporations looking to capitalise on the new market mechanism; all facilitate the destruction of Indigenous peoples' homes and livelihoods. Just as the colonial establishment of game

⁷⁵ Connor Cavanagh, "Virtual nature, violent accumulation: The 'spectacular failure' of carbon offsetting at a Ugandan National Park," *Geoforum* 56, (2014), 55–65.

K. Lyons, C. Richards, and P. Westoby, *The darker side of green: Plantation forestry and carbon violence in Uganda*, (California: Oakland Institute, 2014)

⁷⁶ Acción Ecológica, "REDD+ and the ecuadorian SocioBosque programme: awards deforestation and promoting the massive land grab in indigenous territories," *No REDD! A Reader*, (Web: *Carbon Trade Watch and the Indigenous Environment Network*, 2010) Accessed: 27th November 2016 <http://no-redd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

Joanna Cabello, "Enclosing forests and peoples: REDD and the Inter-Oceanic Highway in Peru," *No REDD! A Reader*, (Web: *Carbon Trade Watch and the Indigenous Environment Network*, 2010) Accessed: 27th November 2016 <http://no-redd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

Chris Lang, "REDD projects in Papua New Guinea 'Legally untenable,'" *No REDD! A Reader*, (Web: *Carbon Trade Watch and the Indigenous Environment Network*, 2010) Accessed: 27th November 2016 <http://no-redd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

Honduras Garifuna Organization, OFRANEH, "HONDURAS: REDD and the Destruction of the Indigenous Peoples of the Planet," *No REDD! A Reader*, (Web: *Carbon Trade Watch and the Indigenous Environment Network*, 2010) Accessed: 27th November 2016 <http://no-redd.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/REDDreaderEN.pdf>

reserves or conservation areas relied on the top-down imposition of the Enlightenment vision nature, so too do land grabs facilitated by carbon offsetting mechanisms.

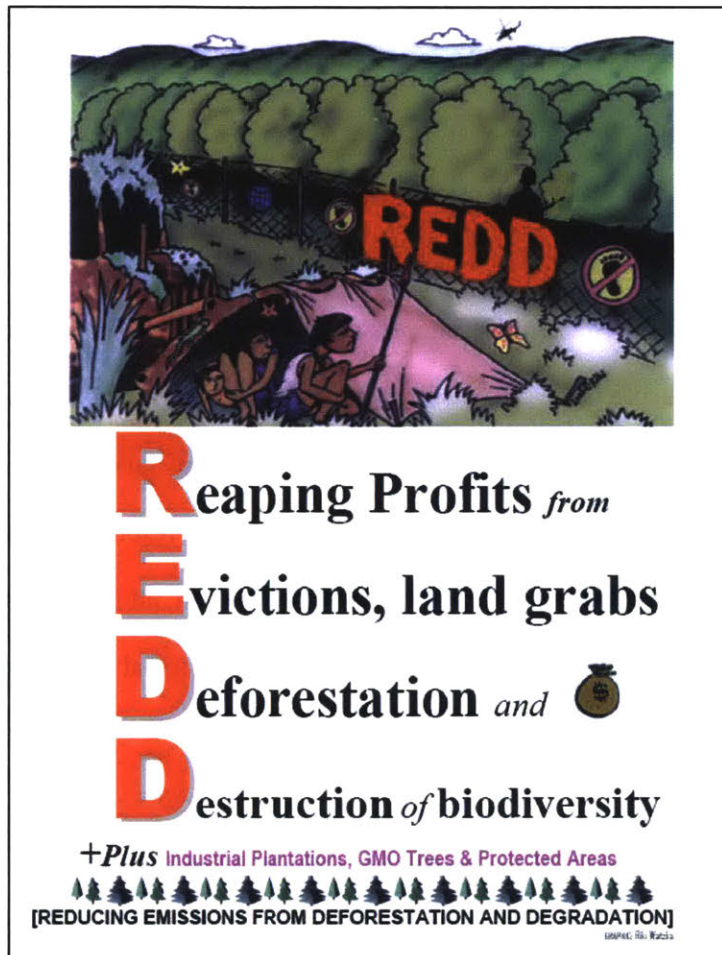


Image 5: Cover of the “No REDD” booklet by the Indigenous Environmental Network illustrating the eviction of local communities from conservation areas.

v. Decolonizing climate action

Neo-colonial power relations continue to shape the circuits of knowledge that give meaning to climate change and climate action. Environmental justice campaigner Suzanne

Dhaliwal has criticized the prevalence of all white panels at environmental events.⁷⁷ Organizer Sai Murray furthers this in his description of a climate change conference he attended, which “replicated this idea that environmental activism is the preserve of people with certain knowledge, i.e. scientists... which needs to be tailored to the ‘masses.’” The physical embodiment of “science” at this event by individuals who were European and predominantly white and male⁷⁸ serves as a microcosm for the paternal dominance of a male, Euro-centric form of science. This centralization and legitimization of a historically and socially rooted form of science informs global warming limits that designates communities across the world as expendable, prioritizes “big business” interests, and condemns alternative forms of knowledge as invalid.

Despite the growing realization of the need to center new forms of resistance that address intersecting forms of oppression and their links to climate change, the UK conversation is still dominated by Euro-centric and “race blind” understandings of climate action. The privileging of a singular strand of “scientific” knowledge as objective and universal ignores the political economy of science as an industry and erases the Enlightenment values it derives from. Unequivocally centering the science of the Global North in this way also endorses a neo-colonial approach to environmental action, a paternalistic “we can help you” which reifies hierarchies of knowledge and power. As such to develop a socio-political imaginary that challenges both the neocolonial approach of the “scientization” of climate change as well as “corporate environmentalism” and the tenets of injustice they reify, one must look directly to frontline struggles and decolonial discourses.

⁷⁷ Suzanne Dhaliwal, “Why are Britain’s green movements an all-white affair?” (Web: *The Guardian*, 28th September 2015.) Accessed: 7th May 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/28/why-are-britains-green-movements-an-all-white-affair>

⁷⁸ Anna Lau, “Environment, colonial legacies and systemic change,” (Web: *Open Democracy*, 14th October 2015.) Accessed: 7th May 2016. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/anna-lau/climate-stories-environmentcolonial-legacies-and-systemic-change>

Climate justice does this by recognising the intersections of colonialism, climate change, and capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, as well as amplifying “paradigms” that realign the human within nature, such as indigenous cosmovisions.⁷⁹ Following the political statement of transnational activist group Rising Tide, climate justice can be defined as the belief that climate action is only fair when it strives for social and economic equity within and between countries. Climate justice therefore demands acknowledgement of the perpetuation of the historical exploitation of resources by the Global North today and requires reparations for hundreds of years of colonialism, slavery, genocide of Indigenous peoples, and resource plundering and extraction, in the form of the permanent redistribution of wealth and ownership. Climate justice decolonizes the climate movement by decentralising power away from governments and big business, and standing in solidarity with the grassroots movements of those most affected, including the Global South, Small Island States, indigenous peoples, migrants, women and youth organisations.⁸⁰

vii. Climate justice in the UK

In the UK, climate justice was first articulated around the 6th Conference of the Parties (COP6) at The Hague, Netherlands, in November 2000. Rising Tide was a coalition formed from a network of international grassroots groups, self-described as “essentially... a tool for communication between individuals, groups and organizations committed to a grassroots

⁷⁹ Melissa K. Nelson, “Native ecologies and cosmovisions renew treaties with the earth and fuel indigenous movements,” in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Willis J. Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 138-147.

Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013), p.125.

⁸⁰ Rising Tide, “Political Statement,” (Web: *Rising Tide*, 2011). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <http://risingtide.org.uk/about/political>

approach to climate change.”⁸¹ Throughout the international negotiations, the allied groups of Rising Tide participated in direct action, radical media production, and an alternative Climate Justice Summit that provided “a platform for the voices absent from the COP6 negotiations.”⁸² Activists held countless actions including a Walk of Life outside of Royal Dutch Shell HQ in memory of Ken Saro-Wiwa, who died fighting waste dumping of petroleum in Nigeria, anti-nuclear and pro-indigenous marches,⁸³ as well as a mass invasion and occupation of the conference itself.⁸⁴

In particular Rising Tide made use of radical and alternative media sources to publicize their actions and articulate their vision of climate justice. The group made a *dissenting voices* zine (see Image 2), recording the day-to-day actions of the group, as well as detailing the various challenges it faced throughout its time in the Netherlands. The zine provided space for the voices of frontline climate justice activists, from Margie Richards fighting against air pollution in Louisiana, USA, to politician and poet Lina Magaia, and biologist and writer Mia Couto, who witnessed the floods in Mozambique first hand. Entries to the zine include a submission by the Korean Ecological Youth and the Declaration of the International Forum of Indigenous People on Climate Change.⁸⁵

The zine also became a space to present a curated news stream, with cuttings and transcripts from *The Guardian*, *Financial Times* and *BBC World Service* coming behind ads

⁸¹ Rising Tide, *dissenting voices*, (Web: *Platform London/ISSUU*, 2000), p.6. Accessed: 27th November 2016. https://issuu.com/platform-london/docs/dissenting_voices_cop_6_climate_tal?e=4311440/4088779#search

⁸² Yin Shao Loong, “Battling on the fence line,” pp.14-15, p.14, in Rising Tide, *dissenting voices*, (Web: *Platform London/ISSUU*, 2000), p.6. Accessed: 27th November 2016. https://issuu.com/platform-london/docs/dissenting_voices_cop_6_climate_tal?e=4311440/4088779#search

⁸³ “Every day is a day of action – COP6 action diary,” pp.16-19 in Rising Tide, *dissenting voices*, (Web: *Platform London/ISSUU*, 2000), p.6. Accessed: 27th November 2016. https://issuu.com/platform-london/docs/dissenting_voices_cop_6_climate_tal?e=4311440/4088779#search

⁸⁴ “Climax of the Carbon Guerilla Scene inside the conference center,” pp.20-21, in Rising Tide, *dissenting voices*, (Web: *Platform London/ISSUU*, 2000), p.6. Accessed: 27th November 2016. https://issuu.com/platform-london/docs/dissenting_voices_cop_6_climate_tal?e=4311440/4088779#search

⁸⁵ Rising Tide, *dissenting voices*, pp. 6-7, 14-15, 30-31, 32-33.

for the tactical media broadcasting of the Climate Justice Summit through TONKA radio and web hosting on the (now defunct) URL climateconference.org.⁸⁶ Moreover, RisingTide teamed with IndyMedia, or the Independent Media Center (IMC), to create an alternative “Climate Media Center” which published “independent coverage about the actions and in-

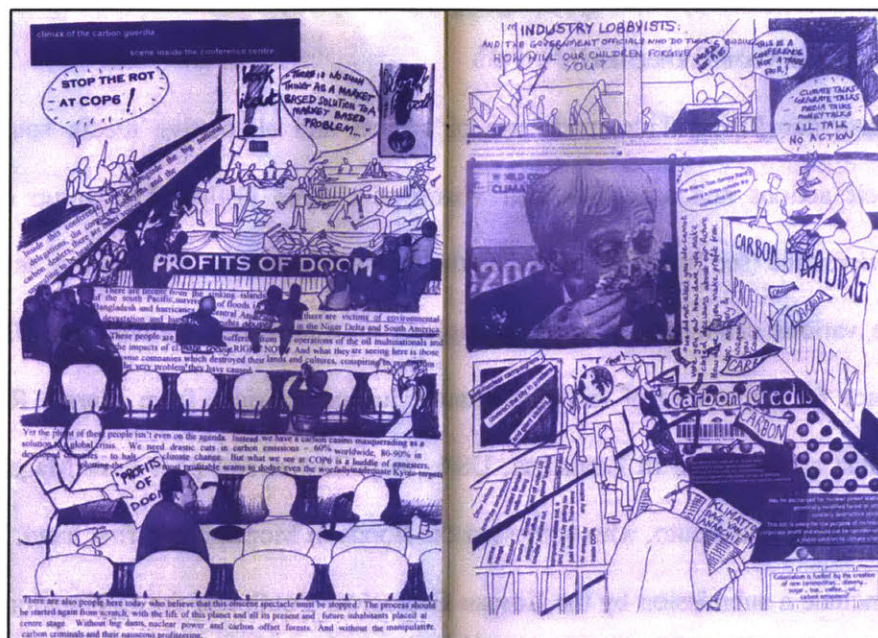


Image 6: Illustration of Rising Tides mass invasion and occupation of the COP6 conference centre in *dissenting voices*.

depth critical analyses.”⁸⁷ Web archives show the IndyMedia site was used to provide action updates, on the ground coverage of the negotiations, and curated news.⁸⁸ This illustrates an early example of social movements capitalizing on the decentralized distribution of

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, pp.36-41

⁸⁷ Indy Media, “Climate Independent Media Center,” (Web: *Indy Media / Web Archive*, 2nd December 2000). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <https://web.archive.org/web/20001202131100/http://climate.indymedia.org/>

⁸⁸ Indy Media, “Climate Independent Media Center”

information enabled by the Internet. In analogue and in digital, through embodied protest, zine publishing, radio broadcasting, and the website, Rising Tide utilized alternative media strategies to challenge the hegemonic narrative of the COP6 negotiations and the mainstream media coverage of them.

Members of Rising Tide have pointed to how the group was articulating the “rallying points of the Climate Justice Action network in the Copenhagen talks in 2009” nearly ten years earlier.⁸⁹ Indeed, climate justice interventions have begun to alter the articulations of climate action by both the mainstream media and international negotiations. Not only has the G77 bloc of the UNFCCC negotiations, including China and India, become bolder in demanding their entitlement to industrialize, but also COP21 saw the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) push for the inclusion of the 1.5-degrees global warming goal, including support from members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) who broke from the G77 bloc. Activists⁹⁰ and academics⁹¹ are pushing for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in diplomatic discussions, and cries to decolonize the climate movement from Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to Standing Rock are published in alternative⁹² and mainstream⁹³ media sources.

⁸⁹ Kevin Smith, “Movement history: COP 6 climate justice mobilisation & the birth of Rising Tide” (Web: *Platform London*, 2013) Accessed: 26th November 2016 <http://platformlondon.org/2013/07/18/movement-history-cop-6-climate-justice-mobilisations-the-birth-of-rising-tide/>

⁹⁰ International Indigenous People’s Forum on Climate Change, “Thousands Take to the Streets in Marrakech to Demand Climate Justice,” (Web: *IIPFCC*, 15th November 2016). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <http://www.iipfcc.org/blog/2016/11/15/thousands-take-to-the-streets-in-marrakech-to-demand-climate-justice>

⁹¹ Claudia Comberti, Thomas F. Thornton, and Michaela Korodimou, “Addressing Indigenous Peoples’ Marginalisation at International Climate Negotiations: Adaptation and Resilience at the Margins,” Working paper, ECI, University of Oxford, (November 16, 2016).

⁹² Alycee Lane, “Why ‘Climate Change’ Must Become a Promise to Decolonize,” (Web: *Truthout*, 18th November 2016). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/38428-why-climate-change-must-become-a-promise-to-decolonize>

⁹³ Louise Gray and Rowena Mason, “Copenhagen summit: rich nations guilty of ‘climate colonialism,’” Web: *The Telegraph*, 9th December 2009). Accessed: 27th November 2016.

Despite these tectonic shifts in the discussion achieved by the climate justice movement, the fight continues and climate justice remains sidelined by the dominant climate change narratives in international negotiations, as well as in the UK and many other parts of the world. Today, climate justice is understood as part of an international solidarity movement,⁹⁴ with the broad circuits of knowledge caused by globalization also enabling “the circulation of [indigenous] intellectual production and cross-border, cross-ethnic mutual assistance.”⁹⁵ The climate justice movement therefore relies on the affordances and innovation of analogue and digital forms of radical media, as well as the importance of embodied protest across borders.

The UNFCCC negotiations also illuminate the ways in which climate justice is articulated and re-articulated for different ends. So-called developing countries will often couch their right to industrialise in climate justice rhetoric whilst promoting big business, elite interests, and “development” trajectories that negate or marginalise claims by frontline climate justice communities. The conflicting interests within climate justice rhetoric do not belittle the historical disparities that define the rights of nation-state to industrialise. It does mean, however, that negotiating the landscape of climate justice claims, which includes those

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/copenhagen-climate-change-confe/6771129/Copenhagen-summit-rich-nations-guilty-of-climate-colonialism.html>

Luis Alberto Moreno, “If you want to tackle carbon emissions let indigenous people control their land,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 16th November 2016). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/nov/16/indigenous-communities-control-over-land-mitigate-climate-change>

⁹⁴ Susannah Fisher, “The emerging geographies of climate justice,” *Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment* 83, (2012).

Sylvia Edcarcega, “The Global Indigenous Movement and Paradigm Wars: International Activism, Network Building and Transformative Politics,” in *Insurgent Encounters*, ed. J. Juris and A. Khasnabish, (USA: Duke University Press, 2013), pp.129-150.

⁹⁵ Guillermo Delgado-P., “The Making of a Transnational Movement,” (Web: *NACLA*). Accessed: 27th November 2016. <https://nacla.org/article/making-transnational-movement>

claims that appropriate climate justice rhetoric, requires an engagement with a variety of voices and the amplification of those perspectives continually marginalised in public spaces.

vii. Conclusion

In this chapter I have illuminated how the colonial legacy of the European Enlightenment dichotomisation of the human and natural worlds has created an understanding of environmental protection that seeks to displace humans in the name of conservation. The links between game reserves and National Parks in the colonial area and carbon offsetting land grabs today show how the imposition of this dichotomy legitimises the violent and unjust removal of communities from their land. Furthermore, this separation of the human and natural world underpins mainstream media coverage of climate change in the UK, in turn rendering the public more concerned about wildlife than the human populations around the world who are least responsible and most impacted by a warming world. However, radical and alternative media strategies deployed by the climate justice movement have created an intervention in the UK climate change conversation, re-writing the binary of human and natural worlds in the public imagination.

Chapter 2

Hash tags for climate justice: Transnational solidarity through radical media networks

i. Redrawing borders

Berta Cárceres, Co-Founder of The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), won the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize for her work fighting transnational industry that threatened the homeland of her people with extractive industry “megaprojects.” The award recognised her organisation of a grassroots campaign that forced the world’s largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. The dam, a joint project of Honduran company Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA) and Chinese state-owned Sinohydro, was to be built without consultation of indigenous communities on the Gualcarque River, sacred to the Lenca people and vital to their survival.⁹⁶

In early 2016, Cárceres moved to the outskirts of La Esperanza, supposedly under state protection. Cárceres’ success had meant she was targeted with rape and death threats. On the 2nd March 2016, only a few months after Berta Cárceres had received international recognition for her success stopping the Agua Zarca project, the checkpoint at the town’s entrance was left unattended.⁹⁷ That night, Cárceres returned home to continue working with fellow activist Gustavo Castro Soto, coordinator of Friends of the Earth Mexico and director

⁹⁶ The Goldman Environmental Prize, “Berta Carceres,” (Web: *Goldman Prize*, 2015). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>

⁹⁷ Nina Lakhani, “Berta Carceres court papers show murder suspects’ links to US-trained elite troops,” (Web: *Guardian*, 28th February 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/28/berta-caceres-honduras-military-intelligence-us-trained-special-forces>

of the Chiapas-based NGO Otros Mundos It was towards midnight when masked gunmen aggressively broke into her home and murdered Berta Cárceres on the spot.⁹⁸

Speculation over the exact perpetrator of the assassination is on going, with the state refusing to allow an independent investigation into the death⁹⁹ - a far too familiar pattern. The murder of environmental activists and indigenous organisers like Berta Cárceres is the rule rather than the exception worldwide. Honduras specifically has been subject to a dramatic increase in extractive industry projects, threatening livelihoods and land-rights, since the 2009 coup d'état. Opposition to these projects has also increased, and consequently Honduras is currently the deadliest place in the world for environmental activists with over 120 people killed since 2010 for fighting dams, mines, logging, or protecting their lands and agriculture.¹⁰⁰

Towards the end of 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux tribe's two-year fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline begun making international headlines as thousands of protesters responded to a call to block the project.¹⁰¹ Originally planned to cross the Missouri River north of Bismark through a predominantly white area of North Dakota, the project was re-routed half a mile from the reservation lands of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe when permits were denied by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.¹⁰² The project infringes indigenous peoples right to consultation by not including them in the planning process. The pipeline

⁹⁸ Nina Lakhani, "Sole Witness to Berta Carceres murder fears he might be framed, lawyer says," (Web: *Guardian*, 28th March 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/28/bertha-caceres-murder-witness-honduras-appeals-to-mexico>

⁹⁹ Lakhani, "Berta Carceres court papers show murder suspects' links to US-trained elite troops."

¹⁰⁰ Billy Kyte, "Honduras Deadliest Country in the World for Environmental Activism," (Web: *Global Witness*, 31st January 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/honduras-deadliest-country-world-environmental-activism/>

¹⁰¹ Justin Worland, "What to Know About the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests," (Web, *TIME*, 28th October 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <http://time.com/4548566/dakota-access-pipeline-standing-rock-sioux/>

¹⁰² Catherine Thorbecke, "Why a Previously Proposed Route for the Dakota Access Pipeline was Rejected," (Web: *ABC News*, 3rd November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/previously-proposed-route-dakota-access-pipeline-rejected/story?id=43274356>

construction not only continues to build the fossil fuel infrastructure of the USA, but does so at the expense of the Sioux tribes' water supply, as well as traversing sacred burial grounds.

In July 2016, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, founder of the Sacred Stone Camp, uploaded a video to Facebook asking allies to come stand with the tribe after discovering the pipeline was going to pass through the burial lands of her son.¹⁰³ The One Mind Youth Movement, rising in response to the struggles of First Nation youth and with the organising skills used to create a prayer camp during the Keystone XL demonstrations, defied their elders - and Lakota tradition - by leading the construction of the Sacred Stone camp.¹⁰⁴ The youth movement, persevering against the cynicism and lack of support from the Standing Rock Sioux tribe council, created a protest space on the Cannonball River. Working with the Indigenous Environmental Network, One Mind Youth Movement organised a 500-mile relay run to Omaha in order to deliver a letter to the US Army Corps of Engineers considering the Dakota Access Pipeline proposal across the Missouri River. The group stopped at reservations and publicised their run on social media in order to organise a "blitz of calls and letters from tribal members on various reservations."¹⁰⁵

The groups' efforts encouraged solidarity across reservations, engaged First Nation Youth, and garnered international attention. Over three hundred tribes and thousands of allies came to the Oceti Sakowin camp to block the pipelines construction on tribal lands. As the struggle wore on and tensions rose, the Sioux tribe, their First Nation allies, and protestors who had gathered in support, faced mounting violence from the police and private security companies guarding the pipeline site. Waters canons, rubber bullets, tear gas, concussion

¹⁰³ LaDonna Tamakawastewin Allard, "Facebook Video," (Web: *Facebook*, 27th July 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/earthw7/videos/vb.1395697853/1020714327080555/?type=2&theater>

¹⁰⁴ Saul Elbein, "The Youth Group That Launched a Movement at Standing Rock," (Web: *New York Times*, 31st January 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/magazine/the-youth-group-that-launched-a-movement-at-standing-rock.html?_r=0

¹⁰⁵ Elbein, "The Youth Group That Launched a Movement at Standing Rock."

grenades, and dogs were all reportedly used against the resistance, on top of the below freezing temperatures as the struggle continued into the winter.¹⁰⁶ Water protectors and journalists alike were arrested, their resistance criminalised.

North Dakota has seen a rush of companies vying for oil contracts since 2006 and the Standing Rock Sioux tribe have a 2007 resolution forbidding pipelines on their ancestral lands.¹⁰⁷ Despite this, after Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017 the easement for the pipelines construction was granted and on the 22nd February North Dakota law enforcement begun forceful evacuation and demolition of the camp.¹⁰⁸ First Nation peoples have faced the on-going violence of climate colonialism, with land and resources stolen, destroyed, and poisoned in the name of extractive industry and profit.¹⁰⁹ It is a pattern seen historically through the violence of colonial genocide and contemporarily across Turtle Island,¹¹⁰ from Oak Flat, to Chaco Canyon, from the Gulf Coast, to the Arctic.¹¹¹

These two moments bookend a year spattered with the blood of frontlines struggles against climate colonialism. Both moments take our attention here, because of their

¹⁰⁶ Julia Carrie Wong and Sam Levin, "Standing Rock Protestors hold out against extraordinary police violence," (Web: *Guardian*, 29th November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/29/standing-rock-protest-north-dakota-shutdown-evacuation>

Hilary Hanson, "Woman's Arm may be Amputated after Horrific Injury at Standing Rock Protest's," (Web: *Huffington Post*, 22nd November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/standing-rock-arm-amputation_us_5834853ee4b09b6055ff01ec

¹⁰⁷ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Mni Wiconi – Water is Life," (Web: *Facebook*, 15th November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. https://www.facebook.com/pg/Standing-Rock-Sioux-Tribe-402298239798452/videos/?ref=page_internal

¹⁰⁸ Indigenous Environmental Network, "Official Statement from Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director of The Indigenous Environmental Network," (Web: *Facebook*, 22nd February 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017) <https://www.facebook.com/ienearth/photos/a.346330010641.150464.186264980641/10154437951990642/?type=3&theater>

Indigenous Rising Media, "A timeline and summary of yesterday (Feb.23, 2017) at the camp," (Web: *Facebook*, 24th February 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/Indigenoustrisingmedia/posts/1643289019021251>

¹⁰⁹ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, "Mni Wiconi – Water is Life."

¹¹⁰ Turtle Island is the name for North America used by some indigenous groups.

¹¹¹ Indigenous Environmental Network, "Native Nations Rise," (Web: *Facebook*, 4th March 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017. https://www.facebook.com/pg/ienearth/videos/?ref=page_internal

prominence as focal points for transnational climate action. This chapter will explore how these incidents were translated into calls for cross-border organising and became representative of *connective transnational solidarity* in the UK. Taking these two pivotal struggles as case studies, this chapter will focus on how climate justice and decolonial activist groups in London utilise different media practices to enact international solidarity with indigenous and decolonial struggles. These two case studies have been chosen for their global resonance. Both have mobilised solidarity from across the world, defying nation-state boundaries and instigating climate action as an inherently transnational and intersectional struggle.

In this chapter I perform close-reading of the media output from The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network to examine the collective's use of platforms and framing for organizing and broadcasting. This illuminates how the groups deploy a variety of on- and off-line media strategies to amplify indigenous and decolonial frontline struggles against climate colonialism. Focusing on the groups campaigns and community organizing initiatives surrounding these two on-going issues, this chapter will argue that these grassroots community groups are key actors in articulating a decolonial intervention within the UK climate change conversation, elaborating solidarity beyond borders that fulfills transformative media organizing principles and re-writes the logic of connective action.

I use social movement and radical media theory to provide descriptive case studies and analysis, including a qualitative deconstruction of the decolonial climate action narratives used by The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network. Following the Transformative Media Organizing Project's definition, I explore the extent to which the media practices of the groups fulfill transformative media organizing principles through media work that develops critical consciousness and leadership, remains accountable to the community, engages participatory and cross-platform approaches to production, and roots

itself in community action. As Pastor, Ito, and Rosner have noted, looking beyond the more easily quantifiable (and fundable) markers of “transactional” impact can show us not only “how people, organizations, and movements have been altered through collective efforts,” but also “how societal and political views have shifted or been impacted by movement building.”¹¹²

Rooted in social movement theory, John Downing’s theory of radical media includes practices beyond those we might conventionally consider as media. Giving space to media such as dance, jokes, graffiti, dress, performance, and woodcuts alongside press, radio, film, and the Internet as “public sphere interventions,” Downing provides us with the theoretical tools to examine media practices from moments of embodied protest to online discursive contestation.¹¹³ Bennett and Segerberg’s “logic of connective action” also provides useful insights into the “digitally networked action” of the two cases.¹¹⁴ Following one of the “broad organizational patterns” Bennett and Segerberg identify,¹¹⁵ The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network function as network nodes that translate and redistribute information. This chapter thus proposes the concept of *connective transnational solidarity* to characterize the mobilizing logics of the two case studies, a mode of intersectional grassroots organizing that, I argue, may be read as a subset of Keck and Sikkink’s “transnational advocacy networks.”¹¹⁶

Before we dive in, it makes sense to pause for a moment to recognize how the two cases here are inherently rooted in, and defined by, this particular historical moment.

¹¹² Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, and Rachel Rosner. *Transactions, Transformations, Translation: Metrics that Matter for Building, Scaling and Funding Social Movements*, (Los Angeles: USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, 2011), p. 13

¹¹³ Downing, *Radical Media*

¹¹⁴ W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, “The Logic of Connective Action,” *Information, Communication and Society* 15:5 (2012), 739-768.

¹¹⁵ Bennett and Segerberg, “The Logic of Connective Action,” p.742

¹¹⁶ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (USA: Cornell University Press, 1998)

Globalization, the on-going history of colonialism, the proliferation of affordable technological hardware and the digitally enabled communications these facilitate, all contribute elements to the configuration of these struggles against climate colonialism. #JusticeForBerta and #MniWiconi provide us with a new model for grassroots social movement mobilization which engages with and responds to the 21st century as a moment of globally interconnected struggles. Where the growing pervasiveness of communication technologies have collapsed geographical distance, the concept of the “Anthropocene” bends linear temporality as we are constantly confronted with our collective histories. It is within these conditions of possibility that connective transnational solidarity both responds to and re-imagines the future.

Image 7: Tweet from Wretched of the Earth (@wretchedotearth) depicting their mural to Berta Cáceres on Regents Canal, London. (3rd April 2016)



ii. #JusticeForBerta

On the 3rd of April 2016, members of The Wretched of the Earth took to the streets of Camden in London to raise awareness around Berta's assassination and build political pressure on the UK government to push for justice. The Wretched of the Earth's action was part of a broader, transnational campaign for #JusticeForBerta, which saw several groups across the globe stage actions and protest outside the Honduran embassies in their cities.¹¹⁷ In London, The Wretched of the Earth employed several varied tactics. On the streets they painted a mural to Berta on a wall, complete with candles and flower offerings. The group staged several corporeal actions with a banner that read "BERTA DiDN'T DiE, SHE MULTIPLiED" whilst activists held masks of her face (see: Image 8).

Members of the group took environmental action in memory of Berta's work defending her people's waterways by fishing litter from the Regent's canal. This was collected into rubbish bags, each labeled with one of the injustices Berta had organized against including patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and extractivism.¹¹⁸ These they left outside the Honduran embassy in London building a symbolic dam of "the rubbish that Berta gave her life fighting."¹¹⁹ The online channels for The Wretched of the Earth, primarily social media networks Facebook and Twitter, amplified these offline actions. Posts were in English and Spanish (see: Image 9), and engaging with passers by meant members of the public joined in the online dialogue. A video of the day uploaded to Vimeo told the story of Berta's

¹¹⁷ bertacaceres.org, "Reacting to the murder of Berta Cáceres," *BertaCarceres*, April 2016. Accessed: 7th May 2016 <http://bertacaceres.org/coverage-and-tweets/>

¹¹⁸ The Wretched of the Earth, "Tweet 1," (Web: @wretchedotearth/Twitter, 3rd April 2016, 10:46am.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 https://twitter.com/wretchedotearth/status/716683352351383552/photo/1?utm_source=fb&utm_medium=fb&utm_campaign=wretchedotearth&utm_content=716683352351383552

¹¹⁹ The Wretched of the Earth, "Tweet 1"

fight and The Wretched of the Earth's day of action.¹²⁰ The same video uploaded to Facebook totaled 450 shares and 19,000 views, fulfilling The Wretched of the Earth's aim "to bring the demands of Berta's organisation, Copinh Intibucá, to Londoners."¹²¹



Image 8: Tweet showing The Wretched of the Earth's action on the Regents Canal to demand #JusticeForBerta

As the day of action for Berta shows, The Wretched of the Earth employ several forms of radical media to intervene in the climate conversation. From graffiti to masks to creating a symbolic dam from rubbish fished from London canals, the group utilized low-cost, easily accessible media with high aesthetic impact. More than this, the labels on the rubbish bags remind us that these issues are not separate but must be tackled as one. In this

¹²⁰ The Wretched of the Earth (Wretched), "bertaVive," (Web: *Vimeo*, 3rd April 2016.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://vimeo.com/161497508>

¹²¹ The Wretched of the Earth, "Action for Justice4Berta," (Web: *Facebook*, 4th April 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/wotearth/videos/1569156070062470/>

way, The Wretched of the Earth can be seen as both recognizing and instigating intersectional critical consciousness and action. The use of direct action outside the Embassy of Honduras is a symbol of The Wretched of the Earth’s tactical goal of legal justice for Berta. However, the engagement with the public, the use of video to document the action and social media to promote the campaign, illuminates the intertwining of tactical and transformative goals: The campaign hoped to raise awareness of Berta’s struggle and in turn both simultaneously transform individuals understanding of climate change as linked to colonial violence and motivate them to build political pressure for the tactical goal of legal justice.

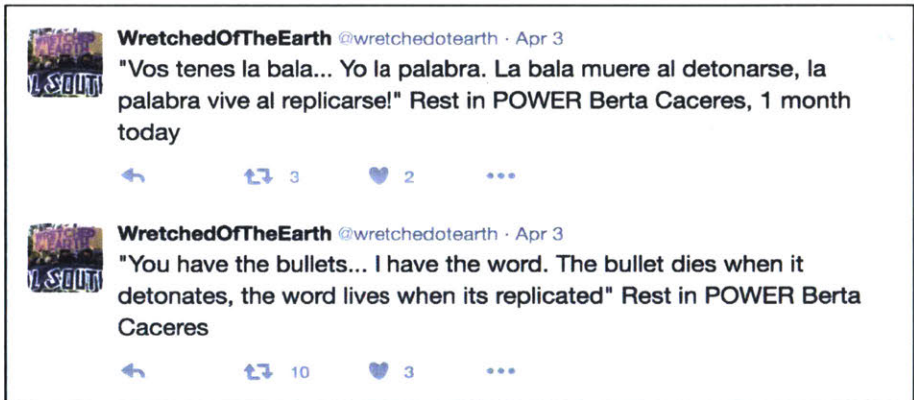


Image 9: Tweets from Wretched of the Earth (@wretchedotearth) in Spanish and English as part of their #JusticeForBerta campaign. (3rd April 2016)

As such, by intervening in the climate change conversation by rearticulating the issue within the terms of a decolonial critique The Wretched of the Earth create a space to reconfigure the UK’s collective imagination, in turn transforming the meaning of climate change and reconfiguring climate action. One instance of this scripting can be seen in a tweet from the Berta campaign (see: Image 7) captioned: “Berta’s 1 in a long history of Indigenous women murdered fighting so-called ‘development’ projects. #JusticeForBerta.”¹²² In these

¹²² The Wretched of the Earth, “Tweet 2,” (Web: @wretchedotearth / Twitter, 3rd April 2016, 8:24am.) Accessed: 7th May 2016 <https://twitter.com/wretchedotearth/status/716647613030903808>

140 characters, *The Wretched of the Earth* instigate an alternative history, advocate for a different knowledge system and question the colonial underpinning of the narrative of development. Locating Berta's murder within an on-going struggle against colonial violence in the name of "development" destabilizes the historical legitimacy of the term and extends the scope of the action to structural transformation.

iii. Berta Vive

A year on from the date of Berta's murder, and with no satisfying resolution to the cries for justice it sparked around the world, COPINH issues a return to action.¹²³ Under the heading, "Berta vive, COPINH sigue" or "Berta lives, COPINH is strong" COPINH's English language Blogspot site rallied action "walking in her footsteps, confronting the patriarchal, capitalist, colonial and racist system that is imposed upon our peoples." The call to action invited allies to "multiply" actions throughout March, including protest and resistance against transnational corporations, commodification of land and militarization, as well as actions to denounce the Honduran state in front of its embassies, defend "bodies and lives of women in the face of the patriarchal and colonial system," and "spread the thinking and example of Berta's life." COPINH's call to action outlines both transactional and transformative aims, intertwines them both as means and end. It also posits an intersectional analysis whereby patriarchal, capitalist, colonial, and racist oppression are all part of the same system and must be tackled as such.

The Wretched of the Earth returned to the streets as part of COPINH's call to multiply. The group revisited the walkways of the Camden canals to repaint their mural to Berta. This

¹²³ COPINH, "'Berta lives on, COPINH is strong' – COPINH calls for month of actions," (Web: *COPINHEnglish*, 25th January 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017
<http://copinenglish.blogspot.com/2017/01/berta-lives-on-copinh-is-strong-copinh.html>

time activists expanded the graffiti mural to include new indigenous imagery and the statement that “Water is Life” in line with the inclusion of “NO DAPL.” Members were encouraged to bring “candles, prayers, messages of solidarity, poems, songs and offerings” as part of the mural.¹²⁴ The Wretched of the Earth thus created space for the different media practices and literacies of their members, allowing them to produce and share meaning within the group. This aspect of the action enables participants to express and articulate themselves, fulfilling the Transformative Media Organizing projects’ identification of the transformative and skill-building potential of media making.¹²⁵

Tweets were posted in English, Spanish, and Portuguese using the hashtags #BertaVive and #JusticeForBerta. Tweets would also tag @COPINHHONDURAS, allowing for COPINH to see and re-tweet the solidarity action through their own channels. This time the group used cross-platform posting to promote their action, with links to the Facebook event posted on Twitter. New platform affordances were also utilized throughout the action, with Facebook’s “Live” feature allowing for the group to share the action as they were doing it. The live video streams were accessible on Facebook as videos, complementing the photos, video, and commentary that would follow on the groups’ social media streams throughout the day. The live video enabled a rapid accumulation of viewers for the action due to the platforms’ emphasis on live content.¹²⁶ This shows The Wretched of the Earth push their actions through new medium affordances in order to amplify their voices as much as possible.

The Wretched of the Earth’s online coverage of the action also shows an inherently intersectional and cross-issue approach to activism. Reflecting COPINH’s call to multiply

¹²⁴ The Wretched of the Earth, “Berta Lives On / Berta Vive,” (Web: *Facebook*, February 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/events/705482982965725/>

¹²⁵ Transformative Media Organizing Project, “Toward transformative media organizing: LGBTQ and Two-Spirit media work in the United States,” *Media Culture and Society* 39:2 (2017), 159-184, p.169

¹²⁶ Victor Luckerson, “Get Ready to See More Live Video on Facebook,” (Web: *TIME*, 1st March 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://time.com/4243416/facebook-live-video/>

and the groups additions to the mural, tweets connected Berta's struggle to that of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe using the hashtag #WaterProtectors. Linking these two on-going struggles and their goals encourages the audience to understand them by identifying systems of intersecting oppression and violence. The label "water protectors" arose from the grassroots during the NoDAPL march and represents a significant discursive shift away from "protestors." The Wretched of the Earth also spoke in solidarity by sharing voices from the frontlines¹²⁷ and following actions on the ground in Honduras, where members of COPINH and the Lenca community gathered to lay flowers and pay respects at Berta's gravesite.

Downing's analysis of radical media highlights how mediums of resistance outside of mainstream media, including graffiti, dress, and posters act as important forms of articulation to resist hegemonic narratives. Following this, The Wretched of the Earths' action can be seen as furthered, as opposed to produced, by online social media platform tools. Whilst the core of the groups organizing focuses on embodied actions in the streets, digitally enabled media production and distribution allows the group to reach beyond passers-by and engage in global dialogues. As The Wretched of the Earth's participation in the campaign for #JusticeForBerta shows, online channels become a space to amplify action taken locally. Social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, enact a connective transnational network of solidarity that reflects both the condition of diaspora within the groups' constitution and the systemically global nature of the issues they are tackling.

¹²⁷ Lisa Veneklasen, "Berta Vive! Lessons from Honduras on resistance," (Web: *Open Democracy*, 3rd March 2017) Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/lisa-veneklasen/berta-vive-lessons-from-honduras-on-resistance-and-justice#comments>

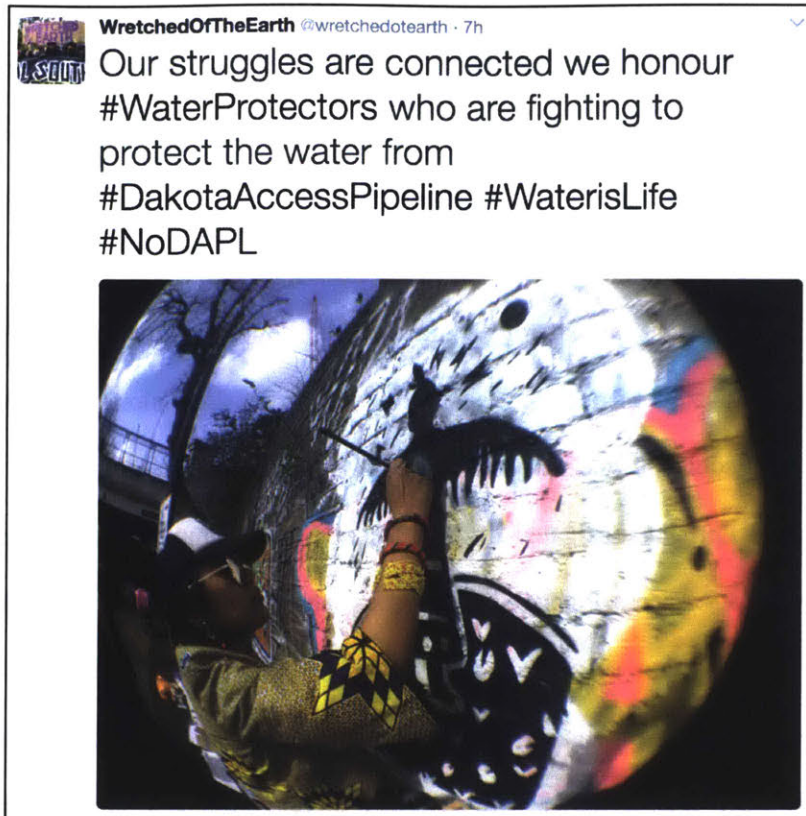


Image 10: Photograph tweeted by Wretched of the Earth (@wretchedotearth) depicting their updated mural to Berta Cáceres including the #NoDAPL struggle. (4th March 2017)

iv. #NODAPL #MniWiconi

Following the ongoing struggle at the Sacred Stone Camp in the early autumn of 2016, the UK Tar Sands Network posted a video to Facebook showing members of the group and its ally organizations standing across Westminster Bridge unfurling a banner that read “Still Fighting CO2onialism Your Climate Profits Kill” and “Stand with Standing Rock Water is Life #NODAPL” as members shouted “Climate” “Justice!” in call and return fashion¹²⁸ The video features organizer Suzanne Dhaliwal explaining that the action was born

¹²⁸ UK Tar Sands Network, “Action for No DAPL,” (Web: *Facebook*, 14th September 2016) Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/notarsands/videos/1317097098308987/>

from the desire to send a message of solidarity to “our relatives... who are holding the line.” It is also a means to send “gratitude and thanks to all the water defenders.” Dhaliwal contends that as these struggles “are rooted in colonialism” it is important for those in the UK to stand in solidarity.

On the 1st December, as part of an international day of action, the UK Tar Sands Network held a demonstration outside the Royal Bank of Scotland along with indigenous, climate justice, and social justice activists from across London. The action was part of a targeted divestment uprising instigated by the Sacred Stone Camp against the companies bankrolling the Dakota Access Pipeline.¹²⁹ An article about the event posted to the groups website discusses the action as a “collective sculpture” designed to illuminate the links between the Dakota Access Pipeline, UK finance, and women on the frontlines. Indeed, the action was inherently intersectional with feminist direct-action collective Sisters Uncut coming forward to stand with the struggle that “is also a fight for the safety and lives of women and children.”¹³⁰

Transnational money flows for colonial extractive industry projects are one of the main focuses for the UK Tar Sands Network. Indeed, the groups profile picture has the words “DECOLONISE | DIVEST | DEFUND DAPL” in white text across a brown saturated image of an armed soldier behind a mass of barbed wire. The glint of the razor sharp wire emphasizes the solitary silhouette, the images surreal composition enhanced by the muted color palette. The image becomes something recognizable yet unfamiliar, a metaphor for the frontlines struggles which take place simultaneously out of sight and under our very noses. The image caption contains a quote from and link to an article from *Investment and Pensions*

¹²⁹ Sacred Stone Camp, “December: Every Day is a #NODAPL Day of Action,” (Web: *Sacred Stone Camp*, 27th November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://sacredstonecamp.org/blog/december-action>

¹³⁰ UK Tar Sands Network, “London Banks targeted by Standing Rock solidarity actions,” (Web: *UK Tar Sands Network*, 30th November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.no-tar-sands.org/2016/11/london-banks-targeted-by-standing-rock-solidarity-actions/>

Europe, stating “our collective action lies in stopping capital flowing from London immediately.”¹³¹

The article itself outlines the £4.6bn worth of holdings of London’s largest pension fund, The London Pension Fund Authority (LPFA). Around £393,000 of investments were issued to the LPFA by Energy Transfer Partners, ConocoPhillips, and Marathon Petroleum - all groups with significant shares in the Dakota Access Pipeline. The LPFA statement in the article utilizes financial speak around ensuring the “best return” for stakeholders and encouraging “responsible long-term behavior” through engagement. The quote from UK Tar Sands Network co-director Suzanne Dhaliwal initiates a different aspect of discussion by aligning divestment with “global leadership” and asking London to “set an example.” Moreover, by describing the project as devastating indigenous rights and causing further climate chaos, Dhaliwal encourages the intersectional structural analysis of a climate justice perspective.

Beyond this, the UK Tar Sands Network use their relatively large audience (7,256 likes and 7,060 follows) on Facebook to promote radical media produced on the frontlines of struggles against climate colonialism. In this way, the newsfeed becomes a carefully curated space to amplify indigenous alternative media and frontlines media production. Sources that have built up cultural capital outside of mainstream news circuits, including the Indigenous Environmental Network and Indigenous Rising Media, take prominence next to materials produced by different indigenous communities and activist groups. Whilst relevant stories from mainstream media outlets such as *The Guardian* are shared, they tend to punctuate on-site video broadcasting and independent writing.

¹³¹ UK Tar Sands Network, “Defund DAPL,” (Web: *Facebook*, 25th November 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/notarsands/photos/a.155128911172484.33945.109752842376758/1387352181283478/?type=1&theater>

Much like The Wretched of the Earth, the UK Tar Sands Network deploys different means of independent production to enact the “gatekeeper” role usually reserved for high editorial positions in mainstream media outlets. From quotes in mainstream media stories to articles on recent actions published on the groups website, UK Tar Sands Network articulates an intervention into the UK climate change conversation by vocalizing perspectives normally omitted. More than this, the group deliberately strives to amplify radical media production from the frontlines, creating a curated news feed of material that contests the conventional “trickle down” effect of news circuits. Following this, solidarity becomes an act of radical and active listening as well as amplification.

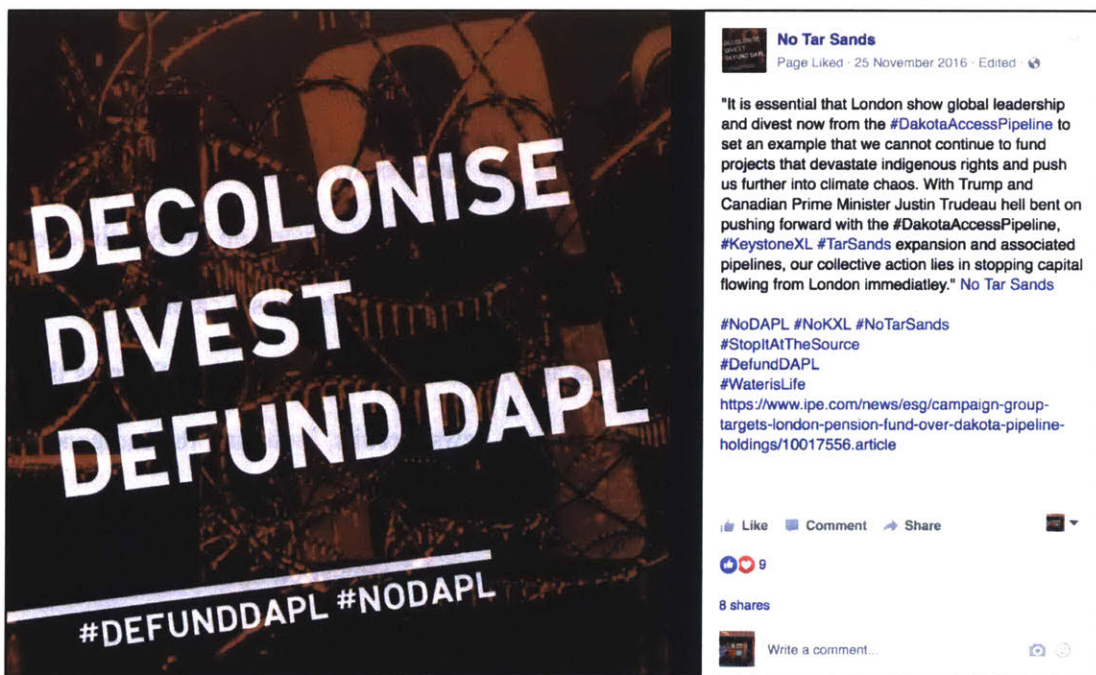


Image 11: UK Tar Sands Network Facebook profile picture in solidarity with the #NoDAPL movement.

v. Decolonizing climate action through connective transnational solidarity

This final section explores the extent to which the cases described above fit the Transformative Media Organizing project's definition, arguing that the groups both perform aspects of transformative media organizing. It argues that whilst the groups fulfill the aspects of transformative media organizing, the concept fails to completely capture the role of these groups as enacting solidarity with frontlines struggles from a position of privilege within the global structuring of colonial power. I propose the idea of *connective transnational solidarity* to describe the inherently cross-border global flows of resistance enabled by digital communications technology. Connective transnational solidarity expresses the role of activist groups like The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network as nodes that relay, translate, and reconfigure meaning and action in the Global North through a network of diaspora populations and allies.

This concept zeros in on the specific grassroots organizing across-borders performed by local activist groups and diaspora (post)colonial communities. Keck and Sikkink's concept of transnational advocacy groups provides the big picture of these transnational dynamics: the values driven, multiple actor, movements that build internationally through parts of government, NGOs, IGOs, the media, churches, trade unions, and other agents.¹³² *Connective transnational solidarity* can be seen as a subset of these information and mobilization flows, distinguished by its make-up of collective and community groups who drive grassroots mobilization; the inherited or chosen positioning of these groups as "outsiders" in national and international civil society; the movements goals to attain realizable material aims, particularly on frontline struggles, alongside transformative

¹³² Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, p.9

changes; and the inherently intersectional approach to enacting solidarity through action which recognizes geographical and demographical privilege.

As umbrella community organizing groups and active participants in a transnational solidarity network, The Wretched of the Earth and the UK Tar Sands Network can be argued as embodying what the Transformative Media Organizing Project have identified as “transformative media organizing.” Defined as “a liberatory approach to integrating media, communications, and cultural work into movement building,” transformative media organizing “begins with an intersectional analysis of linked systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and other axes of identity” and performs “media work that develops the critical consciousness and leadership of those who take part in the media-making process.” This involves community participation in media production; rooting work in community action; creating content across platforms; and remaining accountable to the needs of the movement base.¹³³

Both The Wretched of the Earth and the UK Tar Sands Network fulfill the characteristics of transformative media organizing. Their media work is inherently rooted in community action, with media production involving the creation of campaign materials by members. From banners to graffiti stencils to live video streaming to tweets, members construct and use media as an extension of their actions. In this way the groups both adopt participatory media organizing principles. Events hosted and promoted by the group include poster making in preparation for marches and print screening workshops in solidarity with frontline struggles. For the London Climate March 2015, The Wretched of the Earth specifically asked members to wear black clothes, and during their 2017 solidarity event for #Justice4Berta members were asked to bring and produce media including poems and songs.

¹³³ Transformative Media Organizing Project, “Toward transformative media organizing,” p.177

Both groups adopt a radical media stance where potential mediums for resistance expand well beyond mainstream sources and blend online and offline action.

The groups are also strategic about their media practices, adopting online forms of broadcasting and utilizing offline media for aesthetic interventions. The UK Tar Sands Network navigates the mainstream media conversation by both voicing opposition in mainstream sources and amplifying radical frontlines media production in their own feeds. Trade union presses and other alternative media sources like the New Internationalist become a focal point for the groups to articulate their perspectives, complementing the use of social media platforms Facebook and Twitter to share these stories to a pre-formed audience. Social media is also used to inform members of upcoming actions and relate actions to the broader frontlines networks they stand in solidarity with. Carefully curated social media news sources allow the groups to intervene in the mainstream discussion by amplifying frontline, indigenous, and decolonial voices.

The groups also instigate a radically intersectional approach to decolonialization and climate action. Whilst the groups main focus are on the impacts of race and nationality within the colonial structuring of global power, both acknowledge the intersections of other forms of violence and oppression including gender and sexuality. The Wretched of the Earth have taken actions that specifically call attention to the disparate impact of colonial climate violence on women, whilst the Tar Sands Network UK teamed with radical feminist collective Sisters Uncut to advocate an intersectional critique throughout their #NODAPL event. This intersectional approach is furthered by a horizontal organization method that ensures the groups' inherent accountability. The Wretched of the Earth has no formal leadership and consists of a number of different solidarity and climate justice organizations. Both groups remain accountable to frontlines communities by following their calls for

solidarity actions and engaging in digitally enabled conversations with them through the looser networked ties of social media platforms.

If we locate The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network in this way, as nodes of a global solidarity network, it allows us to revise our understanding of the logic of connective action within the decolonial movement. Bennett and Segerberg's understanding of logic of connective action focuses on large-scale organizations, arguing that social media and easily personalizable content have created "personalized, digitally mediated collective action formations" which "have frequently been larger; have scaled up more quickly; and have been flexible in tracking moving political targets and bridging different issues." Following Yochai Benkler's work on digitally mediated social networks, one of the broad organizational patterns the authors identify "entails platforms and applications taking the role of established political organizations."¹³⁴

Whilst the UK Tar Sands Network and, in particular, The Wretched of the Earth can be seen as simultaneously global network nodes and local umbrella organizations that utilize the connective logics available from digitally enabled communication, Bennett and Segerberg's emphasis on the self as the key actor in social movements directed by connective logics fails to capture the collective solidarity efforts and resultant self-reflexive privilege checking that characterizes these groups. As such the idea of *connective transnational solidarity* captures both the transformative media organizing characteristics and connective action logics that go some way in describing the groups social movement mobilizations. Connective transnational solidarity is defined as action that is taken across nation-state borders which follows independent and alternative media sources on the frontlines through intersectional activist networks facilitated by the connective logics of digitally enabled communication. It thus stands to critique and broaden Bennett and Segerberg's understanding

¹³⁴ Bennett and Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action," p.742

of the neoliberal individual agent as the primary actor in social movements defined by connective logics: in cross-border solidarity, the connective *is* collective.

The UK Tar Sands Network and The Wretched of the Earth's activist work translate the imagery and narratives of climate change from the frontlines to the UK. In so doing, they broaden the spectrum of possibility in the UK climate change conversation and ask us to utilize compassion by imagining beyond British borders and knowledge circuits in the UK mainstream media. This mobilization of revolt against hegemonic knowledge circuits and the "trickle down" of conventional news flows relies on the distribution potential enabled by digital media. The communicative value of the online space, and in particular, social media, create certain conditions of possibility for the activist groups within a particular historical context. The Internet facilitates a space of cross-border connection by allowing the instantaneous distribution of materials and connective organizing of actions without high financial or time demands. Indeed, Downing has pointed to how "through electronic networks, the articulators of social movements are increasingly able to speak for themselves."¹³⁵

In this vein, the centralized use of self-mediated forms of communication, both online and in person, as well as trade magazines and union publications, perhaps emphasizes not only the rising role of the citizen journalist, empowered by digital access and lowered technology costs, but also the deliberate outreach to certain stakeholders and audiences in particular strategic modes. The networked and "connective" logics of online platforms like social media enable UK Tar Sands Network and The Wretched of the Earth's mode of horizontal cross-border and cross-community solidarity. Simultaneously, the digital space allows the group to disseminate their own words and discursive truths unmediated in the form of blogs. The proliferation of trade magazines and union publications online also creates a

¹³⁵ Downing, *Radical Media*, p.206.

space for the activist groups to build horizontal networks and elaborate their intersectional critique. These modes of communication and their conventions then become inherent to the community-networked mobilization The Wretched of the Earth and UK Tar Sands Network organize around.

vi. Conclusion

I have put forward the concept of *connective transnational solidarity* as a mode of intersectional and transformative cross-border organizing for decolonialisation and climate justice. I have used textual analysis to explore how two London-based activist groups, The Wretched of the Earth and the UK Tar Sands Network, translate frontline struggles to the heart of the city, arguing that the groups fulfill both transformative media organizing principles and re-write the logic of connective action. The groups' online and offline work for campaigns surrounding #JusticeForBerta; #BertaVive; and #NODAPL enacts participatory, accountable, and intersectional media organizing that is rooted in community action. The cross-border communication enabled by digital technologies provides the potential for frontlines struggles to be instantaneously amplified across the world, through solidarity actions and subaltern knowledge circulation.

Identifying *connective transnational solidarity* as a particular decolonial form of social movement organizing in the era of globalization and the Anthropocene sheds light on the transformative potential of on- and off-line mediums that facilitate connective logics. The two case studies also illuminate the blending of on- and off-line action within strategies to contest meaning and be heard. Moreover, the intersectional approach to solidarity that the groups participate in reflect the limitations of Bennett and Segerberg's "logic of connective action" which posits the self as the primary agent of change and posits connective organizing

in binary opposition to the collective. As exploring the work of The Wretched of the Earth and the UK Tar Sands Network has shown, however, the connective abilities of different media can be utilized to articulate collective demands that radically center intersectional awareness and transformative change.

Chapter 3

From Paris to Marrakech: The climate action narrative of the UNFCCC

i. Down by the *Rein*

Home to Beethoven and a series of castles in various states of ruin dating back to the 12th century, the town of Bonn is built upon pavements that wind through streets of baroque architecture, shaded by the branches of old leafy trees, and scented by scattered lavender bushes that are full of busy bumble bees. Consequently, the building that houses several UN bodies cuts a rather severe and imposing figure in the Bonn skyline. The quaint historical market town, one of Germany's oldest, became the de facto capital of West Germany after the Second World War. Today, whilst multiple federal ministries remain based in the area, unification has meant that private business, national institutions, and NGOs have largely replaced the presence of government organisations.

Several UN bodies, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), are based in the southern part of the old *Bundeshaus* campus, including a looming skyscraper that bares more resemblance to a J. G. Ballard imagining than a government building. Tucked in a bend in the *Rein* River, the old government complex is now home to UNFCCC, as well as the World Conference Center, and national German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*. A few moments down Kurt-Schumacher-Straße, the *Deutsche Post* headquarters provide a towering glassy rebuttal to the UN buildings brutalist composure.

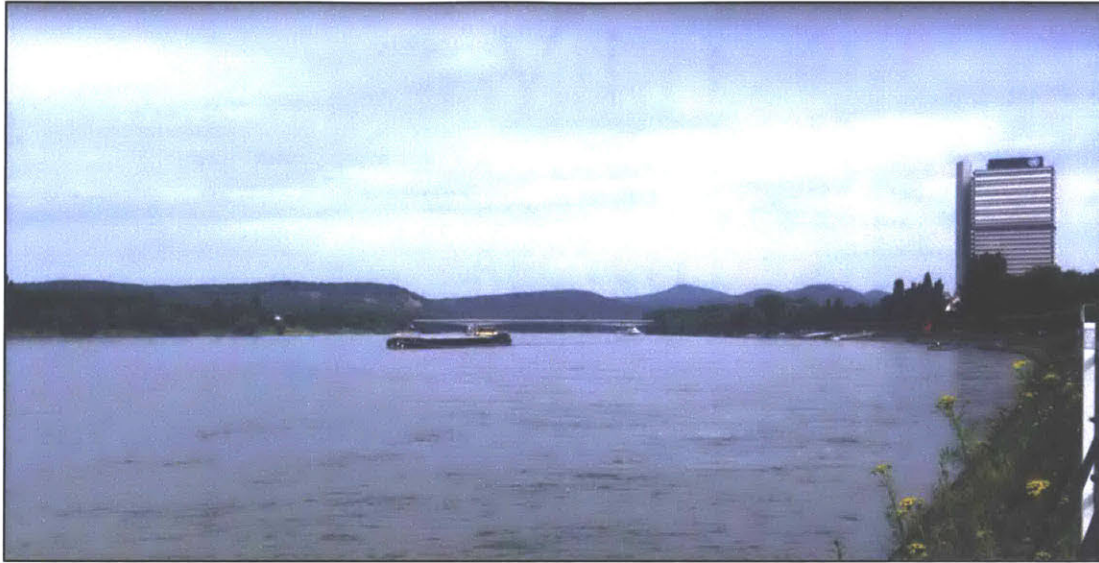


Image 12: Southern view of the *Rein* river from Bonn, overlooking the *Siebengebirge*, or seven hills, and the UNFCCC campus skyscraper, previously part of the *Bundeshaus*.

It was on these sun soaked (and often rain soaked) banks of the *Rein* that I was to eat my packed lunch for 9 weeks of the summer. Internships at the United Nations are fraught with their own politics: unpaid and unsubsidised, interns are expected to foot the bill for up to 6 months of working and living in one of the UN campus cities.¹³⁶ Interns also have to be undertaking a Masters or PhD, or be in the final year of a Bachelor's degree program. Early on I was informed that the department I worked in didn't get many British interns and I wondered whether that was primarily the result of a lack of funding for such programs by British institutions. Despite the restricted pool the UN Internship program had constructed, whilst there I would find myself in the company of people of several nationalities from across the world. Funded by the MIT International Science and Technology Initiative (MISTI) Germany, I worked in the Communications and Outreach (CO) department of the UNFCCC Secretariat for July and August of 2016.

¹³⁶ UNFCCC, "UNFCCC's Internship Programme – General Information and Governing Conditions," (Web: UNFCCC) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 http://unfccc.int/secretariat/internship_programme/items/2653.php

When I arrived at the UNFCCC, the Secretariat was in a summer lull that had been exacerbated by the heights achieved in Paris the year before. On the 12th December 2015, on the back of 6 years of diplomatic work since the acrimonious failure of the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Copenhagen and nearly two weeks of marathon negotiations by representatives from 195 countries, the UNFCCC announced the successful seal of the Paris Agreement. Using Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that were agreed by national governments, the Agreement addressed global mitigation, adaptation, and relevant finance. The accord was roundly hailed by British and US mainstream media outlets as “historic,”¹³⁷ acclaimed as a “landmark,”¹³⁸ and championed the “world’s greatest diplomatic success.”¹³⁹

As I write this, countries continue to deposit their instruments of ratification to the UN headquarters in New York, nation-state after nation-state pledging their commitment to the agreement. Less than 12 months on from the sleepless nights in France, the Paris Agreement entered into force after being ratified by the necessary 55 parties representing at least 55% of global emissions. The ratification poses a huge symbolic win for international climate action, but an existential question for the UNFCCC, whose *raison d’être* is now all but accomplished. As the still weary delegations begin to assemble for COP22 in Marrakech, the question becomes “what next?” Drawing a sketch from my time working in the Communications and Outreach Department during the summer of 2016, this chapter will examine the political implications of the changing narrative of the UNFCCC at this point of critical juncture.

¹³⁷ Justin Worland, “What to Know About the Historic ‘Paris Agreement’ on Climate Change,” (Web: *TIME*, 12th December 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://time.com/4146764/paris-agreement-climate-cop-21/>

¹³⁸ Coral Davenport, “Nations Approve Landmark Climate Accord in Paris,” (Web: *The New York Times*, 12th December 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/europe/climate-change-accord-paris.html>

¹³⁹ Fiona Harvey, “Paris climate change agreement: the world’s greatest diplomatic success,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 14th December 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/paris-climate-deal-cop-diplomacy-developing-united-nations>

Pairing my insights into the CO department paired with textual analysis, this chapter argues that the UNFCCC media practices and communications strategies often enact colonial power by privileging the voices and perspectives of the wealthiest and most powerful nation-states both implicitly and explicitly. I begin by examining the narrative of the UNFCCC by pairing articles I wrote for the Newsroom with information from my time behind the scenes in the CO department. I draw out the emphasis on technology and economic growth, along with the secretariat's refusal to use climate justice, as an erasure of colonial responsibility. This is extended by an analysis of the UNFCCC's distribution strategies, where I argue that the secretariat's reliance on Twitter both utilizes and reifies news flows that privilege the Global North. To conclude, I examine the incoming Executive Secretary's move away from the "aspirational" 1.5-degree global warming limit. I amplify the voices of the lead negotiator for the Nicaraguan Commission at COP21, Paul Oquist, and Marshallese poet, Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, in order to highlight the colonial disavowal inherent to the 2-degree goal.

Both methodologically and theoretically, this chapter utilizes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from media studies, anthropology, and science and technology studies. It pivots on theories of the public sphere, conceptualizations of legitimacy and influence, as well as international development literature. In particular Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib's interventions into Habermasian conceptions of the (transnational) public sphere and discourse ethics have pointed to how the most seemingly neutral forms of democratic discussion and international negotiation remain value-laden with privilege for the powerful.¹⁴⁰ Edward

¹⁴⁰ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990), 56-80.

Nancy Fraser, "Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World," *Theory, Culture and Society* 24:4 (2007), 7-30.

Seyla Benhabib, (*Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1992)

Herman and Noam Chomsky's work on erasure and marginalization in the media,¹⁴¹ along with Aeron Davis' research on legitimacy, news flows and "PR democracy"¹⁴² and Candis Callison's exploration of how journalists configure meanings of climate change¹⁴³ show how hegemonic understandings come to dominate our mainstream media. International development theory, meanwhile, has highlighted the structural power relations that create inequity in international negotiations and multilateral decision-making.¹⁴⁴

As such I hope to illuminate some of the processes and practices that constitute a seemingly impenetrable international organization. By "studying-up" from my experience in the CO department and exploring the finer details, the seemingly normal and benign, the parts often designated as mundane, I hope this chapter can begin to untangle some of the historically loaded assumptions and politically charged norms that are deliberately deployed, with their explicit and implicit values, to form the narrative of the UNFCCC. Consequently, this chapter is largely inward looking and does not attempt to comprehensively answer the important myriad of questions to be asked of the success, influence, and contestation of the UNFCCC narrative worldwide. However, textual analysis and the inclusion of several critical perspectives enable some of these questions to be woven throughout my analysis.

¹⁴¹ Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon, 2002)

¹⁴² Aeron Davis, "Public Relations and News Sources," in *News, Public Relations and Power*, ed. Simon Cottle, (London: Sage, 2003), 27-42,

Aeron Davis, *Public Relations Democracy: Politics, Public Relations and Mass Media in the UK*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

¹⁴³ Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter*

¹⁴⁴ Tim Cadman and Tek Maraseni, "More equal than others? A comparative analysis of state and non-state perceptions of interest representation and decision-making in REDD+ negotiations," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 26:3 (2013), 214-230.

Frank Biermann and Aarti Gupta, "Accountability and legitimacy in earth system governance: A research framework," *Ecological Economics* 70:11 (2011), 1856-1864.

ii: Five years ago, these discussions couldn't happen

When I arrived at the UNFCCC, the designated CO Intern room was full, with six other interns already working for various aspects of the department, including the Newsroom, Momentum for Change projects and Article 6, otherwise known as Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). Consequently, I was placed in a shared office further down the corridor, next door to my supervisor and across the hall from the UNFCCC speechwriter. Much as I would walk several times a day to the Intern room to discuss department developments and news with the other students spending their summers overlooking the *Rein*, my supervisor would pop into my office to give me updates on articles I was writing for the Newsroom. When on these visits my office colleague was out, my supervisor would often sit down and discuss the processes of the UNFCCC with me more thoroughly.

It was during one of the first conversations with my supervisor that he explained how the UNFCCC Newsroom was currently providing particular space for news on renewable energy and fossil fuel divestment. The modules I was posting in the Newsroom often focused on big wins for renewables, with the social media accounts regularly sharing stories such as the increase of wind generated power in various European countries or new solar powered innovations for those currently without access to national electricity grids. It seemed that “Green” infrastructure was undisruptive – it allowed the UNFCCC to write positive news stories on municipal and nation-state success whilst ignoring more politically fraught questions like the highly contested perspectives on global finance for mitigation and adaptation. The development and expansion of renewable energy would be hailed a climate victory without question.

This ignores several intersectional issues including, for example, how the rare minerals used in solar panels and wind turbines, such as neodymium, are often mined in

unsustainable ways that cause severe disruption to ecosystems and local communities. Issues include toxic chemical discharge;¹⁴⁵ opaque supply chains, including conflict minerals and toxic products; as well as displaced worker safety and the use of prison labour.¹⁴⁶ The narrative of a transition to a renewable energy future rarely unravels the nuance surrounding the access to and affordability of renewables for those in what Mohanty describes as the “Two-Thirds World.”¹⁴⁷ For many of the nation-states in the Global South, for example, reliance on fossil fuels is interwoven with trajectories of “development” that demand rapid industrialisation in exchange for economic growth, processes which encourage state dependency on the affordability of imported fossil fuels.¹⁴⁸

Consequently, as important as renewables and divestment are, they often appear as part of the “green-washing” or general sidestepping that allows governments and corporations to negate the issues of climate justice. If we adopt an intersectional¹⁴⁹ approach as that which acknowledges how violence and oppression can manifest through reinforcing

¹⁴⁵ Cecile Bontron, “Rare-earth mining in China comes at a heavy cost for local villages,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 7th August 2012) Accessed: 4th December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/aug/07/china-rare-earth-village-pollution>

¹⁴⁶ Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, “Scorecard History,” (Web: *Solar Scorecard*, 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://www.solarscorecard.com/2015/about-svtc.php>

¹⁴⁷ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p.226

¹⁴⁸ Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga and Helmuth Trischler’s edited volume provides an in-depth analysis of the links between colonial relationships, fossil fuel dependence, and energy infrastructures. Robert E. Looney’s edited volume contains many stories of nation-state energy transitions, including Adam Simpson and Mattijs Smit’s article on “Transitions to energy and climate security in Thailand,” which explores fossil fuel and electricity systems as “strongly related to dependency, colonialism, and state-building.”

Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga and Helmuth Trischler, “Energy (and) Colonialism, Energy (In)Dependence: Africa, Europe, Greenland, North America,” *Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society* (2014/2015), 1-54.

Adam Simpson and Mattijs Smit, “Transitions to energy and climate security in Thailand,” in *Handbook of Transition to Energy and Climate Security*, ed. Robert E.Looney, (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 296-311.

¹⁴⁹ Kimberley Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality to account for how violence against subjects can be mapped to overlapping categories of identity that create discrimination or disadvantage. Kimberley Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991), 1241-1299.

interactions between different forms of discrimination, we can begin to trace the links between capitalism, colonialism, and climate change. Issues of access, enforced fossil fuel dependency, and rights to development must be recognised and centred if the transition of nation-states to “clean” power is to have the potential to not only prevent further global temperature increases but simultaneously to reduce the struggles of local communities and indigenous peoples with extractive industry. It is only with this intersectional approach that we can begin systemic alterations of the pervasive colonial logic that underpins and legitimises the exploitation involved in extraction.

Putting it in perspective, however, my supervisor recalled that “five years ago” these discussions around renewables and divestment would not have been possible. Only a few years before, mentioning either would have caused rifts in diplomatic relations and climate discussions, with oil rich countries claiming that it would stunt their economic growth. My supervisor used the examples of Russia and Saudi Arabia to illustrate his point, seemingly forgetting that the United States was, and remains today, one of the biggest proponents of fossil fuels on the global stage.

iii. Economic growth and internal censorship

This privileging of economic growth underwrites much of the UNFCCC’s approach to climate change. Business, innovation, and entrepreneurship are all buzz words carried over from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) agendas of the member nation-states. In this way, technology is often celebrated for enabling the continuation of “life as we know it.” For example, an article I wrote for the Newsroom on how air travel will be affected by climate

change¹⁵⁰ began with the ICAO report on how extreme weather caused by climate change will disrupt air travel. Rather than offering developed critiques of “business as usual” in the aviation industry, the UNFCCC article focuses on how we can enable its continuation and growth via renewable energy, “Green” technologies, and trading mechanisms.

This focus on solar-powered airports and the UN’s Clean Development Mechanism highlights a pervasive colonial logic within climate action: the worlds rich can pay to maintain their fossil fuel consumption and the lifestyles it enables at the expense of the worlds poorest. The article does not mention the current disparities in air travel accessibility. It does not address that the predicted expansion of the industry without significant decarbonising measures will use nearly a third of the 1.5degrees global warming carbon budget.¹⁵¹ It does not explore how the expanding industry will benefit the small percentage of the world’s population that take the most flights – who also happen to be the world’s wealthiest¹⁵² and most carbon intensive. These facts and analyses were not included in order to portray climate change as a neutral, “non-political” issue where a universalised understanding of responsibility negates the need to consider radical alternatives to systemic issues, such as the demand for perpetual economic growth under capitalism.

An article I wrote on the carbon footprint of Information and Communication Technologies followed a similar path. An article in the mainstream British press that noted the data centres used to power our online services are contributing approximately 2% of

¹⁵⁰ UNFCCC Newsroom, “Aviation Industry Needs to Green Operations,” (Web, *UNFCCC Newsroom*, 8th August 2016) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/aviation-industry-needs-to-green-operations-and-prepare-for-climate-impacts-icao-report/>

¹⁵¹ Roz Pidcock and Sophie Yeo, “Analysis” Aviation could consume a quarter of 1.5C carbon budget by 2050,” (Web: *Carbon Brief*, 8th August 2016) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.carbonbrief.org/aviation-consume-quarter-carbon-budget>

¹⁵² The Green Party in the UK has run a campaign against the expansion of London airports on the basis that 15% of the UK population takes 7 out of 10 flights. See: Caroline Lucas, “The expansion of Heathrow is unforgivable – we will fight this decision,” (Web: *Independent*, 25th October 2016) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/heathrow-expansion-gatwick-green-party-theresa-may-carbon-emissions-wealthy-a7379136.html>

global GHG emissions was the original inspiration for the Newsroom piece.¹⁵³ However, where my first draft attempted to untangle the back-end “black box” of our increasingly online lifestyles, the article quickly became a plug for UNFCCC’s Momentum for Change partner and Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) chairman, Luis Neves. The article I had initially written went through several read-throughs by my supervisor in the Newsroom, the Momentum for Change office down the hall, and GeSI staff. The need to endorse UN and partnering initiatives, and to protect these partnerships by towing the same line, meant that analytical criticism gave way to promotion via an intense round of internal censoring.

Not only does this highlight the UNFCCC’s careful need to negotiate its diplomatic, political, and fiscal partnerships through an internal process of censorship, but it also shows the UNFCCC’s inability to construct productive interventions in the world of international relations. As a multilateral mechanism for the creation of a global climate change agreement, the UNFCCC secretariat is ultimately the facilitator of negotiations between parties of the convention. Its *raison d’être* is to convene the meetings of the world’s nation-states and find compromise between their interests. This amounts to tacit restrictions on the UNFCCC secretariat’s communication in order to remain un-contentious for the governmental and civil partnerships they desperately need to keep “on-side.” As a result of this, the UNFCCC avoids criticising governments, business, and industry.

iv. No hashtags for climate justice

These implicit restrictions extend to not criticising governments or business indirectly by promoting frontlines activism that is explicitly against their interests. Early on in my time

¹⁵³ Adam Vaughan, “How viral cat videos are warming the planet,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 25th September 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/25/server-data-centre-emissions-air-travel-web-google-facebook-greenhouse-gas>

in the CO department, I suggested a series of Instagram posts that highlighted frontline community struggles around the world. However, my supervisor advised me that the focus of the UNFCCC was on process and municipalities rather than communities and activism per se – the aim is to keep the governments engaged, and that means keeping them happy. This diplomatic need of the UNFCCC to constantly bring in national governments goes some length in explaining the implicit biases of the UNFCCC towards world powers. We just have to look to the Paris Agreement itself: it was bilateral meetings between the USA and China that set the stage for the global agreement, with the needs of Small Island States (SIS) pushed to the side. Russia and Saudi Arabia were seen as the potentially worrying non-signers of the Paris Agreement, not Nicaragua or Syria.

As such, the rights of indigenous peoples and communities in countries across the world, along with their claims to land ownership and legal protection, often remain out of the spotlight, despite being on the frontlines of the struggles against extractive industry, deforestation, and climate change affected weather and eco systems. As Morgan highlights, “the central claim of the indigenous movement to the right to self-determination” is “perceived by a number of UN member states as radically threatening to their interests.”¹⁵⁴ National sovereignty outweighs claims to land ownership and self-determination in the diplomatic balancing of the UNFCCC’s need for an international agreement.

Contesting perspectives on climate change are erased in favour of the lowest common denominator in order to pursue the apparent legitimacy, authority, and neutrality that are deemed necessary to implement multilateral climate action between nation-states. Political might and economic weight are given precedence in negotiations, as the refusal of these nation-states would be the most detrimental to the viability of an international agreement. As

¹⁵⁴ Rhiannon Morgan, “On Political Institutions and Social Movement Dynamics: The Case of the United Nations and the Global Indigenous Movement,” *International Political Science Review* 28:3 (2007), 273-292, p.276

such, the need to compromise often falls on the less wealthy nation-states, reinforcing a colonial divide. Indeed, it turns out the UNFCCC do not like using the terminology of climate justice much at all, as when my supervisor discovered I had been using the hashtag “#ClimateJustice” alongside the approved “#ClimateChange #ClimateAction” on Instagram posts, he immediately asked me to remove it.

In the following discussion about the idea of climate justice, my supervisor told me that it was a political ploy used by countries like “Saudi Arabia” to further economic gains and negate responsibility. By this he seemed to imply that “developing” countries would use climate justice framing as an excuse to not commit to climate action whilst capitalising on extractive industry at the expense of others. What this assertion misses is the historical disparity of gain in the Global North from greenhouse gas emissions. As with much I had found at the UNFCCC, the supranational level of diplomacy was a long way from the articulations of climate change that were happening at the frontlines. My supervisors’ understanding of climate justice as a ploy to extend national power is the same perspective that views international relations and the climate negotiations as a zero-sum game, with economic growth and all it entails as the central motivating force. It perpetuates colonial power by refusing to see the historical responsibility for emissions, as well as contemporary market mechanisms and economic conditions, as a result of colonial exploitation.

v. Intervening in the 21st Century news flow

The Communications and Outreach department of the UNFCCC has several channels to distribute information. It was during the Newsroom team’s daily meeting that we would go

through the UNFCCC's daily news round up¹⁵⁵ to decide which stories were worth sharing through which channels. Only the stories that met the precise criteria of the UNFCCC would be released through the main Newsroom site. These primarily consisted of national ratifications of the Paris Agreement; national or municipality announcements on achieved (rather than speculative) climate targets; news on UNFCCC processes or UNFCCC endorsed programs including the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), NAZCA (Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action) portal, Momentum for Change, or ACE (Action for Climate Empowerment); or reports from the UNFCCC, UN related bodies such as UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), and WMO (World Meteorological Organisation), and other partnering or relevant organisations including the World Bank, ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation), and NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

Twitter would go through the next most stringent set of editorial rules for story selection. It was certainly my supervisor's social media platform of choice due to his perception of its primacy in the news cycle. As such he closely managed the accounts of the secretariat and the Executive Secretary in order to provide only the most accurate and diplomatically viable information on UNFCCC processes, climate action, and climate news. Like the Newsroom, during COP sessions the focus for Twitter is to publish the authoritative take on proceedings. Original material posted to the Newsroom increases dramatically throughout the negotiations, with regular updates in the form of press releases and announcements dominating the site. As the primary front-facing interface for the UNFCCC, the Newsroom represents the official line of the Framework Convention on Climate Change process. Utilising the prevalence of click-through links on Twitter drives traffic to these official communications.

¹⁵⁵ UNFCCC, "Press Headlines," (Web: *UNFCCC*) Accessed: 2nd December 2016
http://unfccc.int/press/news_room/items/2768.php

However, the emphasis on Twitter over Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram did not arise solely from platform affordances. Rather, what drove the differing strategic approaches to the platforms was the UNFCCC's perception of the audiences for each. As users of Instagram skew younger than other social media platforms¹⁵⁶ the aim was to approach the platform with a youth focus, emphasizing relatable human stories, using good pictures, and incorporating video as much as possible. The audience for Instagram continued to grow throughout my time there and user comments often showed in-depth understanding of and commitment to climate change issues all over the world. Despite this, my supervisor saw it as a less valuable social media tool. In fact, part of the reason content on Instagram was less rigorously checked and double-checked before publication was due to the implicit assumption that the platform carried less political weight.

Indeed, the privileging of Twitter as the UNFCCC's social media platform of choice illuminates the secretariat's conventional understanding of media legitimacy and influence, privileging the big name transnational outlets based in the Global North. Aiming communications through Twitter shows that the key stakeholders for UNFCCC communications are journalists and media outlets, with thought leaders, UN bodies and partners, and civil society organisations following. The secretariat tends not to directly address the public but relies on these stakeholders to translate news into the broader public sphere and build public pressure within nation-states through increased issue awareness. This strategy reflects the limited capacity of the UNFCCC to create its own content and the role of the mainstream media as a gatekeeper of information. Following this, the role of the CO department is to provide the authoritative official take on proceedings for others to translate into meaningful stories for the wider public.

¹⁵⁶ Sydney Parker, "Top Instagram Demographics That Matter to Social Media Marketers," (Web: *Hootsuite*, 21st July 2016) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/>

The UNFCCC's communications strategy thus utilises the increasing reliance of journalists on Public Relations (PR). Several studies have pointed to the increasing demand for content through the 24hour news cycle as well as funding cuts to journalistic resources as decreasing the ability of journalists to conduct investigative news.¹⁵⁷ Instead, many journalists rely on PR materials from governments, NGOs, and businesses in order to keep up with increasingly rapid turnover. Certainly whilst I was working within the CO department, my searches for information on news stories we were sharing would often reveal word for word articles across different press outlets. Despite the lack of source accreditation, this was not considered plagiarising. Indeed, the CO department had even verbally advised me to just copy and paste, "You'd be surprised at how much this happens in the industry."

This shifting in journalistic practices has opened up new spaces for institutions to intervene in the news cycle. Growing reliance on PR materials has meant an evolving hierarchy of influence based on the reliability of sources to provide accurate information. Institutions like the UNFCCC can therefore increase their legitimacy and influence in the news cycle by maintaining a steady stream of dependable news material. Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" as the social power relations within a "system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status"¹⁵⁸ is relevant here, as it illuminates the commodification of knowledge in contemporary news flows as well as the rising journalistic dependence on feedback loops of legitimacy that limit source diversity. Dependence on a narrow field of reliable sources in turn restricts the quality of news that enters the public sphere through mainstream media by reducing the amount of perspectives

¹⁵⁷ Aeron Davis, "Public Relations and News Sources," in *News, Public Relations and Power*, ed. Simon Cottle, (London: Sage, 2003), 27-42.

¹⁵⁸ Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, (London: Sage, 2004), p.37.

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson, (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258.

included, with the analytical “vetting” process constrained by resource demands on journalists.¹⁵⁹

The UNFCCC’s recent expansion to Instagram shows the secretariat’s recognition of the platform’s importance as a direct distributor of information to a broader demographic. Yet, it is still considered an expendable platform and is updated less regularly than Twitter. During my time at the secretariat, the UNFCCC Instagram had considerably larger gains in followers than the Twitter account. However, for the UNFCCC, the legitimacy and influence of its smaller audience on Twitter is worth more in the circulation of information than its broader Instagram following. What this shows is that the media practices of the UNFCCC participate and maintain a restricted public sphere through limited circuits of knowledge and news flow. The secretariat’s reliance on Twitter as a press release platform privileges voices already considered “legitimate” in mainstream news media, particularly in the Global North. This systematically marginalizes the voices of the Global South or the “Two-Thirds World,” by broadcasting through platforms and mediums that are less accessible and by virtue less accountable to those populations.

vi. “When a scientist said 2 degrees / was just an estimate”¹⁶⁰

With the new Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, arriving in Bonn and taking up her role in the August I was at the secretariat, there were a lot of conversations about the new direction of the UNFCCC - particularly in light of the Paris Agreement. One new direction

¹⁵⁹ Aeron Davis provides a succinct review of literature that argues news “has been consistently dominated by sources from government and elite institutions” as well as exploring how PR strategies are incorporated into newsgathering practices.

Aeron Davis, *Public Relations Democracy*, pp.11-12.

¹⁶⁰ Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, “Marshall Islands Poet to U.N. Climate Summit: At 2 Degrees, My Islands Will Already Be Underwater,” (Web: *Democracy Now!*, 18th November 2016) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 https://www.democracynow.org/2016/11/18/marshall_islands_poet_to_un_climate

concerned Espinosa's desire to discursively abandon the 1.5 degrees goal. As far back as 2011, Espinosa's predecessor Christiana Figueres was tweeting: "we can't measure success by vigour of market but by impact on most vulnerable. Market is a tool. Goal has to be 1.5°C max."¹⁶¹ During the more recent Grantham Lecture, Figueres had spoken of the 1.5-degree limit as the "aspirational goal" in contrast to 2-degrees that embodies the absolute "physical impact" and "physical urgency" of climate change as "we have already agreed – thanks to science."¹⁶²

However, as Figueres states, the 1.5 degree limit carries more scientific and political significance for the "extreme vulnerability of populations around the world." What Figueres forgoes in her speech is that for these populations it is not a question of aspiration but survival. Both the 1.5-degree and 2-degree limits work as global averages, symbolising a disparate amount of rising and cooling temperatures in different areas of the world. The difference between an increase of 1.5- and 2-degrees global warming above pre-industrial levels is the difference between the habitability of areas around the Arabian Gulf,¹⁶³ between the ability to grow staple crops in many parts of Africa,¹⁶⁴ and between the existence of coral reef eco-systems and how much of the earth is submerged by rising sea levels.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Christiana Figueres, "CarbonExpo Tweet," (Web: @CFigueres / Twitter, 2nd June 2011) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://twitter.com/CFigueres/status/76228293858308096>

¹⁶² Grantham Imperial, "Transforming growth: Climate policy today for a sustainable tomorrow – Christiana Figueres," (Web: YouTube, 14th April 2016). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwTCl0W0QtU>

¹⁶³ Jeremy S. Pal and Elfatih A. B. Eltahir, "Future temperature in southwest Asia projected to exceed a threshold for human adaptability," *Nature Climate Change* 6 (2015), 197-200.

¹⁶⁴ Bruce Campbell, "Climate Change: Half a Degree Will Make a World of Difference for the Food We Eat," (Web: *The Huffington Post*, 12th September 2015.) Accessed: 27th November 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bruce-campbell-phd/climate-change-half-a-deg_b_8756428.html

¹⁶⁵ Carl-Friedrich Schleussner,, Tabea K. Lissner, Erich M. Fischer, Jan Wohland, Mahé Perrette, Antonius Golly, Joeri Rogelj, Katelin Childers, Jacob Schewe, Katja Frieler, Matthias Mengel, William Hare, and Michiel Schaeffer, "Differential climate impacts for policy-relevant limits to global warming: the case of 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees," *Earth System Dynamics* 7:2 (2016), 327-351.

The inequitable outcome of global warming and its effect on the climate are already happening with “11 of the 17 countries with low or moderate GHG emissions” currently “acutely vulnerable to negative impacts of climate change.” Climate modelling predicts that this inequality “will significantly worsen by 2030.”¹⁶⁶ The 2-degree threshold renders these populations expendable. Perhaps it is therefore unsurprising that it was European policy analysts that recommended the 2-degrees threshold over ten years ago.¹⁶⁷ In the run up to the Paris Agreement, 44 countries that constitute the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) pushed for the inclusion of 1.5 degrees goal. Figueres herself signed the declaration, along with members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF),¹⁶⁸ who broke from the G77 group that represents most “developing” countries to demand the limit.

A quote from CVF spokesperson Saleemul Huq shows the unequal distribution of power, responsibility and vulnerability in the COP21 negotiations: “We are the countries who will suffer the most from climate change and against whom all the big [negotiating] groups like the US, EU and G77 are aligned. We are the majority: 106 of the 195 countries of the world want this 1.5C target. But there is no democracy here. It’s a power game and the powerful are not on our side.”¹⁶⁹ The delegation for Nicaragua went one step further, with lead negotiator Paul Oquist refusing to sign the Paris Agreement under the premise that Nicaragua “don’t want to be an accomplice to taking the world to 3 to 4 degrees and the

¹⁶⁶ Glenn Althor, James E. M. Watson and Richard A. Fuller, “Global mismatch between greenhouse gas emissions and the burden of climate change,” *Scientific Reports*, (2016) 6:20281

¹⁶⁷ Fred Pearce, “Paris COP21: An Unexpected Move Towards Global Target of 1.5 Degrees,” (Web: *Yale environment360*, 10th December 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 https://e360.yale.edu/digest/paris_cop21_an_unexpected_move_toward_global_target_of_15_degrees/4607/

¹⁶⁸ Climate Vulnerable Forum, “CVF Participating Countries,” (Web: *Climate Vulnerable Forum*) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <http://www.thecvf.org/web/climate-vulnerable-forum/cvf-participating-countries/>

¹⁶⁹ John Vidal and Fiona Harvey, “Paris climate talks: vulnerable countries demand 1.5C warming limit,” (Web: *The Guardian*, 30th November 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/nov/30/paris-climate-talks-vulnerable-countries-demand-15c-warming-limit>

death and destruction that represents.”¹⁷⁰ This earned the country certain snubs from big press outlets in the Global North as well as from fellow delegates at the convention who accused the country of playing “ideological games.”¹⁷¹

What Oquist’s comments highlight, however, are the colonial ideologies already at play, particularly in the idea of Universal Responsibility. Nicaragua’s intervention noted the lack of accountability within the system of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC’s), the dependency of change on a currently unstable system of climate finance, as well as the uneven adaptation expenses on the poorest and least responsible countries. He argued the agreement needed a different mechanism “based on historical responsibilities.” Pointing to the 10 countries that are responsible for 72% of emissions, in contrast to the 100 nations responsible for just 3%, Oquist remarked that whilst he believed it was possible to reach the 1.5-degree target, “there’s no willingness to make any sacrifices on the policy sphere” on behalf of the big emitters.¹⁷²

The political and economic bulk of the big emitting countries and their transnational extractive industry corporations mean questions of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), or the historical responsibility of nations for climate change and their respective ability to respond to its uneven effects, are often marginalised in favour of unanimous agreement among the big players. The more economically palatable 2-degrees limit wins over the ethically responsible 1.5. Marshall Islands climate activist Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner uses a different form to raise awareness of the

¹⁷⁰ Climate Home, “COP21: Paul Oquist,” (Web: *Climate Home / YouTube*, 30th November 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDS4FrN6ToY>

¹⁷¹ Pilita Clark, “COP21: Nicaragua refuses to make climate pledge at Paris,” (Web: *Financial Times*, 6th December 2015) Accessed: 2nd December 2016 <https://www.ft.com/content/10b3910e-99ee-11e5-9228-87e603d47bdc>

¹⁷² Climate Home, “COP21: Paul Oquist.”

importance of the 1.5-degree limit. Her poem “2 Degrees”¹⁷³ illustrates “what a difference / a few degrees / can make” through the metaphor of her daughters temperature. Registering at 0.2-degrees below the official classification for fever, it leaves her “flushed” and “listless.” The imagery highlights that science is only a partial knowledge, providing limited insight into our world.

The circular structure of “2 Degrees” flows through the colonial nuclear history of Kili Island and to the rising tides that woke the people in “a rushing rapid of salt” and left the Marshallese people asking “if the world will / leave us out to dry in the sun / will they just / dust their hands of us.” Drawing from her father’s fishing knowledge and the Marshallese word “idik,” “for when the tide is nearest an equilibrium,” Jetnil-Kijiner asks herself if she is “fishing for recognition.” Recognition that there are “faces” “beyond the policy,” in the form of “a baby” “all the way out here” on an island “not yet / under water.” Jetnil-Kijiner’s poem highlights the existential impacts the Marshall Islands are already facing despite the Islands limited contribution to climate change. “2 Degrees” also shows how the current international system, including the UNFCCC negotiations, leaves nations like the Marshall Islands without relative political weight.

Only by recognising the disparate impacts of a 1.5-degrees global temperature increase above pre-industrial levels will we understand that our choice is currently for the stability of shares in the fossil fuel industry over the generations of history lived in places across the world. The system currently enables the perpetuation of colonialism by prioritising the already rich and powerful at the expense of those whose only stake in extractive industry is that it continues at the cost of their homes and livelihoods. Only when the disparate responsibility for, and disparate gains from, both historical and contemporary GHG emissions are recognised will there be an intersectional critique of climate change, colonialism, and

¹⁷³ Jetnil-Kijiner, “At 2 Degree, My Islands Will Already Be Underwater.”

capitalism, sufficient to address the systemic issues that underlie the current disproportionate impacts on those least responsible.

Through these too often marginalised voices we can learn the stories of colonialism that perpetuate the UNFCCC's international diplomatic proceedings. Nicaragua's refusal to sign the Paris Agreement and the poetry of Marshall Islands climate activist Kathy Jetni-Jijiner show how the 1.5-degrees limit is not only a particular discursive point of contestation but also an enactment of erasure on behalf of the nation-states most responsible and least vulnerable to climate change. As such the 2-degrees limit is part of the colonial negation of climate change responsibility. The global temperature increase elucidates how evidence based on a scientific method founded in the Global North has been used problematically within international climate change discussions. In this case, average global temperature increases do not account for the life-threatening effects to populations in areas most affected. Consequently, the process, the policy, and the way science has been manipulated to underwrite them, can thus be seen as enacting a colonial logic of expendability - once again situating some lives as more worthy than others.

vii. Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn from ethnographic research conducted during my time interning during the Communications and Outreach department at the UNFCCC. Combining this knowledge of the communications process with textual analysis, I have shown how the UNFCCC constructs and deploys its narrative for international climate action. The secretariat's emphasis on renewables and divestment, business initiatives and technological breakthroughs, and cities and municipalities, has been shown to reflect the UNFCCC's need to negotiate international dynamics and the demand of nation-states to centralise the need for

economic growth. In turn, this role as facilitator restricts the UNFCCC from constructing critiques aimed at governments and reduces the secretariats ability to invoke practices of climate justice. I have shown how a process of internal censorship negates issues central to ethical and effective climate action including indigenous rights, community organising, and historical carbon debts.

I extended this analysis by unravelling how the UNFCCC reify understandings of climate action that privilege the Global North through the strategic emphasis on certain channels of communication. The secretariats preference for the press release format through both its Newsroom site and Twitter account illuminate how the UNFCCC's understanding of distribution and mobilisation relies on a small demographic of journalists in news circuits dominated by organisations and news flows located in the Global North. Traditional understandings of legitimacy pervade the secretariat's communication approach as it capitalises on the interventions institutions can make into news circuits through the reduction of journalistic resources.

I ended the chapter by exploring the repercussions of the decision by incoming Executive Secretary, Patricia Espinosa, to drop the 1.5-degrees "aspirational" goal for global warming in official communications. The voices of the COP21 Lead Negotiator for Nicaragua, Paul Oquist, and Marshall Islands activist and poet, Kathy Jetni-Jijiner, highlight the colonial logic underpinning the 2-degrees global warming limit agreed on in Paris. 1.5-degrees can thus be understood as both a very real question of survival for those most impacted by climate change, as well as a symbolic gesture towards the recognition of the colonial system that enables these least responsible populations to be considered expendable.

Using textual analysis to elaborate insights from my time in the CO department, this chapter provides an insight into both the processes of strategic communications within the UNFCCC and the broader implications of those processes. It has considered the media

practices of the UNFCCC to enact and reify colonial logics of domination and oppression that resonate through the issue of climate change. Whilst it is true that I remain critical of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, I must at this juncture admit that it gives me hope, not as an end, but as a beginning. At this stage in the process, however flawed, an international climate change treaty has been made possible. Working within the CO Department I was surrounded by hard-working and generous individuals, not least the other interns I shared my lunchtimes with. Although the hard work has only begun, it seems a lot easier when you realize how many others are in the fight with you.

Conclusion

Standing up for climate justice

i. Mni Wiconi

It was the kind of morning that you would stay inside to avoid. Despite the bizarre heat wave that seemed to have shaken the North East of America out of its winter blues in the beginning of March, a week later D.C. was in the early throes of another winter storm. News outlets were calling it a “Nor’easter,” not many were calling it climate change. I was tempted to call it pathetic fallacy: it seemed like a fraction of the harsh North Dakota season had accompanied the members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe on their journey halfway across the country. When my friend and I had arrived for the march the previous evening, it had been too warm to walk around in a jacket. On the day of the march, walking to the Metro station without a hat, gloves, and scarf on top of a winter jacket was a sure way to chilblains. Knowing that we were in for a long day on the streets of D.C., we wrapped up in all the winter gear we had brought with us and headed out into the grey skies and strong hail to the Columbia Heights Metro station.

The Native Nations Rise march was a call to action by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Indigenous grassroots leaders to “allies across the United States and around the world to peacefully March on Washington DC.” The Native Nations Rise Planning Committee had invited allies to “rise in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of the world whose rights protect Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth) for the future generations of all.”¹⁷⁴ The march was coined as a “final stand” against the easement granted to the Dakota Access Pipeline through

¹⁷⁴ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, “Global Call to Action,” (Web: *Stand with Standing Rock*, 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <http://standwithstandingrock.net/march/>

First Nation territory, but it was also an uprising that recognised that Standing Rock had come to symbolize the pervasive struggle against climate injustice and colonial violence inflicted on Indigenous and First Nation peoples.

We joined the march as it began winding through China Town from the US Army Corps of Engineers, the banging of drums and flashing of police car lights helping us locate the march as we emerged from the retro-futuristic metro. Against the chalk grey skies and slick asphalt, the march was a buzz of energy and colour. Chants of “Mni Wiconi,” Water is Life, rang out into the wind. The street was full of people marching side by side, some in traditional Native American dress, and others in windbreakers and knitted hats. Screen-printed fabric declaring support for water protectors had been tacked onto backs and rucksacks with pins or hand-stitched into place. The warm scent of sage drove us forward as marchers held burning bundles in the air, the hazy smoke drifting through the thinning rain in a synesthetic surround.

As we meandered further around street corners our shouts got louder and our steps gathered pace. On the right hand side of the march, activists carrying long wooden poles began running. A guy in sunglasses spoke into his phone from a street bollard, talking to his viewers about the march. As we were halted in front of the Trump International Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, the long wooden poles were directed into a tipi structure outside the entrance. As I looked behind me to try and establish how long the march was, I noticed the Capitol building looming on the horizon. The crowd gathered en mass in the plaza in front of the hotel and Indigenous People’s conducted an interpretative demonstration called “Protect the Sacred” based on the “Buffalo Dance,” where buffalo circle their young to defend

them.¹⁷⁵ Cries erupted and a blow-up black snake wound round, passed over participants' heads.

The Lakota peoples of Standing Rock call the oil pipeline the Black Snake following the communities' ancient prophecy of a Black Snake that would enter the Lakota homeland and cause destruction.¹⁷⁶ The nominal act here becomes both a defiance of colonial extractive industry and an assertion of the legitimacy of First Nation communities' histories and religious rights. As marchers in gas masks made their way past me I noticed a small group of protestors stood atop of a parked school bus, chants of "Free Red Fawn" catching on the breeze from another group gathered on the steps of a statue of Benjamin Franklin across the plaza. Five American flags billowed from their poles on Trump's hotel overhead, and the white stone of the statue stood immortalised on its plinth above the heads of First Nation protestors, the legacy of the Founding Fathers built once more on the oppression of America's Indigenous peoples.

We hurriedly took stickers with the words "Stand Up" and "No DAPL" and plastered them on nearby lampposts as the crowd swelled. A figure appeared in one of the hotel windows and we discerned a young white man gazing down on us. Yells arose from amongst the crowd as he pinned the "Trump Pence" text across his sweater between his fingers and pressed it against the windowpane. The physical staging of the moment eerily visualised the systemic problem the march sought to fight: a solitary white man, elevated and closed off, looking down on thousands of marchers gathered behind First Nation women and youth from the frontlines holding banners that read "Water is Life" and "Defend the Sacred." The invisible glass of the window divided him from us even as it allowed us to be visible to one

¹⁷⁵ Indigenous Rising Media, "Native Nations Rise March," (Web: *Facebook*, 17th March 2017). Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.facebook.com/Indigenoustrisingmedia/videos/1667014059982080/>

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Harris, "Tribe puts 'black snake prophecy' at centre of Dakota pipeline battle," (Web: *Boston Globe*, 1st March 2017) Accessed: 25th April 2017 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2017/02/28/tribe-puts-black-snake-prophecy-center-dakota-pipeline-battle/B4NU7XUvBBoPgDbrt0O7II/story.html>

another. Not only did the glass muffle our yells and protect him from the cold wind biting at our exposed skin, but it also meant he was able to choose when and when not to engage with us, when and when not to acknowledge we were there at all.



Image 13: Photograph of the women and youth from Standing Rock leading the Native Nations Rise march outside the Trump hotel in Washington D.C. (10th March 2017)

Organisers began urging marchers to begin the walk to the Lafayette Square. Cars waited as we marched past, chants starting up and fading out amongst the crowd to the beat of drums: “You can’t drink oil, keep it in the soil.” “Don’t be greedy, honour the treaties.” Along with the steady rhythm of the drums, the sound of a horn (which we are later told is a sea shell), reverberates through the streets and, like the burning sage, seems to create a buffer between the city and us. A splinter group breaks off at a branch of SunTrust, a bank funding the pipeline, to shut it down as the group rallies around the corner in Lafayette Square. Looking out onto the White House a small stage has been set-up, surrounded by activists with soggy feet and freezing hands. Speakers, from New Mexico, Arizona, Standing Rock, and beyond, talk of unity and solidarity. Hand made signs dot the crowd declaring ecocide and demanding climate justice.

As the crowd gathers we are told, “This is what democracy looks like” before being given warnings not to go on the White House sidewalk, or face arrest: a reminder of how US democracy currently functions. As the Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, David

Archambault II, takes to the stage cries of “traitor” and “double Dave” ripple in from the crowd. A woman next to us explains it is because he had to make a “difficult decision” regarding the camp and people’s access to resources, but a younger woman, one who had been yelling, tells us that he “bulldozed the school.” The strange discontent Chairman Dave’s presence manifested in the crowd, and the sense of pain and turmoil it ignited, would be made apparent later in the day too.

Chairman JoDe Gaudy of the Yakama tribe read out a proclamation that called on the USA, the monarchies of Spain and England, as well as the Catholic Church, to revoke legal precedents that allow the continuing oppression of First Nation peoples. Speakers from different tribes come forward in solidarity, and with stories of similar struggles against extractive industry and climate colonialism from across Turtle Island. Voice after voice echoed the message that Standing Rock has become more than one pipeline, that it is a movement for First Nation rights and recognition. The march was not a single-issue campaign, and those that had been mobilised over the past year would not stop after the Dakota Access Pipeline. This was a cross-issue uprising, with multiple communities in solidarity with one another identifying colonialism as the cause of their struggles and determining to prevent it.

Speeches were punctuated by musical performances by a range of Native American artists including guitarist Gabriel Ayala, female singing group Ulali, and Black Eyed Peas star Taboo. Despite the cold, and only the occasional glimpses of sun from behind the clouds, protestors danced and cheered their way through the 2-hour rally. As we retreated to a nearby coffee shop filled with protestors to warm up, my friend and I spoke to the feeling that a lot of people who had gathered had been on the frontlines in North Dakota. We felt the disparity in awareness between those who had seen the reality of the conflict and our own Internet-mediated account. For us learning through laptop screens, Chairman Dave had become a

spokesperson for the movement. The obvious sense of frustration and struggle articulated by those that had marched with us from the frontlines made us realise how little we knew.

A text message interrupted our conversation: “Thank you for marching today. All that walking might have made you hungry! Join us for pizza at the Tipi Camp at 3:00PM at NW corner of Washington Monument.” Remembering that we signed up for text alerts, we made our way to the Tipi Camp. Approaching the Mall from the north, the tipis cut into the monuments skyline creating an aesthetic interruption to the cities rigid formality, the temporary structures an entreaty to recognise and remember. At the camp, the bitter wind was still keeping people bundled in layers and protestors gathered by a small fire to warm their hands. We joined the line for pizza and soon found ourselves huddled with other hungry marchers, talking to a man who had travelled from upstate New York.

The man told us of how he had travelled down to D.C. by bus with 40-50 other First Nation people from their reservation. Despite it taking him around 9 hours to get to D.C. he spoke about how powerful the march was as a rallying point for the rights of his people. For him, the march represented a coming together and sharing of the struggle, allowed him a venue to stand for what he believed in and embody the solidarity he felt. It was not his only time protesting, in fact, he had protested a lot in his home state and had wanted to join the struggle at Standing Rock but did not have the means to get there. As we continued talking the man mentioned how his father had been taken from his family, how his people’s language had been stolen from him, and in just a few passing comments he made clear the wounds of colonial violence were still very much open and still very sore.

After the man left us we explored the camp more, joining a small crowd that was gathering outside one of the tipis. As music filled the area from inside the crowded tipi and the steady drumbeat begun to kick a rhythmic haze over those nearby, one older man and one younger boy started dancing in their traditional dress. At one point, the crowd that had

gathered to watch the dancing were invited to form a circle. Moving slowly clockwise and growing larger, the awkward shuffling of feet in the circle kept us warm and smiling. Moved by our now stiff and aching limbs, my friend and I entered a tipi nearer the fire with trails of dense grey sage smoke drifting lazily from its entrance. We entered to find a woman sitting on the floor speaking, her face obscured by the bodies sitting and standing around her. As we tried to make sense of the conversation, we realised it was about Chairman Dave and the upset it had caused at the march.



Image 14: Protestors from the Native Nations Rise march gathering at the tipi camp at the Washington Monument (10th March 2017)

The woman speaking was addressing those gathered in the space, some as fellow frontline protestors and others as media makers. She said that the march would be seen as the First Nation communities gathering in support of the Chairman and his decision to bulldoze

the camp. Her anger and betrayal were made clear when addressing Chairman Dave's position as Speaker at the Rally: "they might as well have bought Donald Trump out." The recognised need for unity was undermined by the felt urgency of denouncing Chairman Dave's decision and the woman urged those gathered to speak a new line about what the march represented, to ensure the cries of "traitor" could be heard in the video footage of the rally. Standing Rock had issued the call to action but the women reminded those gathered that the permits, the tipis, and the pizza "all cost money." The political economy of organising and broadcasting the march took power away from those on the frontlines. Her visceral concern over what the march represented, how it would be portrayed, reminded me of the struggle faced by The Wretched of the Earth at the London People's March for Climate, Justice, and Jobs two years before.

The sincere silence of the tipi and the heavy voices that broke it illuminate the importance of the protest march as a medium to convey meaning. As Chapter 1 explored, the protest march is a tool to inscribe resistance. Bodies are used to redraw the patterns of the city, to stop traffic, to pedestrianize roads, and to move as a single entity in collective action. The political economy involved in the writing and re-writing of those bodies through other mediums embodies the systemic power relations of meaning making. Alternative and independent media production become a strategic extension of physical presence, a means to convey and contest meaning, history, and truth. The woman in the tipi spoke to the centrality of alternative media in articulating the demands of a movement, just as the members of The Wretched of the Earth took to social media, trade presses, and self-built websites to demand colonial accountability in climate action.

The next morning at breakfast, I read a half-page from The Washington Post reporting on the previous days march. A quote from the paper by a member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, Guy Jones, reads "Two years ago I had to explain to everyone where Standing

Rock was. Now the whole world knows where Standing Rock is. It has become a symbol.”¹⁷⁷

The article said “hundreds” had marched, when D.C. police reported “thousands.” As I look through mainstream media sources to find a number I can rely on, Facebook and Twitter show me solidarity events in Seattle, Boston, and London, and I watch the connective transnational solidarity network elaborated in Chapter 2 unfold in real time, translating meaning and resistance around the world, defying the erasure of indigenous and (post)colonial struggles, fighting the hegemonic news circuits that perpetuate colonial silencing. It was not a single-issue march, but an intersectional insurgency. As the Native Nations Rise website said:

The Standing Rock movement is bigger than one tribe. It has evolved into a powerful global phenomenon highlighting the necessity to respect Indigenous Nations and their right to protect their homelands, environment and future generations.¹⁷⁸

As First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, and (post)colonial communities across the world continue to rise, fight, and resist, we must work harder to stand in solidarity with their struggles, efforts, and resilience. Throughout my research I have found active listening to be my most powerful tool, on- and off-line. For allies of decolonial struggles for climate justice, we must begin to move up by listening to those voices we hear least. The radical power of listening is in refusing to be complicit in the structures that allow certain voices to dominate. Engaging with the stories these voices tell, especially when it means reflecting on our own behavior and checking our own privilege, is the first step towards mobilizing in solidarity with frontline struggles. Whether rallying to calls to action or discussing these issues with other people in our position of privilege, it is only by adopting an intersectional approach to climate action that we can strive towards effective and transformative change.

¹⁷⁷ John Heim, “American Indians take crusade for rights to the White House,” *The Washington Post*, (11th March 2017), A3.

¹⁷⁸ Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, “Global Call to Action.”

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Appendix I: Where theory meets praxis
Developing a climate justice workshop with The Surefoot Effect

In an attempt to create something that could begin to help white climate justice activists start discussions with other white people, I developed a climate justice workshop. Throughout the winter break of the 2016/17 academic year I returned to the UK as part of a Priscilla King Gray Fellowship to create a climate justice workshop and attempt to match theory with praxis. Working with The Surefoot Effect, a community interest company based in Scotland with associates across the UK, I transformed what I had learned from decolonial and climate justice activist groups into an accessible workshop. The workshop was developed to join The Surefoot Effect's current program, filling a knowledge and access gap by emphasizing the intersections between climate change, capitalism, and colonialism as well as addressing some of the issues most often marginalized in British climate change narratives by encouraging participants to consider their own understanding, values, and behaviors.

The Surefoot Effect's Climate Justice Workshop: An Invitation to Explore the Links Between Colonialism and Climate Change is free and publicly available on their website at: <http://www.surefoot-effect.com/programmes/climate-action/climate-justice/>

Appendix II: Decolonising the climate movement

A note on terminology

Throughout this thesis I refer to certain approaches to activism, organizing, or thinking as decolonial or decolonizing. Due to the prominence and conflation of many terms, from post-colonial theory (Edward Said; Homi Bhabha) to theories of decoloniality (Walter D. Mignolo; Aníbal Quijano), and between the ideas of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and decolonization, I think it is perhaps worth a short note on what decolonial means within the context of this paper. Following the activists who use “decolonize” and “decolonizing” as verbs and modes of activism, I use “decolonial” as an adjective to describe actions and practices that resist colonial power through strategies of narrative contestation and the recognition and redistribution of privilege. In line with Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Decolonizing the Mind*, the decolonial struggle is that which addresses and fights against what Quijano describes the “colonial matrix of power”: colonialism, and the perpetuation of colonialism, in all its forms.

Decolonial struggle, then, addresses colonialism as the indisputable historical fact that the Global North ruthlessly stole lands, resources, and people from the Global South, and continues to do so through a political economy founded on colonial violence. As Thiong’o writes: “The freedom for western finance capital and for the vast transnational monopolies under its umbrella to continue stealing from the countries and people of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Polynesia is today protected by conventional and nuclear weapons.” Decolonial struggles recognize and resist the colonial imposition of social hierarchies and knowledge circuits that displace language, tradition, and identity. In the words of Thiong’o, the effect of cultural colonialism “is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities

and ultimately in themselves.” Decolonial resistance deliberately strives to reclaim all that has been stolen and brutalized by colonial violence.