

Replacing Colonial Theft and Capitalism by Lunchtime

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14 October 2022

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ABOUT CARE

The Center for Culture-centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand, is a global hub for communication research that uses participatory and culture-centered methodologies to develop community-driven communication solutions to health and wellbeing. Through experiments in methods of radical democracy anchored in community ownership and community voice, the Center collaborates with communities, community organizers, community researchers, advocates, and activists to imagine and develop sustainable practices for prevention, health care organizing, food and agriculture, worker organizing, migrant and refugee rights, indigenous rights, rights of the poor, and economic transformation.

Catherine Delahunty is a Pākehā activist and educator with a long history in critical thinking and radical organising. She was a Green MP from 2008 until 2017 and is a Trustee and tutor at Kotare Trust, The Basket – social and environmental justice Hauraki, and member of West Papua Action Aotearoa, and is Chair of Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki who work to protect Hauraki Coromandel from multinational mining.

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The climate and environmental crises we are in the midst of are symptoms of the failed extractive economic system based on colonial theft. The disproportionate burdens of climate change borne by Indigenous and local communities across the Global South foreground the importance of locating justice as the anchor to climate change organising. In this white paper, we argue that climate change cannot be addressed without the recognition of the racial capitalist processes that drive it. Based on the recognition that both colonialism and capitalism shape climate change, we propose that we cannot solve the crisis of climate change by relying on the colonising traditions and profit-driven techno fixes offered by the west, immersed in the ideology of whiteness. We offer the argument that addressing climate change calls for centering a justice-based framework that is both anti-colonial and anti-capitalist, and that looks to Indigenous peoples and local

communities in the Global South to learn to rebuild relationships with the earth and with each other.

The effects of colonial capitalism have been pushed to extreme proportions by the relentless pursuit of neoliberal policies. We are currently witnessing symptoms of complete collapse, evident in climate change, biodiversity crisis, and the chemical pollution crisis. These symptoms are telling us that the dominant techno-craic approach is not working, and that we have gone past the point of attempting small tweaks to the system. Moreover, the inequalities evident globally demonstrate the nature of crisis presented by the accelerated pursuit of hyper-capitalism as the dominant framework for solutions.

Capitalism at its core is extractive in nature. The extractive principles of capitalism work by extracting from bodies of workers and using bodies as landfill. Although the scale of the

Bhopal Union Carbide Bauxite plant disaster in Madhya Pradesh in India offers an example of the violence of extractive capitalism enacted on bodies in the Global South, the toxic violence of chemical pollution goes on in small everyday ways across the globe. These forms of violence carried in bodies, the earth and the ecosystem are reflective of the nature of capitalism. The degree of othering, the degree of consumption, and the degree of collapse are interconnected. Underlying this flow of violence across spaces and contexts that exist at the margins of the local-national-global flows of power is an underlying infrastructure of racism and hate.

In this backdrop, we suggest that it is urgent that we draw upon a decolonizing tradition that teaches us to rehumanize ourselves. In the Aotearoa context we need to base our commitment to change on the authority of He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Decolonization as the process of cultural centering places us in conversations with our individual, relational and community capacities to rehumanize ourselves. Our call draws upon strategies of reworking power and privilege that are revolutionary. Our articulation of revolution is one that is rooted in the ethic of deep listening, drawing upon the key tenets of the culture-centered approach that places peoples everyday interpretation of their lived struggles at the intersections of culture, structure, and agency. Revolution can not be

an event, but an ongoing process of transformation that is rooted in the ethic of love, care, and connection anchored in the voices of Indigenous and local communities across the Global South. In this white paper, we argue that we have to think beyond the patriarchal strategies of whiteness that impose top-down solutions, and instead invite openings for restoration and re-imagination. These re-imaginings invite us to consider in new ways how we want to live and make decisions collectively that benefit all, and live and be in right relationships with each other and the earth. As indigenous and local communities across the Global South uphold their relationship with the earth, It is not about ownership, but about negotiating use rights.

Drivers of Climate Chaos and Injustice

The ongoing climate chaos witnessed globally is a product of the relentless pursuit of profit through extraction. The interconnected forces of colonisation and racial capitalism, along with mutating fundamentalist patriarchy, underlie the climate crisis. Capitalism, intertwined with and emergent from the colonial project, cannot deliver balance as it's based on growth, which relies on the endless exploitation of natural resources, occupation of land, and exploitation of cheap labour. Moreover, the large-scale inequality seeded by the relentless pursuit of neoliberal reforms globally, has fostered new markets for manipulating fear through the circulation of disinformation, creating polarised fundamentalism. We are killing ourselves and other species so that a 1% elite can accumulate extreme wealth.

The process of capitalist extraction works through the consolidation of power. Consider for instance the ways in which the structures of claims-making around chemical pollution are organised. In Aotearoa the use of often dangerous chemicals is largely unregulated, constituted within an expensive process with limited accountability. For instance, EPA processes are corporatized, with those raising a complaint being told to pay \$50,000 to get a chemical reassessed if the chemical use being challenged is not a “priority” for the EPA. These user pays processes situated within colonial-capitalist structures prevents justice and safety and are helping to bring about environmental and social collapse. Our health and our fertility are sacrificed for toxic products and contaminating production processes.

We note in this paper that extractive capitalism is racist. Structural, cultural, institutional, and personal racism have worked to make the elite wealthy. The othering of peoples and planet has continued via the infrastructure of our current colonial inheritance. Central to this here is the system of majoritarian democracy which serves the interests of extractive capital. Westminster majoritarianism is a failed form of democracy as it delivers inequality and corporatism, rooted in its colonial habits.

The dominant approach to addressing climate change offers technocratic solutions that further perpetuate the whiteness of colonialism and capitalism. Rather than de-centering these forces that drive climate change, these technocratic fixes suggest more

capitalism and colonialism as the solutions to climate change. Neoliberalism in Aotearoa has created identities based on shopping/ individual choice and depoliticised communities. The technocratic fixes are premised on the underlying neoliberal ideology of offering greater choices to individual participants in the market, replete with stocks measures on sustainability metrics and market shares rated on sustainability rankings. It is vital to recognise here that halving energy use in the energy consuming Global North is a bottom line, but there is no profit in reduced consumption. The whiteness of the dominant approach to crisis communication is evident in COVID-19 response; the team of five million narrative; whiteness and middle-class orientation; capital felt it was costing too much money. The vulnerable and the disabled became disposable.

Similarly, the dominant framework to addressing the injustices we witness proliferating globally props up the whiteness of non-governmental organisations that operate on the racist logic of “the whites man’s burden” dressed up in Te Reo phrases to give themselves credibility. Charity is colonisation. It is critical here to interrogate the politics of representation played by the local, national, global networks of NGOs that uphold the whiteness of capitalism and colonialism while positioning themselves as liberators of communities at the margins.

Consider here the underlying racism that erases the agency, capacities, voices, and knowledge held by local

local and Indigenous communities in the Global South and in the settler colonies of the West/North. There is racist resistance to an authentic Te Tiriti based conversation and healing of colonisation. Similarly, the dominant approaches to addressing climate change are racist in their erasure of the voices of diverse and local and Indigenous communities. Simultaneously, through the rhetoric of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion, local and Indigenous knowledge is simultaneously being co-opted or denigrated to uphold the extractive model. Worth noting for instance are the tokenistic use of coloured bodies as the faux representation of shared power within colonialism and capitalism, welcome to tokenism and assimilation.. The elite capture of identity politics, devoid of the struggle for structural transformation, reproduces the extractive capitalist and colonial status quo.

Culture-centered voices of transformation

Voice infrastructures are spaces, resources, and tools through which communities express their voices¹. Drawing upon the key tenets of the culture-centered approach that turn to voice infrastructures as the bases for social change², we argue that to address climate chaos requires hitherto marginalized voices to be heard and collective acts of imagination to be valued. The powerful never give up power willingly. Therefore transformation needs to be anchored in speaking inconvenient truth to power, questioning the very assumptions that shape the ways in which power is perpetuated.

We need acts of imagination based on justice that build our collective power and are based on strong connections that are led by communities. We need to hear from indigenous communities and learn to follow their wisdom and authority in protection of the natural world and nurturing of social fabrics. Culturally centered listening as the basis for conversations creates the opening for transforming structures.

Collective, connected, community - the vision

Drawing upon examples of culture-centered community led solutions across Aotearoa, we turn to the values of collective, connection, and community that offer the visions of positive change. We celebrate here some of the examples in our own country including Matike Mai, Parihaka, Matakaoa, Common Unity, Ihumātao, Parakore, Go Eco, The Basket, Kotare Trust, and CARE (the Center for Culture-centered Approach to Research and Evaluation).

Matike Mai. Matike Mai as an inspirational kaupapa challenges us to re imagine political power structures.

¹ Dutta, M. J. (2014). A culture-centered approach to listening: Voices of social change. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(2), 67-81.

² Dell, K., Mika, J., Elers, C., Dutta, M., & Tong, Q. (2021). Indigenous environmental defenders from Aotearoa New Zealand: Ihumātao and Ōroua River.

This requires us to understand what it is to be Tangata Tiriti so we can rebuild the space graciously shared with tauiwi katoa via Article one of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Tauiwi katoa need to prepare for the relationship negotiation in the proposed “relational space” of “Matike Mai by facing our colonialism and racism and the failure of capitalism. Pākehā in particular need to bring something better from our internal dialogues to that table where we finally meet to uphold the recognition of He Whakaputanga and the promise of Te Tiriti.

Inherent in this work is the essential redistribution of wealth and commitment to a value base which challenges class oppression and the contamination of resources and the earth. In this country the migrant and refugee communities from the global south have more in common with tangata whenua than the Pākehā and more scope for joining the healing of the colonial trauma than a paranoid culture clutching its dominance. Colonial thinking will try to co-opt migrant and refugee communities to view the struggle for decolonisation as “trouble making” but the deeper histories of so many cultures can teach all of us that solidarity with tangata whenua will benefit all except the toxic elite.

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Parihaka. Parihaka is the renowned home for non-violence and non-violence activism ever since Te Whiti and Tohu led their people in peaceful challenge against colonisation during the 1860s invasion by colonial forces. Despite the huge price paid by successive generations they have offered a model of collective peace making (and gardening) to the world. The inspiration of Parihaka is an inspiration of resistance and self-determination in the face of colonisation that will never be forgotten.

Matakaoa. Matakaoa whanau and hapū in the far north of Te Tairāwhiti took collective power during the Covid pandemic early years creating protective check points on the one road through their rohe and in an extraordinary effort they raised more than \$100,000 to purchase a van for medical services to remote communities. Their absolute commitment to a tikanga based approach to saving lives in the pandemic has been honoured beyond Te Tairāwhiti and is an inspiration across Aotearoa. No thanks to the Crown they have protected and strengthened their community.

GO ECO. GO ECO was an environment centre since 1993 and now it's a Te Tiriti based project leader in food redistribution, zero waste, climate action

and environmental restoration across the Waikato and helps many other groups build a Te Tiriti understanding and a focus on environmental justice. They are a creative umbrella for both sharing food and healing land, based on clear statements to the power structures in the Waikato about the necessity for radical change.

Common Unity. Common Unity in Lower Hutt since 2012 is a community based urban based development project where they grow food, skills and leadership plus enterprise. This includes the Remakery kitchen and urban kai farms. It started at Epuni School because they say “every child needs a village” but collaboration has led to multiple activities supported by the tangata whenua, refugee and migrant communities in the rohe.

Ihumātao. Ihumātao is the vision of six indigenous cousins to protect their sacred landscape at Ihumātao from development. The legendary land protection effort has led to a stall on corporate housing development and a gardening culture that supplies locals with plants and kai. The Ihumātao activism has been led by a new generation with a focus on kaitiakitanga and is inspired by the non-violence of Parihaka.

Parakore. Parakore is a Māori zero waste organisation since 2010 which has a vision of oranga taiao, oranga whanau and oranga marae. The focus is supporting an education for Māori power and a circular economy, soil and kai sovereignty and supporting climate justice and action.

The Basket. The Basket is a tiny new local project in Hauraki who work for environmental and social justice through Te Tiriti education, food growing and redistribution with Te Whariki o Manawahine o Hauraki, Te Kura o Te Kauaeranga and other partners. We as a tauiwi group try to strengthen Te Tiriti understanding within environmental groups in particular and be a useful Pākehā/tau iwi group within Hauraki.

Kotare Trust. Kotare is a space that is invitational and is based on caring for people in the process of mutual education about power and justice. Kotare Trust is also an education for social justice centre at Hoteo North in the Te Uri a Hau and Ngāti Whātua ki Kaipara rohe. Kotare is focussed on radical participatory education about Te Tiriti, structural power, challenging capitalism, environmental justice, and more. Kotare has been offering social change education for left wing activists and communities for 25 years.

Culture-centered processes of organising at CARE. Across a range of community-led social change processes that seek structural transformation in Indigenous and local communities, housed under the umbrella of CARE, community ownership of food generation, food distribution processes, mutual support amidst COVID-19, cultural spaces of healing, efforts of violence prevention, and advocacy campaigns seeking structural transformation offer examples of community agency. Community voices, narrated through stories and connections shape the claims to sovereignty, which in turn, underlie the claims to justice.

These examples of community-led organising in Aotearoa, in conversation with collective community-led organising across the Global South, offer entry points into other ways of being in the world and imagining the world as solutions to organising.

Transforming Left struggles

We reflect on Syd Keepa's comments suggesting that a fundamentalist Left cannot co-opt *mana motuhake*³. What does this mean for Left movements? How do we center the voices of the margins of the Left?

In Aotearoa, class largely aligns with the struggles of people of colour. The solutions that came out of 19th and 20th century Marxism are still accurate descriptions of capitalism, but we ask if they speak to those people for whom culture, *whakapapa* and family are anchoring points. How do you draw on culture to organise working class/underclass politics?

SWAP, body as landfill, and worker-led resistance. The Sawmill Workers Against Poisons (SWAP) roopu was formed after the Whakatane Board Mill and many other timber treatment sites owned by forestry corporates used the chemical PCP (pentachlorophenol) which includes deadly dioxins and furans. They poisoned an entire workforce and their *whenua* in the Mataatua rohe and other forestry production areas. SWAP have been without effective and sustained union support, but have organised the fight for health support and environmental justice for all affected workers and their *whanau* affected by this intergenerational toxicity. Their care for the *whenua* and for *whanau* in the face of racist and classist disregard for their needs has been and continues to

be remarkable as they and their allies fight over the complex science with indifferent institutions like ACC and the largely indifferent politicians. The profit made from their bodies has left a deadly legacy. The companies who profited from them and poisoned them have evaporated. Their resolute campaigning shows that abusive capitalism cannot silence the most affected communities or own their spirits.

Moreover, contemporary forms of extractive neoliberalism are consolidated through digital platforms. These platforms work through the hyper-precarization of labour while simultaneously individualising the nature of work. We need to listen to the precariat and under class everywhere as the actual experts about what does not work for them and how we must challenge business as usual. Here we note the communicative inequalities that constitute dominant forms of collectivisation, with worker voices at the margins largely missing from the dominant structures of union organising. What then are the ways in which hyper-precarious platform workers organise, amidst the individualised, reductionist and isolated forms of platform work?

Amidst the ongoing economic transformations propelled by data colonialism and artificial intelligence, universal basic income starts a critical conversation about the fundamental

³ Keepa, S., & Delahunty, C. The History of Building Te Runanga in the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions: Syd Keepa speaks with Catherine Delahunty. Retrieved from <https://lhp.org.nz/2020/04/16/labour-history-project-bulletin-78-april-2020/>

economic resources that are necessary to live and livelihood. Universal basic income is progressive and potentially liberating in many communities.

Global South organising. There are many inspiring examples of collective and care based community organising across the world including Rojava in Kurdish Syria which has fought to build a nation based on women's rights, shared power and ecological principles. Costa Rica has chosen to have no army but to invest in protecting forests. In South America there are many left-wing traditions and political efforts, the most current being the possible return of Lula the left wing former President who may have beaten Bolsonaro in the popular vote, a sign that Bolsonaro is not secure. Universal basic income pilots across India and Africa have shown the value of money being directly provided to women and thus children in rural communities to lift the quality of food especially for girls and to help create effective micro enterprises. When Cuba was experiencing an energy crisis due to US blockades the adaptations to alternative energy showed what was possible to sustain food production and energy. West Papua is still an occupied /colonised state by Indonesia, but the vision of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua who are working in exile for a future Green State is strong. It is based on protecting ecology and indigenous customary knowledge and practice as the "lungs of the Pacific. Vanuatu a small island state who expelled both the French and English colonisers is suffering from climate impacts they have not contributed to. They are leading challenges to western nations on the human rights effects of climate change at the International Court of Justice.

We suggest the importance of listening to the voices of visionaries such as Moana Jackson, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Vandana Shiva, Ralph Regenvanu, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Annette Sykes, Tina Ngata and many more as guides in our journeys for transformation.⁴

Organising outside corporatisation

What are the forms of organising that lie outside of corporatisation and NGO-isation?

Kay Robin of Ngai Tamanuhiri as Turanganui a Kiwa taught a workshop to Māori social science students at Te Tairāwhiti in a team course with Catherine Delahunty, to remind students that *tangihanga* is almost the last corporate free cultural model of collective leadership⁵. She reminded students they had grown up within a collective organising experience where no one was paid, and all roles were valued. She reminded them that the multiple functions of the *tangi* from *farewelling* the dead to reconnecting the *whakapapa* of the people is also reflected in the valuing of roles from children to elders. She urged them to consider that corporate hierarchy is not needed when you nurture the collective cultural base.

If we acknowledge an indigenous process such as *tangihanga* as the basis for organising, everyone is valued, no one is paid, and power is shared across different roles, and models of corporate hierarchy are irrelevant.

⁴ In placing some of the voices here, we note that in many Indigenous and Global South traditions, knowledge is held collectively in communities.

⁵ Catherine reflects here on Kay's teaching from a team taught course with Kay.

Organising voice around disability.

Disability is an important touchstone in the conversations on organising around principles of care and connection. Māori and other indigenous approaches to disability suggest a different approach that challenges the western disregard and exclusion of disabled from the workplace and the community. As people at the margins of the margins, disabled people experience an extreme disregard for their value as human beings in neoliberal societies, shaped by the ethos of services rather than community-led decision-making. Their voices are yet to be valued or their needs upheld. Moreover, the whiteness of spaces of disability advocacy and the NGO-ization of the sector means that the voices of community members at the intersectional margins are further erased.

The examples outlined in this paper attend to the role of connection in communities as the basis for transformation. If communities are more connected to collective and holistic processes, is there greater recognition and respect for difference and everyone's contribution?

Finally, the quality of our project depends on the quality of our relationships. Ethics around manaakitanga, care, and connection offer the frameworks for transformation. Respecting people's humanity while fundamentally challenging their positions creates the basis for conversations on transformations. It is important to highlight the categories of class and poverty in contexts of cultures to build that dialogue. We have to continue to acknowledge the oppression

and struggle against it while acknowledging the humanity of the oppressor.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Indigenous and local communities across the Global South and at the margins of the Global North offer us forms of organising that propose frameworks for replacing colonialism and capitalism. Amongst many other challenges, we need a landback negotiation to open up different discussions around ownership, sharing and returning what has been stolen. We need more networking across sites of radical organising just as indigenous communities do so successfully across the world, so we can challenge the global corporate myths and colonising attacks on the environment and communities. Via powerful storytelling and acts of imagination creatively shared, we can rejuvenate our understanding of justice-based transformation and learn from our histories and mistakes. We can build new coalitions that respect the earth we rely on and follow the wisdom of the indigenous leadership we have failed to erase.

In solidarity based cross sectoral hui, these conversations and strategies can be a base for localised action and wider transformation. It's going to be a struggle, but we can connect and share resources for a common good that expresses values such as the key values in "Matike Mai".

The turn to community we suggest here interrogates and resists the co-option of community into conservative movements that serve the status quo.

The concept of care we suggest here anchors community in a progressive space of connection and transformation. What are we going to put between the risk of the parochial village and the technocratic nightmare? The caring ethic has existed before, and our activist, community, academic solidarities must ask, how do we remobilise these existing forms of care. We have to go deep to find the sources of care that exist in cultural spaces. The values of care and justice shape the ideas of progressive communities as drivers of structural transformation.

In local and Indigenous communities across the Global South and the margins of the North, community-led educational pedagogy creates the basis for new possibilities. Education, both formal and informal, which upholds the knowledge of marginalised voices and the value of critical thinking can be a vital part of the transformation.

The examples of community-led culture-centered organising for structural transformation at Matakaoa, Parihaka or Ihumatao teach us that if the village is care-based, whakapapa-based, it can offer the basis for challenging both colonialism and capitalism. Turning to Māori leadership as the basis for structural transformation upholds the values of tikanga. Māori-led solidarity can hold the people through the roller coaster consequences of the failed systems on the very air we breathe. There is no rigid blueprint to get to the future, but the collective attention to questions such as how do we collectively organise, how do we strengthen community ties, how do we feed people, and how do we feed each other while working collectively to

transform the systems offer potential anchors for transformations.

Through our dialogues carried out in the spaces of CARE as it celebrates its ten-year anniversary, we turn to the vital role of such academic-activist-community dialogues fostered by the activist-in-residence programme as a portal for imagining transformative futures. Fostering these dialogues with activists and communities at the margins enacting tino rangatiratanga is critical to contributing to imaginations that are rooted in struggles and are the basis for materialising transformations. Safeguarding such spaces in the academe against the attacks through disinformation and targeted hate campaigns orchestrated by the far-right is crucial to the sustenance of the dialogues for imagination.