

*More powerful together:
collaborative theorizing with social movements about
decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada*

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“Change can be an end result, measured in discrete outcomes, and change can be a relational process of continuous becoming” (Ayala, in Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.127).

“While the climate justice movement is working hard to address the legacy of white supremacy and colonialism within environmental and conservation movements, it is a work in progress” (Deranger, 2019, n.p).

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Abstract

While the climate and inequality crises intensify in Canada, the federal government continues to approve pipelines and other oil and gas projects, violating commitments to both climate action and reconciliation with Indigenous nations. In response to this, grassroots groups, non-governmental organizations, and Indigenous communities are working hard to contest these projects and the colonial capitalist logics that underlie them. This thesis reports on four years of qualitative research developed and conducted in collaboration with people actively involved in the Indigenous land defense, climate/environmental justice, and anti-pipeline movements in Canada, with which the author is actively involved as both activist and researcher.

Guided by grounded theory methodology, activist theories and perspectives were gathered through participant observation, in depth interviews, and surveys and then brought into dialogue to generate collaboratively constructed theory, from the ground-up. The research explores, as a first central theme, the ways that movement actors understand the crises and their underlying causes and how they envision the worlds they want. People in these movements are seeing that climate change and inequality are both driven by colonial capitalism, which is undergirded by western worldviews that promote domination of people over nature and of people over other people. These systems have bred systemic disconnection from land and from each other, cutting us off from the communities, tools, and knowledges we need to get ourselves out of this mess. Their visions of the worlds they want conjure up a future of flourishing networks of decentralized, self-determining communities, powered by renewable energy, and learning from the land. This is a future where a hard process of decolonizing relations renders us all much more capable of living and making decisions together – decisions that benefit all beings. This future depends on a fundamental restructuring of our systems and a massive redistribution of wealth, power, and land.

A second major theme of this work is the ways that people conceptualize how large-scale change happens. This theme is engaged first through a literature review of theories of change (TOCs) from various bodies of academic literature including Indigenous scholarship, Historical Materialism, Intersectional Feminism, Social Movement Studies, and Social-Ecological Systems Transformation. This thesis also brings together the TOCs held by activists in these movements.

Though their TOCs are diverse and conflicting at times, when brought together, they emphasize that transformation happens through a complex convergence of 1) the contexts in which we act, 2) people's understanding, worldviews, and values and 3) building power through collective action and directing that power in various ways. 4) Undergirding these 3 factors is how we relate to each other and how all our efforts combine in mutually supporting ways.

The third major theme in this thesis examines the obstacles to change being faced. Activists and land defenders identified barriers that are external to the movement, including lack of public will, the capitalist-driven economic system, corporate influence over public decision-making, criminalization of activists, and others. People I spoke with also identified barriers more internal to the movements. These include fragmentation, internal tensions, the trends towards NGOization, hierarchical, centralized organizing structures, as well as the insular, overly-critical activist culture and activist burn-out.

This project culminates in a collective strategizing on what can be done to overcome the barriers and increase the transformative power of these movements to successfully contest and weaken colonial capitalism and offer viable and inspiring alternatives. To overcome all these daunting barriers, we need *much bigger, much stronger* movements and to do so we need to develop more capacity for thinking and working across differences. A shared understanding that emerges from all the chapters is that forging stronger, more just relations within and across movements is crucial for strengthening our collective ability to bring radical change to Canada's economic, political, and social systems.

Résumé

Alors que la crise climatique et des inégalités s'intensifient au Canada, le Gouvernement fédéral continue à approuver des projets de construction de d'oléoduc et d'expansion de l'extraction de combustibles fossiles (pétrole et gaz naturel), en violation de ses engagements en actions climatiques et de réconciliation envers les Premières Nations. En réponse, des mouvements populaires, des organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG) et des communautés autochtones travaillent à contester ces projets ainsi que la logique capitaliste qui les soutient. Cette thèse est le résultat de recherches qualitatives qui se sont déroulées sur quatre années et

développées en collaboration avec des personnes engagées dans la défense des territoires autochtones, la justice climatique et les mouvements anti-pipeline au Canada, avec lequel(le)s l'auteure est activement engagée comme militante et chercheure.

Guidées par la Théorie ancrée (grounded theory), les perspectives et les théories issues d'expériences militantes ont été récoltées par observation participative, entrevues en profondeur et sondages. L'ensemble a été mis en discussion pour générer une théorie construite de manière collaborative, de la base vers le haut.

Le premier thème central de cette recherche consiste dans l'étude des modes d'après lesquels les acteurs des mouvements environnementaux comprennent les crises ainsi que leurs causes sous-jacentes et comment envisagent-ils le monde qu'ils désirent. Ces individus estiment que la crise climatique et les inégalités sont toutes deux produites par le capitalisme colonial, lequel est soutenu à son tour par les ontologies occidentales qui valident la domination de la nature par les humains et entre eux. Ces systèmes ont engendré une déconnexion systémique des humains avec la Terre, nous éloignant des communautés, des outils et des savoirs nécessaires pour nous sortir de ces systèmes. Les visions du monde futur évoquées par les militant.e.s sont constituées de réseaux de communautés florissantes, décentralisées et auto-déterminées, alimentées par les énergies renouvelables et attentives aux enseignements de la Terre. Ce futur en est un où le processus difficile de décolonisation nous rend tous et toutes davantage capables de vivre et prendre des décisions ensembles – décisions au bénéfice de l'ensemble des êtres. Ce futur dépend d'une restructuration fondamentale de nos systèmes et d'une redistribution massive de la richesse, du pouvoir et de la terre.

Un second thème majeur de cette thèse concerne les modes d'après lesquels les individus conceptualisent comment les changements à grande échelle se produisent. Pour ce faire, nous avons revu la littérature sur les théories du changement (Theories of Change) à partir de différents corpus académiques incluant les études autochtones, le matérialisme historique, le féminisme intersectionnel et les transformations des systèmes sociaux-écologiques. Cette thèse rassemble les théories du changement soutenues par les militant.e.s des mouvements étudiés. Bien que ces théories soient variées et parfois contradictoires, lorsque rassemblées, elles mettent en évidence que les transformations se produisent à travers une convergence complexe : 1) de contextes d'action, 2) de compréhensions, d'ontologies, de visions du monde et de valeurs, 3) de construction de rapports de force à travers l'action collective ainsi que d'une direction de ces

rapports de force dans des directions diverses, 4) des rapports entretenus entre individus ainsi que les efforts combinés de manière mutuellement constructive.

Le troisième thème de cette recherche étudie les obstacles au changement. Ceux-ci incluent les obstacles externes aux mouvements, incluant le manque de volonté au niveau social, l'économie capitaliste, l'influence des intérêts corporatifs sur la prise de décision publique, la criminalisation des militant.e.s et autres. Les obstacles internes incluent la fragmentation, les tensions internes, la tendance à la transformation des mouvements sociaux en ONG hiérarchiques et centralisées, ainsi que les cultures trop critiques des mouvements militants et, finalement, l'épuisement militant.

Cette thèse culmine par l'élaboration d'une stratégie collective sur ce qui peut être fait pour dépasser ces barrières et accroître le pouvoir de transformation de ces mouvements pour contester et affaiblir avec succès le capitalisme colonial et offrir des alternatives viables et inspirantes. Pour surmonter ces barrières intimidantes, nous avons besoin de mouvements beaucoup plus grands et puissants. Pour ce faire, nous avons besoin de davantage de capacités à travailler et réfléchir malgré les différences. Des stratégies spécifiques sont proposées pour ce faire.

Le thème principal émanant de ces chapitres est qu'il est nécessaire de forger des relations plus fortes et plus justes entre mouvements pour renforcer notre habileté collective d'apporter des changements radicaux aux systèmes économiques, politiques et sociaux du Canada.

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The dissertation is a product of many collaborations and emerges from the coming together of many minds. I'd like to first and foremost thank the activists and land defenders across Canada who sat down with me for interviews, who filled out the surveys, and who participated in this project in other ways. Thank you for thinking with me and for bringing all your hard-earned, on-the-ground experience to bear on these research questions. But mostly, thank you for doing the risky, exhausting, vital work of opposing extractivism in Canada and fighting hard for a more just and livable world.

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Contribution to Original Knowledge

This work contributes to ongoing scholarship on transformation and environmental justice, by bring to these ongoing conversations theory and insight from on-the-ground and frontline activists working towards systems change in Canada. The following elements of the thesis are considered original scholarship and distinct.

Chapter 4 presents the ways that research participants, engaged in these movements, are understanding the climate and inequality crises, as well as how they envision the futures they are working towards. These understandings and visions have never before been documented. Chapter 5 advances a novel collectively-generated theory of transformation. Compiled from the individual theories of change held by over 80 people actively engaged in making change in Canada, this novel theory is presented as four key forces and factors (and many sub-factors) required for systems change.

Chapter 6 brings to light and discusses a long list of internal and external barriers being faced by those working to bring about systems change, and Chapter 7 raises up many promising strategies for confronting and overcoming these barriers and forging stronger, more transformative movements. This is information that also has never been documented.

Chapter 8's original conceptual contributions include the discussions on movements as diverse ecosystems, and on critical holism, direct-action solutions, and intersectional solutions. Additionally, the thesis's theoretical contributions include the 8 Key Lessons about how change happens and the ways that dualistic, binary theories of change hinder collaborations in social movements. Methodological contributions include my unconventional approach to literature review which reached across very different bodies of literature, based on criteria of relevance to activists. Methodological contributions also include experimenting with methods of collaborative theorizing as well as writing with others' words.

These main contributions of original knowledge offer important insight for scholarly knowledge on social transformation, but importantly this original knowledge may also be of practical use to social movements and thus to the work of transforming Canada towards more just and ecologically viable systems.

Contribution of Authors

With a few minor exceptions, I am the sole author of all 8 chapters. In Chapter 3, I had some minor help reviewing relevant theories of change from authors from within Historical Materialism and Intersectional Feminism bodies of literature. I was helped by a fellow activist Ayendri Riddel, who contributed about 5 pages of text to the original draft (original draft is included for reference in Appendix 3). Only a few sentences of her text made it into the final, much shorter, version of the literature review.

A version of Chapter 4 was published in the Routledge Handbook on Climate Justice, co-authored by a fellow activist-scholar Kristian Gareau (Gobby & Gareau, 2018). In the published version, data from Gareau's own research was included and discussions and conclusion were generated together, based on both of our sets of data. Although Chapter 4 in this thesis doesn't include any of Gareau's data or discussion, I do acknowledge that the conversations we had through our co-authorship may have shaped Chapter 4 in subtle ways.

Peter Brown, Kirsten Anker, and Ellie Perkins (advisory committee members), as well as Aziz Choudry (internal thesis examiner) contributed substantial editing and suggested changes on all 8 chapters. As such, their input has helped shape this thesis in important ways.

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List of Abbreviations

COP Conference of the Parties

FPIC Free prior informed consent

GHG Greenhouse Gas Emissions

IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LNG Liquid Natural Gas

NEB National Energy Board

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

RCAP Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

SMS Social Movements Studies

TOC Theory of Change

TRC Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UNDRIP United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNFCCC United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge” (Kelley, 2002, p. 8).

1.1 General introduction

Bad news and hope. Climate change is getting worse, quickly; more storms, more floods, more fires, more drought. This is not just bad news for ecosystems. The changing climate is exacerbating existing inequalities among people, hitting the poorest and most marginalized, first and hardest. As we face the converging and entwined social and ecological crises, governments are failing to respond in meaningful ways, often making decisions that continue to drive climate chaos and widen inequality. It’s easy to lose hope.

The failure to respond is happening on the global scale, and it’s also the case here in Canada where the federal government claims to be a climate leader as it pushes to build new pipelines to get oil and gas to overseas markets. This ongoing commitment to growing Canada’s fossil fuel industry is disastrously counter-productive for climate mitigation. Additionally, it involves the ongoing violation of Indigenous rights and infringement on Indigenous land; making a mockery of Canada’s claims to reconciliation with First Nations. Again, it’s easy to lose hope.

With decision-makers failing to secure a liveable planet, human wellbeing, and just relations, it’s the masses of regular people, organizing together, taking collective action that constitutes our most promising vehicle for change. Social movements have brought incredible changes over the last 200 years: for civil rights, women’s rights, legalizing gay marriage, and protecting endangered species. This is where I find hope - that diverse and inspired social movements can work together not only to address the current crises, but to do it in ways that forge more just and life-supporting relations among people and between people and planet.

This project. I set out on my doctoral research in September 2014, the month of the People’s Climate March in New York City. I took that walk, with 400, 000 others, to express my growing concern and my willingness to take action. That was also the month that Naomi Klein’s

book *'This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate'* was released. Both the book and the People's Climate March made explicit the fundamental links between the deepening environmental crisis and growing social inequality and injustice worldwide. They, as have others before them such as John Bellamy Foster, Andreas Malm, and movements in the Global South, named capitalism and colonialism as root causes of intersecting crises being faced around the world. Both called out for massive collective action for the wellbeing of people and the planet.

The march and the book sparked within me a conviction to conduct a doctoral research project that is informed by, and hopefully of direct use to, frontline communities and other activists fighting for climate justice. I set out to do research that is not just about transformation, but that *contributes* to transformation. We know there is a huge need for transforming our political, economic and thought systems. We know what's wrong and where we need to go. What is less known is how we get from here to there. My interest is in better understanding *how large-scale systems change happens and how social movements can work together to bring this change about*. I have been working to shed light on these questions through climate justice activism and by means of hundreds of conversations with activists and with land defenders.

Since the fall of 2014, I have visited Indigenous blockades - washing dishes, hauling wood, and learning decolonization practices and theory. I've been working with grassroots organizations to organize protests and marches. I've helped plan training events, panel discussions and think tanks, and fundraised legal fees for activists criminalized for direct action. Through five years immersed in activism with environmental/climate justice, anti-pipeline, and Indigenous land defense movements in Canada, I have sought to develop and conduct a research project that centers the interests and needs of these various activist communities.

My primary methodology has been *thinking with* activists about transformation. Through interviews, surveys, and focus groups I have carved out space to collectively analyze the crises, envision the future we want, theorize about how change happens, reflect on what is working and what is not, and strategize together about how to strengthen the movements' power to transform Canada. This has been a process of theorizing from the ground up. Rather than doing interviews to gather data in order to confirm or refute some existing scholarly theory, I have conducted research and analyses in ways that allow new theories and insights to emerge from this *thinking together*. This process has been guided by a 'grounded theory' methodological approach and

inspired by scholars doing movement-relevant research with social movements such as Aziz Choudry and Chris Dixon.

I am more hopeful about the state of the world now than I was when I began this project. Spending these 5 years talking and working closely with so many people who care so deeply and are working so hard to fight against injustice and build a just and thriving world has provided me a much-needed antidote to the despair and anxiety that this moment in history can generate.

The story. This thesis tells a story about distinct but overlapping movements in Canada, a powerful convergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, impacted communities, grassroots groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These have come together in the common cause of opposing the criss-crossing network of proposed and existing oil and gas pipelines in Canada. While grappling with very real inter- and intra- movement tensions and differences in worldviews, strategies, and long terms goals, the environmental/climate justice, anti-pipeline, and Indigenous land defense movements are directly challenging the status quo of the Canadian extractive economy.

As I will argue, these movements are contesting the story Canada tells itself about being a peaceful, nature-loving, human-rights-abiding nation. These movements are helping expose the contradictions and injustices at the heart of Canada – that its economy is based on the destruction of natural systems and the theft of Indigenous land and violation of Indigenous rights; that Canada is a country guided predominantly by the logics and relations of capitalist accumulation and settler colonialism.

Though the Liberal government purports to care about forging better relationships with First Nations, it continues to pressure them to extinguish their rights at land claims negotiations tables (Manuel, 2017). While Prime Minister Trudeau continues with his simplistic rhetoric about climate action that balances the ‘environment’ and the ‘economy’, these movements are offering a different story. It’s a story that doesn’t pit the economy against the environment but conceives of the economy, and the wellbeing of people, as fundamentally dependent on clean water, air, and a stable climate.

Meanwhile, collaborations with social justice groups and Indigenous communities are expanding mainstream environmental movements’ narrow understanding of ‘environment’, as

they learn about solidarity across diverse movements, rendering the movements less ‘siloed’. These movements are working to coordinate efforts across vast geographies and diverse ideologies and coming to see themselves as part of a movement ecosystem – a larger whole in which different groups play differentiated and interdependent roles, contributing in ways that are necessary but insufficient on their own. Conceiving of ‘movements as ecosystems’ and learning to see and work with diversity as a strength in making change, holds promise for better collaborating and coordinating movement efforts.

Indigenous people engaged in these struggles are defending their lands and rights and reinvigorating traditional practices and livelihoods. They are directly and indirectly teaching non-Indigenous activists about reciprocal relationships: relationships of responsibility to land and to each other. These teachings are ultimately the promise of stronger, more effective social movements. They offer new ways of relating that can help overcome the relational and ideological tensions and divisions currently weakening and fracturing the movements. However, to realize this promise of a ‘movement of movements’ powerful enough to transform Canada, there is much work to be done to undo the power imbalances - the ongoing racism, classism, sexism and other forms of ‘power-over’ that still exist within and across movements.

The thesis will present the diverse voices in these movements. While struggling with divergent worldviews, sometimes-competing interests, and deeply wounded relationships, activists, organizers, and land defenders are working together and apart, to forge paths forward -- paths that work simultaneously toward decarbonizing and decolonizing Canada.

I have conducted this research project as part of the Economics for the Anthropocene (E4A) partnership – an interdisciplinary graduate training and research partnership, based in ecological economics¹ and designed to improve how the social sciences and humanities connect to ecological and economic realities and challenges of the Anthropocene (Economic for the Anthropocene, n.d.). The project involves dozens of graduate students pursuing widely varying

¹ *Ecological economics* is an interdisciplinary field defined by a set of concrete problems or challenges related to governing *economic* activity in a way that promotes human well-being, sustainability, and justice (see <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/ecological-economics>)

research, but all sharing an interest in large-scale change and challenging the economic status quo. My research fits into the project by directly focusing on the elusive question of *how large-scale change happens*, grounding the enquiry in the Canadian context. I draw on a wide array of social science literature to do so, but my predominant methodological approach is to reach beyond academia and engage with activists and land defenders across the country as holders of important knowledge about making change.

This chapter. In the remainder of this introductory chapter I offer the background information and the context in which this project, and these conversations, have taken place. In section 1.2 I go more deeply into the current state of the climate crisis and inequality crisis globally, making the case that the social and ecological crises are linked and must be addressed together. I back up the call for systems transformation, and the centering of social movements as key agents of transformation, in scholarly literature. In section 1.3 I introduce the three distinct but overlapping social movements with which I've been involved throughout this project. Section 1.4 lays out the specific research objectives and research questions that have guided the project and explain where my work fits into scholarly literature and what it is contributing. I briefly reflect on my positionality. Finally, in section 1.5, I give an overview of Chapters 2 through 8 of this dissertation.

1.2 The Research Problem

Global climate emergency. In November 2017 an open letter entitled Warning to Humanity was published, signed by 160,000 scientists from 184 countries across the Earth. An update to an original warning sent 25 years ago, it states that global biophysical systems have changed dramatically over these last 25 years, and almost entirely for the worse. Climate change is being driven by greenhouse gases (GHGs), such as carbon dioxide, building up in the Earth's atmosphere and trapping heat. GHGs are produced by human activity such as the combustion of fossil fuels (mainly coal, oil, and natural gas) as well as deforestation, changes in land use, soil erosion, and agriculture (Solomon et al., 2007). The scientists who issued the Warning to Humanity state that "especially troubling is the current trajectory of potentially catastrophic climate change ... Moreover, we have unleashed a mass extinction event ... wherein many current life forms could be annihilated or at least committed to extinction by the end of this

century” (Ripple et al., 2017, p.1). This echoes the findings of Rockström et al. (2009) as well as the reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which recognize that our globalized industrial activities are increasingly compromising the processes of the planet’s life support systems, thus threatening the viability of ecosystems and countless life forms including our own (Field et al., 2014). There has been stark failure to address the increasingly urgent environmental crises that are unfolding.

Inequality crisis. While people around the world suffer increasing ecological upheaval, growing social crises of economic, racial, and gender inequality and violence are also unfolding and demanding urgent, collective response. In one recent overview of global social inequality, Kate Raworth (2017) identified twelve dimensions of social wellbeing including education, peace and justice, political voice, gender equality, health and food. Her work shows that many millions of people around the world are not able to meet their basic needs. She writes, “worldwide, one person in nine does not have enough food to eat. One in four lives on less than \$3 a day, and one in eight people cannot find (paid) work. One person in eleven has no source of safe drinking water” (Raworth, 2017, p.43). She goes on to describe that almost 40% of people live in countries in which income is distributed highly unequally and more than half of the world’s population live in countries in which people have little political voice (Raworth, 2017). A recent Oxfam report found global economic inequality to be growing rapidly.

“The year 2017 saw the biggest increase in billionaires in history, one more every two days. This huge increase could have ended global extreme poverty seven times over. Eighty-two percent of all wealth created in the last year went to the top 1%, and nothing went to the bottom 50%. Dangerous, poorly paid work for the many is supporting extreme wealth for the few. Women are in the worst work, and almost all the super-rich are men” (Oxfam, 2018, p.2).

Increasingly, masses of people suffer from poverty while a very few powerful people become obscenely rich. The accumulation of wealth of the very rich few is happening at the expense of poor people, women and children and at the expense of ecosystems and non-human life on earth. Transformation scholar Ashish Kothari writes that “every day, we see new evidence that our current model of development is straining the resilience of the biosphere and producing glaring economic inequalities. Levels of poverty, deprivation, and exploitation remain

unacceptable, while conflict over access to natural resources, food, and water grows more frequent” (Kothari, 2014b, p.2).

Indigenous peoples are particularly impacted by climate change. Because many Indigenous communities live close to the land and thus rely directly on natural resources and ecosystems, Indigenous people are especially vulnerable to, and disproportionately affected by, climate change (Salick & Byg, 2007). Around the world, they are being forced to leave their lands due to deforestation, sea-level rise, major infrastructure projects, and conflict arising from resource scarcity and other climate impacts (Salick & Byg, 2007). Impacts of climate change are made worse by the pressure from commercial and extractive interests on their land and resources (Tupaz, 2015). Because they are already disproportionately suffering from poverty and other legacies of colonialism, they are disadvantaged in terms of resources to help adapt to climate change and in some cases do not have the ability to reject unwanted extractive projects on their territories. Yet despite this poverty and disadvantage, Indigenous communities bearing the brunt of extractivism and climate change are leading the climate justice and environmental justice movements. The UN’s Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, released in 2019, finds that while biodiversity is declining in all across the globe, it is declining much less rapidly in those lands still managed by Indigenous peoples (IPBES, 2019). In countless places around the world Indigenous peoples are actively blocking the expansion of extractive industries (Gedicks, 1994, 2001; Temper et al., 2015).

These converging climate and inequality crises speak to deeply troubled *human-Earth* and *human-human* relationships. Both these sets of relationships are in urgent need of healing and transformation. The interconnection between environmental and equality crises is not just functional (i.e. poor people reliant on land hardest hit by climate change) but are symptoms of a deeper pattern of dysfunctional relationship based on domination. Some scientists, policy makers, and activists discuss the environmental crises as separate, or of a different nature, from social crises. Though some may prefer, for simplicity’s sake, to create policies and solutions addressing *social* crises and *ecological* crises separately, Raworth reminds us that “that simply won’t work: their interconnectedness demands that they be understood as part of a complex socio-ecological system and hence be addressed within a greater whole” (Raworth, 2017, p.47; see also Folke et al., 2011).

Climate crisis and oil and gas development in Canada. Like many places around the globe, Canada has been facing increasing occurrences of climate change-induced extreme weather such as wildfires, floods, and storms (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2019). A report released in April 2019, by Environment and Climate Change Canada, shows Canada warming at twice the global rate, and confirms that the majority of warming is the result of burning fossil fuels. To have any chance of warding off the worst of the impending climate impacts much of the remaining fossil fuel reserves must remain in the ground and other forms of energy and revenue must be developed (McGlade & Ekins, 2015). Despite this, Canada continues attempting to expand its non-conventional oil and gas resources to the detriment of ecosystems, local communities, long term economic sustainability, and a stable climate.

At the opening of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015 in Paris, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised real action on climate change, claiming “it’s the right thing to do, for our environment, economy, and as part of the global community” (Morin, 2015, n.p.). Despite these seeming commitments to climate change mitigation, the Trudeau Liberals continue to expand Canada’s oil and gas industry. Canada is the 5th largest producer globally of both petroleum and gas (Natural Resources Canada, 2018). The 2016 Report about Canadian GHG Emissions from Ivey Business School at University of Western Ontario states that

“Canada emits about 1.6 percent of the world’s GHG emissions. Despite this relatively low share, Canada is among the top 10 global emitters on an absolute basis and stands firmly in the top 3 for emissions per capita. By way of comparison, Canada’s population makes up about 0.5 percent of the world total so that our emissions’ share is about 3 times our population share” (Booth et al., 2016, p. 4).

The center of Canada’s oil extraction is in the Alberta tar sands which hold 170.2 billion barrels and is the third largest known oil reserve in the world after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (Nimana et al., 2015). NASA scientist James Hansen has calculated that the tar sands contain twice the amount of CO₂ than has been emitted by global oil use in human history. He has said that if we were to burn all the oil in Alberta at once, the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ would go from the present level of 400 ppm to 540 ppm and this has led him to conclude that

continuing exploitation of the tar sands is ‘game over’ for the climate (Black et al., 2014). The tar sands are thus a key front in the fight against climate change (Black et al., 2014).

Like the uneven and unjust distribution of climate impacts, the impacts of fossil fuel extraction and transportation are felt by some people in Canada more than others, reflecting more general patterns of environmental injustice (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014). Whether at the points of extraction, transport, processing, or combustion, Indigenous communities are bearing an unfair brunt of Canada’s ongoing dependence on oil and gas industry. The expansion of the oil and gas industry is currently a critical point of tension in Canada and the source of much resistance and conflict.

Resistance to oil and gas pipelines has been a primary manifestation and catalyst for the growing environmental/climate justice movement in Canada. To get Canada’s land-locked fossil fuel resources to refineries and to domestic and international markets, and to continue to expand the industries, transport infrastructure is needed. “Pipelines are the vital arteries of the industry, bringing bitumen to refineries and ultimately to market, and they already stretch over thousands of kilometers across North America” (Black et al., 2014, p.4).

The ongoing effort to propose, approve, and build new oil and gas pipelines have sparked unprecedented resistance to Canada’s oil and gas industry (Lukacs in Black et al., 2014). As extractivism and climate change exacerbate existing social injustice and inequality in Canada, communities and social movements have been mobilizing to resist new fossil fuel infrastructure and to push for more just and ecologically viable energy and economic systems. These movements are being led by Indigenous people on the front lines of both the climate and the inequality crises.

The expansion of the oil and gas industry in Canada is directly related to Canada’s colonial history, and to the very real neo-colonial forces still at play in this country. This includes but is not limited to struggles over land, water and resources. Resource extraction in Canada has been from the start, and continues to be, closely linked with colonization and the dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands.

Colonialism, land, extractivism, and climate change. Despite recent attention to reconciliation and increasing international pressure to respect Indigenous rights, the Canadian

government continues to infringe on Indigenous rights through the development of oil and gas pipelines, expansion of the tar sands, mining and other extraction projects. Canada's economic base is dependent on the land stolen from Indigenous nations, lands that are still contested. This places Canada and Canadians at odds with Indigenous peoples, who have prior, and competing claims to land (Lowman & Barker, 2015). Thus, Canada's ongoing extractive economic development is not only driving the climate crisis, it is dependent on the ongoing theft of Indigenous land and violation of Indigenous peoples' rights. The late Arthur Manuel, influential thinker and political leader from the Secwepemc Nation, put it clearly: "the forces of cultural genocide that you launched against us were not because you are wantonly cruel people ... it was because only by destroying us could you have uncontested ownership of the land" (Manuel, 2017, p.88). Canada's wealth has been created on the backs of Indigenous people and through the extraction and destruction of lands that are the basis of Indigenous cultures and economies.

Ongoing impacts of settler colonialism in Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, released in 2015, starkly exposes the huge suffering that has come directly from historical and ongoing colonial relations between the Canadian State and Indigenous peoples, naming the historical treatment of First Nations by the Canadian state as "cultural genocide" (TRC, 2015, p. 1). The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People explicitly lays out Canada's imposition of a colonial relationship on Indigenous Peoples including

"residential schools, forcible relocation, the imposed Band Council system, institution of a pass system, germ warfare, outlawing of ceremonies such as the potlatch and traditional activities such as fishing, failed treaty processes, and other forced assimilation policies. Currently, it takes the form of the imposition of foreign governance systems legislated through the Indian Act and state-sanctioned appropriation of Indigenous lands and resources" (Walia, 2012, p.241, see also Dussault & Erasmus, 1996).

Indigenous people continue to lose their land base, while facing infringement of their rights from resource extraction, mining companies, property developers, and the pressure of urbanization. This "massive land dispossession and resultant dependency is not only a humiliation and an instant impoverishment, it has devastated [Indigenous] social, political,

economic, cultural and spiritual life. We continue to pay for it every day with grinding poverty, broken social relations, and too often in life-ending despair” (Manuel, 2017, p.70). A disproportional number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, discrimination by social services, and police brutality underscore the reality that colonialism is an ongoing legacy (Barker & Lowman, 2015).

Indigenous people in Canada are currently facing the ongoing impacts of a colonial past, as well as impacts from ongoing colonialism as a persistent structure. These manifest in stark systemic social, economic and health inequalities between Indigenous and settler Canadians (see Manuel, 2017, p.78; TRC, p.146-47). These inequalities stem from the violation of Indigenous rights to land and self-determination. In their 2018 ‘World Report’, Human Rights Watch state that the Canadian government “has yet to pay adequate attention to systemic poverty, housing, water, sanitation, healthcare, and education problems in Indigenous communities” (Human Rights Watch, 2018, n.p.). In 2017, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination “urged the Canadian government to remedy what it found were persistent violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples” (Human Rights Watch, 2018, n.p.).

These stark racial inequalities in Canada are being driven by ongoing colonial relations. Arthur Manuel wrote: “Our dependency was not some accident of history. It is at the heart of the colonial system. Our poverty is not an accident, the result of our incompetence or bad luck; it is intentional and systematic ... Our poverty is not a by-product of our domination but an essential part of it” (Manuel, 2017, p.68). As Leanne Simpson puts it, “the ‘social ills’ in our communities ... are the symptoms, not the disease. ‘Fixing’ the ‘social ills’ serves only to reinforce settler colonialism, because it doesn’t stop the system that causes the harm in the first place” (Simpson, 2017, p.42). As Kanien’kehá ka elder Ellen Gabriel has commented, “what we need is systemic change” (Ellen Gabriel, quoted in Serebrin, 2018, n.p.).

The need for transformation. In the spirit of seeing and responding to the depth, breadth, and interconnection of the social and ecological crises unfolding currently, climate justice activists and organizers around the globe are calling for *systems change* (Klein, 2014). Scientists too are acknowledging that in order to address the crises being faced, there needs to be a profound transformation in the economic, political and thought systems that are driving the crises (Moore et al., 2015; Beddoe et al., 2010). Some scientists too, are recognizing that a

transformation towards sustainability will require radical, systemic shifts in deeply held values and beliefs, patterns of social behavior, and multi-level governance and management regimes (Westley, 2011). Indeed “the roots of these crises lie in structural problems within the economy, society, and humanity’s relationship with nature. All of this calls for a fundamental rethinking of the human project in the twenty-first century” (Kothari, 2014b, p.2).

The need for massive systemic transformation is clear. We require a “fundamental restructuring of the way modern societies operate” (Scheidel et al., 2017, p.11). There is acknowledgment by some scholars that moving towards sustainability and justice requires radical transformation, but there is a lack of agreement as to what ‘radical’ means (Temper et al., 2018). The word radical comes from the Latin and refers to ‘change at the root’ pointing us towards fundamental changes of our systems (Temper et al., 2018, p.5). Radical transformation calls for tackling social injustice and power issues, as well as environmental ones in the transformation process (Temper et al., 2018).

Defining the concept of ‘transformation’ will be further developed in Chapters 3 and 5, but to provide an initial understanding, I follow Temper et al. (2018) in using the term transformation as shorthand for referring to intentional change that confronts not just the symptoms, but the root causes of social injustice and environmental unsustainability, including unequal power relations, and does so in ways that, rather than merely improving an existing system, alters the overall composition and behavior of the system in ways that drive desirable change across temporal and spatial scales, towards increased social wellbeing, equality, and ecological sustainability.

Centering social movements as key agents of change. Given that many people in decision-making positions of power benefit from the systems remaining as they are, and given that individual people do not, alone, constitute the kind of counter force required, many scholars argue that *social movements* - ordinary people coming together, engaging in collective action to push for change – are crucial for bringing about transformative change (Carroll, 2016; Solnit, 2016; Scheidel et al., 2017; Kothari et al., 2015; Temper & Del Bene 2016; Choudry, 2015).

The Blackwell Handbook on Social Movements describes social movements as “one of the principal social forms through which collectives give voice to their grievances and concerns

about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others” (Snow et al., 2008, p.3). Social movements are forms “of political association between persons who have at least a minimal sense of themselves as connected to others in common purpose and who come together across an extended period of time to effect social change in the name of that purpose” (James & van Seeters, 2014, p.xi).

Though there are other ways by which social change is driven, such as through legislation and court proceedings, through educational systems, and through electoral outcomes etc., social movements provide regular people a means by which to combine forces to influence change without needing to hold certain specialized or elite roles in society (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010). Movements drive social change from the bottom up by empowering regular folks and oppressed people to effectively challenge and resist the decisions and actions of those with more power and advantage in a society (Glasberg & Shannon, 2010).

Movements can be place-based and take action on the local level, such as by resisting a specific unwanted project such as a mine, dam, or pipeline. Thousands of examples of these forms of resistance from all across the globe can be found on the Environmental Justice Atlas (<https://ejatlas.org/>). But these movements can and often do take action on national and international scales. Examples of these include international boycotts of products produced in unjust and unsustainable ways and global divestment campaigns that take aim at banks which are involved with funding projects that are being resisted in specific places. In 2018, EcoWatch reported that 1,000 institutions with nearly \$8 trillion in assets had committed to divest from fossil fuels (Johnson, 2018). Both local and global scales of action by social movements can be effective in shaping change and altering outcomes.

This dissertation aims to contribute to shedding light on the question of how large-scale transformation, driven by social movements, can be brought about. To do so, I have been working closely with Indigenous land defense, environmental/climate justice, and anti-pipeline movements in Canada. Radical, systemic change is the explicit work of these movements and they share a commitment to both ecological and social goals and to bringing about change through collective action. In the next section I provide a brief overview of the current social and ecological crises in Canada which these movements are working to address.

1.3 Introduction to social movements

1.3.1 The historical and global context of social movements in Canada

As will be explored in chapter 4, the climate crisis and the inequality crisis are both manifestations of colonial capitalism, supercharged by globalization and neoliberalism. As this system of domination and exploitation has spread around the globe, it has been driving ecological destruction and social injustice while simultaneously and consistently attacking, isolating, or erasing other modes of production and alternate ways of organizing society (Wolfe, 2006; Fortier, 2015). This continuous expansion and its destructive impacts on people and ecosystems have been met with resistance from communities and social movements from local to global scales as “disadvantaged, exploited and dominated groups contest the hierarchies that global capitalism and hegemonic states have constructed” (Chase-Dunn & Gills, 2003, p.1). As corporations and capital have become increasingly globalized, so too have social movements become connected globally, being led particularly by those in the Global South, reflecting the fact that much neoliberal economic globalization has been happening at the expense of the poor or working majority of people in the Global South (Chase-Dunn & Gills, 2003).

Related to and pre-existing the wide spread anti-capitalist and anti-globalization movements, are Indigenous struggles against colonization which have been ongoing in many regions of the world. Indigenous communities globally struggle to resist the capitalist mode of production and the logics of domination that maintain the structure of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006), while also defending relations and forms of social organization based on mutuality and reciprocity (Amadahy, 2010; Simpson, 2011; Coulthard, 2014).

In Canada as well, there has been ongoing resistance to colonialism, capitalism, globalization, and neoliberalism. The ways that groups, communities, and organizations have organized and mobilized to resist has been shaped by the historical conditions particular to Canada. These include an immense land-base for a relatively small population, an economy shaped by historical dependence on natural resources exploitation or ‘Staples’ trade, all of which has taken place within an explicit colonial context (Findlay, 1994). Also key for shaping movement resistance in Canada is its bilingual nature, with two distinct societies - francophone and anglophone - corresponding with distinct configurations in class relations and social

movements (Findlay, 1994). Lastly, the confederal form of government that exists in Canada with the separation of jurisdiction and political power between federal and provincial governments, has also shaped the ways that movements have emerged and mobilized in resistance to capitalist expansion and exploitation of lands, waters, and peoples (Findlay, 1994).

Findlay argues that though social movements do challenge hegemony in important ways, in Canada, social movements efforts have been fragmented, often working at cross purposes, and unwilling to collaborate. This renders social movements unable to build a ‘counter-hegemonic’ political force (Findlay, 1994).

As significant threat is posed to settler colonial states is the possibility of building relationships of solidarity between people negatively impacted by these processes of domination through displacement, enslavement, and dispossession (Fortier, 2015). However, over and over this “potential has been thwarted in the history of settler left struggles, whereby the potential solidarity with insurgent Indigenous, African, Asian, and other oppressed and exploited people was mitigated by the ruling classes through the promise of land and the doctrine of white supremacy” (Fortier, 2015, p.80).

The doctrine of white supremacy is employed in order to destroy potential solidarity between European settlers and Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans (Fortier, 2015, p.81). Fortier traces how “the alliance of the white elite and poor whites (including those on the radical left) is consolidated through not only the logics but the material benefits afforded to settlers through the project of conquest” (Fortier, 2015, p.76). In other words, since even those least well off within white settler society share the benefits of land and resource theft in Canada (as well as global capitalist exploitation abroad), most movements and coalitions in Canada fail to coalesce around shared goals of dismantling settler states, challenging white supremacy, and resisting imperialism (Fortier, 2015).

In these ways the tensions, contradictions, and challenges within and across current movements in Canada and elsewhere “are situated as being historically rooted in the choices made by previous liberation struggles to disinvest (at best) and perpetuate (at worst) the structure of settler colonialism” (Fortier, 2015, p.76). This is central to the history of left struggles in Canada and the US which have fought for political gains and political power within the settler

state. As they “replicate the settler-colonial logics of state-building foundational to maintaining the structures of colonialism the revolutionary potential of left social movements in Canada and the United States have been significantly blunted” (Fortier, 2015, p.86).

All of this constitutes the historical and global backdrop against which current social movements in Canada are organizing and mobilizing.

1.3.2 Three social movements in Canada engaged in resisting oil and gas pipelines

Resisting proposed pipeline after proposed pipeline over the last decade has brought together diverse social movements in Canada, working in courtrooms, in the media, in the streets, and on the land. Although specific social movements are dynamic and hard to define and delineate, I see three distinct but overlapping movements as making up the bulk of the anti-pipeline resistance. They are the Indigenous land defense movement, the mainstream environmental movement, and the environmental/climate justice movement. Chapters 4,5,6, and 7 report on the conversations I have had with people in these three social movements. Because of my personal and intellectual commitment to both social justice and environmental goals, most of the interviews and conversations I convened are with people in the Indigenous land defense and environmental/climate justice movements who tend to center both social and ecological goals. As I will argue below, the mainstream environmental movement does not center justice and social equality in the same way, but I do include them here (and did interview some people from that movement) because they are indeed involved in anti-pipeline struggles.

Indigenous land defense movements . Indigenous resistance to oil and gas pipelines is one manifestation of a much longer and much broader struggle. Indigenous resistance to colonial violation of Indigenous lands, rights, and lives has been ongoing since European contact over 500 years ago (Hill, 2010; Simpson, 2017). That Indigenous people are still here after centuries of Canadian federal “Indian policy” with its explicit goals to eliminate and assimilate Indigenous peoples is testament to this ongoing resistance (Coburn, 2015; Simpson & Ladner 2010; Manuel, 2017; Simpson, 2017).

This resistance has taken, and continues to take, multiple overlapping forms, including legal actions defending constitutional (inherent and treaty) and international rights in provincial and federal courts. This legal approach has led to important court rulings that affirm the rights of

Indigenous peoples to their lands. These key rulings include Calder (1973), Van Der Peet (1996), and Tsilhqot'in (2014).

While some Indigenous people and communities have been fighting colonialism through the court system in Canada, others have been resisting through the direct action of blockades and land occupations, creating what Anishinaabe scholar of Indigenous Law John Borrows refers to as vitally important 'flash point' events (2007). There is a long history of this kind of direct action resistance by Indigenous people in this country including at Oka, Caledonia, Ipperwash, Gustafsen Lake, Burnt Church and more recently Elsipogtog and Unist'ot'en. These flash point events tend to arise when 1) Indigenous rights have been violated, 2) years of political and legal means of addressing the violation have been ineffective and 3) despite the ongoing dispute over land rights, governments authorize unwanted development on Indigenous land (Russell, 2010). Currently there are multiple sites in Canada where Indigenous communities are actively blocking the development of gas terminals, mines, dams, pipelines and oil and gas extraction on their lands. These types of resistance efforts work on many fronts of socio-ecological transformation: "beyond the disruption of the flows of capitalism and the denial of the movement of resources out of the territory, the blockade can create a space for the control and practice of Indigenous economic and political authority in the face of the cultural and economic dislocation forced upon them..." (Temper et al., 2015, p.21).

Very often these two strategies of legal action in the courts and direct action on the land have been combined (e.g. the Gitksan, Lubicon Cree, and Eeyou). Different strategies are effective in different contexts and in many key cases (eg. Northern Gateway) combining both court action and direct action has led to important wins. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard wrote that "if history has taught us anything, it is this: if you want those within power to respond swiftly for Indigenous peoples' political efforts, start by placing Native bodies ... between settlers and their money" (Coulthard, 2013, n.p.).

Indigenous resistance was also mounted in the form of the Idle No More movement during the winter of 2011, triggered by legislation of the Harper government - an Omnibus Bill - which included bills to weaken environmental protection laws, including those protecting all of Canada's navigable waterways, many of which pass through Indigenous territory. The Omnibus bill also included 10 bills that would affect Indigenous sovereignty (Collective, K. N. N., 2014).

This movement erupted across the country in the form of flash-mob circle dances and drumming and other beautiful and disruptive expressions of Indigenous agency and cultures in public spaces such as shopping malls and blockades of rail lines (Collective, K. N. N., 2014). The Idle No More movement was and is part of a larger movement of *resurgence* that is at the heart of Indigenous change agency currently, in this country. While resistance over the last five centuries has been critical to defending Indigenous lands, rights and lives, in pushing back against the forces of colonial capitalism (Alfred, 2009), “at their most powerful ... Indigenous movements move beyond resistance to resurgence; that is the joyful affirmations of individual and collective indigenous self-determination” (Coburn, 2015, p.25). There is a move currently in Indigenous movements and communities to turn away from approaches that seek to gain recognition from non-Indigenous people and colonial governments, and a turning inwards instead; towards healing, strengthening, and reinvigorating traditional cultures, practices, and governance structures (Coulthard, 2007; Simpson, 2017).

Many powerful expressions of Indigenous agency, such as the Unist’ot’en camp in BC, are currently pursuing transformation through both resistance *and* resurgence. For the past 10 years, these people have reoccupied their traditional territories, which are on the pathways of multiple oil and gas pipeline routes. This most certainly is a site of resistance, having seen multiple confrontations with police and industry, but it has also provided space to practice and assert sovereignty and enact their responsibility to their lands (Temper et al., 2015). Guided by their natural law and traditional governance system, they have built traditional structures and a healing center, and they teach traditional practices of hunting, trapping, and gathering to Indigenous youth (Unist’ot’en Camp, n.d.).

Many strands of anti-authoritarian social movements in Canada have come to see the Indigenous fight for decolonization as deeply connected to other liberational, transformative goals and indeed foundational to them (Fortier, 2017). While the environmental/climate justice movements tend to align with this understanding, the mainstream environmental movement has been slower to center Indigenous voices and struggles in their practices and conceptions of environmentalism (Fortier, 2017, p.117).

Given the shared focus of protecting land, there have been numerous partnerships between mainstream environmentalists and Indigenous peoples against resource extraction,

development, and pollution (Fortier, 2017). Though these collaborations have at times succeeded strategically in stopping or slowing unwanted development projects, they have been “fraught with colonialist logics and instrumentalism” (Fortier, 2017, p.118). The transformative potential, as well as the conflicts and tensions present in these relationships between Indigenous and environmental movements, are a central theme of this dissertation and are explored in greater depth in the following chapters.

The mainstream environmental movement. The environmental movement in Canada emerged and evolved along a similar trajectory as did environmental movements in the US and Europe. It began in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a predominantly white movement for the conservation of pristine nature and the setting aside of “wilderness” (Indigenous lands) as national parks (Guha, 2014). In the 1960s, with the publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, environmentalism gained traction around issues of chemical pollution and impacts to human health and to other species, and became more of a popular movement (Guha, 2014). In Canada in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the environmental movement gained strength and numbers as it mobilized around direct actions to oppose clear-cut logging and other pressing issues. “This predominantly white environmentalist movement broke into the mainstream through tree sits, flotillas, and other forms of direct action that brought groups like Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network ... and others into popular consciousness” (Fortier, 2017, p.118-119). While environmental causes gained more popular support, the movement was slowly becoming institutionalized with the increase in non-governmental organizations (NGOs)².

Ramos and Rodgers (2015) argue that the environmental movement in Canada has followed a similar pattern to other social movements at this time. This involved the gradual professionalization and institutionalization of social movements, moving them from what had been “risky, contentious, and outside-of-the state in the 1960s” to be more “predictable and accommodating, and partially incorporated into the state” by the 1990s (Ramos & Rodgers, 2015, p.4).

² This trend and how it is playing out in the Canadian context will be discussed and explored further in Chapter 6.

Indeed, in his book *Environmentalism of the Rich*, Peter Dauvergne exposes this turn of environmental movements in the western world as not only institutionalization, but corporatization – increased collaboration and cooperation with large corporations. He understands this trend to have significantly reduced the transformative impacts of environmental movements (2016). He claims that this decreasing effectiveness of the environmental movement stems from a loss of a sense of ‘outrage’ at the deep injustices inherent in the destruction of the natural world. This critical ‘outrage’ that had previously been at the heart of environmental struggles of earlier decades is still at the heart of what Martinez-Alier and others refer to as Environmentalism of the Poor and currently at the heart of environmental justice and climate justice movements around the world (Guha, 2014).

Clapp and Dauvergne analyze the divergent strands of global environmental movements, as divided by “radically different visions of the best way forward: ones rooted in radically different explanations of the causes and consequences of global environmental change” (Clapp et al., 2011, p.1). They identify four distinct strands which include: 1) *Market liberals*, who call for reforms to facilitate a smooth functioning of markets. They want eco-efficiency, voluntary corporate responsibility, and more technological cooperation; 2) *Institutionalists*, who call for reforms to facilitate global cooperation and stronger institutions. They call for new and better environmental regimes, changes to international organizations, and efforts to enhance state capacity to manage environmental change; 3) *Bio-environmentalists* calling for reforms to protect nature from humanity. They call for lower rates of population growth and consumption as well as a new economy based on an ethic of sustainability, one that operates at a steady state, designed to preserve the globe’s natural heritage; and lastly 4) *Social greens*, who call for reforms to reduce inequality and foster environmental justice. “People must rise up and dismantle global economic institutions to reverse globalization. The new global political economy must empower communities and localize trade and production. And it should respect the rights of women, Indigenous communities, and the poor” (Clapp et al., 2011, p.1).

Where the mainstream environmental movement in Canada is made up of some messy combination of Market liberals, Institutionalists, and Bio-environmentalists, the environmental justice and climate justice movements are much more aligned with Dauvergne and Clapp’s Social Greens categorization. Some people in the mainstream environmental movement

“continue to see environmental endeavor detached from questions of social justice ... some proponents of environmental agenda remain not only disinterested in challenging racialized oppression, but in fact view racial hierarchies and racist practices as necessary to the pursuit of an ‘environmental vision’” (Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008, p.5). The environmental justice and climate justice movements are explicitly committed to social justice and undoing all forms of domination, thus making for somewhat easier alliances with Indigenous movements than the mainstream environmental movement has.

The environmental justice & climate justice movements. The environmental/climate justice movement in Canada emerged more from the anti-authoritarian social justice movement than from the mainstream environmental movement (Fortier, 2017). The environmental justice movement is understood to have been born in the United States in the early 1980s with roots in the Civil Rights movement, defending people of color against environmental and health damage. The concept of environmental justice arose because minority communities were disproportionately impacted by environmental burdens (Scheidel et al., 2017; Bullard, 2002, 1993).

Environmental justice movements tend to focus on “the structural and political dimension of environmental problems that cannot be solved apart from social and economic justice” (Temper, 2016, p.2). Canadian activist and journalist Harsha Walia describes the environmental justice movement in Canada:

“As part of the international movement under the banner of ‘system change, not climate change’, a growing number of environmentalists are rejecting green capitalism. Green-washing attempts such as the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement and the Ontario Far North Act were challenged by anti-capitalist environmentalists, as well as by Indigenous communities who saw such efforts as continuing to marginalize front-line voices. An inspiring example of anti-colonial environmental justice organizing has been resistance to the Alberta Tar Sands and Enbridge Pipeline in BC” (Walia, 2011, n.p.).

Climate justice activism in Canada has emerged in the last decade within the context of a new bottom-up global movement (Bond, 2011) which has mobilized to contest the unequal

impacts of climate change, both geographically and socially³ (Featherstone, 2012). This movement is growing as more communities around the world are being impacted by changes in the climate.

The term ‘climate justice’ was coined by activists protesting the failed negotiations at the Copenhagen UNFCCC COP meeting in 2009 (Foran et al, 2013). Climate justice emerged in reaction to the failure ‘from above’, as “failure is the only way to summarize sixteen years of talk by United Nations negotiators from national states influenced by fossil-fuel-dependent capital, neoliberal multilateral agencies, and the big Environmental NGOs” (Bond, 2011).

Since Copenhagen the global climate justice movement has grown, bringing together an emerging alignment of previously separate social justice and environmental activist movements. It is being led by those on the frontlines of the impacts of a changing climate and those front lines of the destructive extractivism that is fueling the problem. These people on the front lines are primarily the poor and Indigenous peoples.

Characteristic of this movement is that it aims do not just to tackle climate change, but “challenge the unequal social and environmental relations which carbon emissions are embedded in and locate it within the broader crisis of contemporary capitalism” (Chatterton, 2013). It squarely rejects capitalist solutions to climate change (eg carbon markets) and exposes the “uneven and persistent patterns of eco-imperialism” (Featherstone, 2012).

Climate justice principles were articulated in the KlimaForum’s declaration during Copenhagen and included: leaving fossil fuels in the ground; reasserting peoples’ and community control over production; re-localising food production; massively reducing over-consumption, particularly in the global North; respecting Indigenous and forest people’s rights; and recognizing the ecological and climate debt owed to the people’s in the global South by the societies of the global North necessitating the making of reparations. These principals are now accepted by a broad range of climate justice campaigning networks (Chatterton, 2013).

³ The concepts of climate injustice and climate justice evoke many ethical dilemmas and questions. These deserve greater attention than I can provide within this chapter. For a brief overview of scholarly discussions of what justice means in the context of the climate crisis, see Appendix 2

Climate justice-focused activist groups and organizations have been emerging over the last decade in Canada, such as Climate Justice Montreal, Climate Justice Edmonton, The Leap, Indigenous Climate Action and others. Climate Justice conferences such as Powershift have occurred several times since 2009, bringing diverse groups and activists across Canada to train and plan together.

Convergence of these diverse movements to oppose pipelines. These three distinct but overlapping movements – mainstream environmental, Indigenous land defense, and environmental/climate justice – have come together in other forms at other times, but never more so than during the past decade of opposing pipelines, tar sands, and extractivism. A “large number of industrial projects have actually been delayed or completely halted as a result of community resistance engaging in diverse tactics” (Walia, 2011, n.p.).

Pipeline expansion is currently a shared primary target of these movements. “There are many possible points of intervention but struggles around pipelines appear to have distinct significance as a point of weakness for the tar sands industry” (Black et al., 2014, p.3). Pipelines are viewed as a strategic vulnerability for the tar sands industry, for two major reasons. One is that the industry fears bottlenecks which can “constrain expansion, and hence both increased pipeline capacity and access to a wider set of refineries are deemed to be essential to continuing growth and investments” (Black et al., 2014, p.16). While bottlenecks remain in place, opposition to pipelines can slow investment in the industry as investors are wary of delays. Secondly, pipelines provoke resistance by threatening serious ecological and health risks to more and more regions. These multiple and widespread risks have served to “galvanize front line mobilizations against pipelines and refineries, and these have grown into a major part of the struggles against the tar sands” (Black et al., 2014, p.17).

When I began my PhD research in 2014, there were several large-scale pipelines proposed for development in order to expand markets for Alberta bitumen and BC natural gas, including TransCanada’s Energy East, Trans Mountain’s Kinder Morgan, and Chevron’s Pacific Trail, among others. In October 2017, TransCanada announced the cancelling of the Energy East pipeline, and social movements who had been working hard to oppose this project celebrated the victory (Tucker, 2017). These convergences continue to protest the building of the Trans Mountain (Kinder Morgan) pipeline which, if built, will nearly triple the capacity of the current

pipeline system to 890,000 barrels a day and significantly increase tanker traffic off the Pacific coast (Crawford et al., 2018).

The fierce opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline, like the opposition to the other proposals that have come before, is being led by Indigenous communities. Opposition to pipelines by Indigenous people and their non-Indigenous allies in Canada is posing a real challenge to the State and to the extractive, fossil fuel-based economy. Indigenous peoples in Canada have been called the “last line of defense” and “the only real threat to energy projects such as oil and gas pipelines” (Curtis, 2015, n.d.). The Montreal Gazette stated that though “they don’t have the backing of major political parties, corporations or any major funding source, ... First Nations are becoming the de-facto face of Canada’s anti-pipeline movement” (Curtis, 2015, n.p.).

The alliances between these diverse movements is a powerful force for transformation in Canada, a force dependent on the leadership of Indigenous peoples and also on the support and the awakening of settlers. Arthur Manuel expressed it in these words: “I still see hope, a faint light on the horizon. This is the gradual dawning of awareness among ordinary Canadians that things are not right and things have to change, that there may be important projects in protecting land and fixing Canada to make it a land of justice for all” (Manuel, 2017, p.56).

The crises of climate change - driven by the oil and gas industries - and of racial inequality and Indigenous poverty - rooted in ongoing colonial relations in Canada -- both demand a fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the economic and social relations at the heart of Canada. The path forward for healing these unjust relations lies in the practice of settler Canadians following the leadership of Indigenous people who are actively protecting their lands and waters (Klein, 2014; Davis, 2010). These collaborations are fraught with tensions, with conflicting goals, strategies, and motivations, as the following chapters show. But, I believe they are currently the most transformative and viable force in Canada.

Indeed, Canadian journalist Naomi Klein has pointed out that there is a long legacy in Canada of movements working in silos on ‘separate issues’ and failing to see the crucial overlap in their visions. She contends that moving past this siloed approach and creating a ‘movement of

movements' is necessary for creating a strong enough force to shift the trajectory of the Canadian energy and economic system (2014).

1.4 Situating myself and my research

Research objectives and questions. In the sections above, I have sketched out the social and environmental crises facing Canada. While the global climate crisis deepens, Canada continues to develop polluting oil and gas infrastructure. The expansion of the oil and gas industry is exacerbating the existing suffering of Indigenous communities which are struggling to deal with the systemic poverty rooted in the racist, colonial relationship that characterizes Canada's history and present. In response, social movements in this country have been working actively to resist the expansion of the oil and gas industry (along with other extractive industries) and are offering visions and alternatives for a more socially just and ecologically-viable country. They are having some success in stalling injustice and unsustainability, but overall the balance of power is stacked against their success. There are many barriers to large-scale systems change in Canada. Over the past four years I have been engaged with people in these movements and together we've been discussing this question that is at the heart of this research project:

What can we do, as people involved in social movements engaged in collective action, to increase our power to bring about transformation towards decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada?

This overarching question breaks down into these more specific research questions that have guided my research process. Each question constitutes the central topic of one of three findings chapters:

1) How do people in the Indigenous land defense, climate/environmental justice, and anti-pipeline movements in Canada understand the crises and their causes and how do we envision the world(s) we want? (Chapter 4)

2) How do we think large-scale social change happens and can be brought about in Canada? (Chapter 5)

3) What are the barriers to bringing about the change we want to see in Canada and how can we overcome these barriers and strengthen our capacity to bring about systems transformation in Canada? (Chapters 6 and 7)

The two main objectives that have guided my research are:

1) To facilitate collaborative theorizing about how large-scale systems transformation can be forged in Canada,

2) To create space for reflection and strategizing within and between social movements, with the hopes that this collective thinking can contribute to strengthening the movements' ability to bring about the change we want.

How these questions and objectives were formed. Conversations in the activist circles I am part of made it clear to me early in the research process that activist groups and frontline communities are often in reactionary mode, rushing to respond to the latest unjust and environmentally destructive project. In addition, due to geographical distance, ideological differences, the tendencies to work in silos, there is rarely time and space to do big-picture thinking together, especially at the movement scale. I came to feel that making such time and space to reflect, theorize, and strategize together could be a research project that would be relevant and beneficial to these movements. I discussed my draft research questions and proposed methods with fellow activists across Canada and received positive feedback as well as useful input for refining them. It has been my hope that the iterative and collaborative nature of the research design would increase the chances of this project being of use to those working hard to make change in Canada.

Positionality. Chapter 2 (Methodology) provides more details about my research design and it also explains my positionality as an activist-scholar and as a white settler doing research involving Indigenous people. There are a few key points to be made here. Firstly, when I use the word “we” when referring to the social movements (such as in the research questions above) I have done so as a conscious choice not to separate myself from the movements I am part of. I have been doing this research as both an activist and as a scholar; I have been doing research from within the movements. To refer to the movements that I am part of as “them” would misrepresent myself as a disinterested observer of movement activity. I am not disinterested.

That said, the use of the word ‘we’ is problematic in that it can gloss over or conceal important differences, divisions and disagreements in the movements by homogenizing everyone into one “we”. Another problem with using “we” is that I am much more an ‘insider’ in the environmental justice and climate justice movements than I am in the Indigenous-led movements with which I am engaged but in a supportive role. These various movements are overlapping but it is not my intention to treat them monolithically nor to insinuate myself in all movements equally.

To be clear, there is no singular unified movement in Canada, though that may be implied when I write “we” in the research questions above and elsewhere. There is no clear “we”; rather there is a loose and shifting assemblage of groups, organizations, communities, and individuals across the country who are working towards environmental justice and against unwanted extractivist projects and they are coming at it in different and sometimes conflicting ways.

These ‘we’s that delineate the three ‘movements’ I described above are fluid and contested. Different people and groups involved would define the ‘we’ they are part of very differently from each other. For example, the recent coalition for a New Green Deal in Canada has been aiming to create a shared vision and policy platform for addressing the climate and inequality crises in Canada and has been conducting this process in ways that aim/claim to center Indigenous and other marginalized voices, but still this process has been criticized by prominent Indigenous climate leaders for continuing to tokenize Indigenous peoples, not bringing Indigenous voices to the table in real ways (Deranger, 2019). There are many examples like this where attempts to bring the diverse and divergent voices into one message or one campaign actually contributes to replicating inequalities, while erasing internal dissent. Any attempts to speak for, or to speak as, one unified ‘movement’ can so easily erase very real differences and conflicting interest between people engaged in these struggles. I seek to be aware of these problematic dynamics of using the word “we” as I navigate the ways I refer to the movements and my involvement in them.

A second point to be made here is that my research and indeed all my post-secondary education has been problem-based (around environment and climate), rather than discipline-based. I seek not to be a scholar of any particular discipline or scholarly tradition, nor specialize in any one body of literature. Rather my goal has been to become adept at researching and

thinking synthetically, bringing together diverse theories and tools, selected based on their potential usefulness to the social movements I am part of. In general, I consider this synthetic, non-specialized approach a strength. However, it is also a weakness. Having been reading and doing course work with breadth, instead of depth as priority, my engagement with any given body of literature is relatively incomplete and shallow compared to scholars who engage deeply in one body of literature. This is particularity problematic when it comes to my inclusion of Indigenous and decolonial scholarship in this work. It could be easily argued that a settler drawing on these literatures should immerse him or herself deeply or not at all. It's my hope that the insight that can come from bringing together diverse literatures and perspectives and what this insight has to offer, theoretically and practically, to decolonial goals will compensate for my incomplete, understanding of the bodies of literature from which I draw.

Where and how I am contributing to academic literature. This research draws on and seeks to contribute to the scholarly literature around two defining themes – Social Transformation and Social Movements.

While there is ample research being done to understand the various crises faced and quite a lot of work fleshing out the details of solutions and alternatives, less is known about how the transformations necessary to get from here to there can be brought about. “Overall there is a need for broader thinking about how change does happen so that we can be more creative and adept at devising strategies to confront the enormous challenges facing our societies and planet” (Krznaric, 2007, p.5). Taking up Krznaric's challenge, my work has a key focus on *understanding the processes of large-scale social change*, both in terms of what academic knowledge has to offer (Chapter 3) and how movement actors understand how social change happens (Chapter 5).

I draw from and hope to contribute to scholarly literatures that explicitly focus on large-scale social change processes. These include Social Ecological Systems Transformations (Meadows, 2008; Moore et al., 2015; Olsson et al., 2014; Abson et al., 2017; Boonstra, 2016; Beddow et al., 2009), Social Innovation (Westley et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2011) and Transition Management (Grin et al., 2010; Loorbach, 2014). While these scholars focus on the transformations from a system science perspective, I also look to transformations scholars with a more critical social science approach - including justice, equity and power in the analysis of

transformations - such as Kothari (2014), and Temper et al. (2018), scholars focusing on the transformative potential of environmental conflicts (Temper & Martinez-Alier, 2017) and environmental justice movements (Temper et al., 2018).

There is a significant gap in the literature on transformation in relation to understanding the agency of social movements (Temper et al., 2018), and there is a lack of work being done to understand the agency of social movements through methods and epistemologies that center the insights and theories of movement actors. This project aims to help fill this gap. How I've gone about doing so is explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Though focused on social processes in general, my work homes in specifically on the role that social movements play in bringing about social transformation. In this I join social movement scholars in general (for an overview of this field, see Buechler, 2016; Snow et al., 2008) and those writing about social movements in Canada (see Carroll & Sarker, 2016; Choudry et al., 2012; Smith, 2014) as well as social movement scholars focusing on climate justice (Chatterton, 2013) and Indigenous led movements (Coburn, 2015; Ladner, 2008).

It is not my intention to contribute to Indigenous scholarship, as that is clearly not my place as a settler, but I do seek to contribute to the scholarship in Canada on the process of settler movements working towards decolonization (Fortier, 2017; Walia, 2012; Regan, 2010) and social movement relations and collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Davis, 2010).

Perhaps most distinctly, I seek to join the social movements and transformations scholars who are practicing and promoting an approach to social movement scholarship that is “movement-relevant” and “movement-generated” (see Choudry, 2015; Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Croteau et al., 2005). I seek to do research not *on* or *about*, but *with* social movements. I most keenly want to contribute to our shared knowledge on how we can bring about transformation towards more just and ecologically viable systems.

1.5 Overview of the dissertation chapters

Chapter 2 explains my methodological approach, which has been designed to be participatory, engaged, and to create ‘movement relevant’ research findings. I also present the methods I used to answer my research questions. These include participant observation, semi-

structured in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. In this chapter I also reflect on my position as a settler engaging with Indigenous struggles and discuss some of the ethical tensions I have faced in conducting this research.

Chapter 3 provides a literature review of relevant theories of transformative change. These are gathered, based on their relevance to social movement goals, from across many academic disciplines including social movement theory (sociology), social-ecological systems science, critical social science (historical materialism and intersectional feminism), and Indigenous scholarship. In this chapter, the diverse theories of change are brought into dialogue with each other to combine insights and shed light on each others' blind spots. Findings from this literature review are distilled down to 'Key Lessons for Activists'.

The next three chapters (4, 5, 6, and 7) report on the many conversations I had with activists, organizers and land defenders. Chapter 4 is entitled "*Understanding the crises, uncovering the root causes, and envisioning the world we want*". This chapter digs into the ways that activists and land defenders understand the causes of the social and environmental problems we seek to address. Also elaborated in this chapter are the movement actors' visions of the world they are working hard to bring about.

Chapter 5, entitled "*The Movements' Theories of Change*," reports on the process of thinking with activists about our theories of change. It explores the varied and sometimes conflicting 'theories of change' held by people in these movements.

Chapter 6 is called "*Identifying the Barriers to Decolonizing and Decarbonizing*". In this chapter, the significant barriers to transformative change are identified and explored, including obstacles that are internal to the movements, and those that are external.

Chapter 7, "*Overcoming the Barriers and Strengthening the Movements' Transformative Power*" compiles many promising strategies for overcoming the barriers identified in Ch.6 and for building bigger, stronger, and more powerfully transformative movements. Where Ch. 6 faced the daunting task of listing the many huge forces working against the movements, Ch. 7 is the more hopeful endeavour of collective strategizing about how to confront and overcome the obstacles in our way and increase our capacity to build the worlds we want.

Finally, the concluding chapter, “*Towards A Relational Theory of Change and Relational Practices of Movement Building*” summarizes the findings of chapters 3-7 and elaborates on some key themes that emerged in this research, most importantly the themes of learning to be better at thinking and working across difference and of healing with each other. Echoing Indigenous philosophy and practices as well as systems theory, this final chapter makes the argument that to stand a chance of decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada, we need to centre the work of creating, restoring, and maintaining reciprocal relationships of respect and equality with each other in these movements, with people beyond our movements, and with the earth that sustains us. Just relations are both the means and the goals of transformation.

Chapter 2 - Methodology & methods

“Methods are not neutral tools, but might shape knowledge” (Milan, 2014, p.461).

“We can learn the most about movements, social relations, and perhaps humanity itself by participating in collective fights for justice and dignity” (Dixon, 2014, p.20).

2.1. Introduction

Introduction to the methodology. I have been doing research with activists and organizers in the environmental/climate justice and Indigenous land defense movements in Canada, to develop a better understanding about how large scale, systemic social change happens and how to increase the movements’ transformative capacity to contribute to decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada. The objective of this *collaborative theorizing* is to produce knowledge that contributes both to 1) academic literature on social transformation and 2) movements’ effectiveness in achieving their social change goals.

I am not invested in a specific academic discipline, my entire university education having been in interdisciplinary environmental studies, a problem-based, not discipline-based education. As such, I am not constrained by prescribed disciplinary expectations and conventions. I have been able to develop my methodological approach and choose methods that seem most helpful for answering my research questions. From this starting point, I have created a specific methodological approach that is based on **qualitative, inductive social science with a focus on engaged methods**.

As the focus of my research is *social movements* in Canada, my research design looked to social movement research methodology. However, rather than studying social movements to test existing theory as is common in social movements studies (SMS), my methodological approach centers around ‘**collaborative theorizing**’. I am doing research *with* the movement actors, to answer questions that are relevant to the movements themselves. The knowledge and theory produced emerges from the data I have gathered and from my interactions with movement actors. This methodological approach to theory building is referred to as **Grounded theory**. Literature on Grounded theory, Participatory Action Research and other forms of engaged

research emphasize the importance of building mutually respectful relationships between researcher and the communities or organizations involved. To build strong research relationships, it is important to do research that is *relevant* to social movements, selecting research questions that are useful to these movements.

To build relationships and begin to understand how my research could be of use to these movements, I began my research process with several years of **participant observation** as an activist in the movements with which I was already involved. As a result, several relationships developed that culminated in **Participatory Action Research** projects which helped me frame my research questions and objectives. The research design was an emergent process, evolving as relationships developed, as collaboration opportunities arose, and as I developed a better understanding of which research questions and methods would be of most use to the people with whom I was working.

The research findings presented in this doctoral thesis are based on data gathered from various sources and through a triangulation of several methods. These include over 4 years of participant observation, 3 completed short term Participatory Action Research projects, a series of 40 in-depth interviews, 3 group interviews/conversations (think tank sessions), 36 online surveys, and 105 phone conversations, all with movement actors. My data analysis methods have followed the techniques of grounded theory, explained in more detail in section 2.3.

Overview of this chapter. In section 2.2 I provide an overview of my methodological approach, based in social movement studies (SMS) and explain the ethical challenges and many critiques of SMS. I provide an overview of new approaches to SMS research which respond to these critiques and challenges. I situate my own approach to social movement research, referred to as *thinking with movements*⁴. I will argue that research done *with* movements is key to both addressing the ethical challenges of studying social movement and for promoting social transformation. It is also an affirmation of the value of the intellectual work that goes on within movements. My approach is thus based on both ethical and epistemological grounds. In section 2.3 I explain in detail the methods I used to gather and analyze the data in my research. In

⁴ I borrow this phrase from Chris Dixon

section 2.4 I explore the dynamics and implications of being a non-Indigenous person doing research with Indigenous peoples, situate myself in terms of decolonial research practices, and explain how I carefully navigate the problems associated with settlers doing such research.

2.2 My methodological approach

2.2.1 Social Movement Studies (SMS) research methodology

SMS is a subfield of sociology that generally seeks to explain why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as potential social, cultural, and political consequences. SMS has grown enormously in the past few decades and has spread from sociology and political science to other disciplines such as geography, history, anthropology, psychology, economics, law, and others (della Porta, 2014).

Methodological pluralism is a main characteristic of SMS; researchers use very different methods, often bridging qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and combining inductive and deductive approaches (della Porta, 2014). Methods commonly used in SMS include: Comparative Historical Analysis, Archival Research and Oral History, Participant Observation, Discourse and Frame Analysis, In-depth Interviews, Focus Groups, Surveys, Social Network Analysis and Protest Event Analysis, and others (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002).

Despite this methodological pluralism, it is by no means a methodological free-for-all. Rather, “the fit between research questions and empirical instruments is of central importance for any successful project” (della Porta, 2014, p.4). Important choices must be made in research design such as whether to use inductive or deductive strategies for generating knowledge. In deductive strategies, existing theory is the starting point and empirical observation is meant to confirm or deny the existing theory. Inductive strategies start with empirical observation and build theory from there (della Porta, 2014). Another initial decision to be made in research design and establishing a methodological approach is between Quantitative vs Qualitative methodologies.

Given my interest in creating knowledge with movement actors, an *inductive, qualitative approach* to social movement research was the starting point of my research design. What was less clear in the early stages of research design was how to navigate the ethical challenges that

come with doing research with social movements. The next section overviews the ethical tensions that social movement researchers contend with.

2.2.2 Ethical challenges of SMS methods

Like many forms of social science which use people as the subject of inquiry, the field of social movement studies requires that researchers pay special attention to the ethical dimensions of research (della Porta, 2014). Ethical considerations include: respecting the knowledge created and held by movement actors at every stage of research; ensuring that the research poses no increase in risks to social movements; carefully navigating the normative terrain of movements' values and practices; and developing equal and fair relationships between the researcher and the movement actors (Milan, 2014). These ethical challenges mean that researchers must carefully consider the way their research may impact the movements and support or hinder the movements' success in achieving their social change goals. Involving activists in a research project can have significant consequences and researchers need to consider this seriously in how they conduct research and disseminate findings (Milan, 2014).

These ethical challenges are not unique to SMS. Social science, especially Euro-Western research, has been extensively critiqued as “extractive, insofar as universities and governments send their ‘experts’ to a community, extract information from ‘subjects,’ and take away the data to write their papers, reports and theses with no reciprocity or feedback to the community” (Santos, 2008, p.321). Indeed, this has been the endemic approach in the social sciences more generally, and particularly in anthropology and the study of Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). Although many guidelines exist for conducting ethically sound research with Indigenous communities in Canada, research is still being conducted in ways that are not ethical, culturally respectful, or useful (Riddell et al., 2017). There is a need to clearly distinguish research conducted by settler researchers *on* Indigenous communities, for the benefit of settler scholars and agencies, from research conducted *with* Indigenous communities for their direct benefit (Ball & Janyst, 2008).

As someone conducting research with social movements, including Indigenous-led social movements, I have been keenly attentive to these ethical challenges and I've worked hard to create a project with activists and Indigenous land defenders which can benefit their movements and communities.

Stephania Milan (2014) offers a list of ‘tips for research design and field work’ to be used for addressing the four main ethical challenges in SMS research which she identifies as Relevance, Risk, Power, and Accountability. These tips include: Use participatory and/or engaged research as epistemological approaches; Select research questions that matter also to activists; Consider employing methods that can empower activists; Assess whether your research perpetuates established unequal social relations, or is likely to foster repression; Negotiate access and disclosure with activists; Consider data from the perspective of activists; Recognize material differences between research and activists, and build a fair research relationship that accounts for those disparities; Situate the researcher in the daily environments of the research partners; Reflect on yourself as a researcher; Choose between “research with” vs “research about”; and Translate your research and your knowledge into something that can be understood and used by activists (Milan, 2014, p.461). These and other tips suggested by Milan for developing ethically sound SMS research have actively served as a checklist in my research process. Before explaining the research methods and approach in more detail, I now go deeper into exploring the ethical questions and critiques of SMS, so as to provide a context and justification for my methodology.

2.2.3 Other challenges and critiques of SMS

Despite the work to acknowledge and address the ethical challenges of SMS research, the field of SMS research has not changed significantly, and much research continues to be practiced in ways that are ethically problematic (Croteau et al., 2005). As such, there exists a diverse array of critiques, from scholars and activists alike, about the conventional approach to social movement research. Here I outline four of the main critiques of conventional SMS, which I have gleaned largely from Aziz Choudry’s *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements* and other scholars that he cites in this book (2015 – see Chapter 2). These are: 1) the disconnect between researchers and movements; 2) the objectification of movements actors; 3) the tendency for categorization and compartmentalization; and 4) the universalizing of theory.

The disconnect between researchers and movements. Though there is much potential for co-benefit to come from research collaborations, Choudry contends that most social movement researchers remain disconnected from the movements they study (2015). Croteau,

Haynes, and Ryan contend that the disconnect between scholars and activists comes at a price for both activism and theory (2005). Scholarly theory “uninformed by and isolated from social movements struggles is more likely to be sterile and less likely to capture the vibrant heart and subtle nuances of movement efforts. Theorists without significant connections to social movements can end up constructing elegant abstractions with little real insight or utility” (Croteau et al., 2005, p.xii). Those critiquing the disconnect between research and movement actors are not arguing that researchers should have “uncritical adulation of a favoured movement” (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p.191). Closeness to a movement and analytic distance need not be mutually exclusive (Choudry, 2015).

Objectification of movement actors. This disconnect can breed a form of enquiry where the researcher sees the movement actors as *objects* of study. Choudry sees real tensions between movement theory that is developed through research by outsiders that objectifies the movements and movement theory generated by movements themselves (2015). Like some types of social science research that consider humans as ‘objects’ of study, many SMS scholars approach activists and organizers to “supply the data, the empirical material from their struggles and movements for others to interpret” (Choudry, 2015, p.58). Flacks similarly critiques how “journal articles increasingly analyse social movement experience as grist for the testing of hypotheses, as the illustrations of concepts” (2005, p.7-8). SMS theorists rarely honour the ideas of activists, much less recognize that “activists theorize constantly” (Choudry, 2015, p.58). SMS scholars often “impose theories on activists, ignoring the fact that ordinary people can theorize” (Ryan, 2004, p.111). Not only can this problem of objectification lead to weak theory, but approaching activists as sources of data hurts relationship building (Choudry, 2015, p.58) and as such, can contribute to researcher-activist disconnect.

Categorization and compartmentalization. Another critique of SMS research relates to how data is processed and understood. Richard Flacks (2005, p.4) argues that much of SMS scholarship defining the field resembles “a mix of inflated theorizing and abstracted empiricism”. This comes in the form of categorizing of movement actors, practices and ideas. SMS theory “regulates movements and activists by slotting them into categories, rather than paying attention to what the movements’ own ideas and theories tell us about the social world and power relations they are up against” (Frampton et al., 2006, p.11). Choudry, Frampton, and

others suggest that such distinctions are arbitrary and “often result in an inability to describe and account for how social movements actually work” (Frampton et al., 2006, p.11). “There is danger in theorizing them in ways which construct or interpret them to fit narrow theoretical frameworks” (Choudry, 2015, p.48). This reflects an over-attachment to “paradigms, typologies, and criteria for describing movements and their perceived success or failure and can displace potentially fruitful engagement through dialogue with knowledge generated by activists” (Choudry, 2015, p.56).

Universalizing. “The process of producing knowledge ... is profoundly influenced by our experiences of social relations” (Choudry, 2015, p.54). Overgeneralizing, or universalizing ones’ own social experience leads to many SMS scholars failing to account for the “multiple differences in power, form, strategy and ideology” among and within movements (Eschle, 2001). Eschle sees Eurocentrism and a tendency to presuppose that diverse movements share a unified perspective, where in actuality there are no ‘universal aspirations’ shared by global civil society (Eschle, 2001). Two scholars who problematize the universalizability of theory developed in the West are Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Walter D. Mignolo (2000) who, according to Choudry, both “problematize the positional superiority of canonical forms of knowledge and theory that came out of Europe and North America and have dominated and displaced other worldviews” (2015, p.53). SMS scholars’ propensity for categorizing and the tendency to assume the universalizability of their theoretical construct generate theories that are of little use to social movements. They can reinforce and reproduce the social inequalities that movements seek to confront and transform. To address this, knowledge about social movements and the world needs to be created “through dialogue with other people, other perspectives” (Choudry, 2015, p.55).

2.2.4 New ways of doing social movement research

Though the research practices critiqued above continue in mainstream SMS scholarship, there are scholars forging new and promising approaches. These include scholars from within and outside of SMS. “Dixon, Walia, Neigh, Ramamurthy, Sears, Shragge, and others illustrate that there are other approaches we can take to analysing and understanding movements and activism for social change” (Choudry, 2015, p.47). These more engaged forms of SMS research tend to center around several principles: reducing the disconnect between scholars and activists; valuing the intellectual work of movements; doing research that is relevant to movements; and

doing research that helps bring about social change. This is the scholarship I seek to explore and to which I hope to contribute. These principles are explored in more depth here, as are the challenges that come with these approaches to research.

Reducing the disconnect. The most familiar of these new approaches is *co-generative inquiry* and *engaged research* (della Porta, 2014) which calls for increased activist involvement in the research process. While some of these invite movement actors to be more involved with scholarly research projects, others emphasize the need for researchers to get more involved with the movements and movement activism. In both cases, there is this focus on the rethinking and restructuring of relationships between those researching movements and the movements themselves. Bevington and Dixon call for “dynamic, reciprocal engagement by theorists and movement activists in formulating, producing, refining and applying research” (Quoted in Choudry, 2015, p.59).

Valuing the intellectual work of movements. With these new, more engaged approaches to research on movements and activism comes an increased valuing of knowledge produced within movements. “Theories *about* movements and about social change have a lot to learn from theorizing and knowledge *of* movements” (Choudry, 2015, p.62). Movement theories are constantly subject to testing through trial and error in their direct engagement with the world, rendering the theories particularly robust (Ryan, 2004). Activists are bearers of “new ways of seeing the world” (Cox & Fominaya, 2009, p.1), and as such, offer important visions of solutions and alternatives. They also have much to offer in understanding the problems and crises being faced. Activist knowledge, learning and research are “concerned with exposing the contradictions, cracks, and fault lines in the structures and systems that produce and reproduce inequality, injustice, and environmental devastation” (Choudry, 2015, p.1). The insight held by movement actors can provide scholars with “critical conceptual tools with which to understand, inform, imagine, and bring about social change” (Choudry, 2015, p.1).

Co-design and collaborative knowledge production. In valuing the intellectual life of movements and in seeking to reduce the disconnect between researchers and movements new forms of research collaborations have emerged and are emerging. In their work with environmental justice movements, Temper et al. describe the process of research ‘co-design’ and the transformative potential of research with and for social movements while acknowledging

“the tensions and colliding epistemologies inherent in coproduction of knowledge ... We conclude that co-design can help inform more just, inclusive and socially relevant scholarship” (Temper et al., 2016, p.1).

In seeking ways to co-produce knowledge with social movements, some SMS researchers are looking to established participatory approaches to research such as Participatory Action Research where research questions, objectives, methods and dissemination decisions are made collaboratively between researchers and communities or movements in a process of research, action, and reflection. Though PAR came out of research with marginalized communities, it has been applied to social movement collaborations as well.

Movement-relevant research. There is an emerging area of scholarship on movements and activism that urges theory on movements be relevant to movements, building on the ideas, literature, and discussions within movements (Choudry, 2015). Bevington and Dixon (2005) have been leading the call for researchers to design research projects that are *relevant to and of direct usefulness* to social movements. They offer the following three key questions: What issues concern movement participants? What ideas and theories are activists producing? What academic scholarship is being read and discussed by movement participants? “Within these queries, SM scholarship would, of course, focus on the concerns related directly to the dynamics of the movements themselves, such as questions about structure, effectiveness, strategy, tactics, identity, relations to the state, relations to the media, and the dynamics of their opponents” (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p.198).

Action research. There is a move towards doing research that is not only relevant to movements, but that actively helps contribute to the social change that movements are working to bring about. This calls for “critical approaches to qualitative research ... whereby scholars are believed to have responsibility to do work that is socially meaningful and socially responsible” (Milan, 2014, p.450). Here we see that ‘engaged’ research is not just about working closely with social movement actors, but about taking action in the world. Milan defines engaged research as “inquiries into the social world that, without departing from systematic, evidence-based, social science research, are designed to make a difference for disempowered communities and people beyond the academic community” (Milan, 2014, p.452).

Blurring the lines between scholarship and activism. These deeply engaged approaches to SMS inevitably raise questions about identity and about the synergies and tensions between doing research and taking action, and between positivist and normative approaches to knowledge creation. Some SM scholars argue that “engaged research does not call for the blurring of the boundaries between activists and researchers; rather, it acknowledges the reciprocal roles, with their own strengths and drawbacks, and tries to build on those” (della Porta, 2014, p.452). Others contend that these lines are socially constructed, arbitrary and create “a false binary between knowledge production in the academy and activism in social movements” and that blurring these lines can make for better scholarship and more effective activism (Dawson & Sinwell, 2012b, p.179). Dawson and Sinwell distinguish among 3 types of identities that can be formed in the effort to navigate the dual roles of activist and of scholar. SCHOLAR-activists grant primacy to their careers of primarily academic research. Scholar-ACTIVISTS, prioritize activism over scholarship’ and SCHOLAR-ACTIVISTS seek to be accountable to both activist and academic standards (Dawson & Sinwell, 2012b).

I am positioning myself as a SCHOLAR-ACTIVIST, working to be a successful scholar while involved in bringing about social change. I seek to, as Dawson & Sinwell advise, “shift the balance of power in the relationship between scholars and activists”, by engaging with the academy as a “site of social change so that activists’ knowledge is recognised as a valid form of theorising and idea generation” (2012b, p.188).

2.2.5 My methodological approach – thinking with movements

It is not enough to tweak the edges of the conventional SMS approach in order to mitigate the ethical problems associated with it. Rather, a fundamentally different epistemological and methodological approach is required to forge the kinds of relationships that can generate the kind of knowledge that can contribute to social transformation. Rather than *learning about social movements*, I have from the start approached my research as being about *learning with movements*. My methodological approach has been designed to create the space to *think and learn with social movements about how to bring about social transformation*. Inspired by the work of Aziz Choudry, Chris Dixon and others, I endeavour for my work to be both “informed by and to contribute to the intellectual work that takes place within social movements” (Choudry, 2015, p.9)

As someone who has been involved with movements and activism for over a decade, I can attest to the fact that there is seldom enough time and energy available in movements to sit down and deeply reflect, theorize, and do long-term and big picture strategizing together; we are more often in urgent response, planning and action mode. Creating powerful movements that can bring about transformative change “requires being able to reflect critically, build spaces where people can come together to act and learn collectively ... ” (Choudry, 2015, p.1). This is one key way in which that I see scholar-activists like myself being able to use our particular skills to actively contribute to movements and to social change – by creating the space and time for movements to theorize and strategize together, and to bring the findings back to the movements.

Ryan and Jeffries (2008) refer to this form of convening as creating ‘scholar-activist learning communities’ and they understand them to be “vehicles for creating favourable conditions— conceptual, strategic, cultural and organizational—for collaborative theorizing” (p.1). It is this kind of theory building that I am interested in; the theory that is generated through collaborative processes of thinking, reflecting, and strategizing for social change.

To me, collaborative theory generation is the process of developing a shared understanding of how that world works such that it can help inform collective action for effectively addressing social and environmental problems. What makes theorizing different from talking, thinking together, and sharing information (all of which is necessary but insufficient for collaborative theorizing) is the level of critical engagement, testing, and rigour that are needed to produce useful theory. Scientific theory is generated through a specific form of rigour which involved hypothesis testing, experimentation, and peer review. Collaborative theory in social movements spaces can also be subject to rigour through debate, through testing out strategies and tactics and reflecting on them, and importantly by drawing on the experience of many, many people actively engaged in similar day to day struggles on the ground. In this thesis, I bring together the many insights provided by the activists and land defenders I spoke with. The rigour of theory building happens not through me critically engaging or determining which insights were more correct or less and why, but rather through letting the different people’s insights respond to others, shedding light on each other’s blind spots and pushing back on each other’s assumptions.

I made this decision early on in the project (and told the interviewees and survey respondents accordingly) that I would not be studying or analysing them nor their ideas. I wanted study and analyse the phenomena of social change *with* them. I have included the full range of responses I got to the various questions I asked, I do this as a way to step back from the researcher role of deciding which answers are more valid or more valuable than others. Though this approach, of being co-learner, not critical analyst or interpreter of others' views, theories, and perspectives, has its pros and cons (which are explored in chapter 8, section 8.7), I have remained committed to it.

Having now explained my general research approach, the following section describes the research methods I have used in this doctoral research. They have been selected with the goal of creating spaces for 'thinking together' with people in the Indigenous land defense, anti-pipeline, and the environmental/climate justice movements in Canada.

2.3 Research methods used

I have used various data collection methods common to qualitative social science. These include participant observation, multiple short-term participatory action research projects, surveys, in depth interviews, group interviews (which I refer to as thinktank sessions), and transcriptions from public events. My process of data collection and analysis have been designed around grounded theory, an approach to inductive theory building, from the ground up.

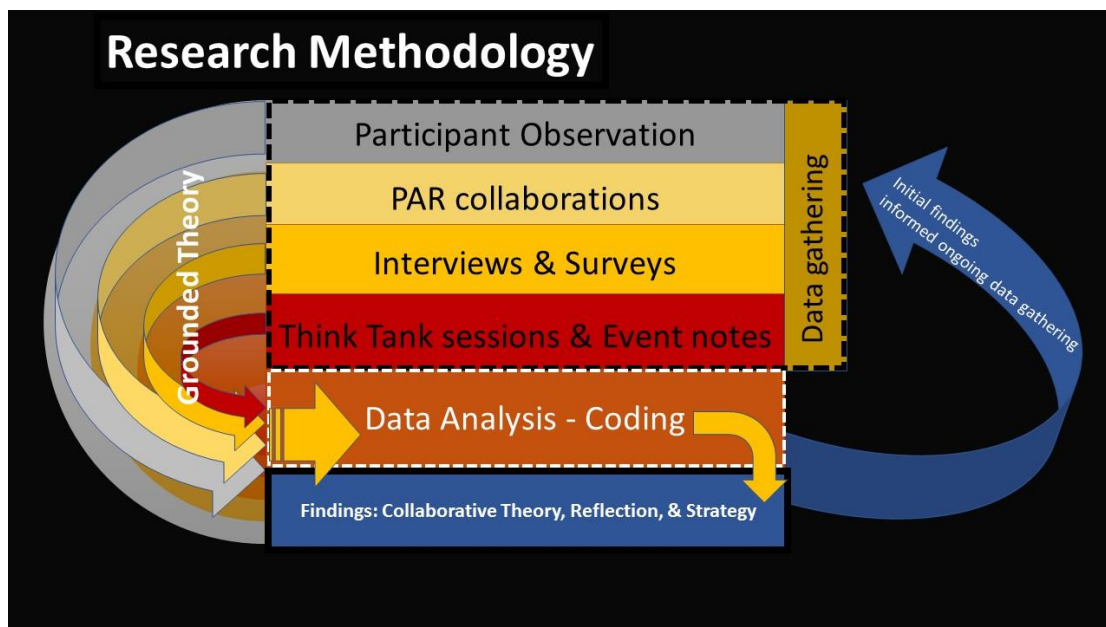


Figure 1 - Graphic showing methods

Grounded theory. Unlike other data analysis approaches that use collected data to confirm or refute existing theory, in grounded theory, theories emerge from the empirical data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010). While well established in the social sciences, this remains marginal in SMS research (Mattoni, 2014, p.21). “Far from being a specific method to collect and analyze data, grounded theory is best understood as a ‘family of methods’ able to guide researchers in the systematic elaboration of concepts and theories that are rooted in the empirical materials at the center of the investigation” (Mattoni, 2014, p.21).

As no theory exists to serve as a starting point for gathering and analysing data in grounded theory, practitioners instead use “sensitizing concepts” that guide the analysis. These concepts function as a starting point for the analysis, and then these concepts “are filled with meaning through the careful examination of empirical data” (Mattoni, 2014, p.24). The following seven sensitizing concepts, developed in conversation with people in the movement communities I am part of, guided my data collection and analysis: ‘theories of change’, ‘root causes of the crises’, ‘the world we want’, ‘what’s working in the movements and what is not’, ‘barriers to transformation’, ‘strategies for overcoming barriers and strengthening the movements’. These helped me develop interview and survey questions and to do preliminary analysis of the interview and survey data.

Sampling. Unlike other research strategies, grounded theory sampling does not follow statistical methods to construct a representative selection of the population under investigation. Rather, sampling develops along with the process of analysis and theory building (Mattoni, 2014, p.27). The goal of this research has not been to accurately describe the movements (in which case representative sampling would be important indeed) but rather, the goal has been to create space for collective theorizing, whereby other factors drive the selection of participants.

Charmaz (2006) distinguishes between two moments: “initial sampling” and “theoretical sampling”. Initial sampling is the starting point of the research when the researcher sets some general criteria about whom she wants to interview. Theoretical sampling methods then guide the researcher during the process of research (Mattoni, 2014, p.27). Participants are chosen on a conceptual basis. This type of sampling is iterative: it involves “moving backwards and forwards between sampling and theoretical reflection” (della Porta, 2014, p.240).

For my initial sampling, the criterion was simply that the individual was a person, from anywhere across Canada, who was actively involved in the Indigenous land defense movements or environmental/climate justice movements. As the research progressed, I began to seek out more specific people to ensure diverse and equitable inclusion in my sample. For example, in early participant observation in the movements, I learned the crucial importance of raising up the voices and viewpoints of women, Indigenous people, people of colour, and people most impacted by the crises I seek to address. As such I sought to include people in my sample in ways that ensured wide representation of people across gender, race, class, and language lines and to prioritize the inclusion especially of Indigenous people in my sample. Further, as I conducted interviews, a recurring theme emerged about the tensions between more radical and more reformist currents in the movements. I sought to include people at different points along this spectrum in order to better understand this tension. As I actively learned during my research process, the sampling approach evolved accordingly.

I had aimed to conduct in depth interviews with 30 people, but once I reached 30, I felt the sample was over representing white settlers and activists from eastern Canada. As such, I continued the interview process, seeking out people of colour, Indigenous people, and those living in western Canada. I feel that the final sample of 40 interviewees fairly represents the range and variation among activists engaged with these movements, though still over represents settlers.

Data analysis – Coding. Creating and assigning codes is a primary data analysis practice in grounded theory (Mattoni, 2014). Once data is collected and transcribed to text, researchers begin to analyse. Coding involves at least three interrelated, and at times overlapping, stages: a preliminary “open coding,” a more elaborated “axial coding,” and a focused “selective coding” (Mattoni, 2014, p.30). In the stage of open coding, tentative codes emerge, “unconstrained by a pre-existing list of codes, or theory” (ibid). This can lead to sub-codes. Axial coding is the exploration of the relationships between codes. During this stage “conceptual categories begin to emerge due to the recombination of codes ... and the researcher begins to reconstruct theoretical categories to which more specific codes belong” (ibid). The analysis and further coding become organized along these axes of specific categories. Finally, during the selective coding stage, the researcher, having begun to note that some categories of codes seem more important than others,

starts to focus only on selected core categories that might function as the pivot of theory building (Mattoni, 2014, p.32). Researchers take notes throughout the coding process and this too supports the emergence of theory.

This reflects my own process of analysis. I used Lite QDA Miner software to code my interviews and survey data. During my early coding, for example when reading through people's answers to my question about how change happens, I developed certain meta codes based on themes emerging such as "how we take action" or "how we relate". These were then used at later stages of coding to develop more selective codes such as direct action or sharing resources. These and other key themes that emerged, their interrelations and the theoretical insight that resulted, are elaborated in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Data analysis – Bringing diverse voices and viewpoints into dialogue. Through the various data collection methods (participant observation, interviews, surveys), I gathered as many perspectives held by movements actors as I could. It was through this elaborate coding process of grounded theory that I was able to bring the voices, views, and theories of a wide variety of people, into dialogue with each other.

Although I have convened several events for collaborative theorizing and strategizing, much of the theorizing gathered has been through interviews and surveys with individuals. The *collaboration theorizing* or *thinking together* then happens through the process of analysis, of bringing all these insights into one big picture and seeing what new insights emerge. We each see the world and social change and movements through our own personal lens. We each see a piece of the puzzle - none of us sees the whole. But together we can access a much bigger view. This has been my attempt, to bring as many pieces of the puzzle together in hopes of getting a bigger picture view than we ordinarily have access to. Social innovation scholar Frances Westley states that "new forms of knowledge integration and generation that support planetary stewardship are required, capable of integrating a much richer diversity of ideas and viewpoints and of bringing action and research into closer proximity" (Westley, 2011, p.5). My data analysis methods have been selected to help bring all these "pieces of the puzzle" into dialogue with each other. The intent is not to compare or categorize, but rather to see what new knowledge and insight may emerge when they are brought together.

Critiques of grounded theory. I chose grounded theory to guide my process for analyzing the data and developing ‘theory’. I chose this approach because it felt right to not starting with a hypothesis nor with existing scholarly theory, but instead to let activists’ and land defenders’ diverse perspectives and theories exist together in their own right, without needing to be measured against or defined in relation to existing scholarly theory. I felt that this approach would serve to create more space for activist and land defenders’ knowledge and voices, to honour the knowledge that is forged in the hard work of social change, and to help upend the power hierarchies of knowledge production whereby the knowledge generated by scholars within the academy is often considered more legitimate and of more value than the knowledge produced outside the academy.

I also looked to grounded theory as well for guidance for how to systematically go through and analyse the large amounts of data I collected through conversations with people in the movements I am part of. Grounded theory did indeed provide useful for guiding the complex analysis process. All this said, grounded theory is not without its problems and weaknesses.

A fundamental part of the grounded analysis method is the deriving of codes, concepts, and categories (Allan, 2003). Indeed, while coding the interview and survey data, much of the time was spent creating themes to act as codes and then organizing different things people told me in to different categories and sub categories. In this sense, grounded theory in itself does not provide ways out of the SMS tendency toward categorization and compartmentalization, as discussed in 2.2.3 above. Categorization may be somewhat unavoidable in the processing of data, but ideally this coding process would have been done in collaborative ways with activists and land defenders. Having conducted the analysis on my own opens up significant potential for my own pre-existing understandings, interests, and other biases to shape the theory that ‘emerges’ from the data I collected, and for interpreting what was meant by certain concepts and words that in actuality can mean very different things to different people⁵. Perhaps the most significant problem with grounded theory is that there is no clear means provided by which a

⁵ For example, phrases such as ‘social change’ or ‘movement ecosystem’ are widely interpretable, yet in grasping for coherence amongst wildly diverse possible definitions, there has been the tendency for my own definitions of these to shape the discussion around them.

researcher can make explicit and be accountable for the ways that his or her biases shape the ‘emergence’ of theory from data (Allan, 2003; Glaser, 2002; Kelle, 2007).

As much as I may have chosen this method precisely because I wanted my project to disrupt rather than replicate power inequities between academic theorists, as the person doing the analysis, coding, and meaning-making I wield significant power to decide what is significant and what is not, to frame what emerges and how it emerges, even as I seek to merely synthesize and report on what I heard in the conversations. This is problematic given that I am relatively new to activism, not part of directly impacted communities, and a settler presenting the views of Indigenous people I spoke with.

To address this problem of bias and power, the remedy cannot be for the researcher to come to the process of gathering and collecting data with no preconceived ideas, bias, or other ‘mental baggage’ (Allan, 2003). Since the 1960s, the insight from epistemology and cognitive psychology has become widely accepted, that we all perceive the world through existing lenses, experience and knowledge. As such, researchers always bring with them their own lenses and conceptual frameworks, theories, and biases (Kelle, 2007).

My own understandings of social change, of what the world is like, of what the world should be, all of this has indelibly tinted the whole project, without me having been explicit where and how it has. This is one weakness and limitation of the methodological approach I chose and of grounded theory in general. It is important for this to be considered and addressed (see Chapter 8 - Section 8.7 for more reflections on the limitations of this project).

The following are the specific data collection methods I used to gather these diverse ideas, perspectives, and theories which I then brought into dialogue with each other through several stages of coding.

Participant observation. Participant observation is a type of data collection method commonly used in qualitative social science research. It seeks to gain familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices through an intensive involvement with them in their cultural environment, usually over an extended period of time (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014). Participant observation is a way of learning by “being part of” and reflects the notion that one can develop deeper understanding through engagement than through observation from the outside (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014, p.45-46).

I have used participant observation in combination with other methods of data collection. It developed organically through my existing involvement with the movements. Aside from activities where I was actually gathering data, I have organized and participated in many events over the last five years, through which I learned much about the movements, and about the process of social change through collective action.

Participatory Action Research. PAR involves researchers and communities or organizations working together to better understand a problem and to take action to change it for the better (Kindon, 2007). The process of PAR involves multiple collaborative steps including 1) identifying a problem, 2) designing and initiating research to precipitate relevant action, developing context-specific methods 3) taking action together, and then 4) reflecting on and learning from the action and possibly proceeding to a new cycle of these steps (Kindon, 2007). This methodological approach reflects PAR's commitment to democratic and non-coercive research *with and for*, rather than *on* communities (Kindon, 2007). PAR challenges the traditionally hierarchical relationships between research and action, and between researcher and researched, and seeks to replace an "extractive", imperial model of social research with one in which the benefits of the research accrue more directly to the communities involved (Kindon, 2007).

Given my commitment to engaged research that can help bring about social transformation, PAR has been my intended approach since the research design phase. This led to several small-scale PAR collaborations that have helped me develop the research project, gather data, and to conduct my research in ways that are intended to be of direct benefit to the organization and communities seeking to bring about transformative change in Canada.

One of these research collaborations was with leaders at the [Unist'ot'en](https://unistoten.camp/)⁶ resistance camp in north-central BC, who have been actively blocking multiple oil and gas pipelines by re-inhabiting their traditional territory that is on the pipeline route between the Alberta oil sands and the BC coast. I worked closely with them to research how social marketing can be used as a tool for social change. This project was prompted by their own research interests and culminated in

⁶ <https://unistoten.camp/>

the preparation and delivery of a day-long workshop at the annual Unist'ot'en Action Camp in 2016, training activists and community members in using social marketing tools for social change. This workshop in turn generated several communications campaigns and projects to promote the community's goals. Through this I learned a lot about using tools of communications and social marketing to bring about social change, while contributing directly to the goals of the residents and leadership at the Unist'ot'en camp.

A second key PAR collaboration was with the team from the [Leap Manifesto](https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/)⁷. This Manifesto sets out a vision for a justice-based energy transition in Canada based on 'Caring for the Earth and One Another'. In 2017, the team that launched the Manifesto formed a new organization, called [The Leap](https://theleap.org/)⁸, to work towards implementing the Manifesto's vision. I collaborated with the team during their transition, by helping them conduct and analyse over 100 phone interviews (I conducted 60 of them) with representatives of the [organizations that had signed on](https://leapmanifesto.org/en/whos-on-board/)⁹ to the Manifesto. In these phone calls we asked for feedback and input on how the Leap could be most useful to the movements in Canada. This PAR process involved a follow-up survey about signatories' Theories of Change (see section below on Surveys). The research process and the report I wrote for The Leap constitute a collaborative, cross-movement strategizing that has been of use for both the Leap and my own research.

The last of the three short-term research collaborations I did was with Vanessa Gray of Aamjiwnaang First Nation. Vanessa is an Anishinaabe land defender and has been actively working to raise awareness about the rampant environmental racism and the devastating health impacts on her community caused by the oil and gas refineries around her reserve near Sarnia, Ontario. In 2015, Vanessa was facing criminal charges for shutting off Enbridge's much contested Line 9 pipeline. Facing the possibility of many years in prison for this act of protest that she considered 'community self-defence', Vanessa sought my help as a researcher and together we convened a think tank of scholars and other experts in Canadian and Indigenous law and we facilitated a public think-tank event brainstorming about Vanessa's defense. The session

⁷ <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/>

⁸ <https://theleap.org/>

⁹ <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/whos-on-board/>

was transcribed and sent to her lawyer who used it in her case. Vanessa felt this research collaboration was helpful to getting the charges dropped and it allowed me to reflect more deeply on the role of law and civil disobedience in the process of social change.

Each of these three projects, though short term, involved stages of research, action, and reflection. Through the PAR projects as well as the participatory observation I began to develop and refine research questions and formed the connections with people who would later participate in the research interviews and surveys.

Interviews. Interviews are a foundational research method in the social sciences and are the most widely used technique for gathering information of different types including qualitative and quantitative (della Porta, 2014, p.228). Interviews are a particular type of conversation that is structured and guided by the researcher with a view to “stimulating the provision of certain information” (della Porta, 2014, p.228). During the spring and summer of 2017, I conducted 40 in-depth interviews with people active in Indigenous land defense, anti-pipeline, and environmental/climate justice movements in Canada. This sample of 40 people represent an incredible wealth of experience in working to make change in Canada. It contains a range of people from youth to elders, 20 women, 20 men, 7 people of colour, 8 Indigenous people, and 25 white settlers. It includes 35 anglophones and 5 francophones¹⁰, mostly people residing in Quebec and British Columbia, but with a few from other provinces as well, including Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. It includes 21 activists in grassroots organizations, 12 people who work in NGOs, 5 community organizers, and 8 who are involved in other ways (e.g. First Nations governance, education, policy)¹¹.

As I began the interview process, I contacted people I was already familiar with through my involvement with the movements. As the process continued, I reached out more widely to people that were suggested to me by previous interviewees, in a process of snowball sampling. I contacted potential interviewees by email, explaining the research project, indicating what would be involved in the interview, and making clear the research ethics protocols involved. At the

¹⁰ Interviews with francophones were conducted in French and then later translated into English during the transcription process.

¹¹ Note that these numbers do not add up to 40, because some people are involved in more than one of these.

beginning of each interview, I explained again the ethics protocols (regarding anonymity and how the data would be stored etc.), which was stated clearly in [consent form](#)¹², which the interviewee then signed to establish their consent to be interviewed.

Most interviews were conducted in person, in parks, homes, cafes, and on reserves across the country. A few were conducted over the phone. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Research ethics process was strictly adhered to, and anonymity and confidentiality was ensured for all interviewees. Most interviews lasted about one hour, a few were shorter, several were longer, and one was over 4 hours long. Most interviews involved myself and one interviewee, though I did conduct a few interviews, or thinktank discussions, with several individuals at a time, in order to think together about specific questions. The interviews were semi-structured around the interview script but were conversational and often veered into unexpected and interesting related topics.

I used the following Interview Script.

- 1) How have you been involved in social movements in Canada?
- 2) In the work you've done, what is the change you want to see? What is the world you want to help bring about?
- 3) What is causing the social and environmental problems you aim to address in your work and how do you understand the relationship between the environmental/climate crises and social injustice?
- 4) How do you see the role of Indigenous rights and resistance, in bringing about systems change in Canada?
- 5) How do you think large-scale systems change happens? Do you have a 'theory of change'?
- 6) What strategies and tactics are you finding most effective and promising these days?
- 7) What's working and what's not working well in the movements you are part of?

¹² Ethics consent form (online) which explains the research ethics protocol:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdziJhurw2kTYP1IxZaf4llet5Z3wa47XUgLkggzKMJcixO9Q/viewform>

8) In your view, what are the biggest barriers to bringing about the kind of change you want to see in Canada? What can be done to overcome these barriers?

9) What do you think could be done to strengthen, leverage, speed up the current efforts for transformative change in Canada?

Surveys. A survey questionnaire, common in SMS and the social sciences generally, is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering quantitative and/or qualitative information from respondents (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). Survey questionnaires can be mailed to respondents, completed in face-to-face or through telephone interviews, or done online (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002). This method is less time and resource consuming than face-to-face interviews and is often used in triangulation with other methods (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002).

I have collected insight about people's theories of change and approaches to making change through three different questionnaires. One was conducted through my research collaboration (see section on PAR above) with The Leap organization and involved 105 completed phone surveys and 36 completed online surveys with people representing organizations and groups who are signatories to the Leap Manifesto. They are all in some way involved with the climate justice and just energy transition movements in Canada. See survey [here](#)¹³. The questions are very similar to the questions in the interview script provided above. I have processed and analysed these survey responses in much the same way as I analysed the interview data, through a process of coding, guided by grounded theory.

For the series of phone calls, of the 206 signatory organizations we contacted, we managed to talk with people from 105. Of these, 46 were women and 59 were men. There were 7 people of colour, 8 Indigenous people, and 90 white settlers. These people are from across the country, involved in the movements through grassroots activist groups, citizen groups, NGOs, and Indigenous organizations and communities. I did not conduct a research consent process with these people for these phone calls, so the data and insight gathered have not been included

¹³ Online survey: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScrQsGvliZEYqP-tWdt1z1oNcYw6IWb6qnZWmmziCmA3S9eMw/formResponse>

in this dissertation. I include this process here in my methods section because, like the participatory action projects and the participant observation, the phone conversations helped shape the project and my growing understanding of the contours and dynamics of these movements.

For the online survey that followed the phone call process, I did get research consent, and the data and findings from the survey have been incorporated in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. This in-depth survey was completed by a total of 36 people of which 13 are women, 16 are men, and the rest didn't specify. It was filled out by 3 people of colour, 3 Indigenous people and 19 white settlers, and the rest didn't specify. All survey respondents were individuals from groups and organizations that are signatories to the Leap Manifesto and involved actively in working towards a just transition in Canada.

It's clear that white settlers make up the majority of the people I interviewed and surveyed. Out of a total of 181 interviews, phone calls, and surveys, 19 of these were with Indigenous people and 17 with people of colour. About 80% of the participants in this project are white settlers. That being acknowledged (and addressed further in section 2.4 below), I have had in-depth conversations with 19 Indigenous people (this alone could constitute enough data gathering for one doctoral project). To ensure that these critically important Indigenous voices do not get buried in the majority of white settlers I also spoke with, in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, I raise up and report on disproportionately the views and theories of the Indigenous people I spoke with. The voices of Indigenous people and people of colour have been given more weight in the data analysis and presentation, as explained below.

As another way to bring in more Indigenous voices, and other voices missing from the interview and survey data, I attended public events where land defenders and water protectors were speaking. I took notes and incorporated these notes into my data analysis. Some of the event quotes are used in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Quotes from various sources of data are represented in the chapters by the following codes:

Quotes from interviews - (Int#),

Quotes from surveys - (S#)

Quotes from think tank sessions - (TT#)

Quotes from public event - (E#).

A table of codes is presented in Appendix 1, providing basic information about each interview, survey, think tank, and event interlocutor.

To summarize my methods, I have conducted participant observation, interviews, thinktanks, surveys, and PAR collaborations to gather perspectives, reflections, and theories of people actively engaged in these social movements in Canada, with a commitment to participatory, engaged, and action research. This process was guided by the grounded theory approach to gathering and analysing qualitative data. Through a lengthy process of coding-based data analysis, I've been able to bring these participants' ideas into dialogue with each other and to create the space for collaborative theorizing of these movements. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 report on the insight and theory that have emerged from this process of *thinking together*.

2.4 Situating myself in Decolonial Research

Although I have provided an overview of the ethical challenges and critiques of social movement research and showed how my research has been designed carefully to address these challenges and critiques, there is a much bigger critique and deeper challenge of the work I've been trying to do. I have shown that there can be problematic relations between social movement actors and scholar researchers, and that I have sought to address this through participatory, engaged research that is of relevance to the social movements. However, the discussion thus far does not at all address the relationship between Indigenous people and settler researchers such as me.

Colonial relations in academia. In her very influential book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith makes very clear that research is a site of ongoing colonial relations (1999). Academic research is an institution that is “embedded in a global system of imperialism and power” and with it has come “new waves of exploration, discovery, exploitation and appropriation” (Smith, 1999, p.24). This is true to such an extent that ‘research’, is “probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith, 1999, p.1). “We need an understanding of the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge

is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (Smith, 1999, p.2). And we need to work hard at undoing these.

Not just another social movement. Settler researchers need to be vigilantly alert to the ways their research may replicate colonial dynamics. There is a history of SMS scholars failing to distinguish Indigenous resistance and resurgence from social movements. It is critical for non-Indigenous SMS scholars to refrain from “treating Indigenous resistance and resurgence as just another social movement” (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.176). SMS must not uncritically apply social movement theories to Indigenous change agency. Instead, “insights from diverse Indigenous perspectives” should be centered and raised up (ibid). Working from diverse perspectives can serve to support Indigenous resurgence by “creating space” (Kovach, 2009) for Indigenous voices in academia (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.176). Ontological shifts are required to ensure social movement research conducted by settlers doesn’t replicate colonial relations. Indeed, although some critical scholars are resisting colonialist assumptions in the academy, most social science research continues to be framed from within Western ontologies which tend to delegitimize Indigenous ways of being and knowing (Fortier, 2015; Hunt, 2013).

Decolonizing research. It is clear that decolonizing research practices is crucial to all research, but particularly so for research involving Indigenous people or issues pertaining to them. There is ample literature pointing to decolonizing research methods. Smith makes clear that “Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices” (Smith, 1999, p.20). Decolonizing research requires decentring the interests and aims of the settler researcher and centering instead the interest and aims of Indigenous peoples (Prior, 2007, p.165), and it requires enough critical reflexivity on the part of the settler researcher to make that happen in a meaningful way.

A key principle in doing such decolonial research is that research *must be done in a participatory* way whereby decisions regarding research questions, methodology and dissemination of findings are guided by the Indigenous community partners (Smith, 1999). Another key principle is that the research outcomes *must be of service* and help contribute to the

goals of the community, which aligns with SMS research ethics outlined in sections 2.2.2 to 2.2.4.

Craig Fortier, a Canadian scholar studying the decolonization process of anti-authoritarian social movements, outlines five core principles that he used to guide his own research process “along a decolonizing pathway” (2015, p.19). These principles include: “(1) drawing on multiple ontological realities and worldviews; (2) situating contemporary political struggles within the structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and the capitalist world system; (3) engaging in critical self-reflexivity; (4) seeking to embody practices of decolonization not only in my research but as a life praxis; and (5) creating long-term and sustained relationships across and between the participants of the study grounded in our shared experiences, desires, vulnerabilities, and understandings of home and belonging” (Fortier, 2015, p.19). He notes that following these principles meant that he “had to be guided by an overarching relational worldview, one drawn from Indigenous ontologies” (ibid). Indeed, according to Riddell et al. (who cite Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Michell, 2012; Smith, 2012; and Wilson, 2008) a key theme in the literature on Indigenous research ethics is that

“every stage of research relies on relational processes—from the researchers' own intentions in seeking particular knowledge, through the design and implementation of methodologies and gathering of consent, to the analysis and dissemination of knowledge. This relational approach ... highlights the importance of reciprocity, insofar as participating communities and individuals should benefit from research throughout the process, not just at the knowledge-sharing stage” (Riddell et al., 2017, p.8)

My approach to working towards decolonial research and activism. I have gathered from the above discussion my own set of guidelines to help forge a decolonial path for a settler scholar-activist who has been engaging with Indigenous people and Indigenous struggles. These principles have guided me through the research design, literature review, field work, and dissertation writing phases of this project. They will guide me as I disseminate the knowledge produced.

1. To engage in critical self-reflexivity (Fortier, 2015), continually working to “critically reflect on and understand the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which

inform my research practices” (Smith, 1999, p.20). To ask myself: who is benefiting from this research and who is not?

2. To acknowledge, learn about, and promote an understanding of Canada’s colonial history and present and to ensure that my framings of current political struggles and efforts for change in Canada are situated “within the structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and the capitalist world system” (Fortier, 2015, p.19)
3. To endeavour to practice decolonization “not only in my research but as a life praxis” (Fortier, 2015, p.19)
4. To develop and practice a research approach that is radically participatory (Smith, 1999) and aimed at social transformation (Chatterton, 2007).
5. To support and enhance an Indigenous agenda for transformation (Smith, 1999), in my research and in my activism.
6. To commit to developing reciprocal relationships with the people with whom I work such that the collaborations and alliances are of benefit to them at every stage (Riddell et al., 2017).
7. To ground my theoretical work in “multiple ontological realities and worldviews,” and to work towards raising up and learning more about relational worldviews drawn from Indigenous ontologies (Fortier, 2015; Kovach, 2009).
8. Rather than uncritically applying social movement theories to Indigenous change agency, I seek to emphasize insights and theories from diverse Indigenous perspectives (Coburn & Atleo, 2016).
9. To use my dissertation and position as scholar and researcher to create space for Indigenous voices, theories and agency in the academy (Kovach, 2009) and in social movements in Canada.

Understanding myself as a settler living and researching on stolen land. My family arrived on Turtle Island, from various countries in eastern and western Europe in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were working-class people seeking employment, homes of their own and a better life for their kids. This space for a better life that my great grandparents sought and found in Canada was available and accessible to them because of the European colonization of North America – the lands and resources taken from Indigenous peoples without their consent

and the systematic destruction of their cultures and lifeways in order to facilitate this land and resource dispossession. My ancestors directly benefitted from the colonial process of land dispossession and the oppression of Indigenous peoples here on Turtle Island. As Mi'kmaw Warrior and decolonial thinker Sakej Ward said to a room of settlers seeking to support Indigenous resistance efforts, at an event I attended in Vancouver in 2017, "As settlers, your ancestors are the architects of my peoples' apocalypse".

What this means to me is that the position I hold in Canadian society - as an able-bodied, cis-gendered, white woman born to middle class parents with access to higher education and financial ease - was afforded to me based on colonial relations and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands. My material wellbeing is based on, and my worldview has been shaped by, these ongoing relations of colonial domination. I continue to benefit from the ongoing injustice in Canada. This understanding demands that I think hard about how self-interest may be clouding and distorting my understandings and visions for change in this country, and how it has shaped my research project.

In responding to this growing understanding, I commit my research and activist work to helping bring about radical transformation in Canada and to unlearning the racist, dualistic, hierarchical, and oppressive worldview that I was born and raised in. I commit this work and my future work to help dismantle the structures of capitalism and colonialism. I have been seeking to learn as much as I can about the systems of domination that undergird the current status quo in Canada that continues to drive ecological devastation and social injustice. I have been seeking to respectfully learn from and raise up Indigenous voices and worldviews which offer radically more just and sustainable ways of knowing, of living, of working for change.

Settlers' role in decolonial change. Although my research has involved many non-Indigenous people and their views as well, it's been my goal to engage primarily with activists who are explicitly committed to centering decolonization in their social change goals. While it is true that settler involvement in decolonial thought and action is often problematic, it is also true that "to challenge colonial-capitalist dispossession of Indigenous lands and seas ... combatting all of this will require transformations that depend on ... solidarity across diverse Indigenous people and with non-Indigenous supporters" (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.193). It is with this understanding that dialogue across the colonial divide, based on the grounds of shared humanity,

is important to bring about the required change (La Roque, 2010, p.13). Coburn and Atleo invoke the Nuu-chah-nulth principle of *hishookish tsa'walk* ("everything is one") as a reminder that "coordination with neighbours is inevitably required to achieve relations that are at once peaceful and just in an interconnected world" (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.180).

Although dialogue and collaboration are crucial, non-Indigenous peoples need to step back and play a supportive role in Indigenous transformation efforts. I have been trying to do so through this research project by creating and conducting research that is participatory and engaged and shaped by the concerns and interests of Indigenous and settler people in Canada working to bring about radical change towards both decarbonizing and decolonizing Canada.

Limitations and problems. Although I have put much thought into how to create and conduct research that does not replicate colonial and oppressive relations, there are ways I have not succeeded in this. For example, I interviewed more non-Indigenous people than Indigenous people. This was not intentional. For various reasons, it was much easier for me to get in contact with and arrange interviews with other non-Indigenous people. I have sought to counter this imbalance by prioritizing and giving more weight to the views of the Indigenous people I talked to when analysing and reporting on the research data. I also work to counter this imbalance through the inclusion of Indigenous voices and perspectives that I have accessed through public events and Indigenous scholarship and other sources of Indigenous thought. This effort to center Indigenous voices in my work will become clear in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Another aspect I have struggled with is that while it's very important for scholars not to render Indigenous voices invisible, my research ethics process required that I guarantee anonymity. Although this research ethics practice is well intentioned and particularly important for protecting activists engaged in civil disobedience, it risks erasing individual Indigenous identities and knowledges, rendering them invisible and associating their ideas and theory with my scholarship rather than with the Indigenous individuals and their communities. To counter this problem, when I can do so without making the person identifiable, I make clear which voices in my text are Indigenous and identify what Nation they are from.

The overarching goal of my work is to gather, bring into dialogue and lift up the voices and theories of (both Indigenous and settler) people in the social movements in Canada, but in the

end, I still have a lot of power, as the one sorting through and analysing and writing about these voices and theories. Through this work of analysis, I risk changing meaning, leaving out important points, and over emphasizing others. In the analysis and reporting I may misunderstand and misrepresenting Indigenous thought. To counter this problem, I am sending out drafts of my chapters as I write them to the various Indigenous peoples I have worked with and interviewed, to get feedback and to ensure my writing is true to the original meaning of what Indigenous peoples shared with me in the interviews.

Another measure I have employed to fairly represent Indigenous knowledge and voices is to avoid paraphrasing Indigenous scholars and activists in this dissertation, but rather quote them directly, raising up their own words, ideas, and framings, not mine.

I acknowledge these limitations and I hope that I can mitigate the most problematic aspects and that in the end, this project will be of use to Indigenous movements, and their transformative goals. I hope that the benefits of this project will outweigh the limitations and weaknesses. In working to ensure that my research is of benefit to Indigenous decolonial struggles and other transformative movements in Canada, the methodological approaches I have used matter greatly. It is for this reason that I have provided such an extensive chapter on Methodology – to make transparent and clear what I have been doing, how I have been doing it, and why.

Chapter 3 - A literature review of theories of change

3.1 Introduction

The multiple, intersecting social and ecological crises that humanity faces call loudly for large scale transformations of our economic, political and thought systems (Moore et al., 2014; Beddoe et al., 2009; Carpenter & Folke, 2006; Folke et al., 2010; Pelling, 2011). These systems drive increasing poverty, widening inequality, global climate change, vanishing forests, and wide-spread resource conflicts (Kothari, 2014). The need for massive transformation in human systems is becoming more widely acknowledged and while ample scientific knowledge exists about the problems we face and potential solutions, less is known about *how we get from here to there*. “There is a need for broader thinking about how change happens so that we can be more creative and adept at devising strategies to confront the enormous challenges facing our societies and planet” (Krznaric, 2007, p.5). In this literature review chapter, I have sought to reach across various bodies of scholarly literature to gather as much insight as I could about how change happens¹⁴.

Indigenous philosophies see the “world as in motion, that all things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration, and that the essence of life and being is movement” (Alfred, 2005, p.9). In this way, we are seeking to change social and ecological systems that are always changing (brown, 2017).

“According to the post-structuralist turn, change is always occurring, and within a more cynical critical approach, change is never happening, and if it does occur, it reinscribes relations of power. Within many Indigenous epistemologies, change is always happening (although different from the poststructuralist sense), and it can take on many forms - desirable and otherwise. These varying perspectives on change matter with regard to human agency ... Each perspective is going to have different implications for how humans should spend their time on the planet” (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.120).

¹⁴ Reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of approaching a literature review this way are offered in section 8.7 of the conclusion chapter of this thesis

Learning from these understandings, the question become not so much how we bring about change, but how we *shape change* (brown, 2017). This insight also inspires one to understand the different kinds of change and how we can navigate the processes of intentional and non-intentional change. A more nuanced understanding of change can help us shape it more effectively.

Being explicit about how we think change happens and learning from scholarly theories of change can help strengthen social movements' ability to transform systems. In her book *Ideas for action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change* (2016), Cynthia Kaufman argues that social theory can help movements be clearer and more informed about the issues they face and about how they can have impact. Theory enables agents of change to move past the particulars of one situation, to see the wider context and see the links between events, thus "opening up the prospect of effective practice" (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.10). Theories of change animate activism; "without a theory of change, struggle is going to be an exercise in futility" (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.92).

This chapter aims to contribute to the understanding of how large-scale, intentional systems transformation happens and about how social movements engaged in collective action can help bring about these transformations towards a more ecologically viable and socially just world. It is my hope that having combed through the scholarly literature on social change this collection of movement-relevant theory can help inform effective strategies and help strengthen movements' ability to bring about systemic change.

The need to alter the path humanity is on is urgent and all encompassing. To do this, we need to harness all the available insight and knowledge about social change that we can find. This literature review is one humble but earnest attempt to bring much of that relevant insight and knowledge that exists in scholarly literature into one place and bring it to the service of activists that are working towards environmental and social justice in Canada.

3.1.2 Approach to gathering and synthesizing the Theories of Change (TOCs)

Unlike most literature reviews, the goal here is not to summarize the insights from a certain discipline or body of literature, but rather to pull together useful insight from relevant bodies of literature about one key question: how large-scale systems transformations can occur and how social movements can most effectively contribute to such transformations. It is not my goal to

categorize or compare the differing Theories of Change. Instead, I start from the assumption that each theory, from its specific disciplinary lens, is seeing a piece of the bigger picture. Each theory holds insight. It is my hope that by bringing as many pieces of the puzzle together, we can access a wider view and deeper insight.

Although I sought to survey a wide variety of literature, I have not, and indeed could not have included all potentially useful theories of change. I narrowed the scope by asking: *Which of the theories of change that exist in academic literature are most potentially relevant to the movements I am part of?* These movements are not interested in *any and all* social change. My interpretation of their particular social change goals provide the criteria through which I've been able to select the theories of change of particular relevance.

Though the climate/environmental justice, anti-pipeline, and Indigenous land defense movements in Canada are not homogenous and indeed hold diverse and even divergent change goals, from what I have gleaned from my time participating in these struggles, people involved are generally interested in making change that a) simultaneously addresses **ecological and social** dimensions of the crises, b) targets the **roots causes** of the problems we face, c) brings about transformation of the **systems**, not just certain policies or institutions, d) will involve a fundamental **shift in balance of power** in order to achieve systems change and address the roots causes, and e) can be brought about from the **'bottom up'**, by people, taking collective action together, rather than change that comes from the 'top down', through formal institutions or through the electoral systems. The people in these movements value radical diversity and seek to amplify the voices of marginalized people and those most impacted by the crises. In organizing circles, we ask who is missing in this discussion or this action. In this spirit, of particular relevance are f) **theories from women of colour** and others whose voices are crucial, yet less heard. Finally, these movements work hard to advocate for Indigenous rights, but also to center and amplify Indigenous voices, ontologies and epistemologies. As such a crucial criterion is to reach outside the constraints of western academic thought and to include g) **Indigenous ways of understanding change**.

With these guiding my criteria for inclusion, I identified the following 6 bodies of literature to work with:

Social Movement Studies for its specific insight about how social movements bring change through collective action;

Historical Materialism for its explicit focus on power and on transforming capitalist relations and systems;

Intersectional Feminism for its understandings on the complex ways various forms of social injustice and systems of oppression co-exist and interrelate;

Socio-ecological Systems Transformation for its simultaneous focus on both social and ecological systems and the interactions between them;

Indigenous scholarship on Resistance and Resurgence for its targeting of colonial systems and for providing alternatives to theories based in Western worldviews.

I've also identified several promising new synthetic approaches to understanding change that do not fit into any of the above bodies of literature but meet many of the criteria set out above.

My hope is that bringing the diverse theories of change into dialogue, and assembling the insights, we can access a bigger picture, a wider view of how change happens and how we can drive and shape it.

Given my focus on breadth, I have not gone into depth about any given theory of change. Instead I've woven together the key insights from each body of literature and present them in this chapter as a series of *Key Lessons for Activists* that emerged in bringing all the TOCs into dialogue. This chapter provides merely the final conclusions of a much more in-depth, lengthy literature review document which is provided in Appendix 3. I have included it as an appendix in order to make transparent and explicit the process by which I came to the Key Lessons below, and to provide wider context about the concepts and theories merely skimmed over in this chapter.

In the first stage of analysis and writing the literature review (which culminated in the draft provided in Appendix 3), I wrote a section describing what I'd gathered from each body of literature. Each of the sections concludes with a textbox containing Key Lessons for Activists. In the second stage of analysis and writing (which culminated in this chapter) I brought together

contents of the Key Lessons in each of the concluding textboxes, exploring thematic convergences and divergences and synthesized them a final series of 8 Key Lessons.

In order to ensure that I do not erase the important differences among these bodies of literature (and to make it easy for readers seeking to know which theories came from which bodies of literature), I identify, whenever discussing any theory, the body of literature from which it came. I've done this through a series of codes that are incorporated in the citations (e.g. HM for historical materialism and IRR for Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence). The respective codes will be made clear as each body of literature is introduced in section 3.2.

3.1.3 Defining 'Theory of Change'

The phrase *Theory of Change* (TOC) is used to mean many things; an empirically-based theory; a framework for thinking about social change; a tool for strategizing; or a vision for change. In this chapter, I have included insights that fall into all four of these categories. According to Michael Wironen, *Theories* are connective tissue that explains how things function and evolve; *Frameworks* are a set of labels and categories that can be used to organize thinking and describe a system (theories help explain the way the things in a framework interrelate); *Tools* are methods or instruments that help "change" the way a thing is structured or evolves; and *Visions* or pathways of change include an explicit goal as well as how to get there. Theories underlie all frameworks and tools, although the relationship may not be explicit or consistent (M. Wironen, personal communication, Dec. 15, 2016).

I am acknowledging the liberal application of the word 'theory' each time I refer to theories of change. I've erred on the side of inclusion; including TOCs based on their potential relevance and usefulness to the movements, rather than inclusion based on being a certain kind of knowledge.

3.1.4 Overview of the chapter

In section 3.2 I briefly introduce each of the bodies of literature from which I gathered TOCs. In section 3.3, I present the findings of this literature review as a series of Key Lessons

for Activists¹⁵: 1) To change the system, we need to understand the system and we need to think in systems; 2) There are many kinds of change. It is helpful to know exactly what kind of change you are working to bring about; 3) There are multiple stages of change processes and different stages call for different strategies and agents; 4) Pay attention to the material as well as the less tangible world of ideas, identity, stories, and emotions when strategizing for change; 5) There are many approaches to making change. Different approaches can work together to build transformative power; 6) It's important to think about why change doesn't happen; 7) Power is key to change; and 8) Relationships are at the heart of change

Section 3.4 concludes with a brief summary of what I've learned from engagement with the literature.

3.2 Introducing the bodies of literature included in this review

In this section I present a very brief introduction to each body of literature that was included, presenting some key insights, themes, and perspectives each brings to understanding systems transformation.

3.2.1 Social Movement Studies (SMS)

The field of sociology has made significant contributions to understanding social change, shedding light particularly on how culture, worldviews, power, identity, resources and the agency of various social actors all influence change processes in different ways (Krznaric, 2007). Within sociology, social movements have received attention for their role in social change, especially since the 1960s. The increase in social movements activity at that time made clear movements' ability to impact legislation and policy as well as norms and values (Buechler, 2011). This increase in social movement activity corresponded with an increase in research on social movements (Snow & Soule, 2008). Like all fields of scholarship, different SMS scholars at different times emphasize different central factors. There are many debates within SMS as to exactly how and why social movements push for social change (Buechler, 2011). Some emphasize culture, emotions, and issue framing, while others point to the ability to pool

¹⁵ I borrow this practice of paring down academic theory into 'Key insights for Activists' from William K. Carroll, in the book "A World To Win" (2016)

resources as key to successful collective action. Others focus on social movements' role in shaping and driving the creation of new identities (ibid). The insights I gathered from reading SMS literature are woven into the Key Lesson for Activists in section 3.3, and I indicate that these insights are from Sociology & Social Movement Studies literature by using the code SMS.

3.2.2 Critical social science – historical materialism and intersectional feminism

To understand and engage in systemic change, it is necessary to understand the 'systems' that need to be transformed. Historical Materialism and Intersectional Feminism each shed important light in this regard. In political economy and historical materialism, the capitalist economic system, along with its recent manifestation in neoliberalism, plays the central role in determining and maintaining the problematic dynamics of the system. Intersectional feminists focus on the interactions between capitalism and classism with other systems of oppression such as colonialism racism and sexism. Brought together, these contribute invaluable insight about power, interests and forms of oppression to understanding of transformation towards justice and sustainability, both in terms of what drives it and what hinders it.

Many scholars of Political Economy and Historical Materialism draw from Marx (1818-1883) and Marxism - a deep critique of capitalism and popular model of social change. Marx saw capitalism as a profoundly alienating form of social organization which brings wealth to a few through the exploitation of many (Marx, 1964). He saw industrialized production and the factory as offering endless grievances that would fuel resistance by the working class. He saw the conflict of interests between social classes, which drives working class protest, as leading to revolution. "Marx's dissection of capitalist dynamics provides a logically compelling account of how such conflicting interests generate collective action" (Buechler, 2011, p.15).

Intersectionality is an analytical and strategic tool developed by women of colour in social movements in the 60s and 70s and developed further by black feminist scholars in the 90s (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It analyzes the ways class, race, and gender (and other systems of domination) relate and intersect, as well as how to forge links between these oft-disparate movements. Collins & Bilge write that:

"Intersectionality ... complicates class-only explanations for economic inequality" (p.15) ... "and gives people better access to the complexity of the world and

themselves ... When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.2).

While I initially planned to consider political economy and intersectional feminism as separate bodies of literature, considerable overlap was found between them. Many anti-colonial, anti-racist and/or feminist scholars draw from, build on, and critique theories of political economy, and intersectional theory recognizes and addresses the deep interconnections between economic relationships and race, class, and gender. How these theorists address issues of political economy play a key role in what they view as key strategies for transformation of oppressive systems.

The insight gleaned about systemic social change from reading these overlapping bodies of literature are woven into the Key Lessons for Activists in 3.3 and coded as follows: HM for Historical Materialism, PE for Political Economy, and IF for Intersectional Feminism.

3.2.3 Indigenous scholarship on resistance and resurgence

Indigenous scholarship on resistance and resurgence targets colonialism as the foundational systemic problem that urgently needs to be challenged and transformed. Indigenous scholars such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg), Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) and Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien'kehá:ka) and others center Indigenous epistemologies and approaches to change. They emphasize the importance of relationships to land in their ways of knowing and in their transformative goals. Providing profound critiques of the Canadian State, of western theories of change, and of settler-led social movements, they argue that: Indigenous approaches to change are grounded in and need to be understood through Indigenous theories and frameworks; Indigenous cosmologies and theories of change are diverse and dynamic; Indigenous movements are distinct from non-Indigenous movements and need to be understood as such; Decolonial goals require targeting the root causes; decolonizing Canada requires both resistance and resurgence and, centering land; Vision, story, dream, and prophesy inform their theories and practice of change; and relationships are at the heart of making change.

Simpson explains that “the intense love of land, of family, and of our nations have always been the spine of indigenous resistance” (Simpson, 2017, p.9). This love stands in stark contrast with the “delusions, greed, and hatreds that lie at the center of colonial culture” (Alfred, 2005, p.35).

Much Indigenous scholarship focuses on two main dimensions of decolonial change that Indigenous communities are actively engaged in - resistance and resurgence. Coburn and Atleo understand it like this: “if Indigenous *resistance* challenges colonial-capitalist relations ... Indigenous resurgence renews Indigenous relationships, practices and worldviews with the land, water and other Indigenous peoples” (2016, p.178). Indigenous Resurgence, as both a movement and body of scholarship, is premised on a firm rejection of mainstream, reformist approaches to dealing with ‘Indigenous issues in Canada’, specifically, the ‘politics of recognition’ and the reconciliation approach touted by the settler governments and institutions (Coulthard, 2014).

As in the previous sections, the findings from this literature review on Indigenous Resistance and Resurgence have been woven into the Key Lesson for Activists in section 3.3 and readers can recognize these with the code IRR.

3.2.4 Social ecological systems transformation

Social-Ecological Systems Transformations (SEST) literature is based on Complexity Science (see Costanza et al., 1993; Kauffman, 1993; Levin, 2005) and General Systems Theory (see von Bertalanffy, 1968). SEST provides a framework from which to think about intentional large-scale changes towards sustainability. Where many other bodies of scholarship of transformation focus only on social factors or only ecological factors, SEST scholars approach it from a lens of linked systems that do not separate the human and earth systems (Moore et al., 2015). This kind of study can inform and assess systems interventions that co-benefit humans and non-human systems alike.

To systems thinkers, the world is understood as a system of systems. A system is a grouping of things – people, organisms, cells, communities – interconnected in such a way that patterns of behaviour are produced through time (Meadows, 2008). An important function of almost all systems is to maintain itself and ensure its own perpetuation. Systems’ purposes are not necessarily those intended by any single actor in a system. In fact, one of the most frustrating

aspects of systems is that the purpose of subunits may add up to an over-all behaviour that no one wants (Meadows, 2008). Systems thinkers emphasize that understanding of systems comes from the examination of how the different elements of a system relate to each other and operate together, and not from the examination of the components in isolation. These relationships determine how a system responds. A system may be affected by outside forces, but the way the system responds to the outside forces is characteristic of itself (Meadows, 2008).

Donella Meadows explains some of the characteristics common to systems: they are more than the sum of their parts; a system's purpose is often the most important determinant of the system's behaviour; systems can be nested in other systems; the relationships among components in a system operate through the flow of information; the dynamics of a system shift through variations of stocks and flows of information and resources; and these variations of stocks and flows are influenced strongly by feedback loops, which are another key characteristic of systems (2008). Understanding the inherent characteristics of the social and ecological systems that we seek to change can help empower activists with the skills to “dance with systems” (Green, 2016; Meadows, 2008).

In looking at the relationship between the structure and the behaviour in systems, we begin to understand how a system works, what makes it produce poor results, what locks certain behaviours in place, and how to shift them to better behaviour patterns. This gives us the ability to identify root causes of problems and see new opportunities (Meadows, 2008). It can help us steward the systems we are part of, in ways that function more beneficially for all.

All the insight about systems change gleaned from reviewing this literature on SEST is woven into the Key Lessons in section 3.3, as indicated with the code SEST.

3.2.5 Promising new approaches

During the literature review I also came across some new and promising frameworks that bridge some of the literature presented and meet many of the criteria I used. The promising new approaches include Duncan Green's Power and Systems approach (2016), Kevin MacKay's Radical Transformation (2017), and Temper et al.'s Radical Transformations to Sustainability framework (2018). All three promising new approaches bridge various disciplines and literature

and offer key insights about systems change. These are incorporated into the Key Lessons in the next section and are indicated with the code PNA.

3.3 Bringing it all together

In this section, I weave together the insights from these five bodies of literature into 8 *Key Lessons for Activists*, with each key lesson containing sub-points. What follows is by no means a complete overview of what academic scholarship (or even what each of these bodies of literature), has to say about change. It is meant to overview some of the insights I gathered in my doctoral reading.

Brought together, these lessons emphasize the complexity of systems change, showing that there are many kinds of change, that there are multiple stages of and approaches to it; that while some things remain central in most cases, such as power, relationships, and understanding the systems that we seek to change, transforming systems calls for more nuanced understandings and a wider diversity of approaches than are accounted for in many common conceptions and strategies for change. I hope that what I have learned through this reading and synthesizing of scholarly literature on theories of social change can be of use and of interest to the movements I am part of.

3.3.1 Key lesson #1

To change the system, we need to understand the system and we need to think in systems.

Human struggles over power and for change happen within the context of *complex socio-ecological systems* that are continuously changing in ways that are unpredictable, shaping, and being shaped by many diverse factors and forces, including but not limited to human agency (Green, 2016 *PNA*). To intervene effectively, we need to learn to work with complexity. Complex systems share characteristics such as non-linearity, uncertainty, emergence, and self-organization (Berkes et al., 2008 *SEST*). Linear models and theories of change that look like “if A, then B” are inadequate for making change in complex systems. Making friends with complexity and uncertainty means evoking disturbance, learning from crises, expecting the unexpected, and creating opportunity for movement self-organization (Green, 2016 *PNA*).

Emergence means that “small things are important and can be major influences over time” (Simpson, 2011, p.144 *IRR*).

When thinking about systems, think about relationships. Systems dynamics are determined by relationships between components (Meadows, 1997 *SEST*). This means we need to pay attention not just to the individual parts of a system but to the relationships between them and to the functioning of the system as a whole. We need to be asking: what is the overall behavior of the system and how can changing the relationships between parts change the overall behavior of the system? Activists are well advised to pay attention to the flows of information and resources and the ways these may be driving balancing and reinforcing feedback loops. Feedback has huge impact on how change is propelled or constrained (Meadows, 2008 *SEST*).

All systems are part of wider systems and change reverberates through time and space and social systems. Strategizing for change requires us to think across three kinds of scales: *spatial scales* (local, regional, national, international), *temporal scales* (short term, medium term and long term) and *human/societal scales* (individual, movements, communities, bioregions, societies) (Temper et al., 2018 *PNA*). We need to be thinking about how different scales interact with each other and making sure that positive changes at one scale don’t lead to negative changes in another (see Gunderson & Holling, 2003 *SEST*; Temper et al., 2018 *PNA*).

World Systems Analysis exposes dynamics of inequality and unsustainability on the macro scale, whereby ‘core’ nations become wealthy and powerful through their exploitation of nations on the ‘periphery’ (Wallerstein, 2004 *PE, HM*). Understanding how global dynamics impact local realities is crucial.

There are many Dimensions/Spheres that we may be trying to change. Be clear about what you are trying to change and be careful that positive change in one sphere doesn’t negatively impact another sphere. Efforts for social change that focus on confronting one dimension of injustice and unsustainability (political, ecological, economic etc.) can negatively impact other dimensions of injustice and unsustainability. In an effort to develop a framework for thinking about transformations that do not risk such trade-offs, Temper et al. outline 5 dimensions, or spheres, that need to be considered: *Ecological integrity and resilience, Social*

well-being and justice, Direct and delegated democracy, Economic democracy, Cultural diversity and knowledge democracy (2018 PNA).

For example, when environmental groups establish nature parks, they may be doing so in the hopes of helping increase ecological wellbeing, but if to do so means they evict Indigenous communities from their territory, they are creating situations of decreased justice, well-being, democracy, diversity, and long-standing traditions and relations of ecological stewardship. Thinking more holistically across spheres can help generate more transformative and powerful solutions. We need to be developing interventions and solutions that foster positive changes in as many of the spheres as possible.

There are many places to intervene in a system; some are more impactful than others.

There are many areas to target when trying to make social change – policies, laws, emissions levels, people’s worldviews, institutions. In her *Places to Intervene in a System* framework, Donella Meadows showed that some leverage points may be easier to ‘pull’ but have little impact, while others are harder to ‘pull’ but have large impacts (1997 *SEST*). These range from worldviews (high leverage) to laws (medium leverage) to flows of materials (lower leverage) (ibid). When formulating change strategies, we need to think about leverage points.

Pay Attention to Positive Deviance. Sometimes it seems we are shooting in the dark and guessing at what might make impact. Green prompts us to look for ‘positive deviance’. For any given problem, there will be someone or some community somewhere that has come up with a solution that is working (Green, 2016, p.24 *PNA*). We must seek these out and understand what conditions, agents, strategies, or ideas made these solutions more easily implementable in these contexts.

Complex systems require that activists be ‘reflectivists’ and understand the contexts.

We need to “look before we leap” and take time to understand the system we want to change and its dynamics (Green, 2016 *PNA*). It is helpful to create ongoing feedback mechanisms when implementing interventions so that we can know what is working and not working (Green, 2016 *PNA*). The systems we are trying to change, are already always changing. Understanding the dynamic context of systems we are trying to change can help determine what kind of approach might work best. Green urges activists to develop strategies that make sense given a) how

confident one is on interventions and b) how stable the context is (Green, 2016, p.244 *PNA*). Matching strategy to context is key.

Avoid myopic thinking; try to see the big picture. Changing a complex, dynamic system requires a wide view, often best gained through collaborative thinking and learning processes.

3.3.2 Key lesson #2

There are many kinds of change. It is helpful to know exactly what kind of change you are working to bring about.

Transitions, adaptations and transformations. Systems scholars distinguish between adaptation, transformation and transition. To contrast adaptation and transformation: adaptation is making adjustments in order to maintain the current system, whereas transformation is change that alters the overall composition and behavior of the system (Olsson et al., 2014 *SEST*). The difference between transition and transformation is that where transformative change refers to more politically unruly, radical, large-scale, and long-term changes and involving significant changes in social relations, *transitions* tend to be more orderly, politically top-down, and technocratic (Temper et al., 2018; Stirling, 2015).

Radical vs. Reformist change. A common way to distinguish different types of change is by contrasting reformist and radical changes. Initiatives that address only the symptoms of a problem can be considered reformist, distinguishing them from initiatives and movements that “are confronting the basic structural reasons for unsustainability, inequity and injustice, such as capitalism, patriarchy, state centrism, or other inequities in power” (Temper et al., 2018, p.6 *PNA*). “A radical transformation not only digs the roots of a problem, but also engages with turning it over by creating new societal meanings and practices” (Temper et al., 2018, p.2 *PNA*).

Affirmative vs. transformative change. Nancy Fraser distinguishes between affirmative and transformative change (Fraser, 1995). Affirmative approaches seek, for example, to reduce income inequality through transfer of material resources to marginalized groups (e.g. the welfare state). “However, these remedies tend to leave intact the conditions, such as the capitalist mode of production, that were responsible for generating income inequality in the first place” (Temper et al., 2018, p.5 *PNA*). Transformative approaches, on the other hand, target the root causes of inequality, for example through “redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour,

subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures” (Fraser, 1995, p.73, quoted in Temper et al., 2018, p.5 *PNA*).

Individual vs systemic, Formal to informal change. Green (2016 *PNA*) argues that activists need to understand and articulate what kind of change they are seeking to affect. They need to locate change processes according to the *institutions in question on a scale of formal to informal* and the *locus of that change sought ranging from individual to systemic*. This framework stresses the need for work to happen at all levels.

Change from above vs. from below & change from inside vs. change from outside the systems Some scholars emphasize that social change happens through the outcomes of interactions between actions from above (state, elite, etc.) and actions from below (social movements, citizens, etc.), as well as combined pressure from both the inside and outside of a system. While certain kinds of change goals need to be sought through the existing social system (e.g. legislative change), other more radical change goals, such as decolonizing the state in Canada for example, cannot be brought about from within the system. Working to transform “colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination” requires that we “address their generative structures – the racist economy and a colonial state” (Coulthard in Simpson, 2008, p.194 *IRR*). This kind of change cannot be made from within colonial structure (Alfred, 2005, p.24 *IRR*).

It is important to keep in mind and articulate what kind of change you are aiming to make because this will have important implications for which strategies you should choose, which agents are best positioned to act, and who you should be allying with.

3.3.3 Key lesson #3

There are multiple stages of change processes and different stages call for different strategies and agents.

Some kinds of change are cyclical. Ecosystems move through cycles of growth, collapse, reorganization, renewal, and re-establishment and social change can follow similar patterns (Berkes et al., 2008 *SEST*). Transformation of a system may be more possible at certain points in time than at others.

Crisis can trigger transformation. Social-ecological transformations scholars see crises and disturbances as triggering and driving transformations (Olsson et al., 2014 *SEST*). Marx also saw “that revolution is most likely when economic crises converge with growing class consciousness” (Buechler, 2011, p.18 *SMS*). The many contradictions inherent within capitalism promote inequality and instability and economic crises, all of which serve as grievances and opportunities for collective action (Harvey, 2014 *HM*). Movements looking to ‘take down’ capitalism are well advised to understand the various contradictions inherent in capitalism that create instability and crises and then develop strategies that can take advantage of the crises as they emerge (Harvey, 2014 *HM*).

Conflict is often a first step of transformation. According to Marx, capitalist society creates an inevitable conflict of interests between social classes and motivates working class protest. This conflict of interests builds polarization between classes as well as solidarity within them (Buechler, p.11 *SMS*). To Temper et al. ecological conflict is a crucial first step of radical transformation and it involves communities and/or movements collectively questioning and resisting the status-quo (2018 *PNA*). Collective “cognitive liberation” or the move from hopelessness in the face of oppression and destruction to a shared willingness and readiness to challenge them, is a first and necessary stage (McAdam, 2010 *SMS*). Conflicts, “by unearthing and making injustices visible, become catalysts for social change” (Temper et al., 2018, p.7 *PNA*, see also Dukes 1996; Lederach, 1995).

The stages of transformations. Monedero’s (2009) theory of change outlines these 5 key stages of change using different Spanish terms: *doler* (hurting), *saber* (knowing), *querer* (desiring), *poder* (empowering), *hacer* (doing) and he argues that “hurting, and being able to critically locate and analyze the causes and the sources of this pain, and acknowledging the possibility to confront and change it, is the first essential step in social transformation (Temper et al., 2018, p.7 *PNA*). According to social-ecological systems scholars, transformation includes: (1) preparing for transformation, (2) navigating the transition, and (3) building the resilience of the new direction (Olsson et al., 2014 *SEST*). Each of these involves important sub-phases. Different phases of transformations require different approaches to activism (Olsson et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2014 *SEST*). It’s important to ask which people or groups are best equipped and positioned to do the work necessary at each phase of systems transformation (e.g. direct-action

group take the lead during the disruption phase, whereas NGO policy analysts take lead during the institutionalization phase).

Pay attention to critical junctures. Green argues that crisis and shocks provide windows of opportunities, which he calls *critical junctures* when to decisionmakers, “the status quo suddenly appears to be less worth defending” (2016, p.17 *PNA*) and when activists’ “long term work of creating constituencies for change, transforming attitudes and norms, and so on can suddenly come to fruition” (2016, p.18 *PNA*). Though these critical junctures are crucial in change processes, organization are not always nimble enough to take advantage of such opportunities (Green, 2016, *PNA*).

Be attentive to windows of opportunity. Social movement scholars point out that to make change, social movements need not just successful mobilization, but the political opportunity to act (Tarrow, 2011 *SMS*). “Movements move in a dialectical relationship with *opportunity structures*, and success or failure in one conjuncture leads on to a new conjuncture that can open up new opportunities and threats. Activists need to be mindful of these changes as they come into view” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16 *HM,SMS*). At certain opportune moments, the state is more ‘receptive or vulnerable’ to movements’ collective action (McAdam et al., 1988 *SMS*). Change becomes more possible when powers that be are weak or experiencing crises of legitimation, when events disrupt people’s taken for granted understanding of social reality (Snow et al., 1996; Buechler, 2011 *SMS*) or when during periods of disruption and instability social controls are weakened enough that people become available to participate in collective action (Piven & Cloward, 1979 *SMS*).

The key insight here is that timing really matters in determining what interventions will work and when. Activists and organizers need to be attentive to timing, opportunities, and stages of change and chose their moments and strategies accordingly.

3.3.4 Key lesson #4

Pay attention to the material as well as the less tangible world of ideas, identity, stories, and emotions when strategizing for change.

How we pool and allocate resources is crucial. For social movements to bring about change, we need to mobilize, which means “bringing under collective control

resources of various kinds, including most importantly human labour: the willingness of people to commit their own time to the movement. Mobilization requires social organization ... which enable[s] collective action to be sustained over time” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16 *HM,SMS*). Collective action is *costly* and as such requires decisions on how to allocate resources. “Effective movements create a configuration of alliances and reciprocal relations of mutual aid (facilitation), thereby lowering costs of collective action” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16 *HM,SMS*).

Organizing is necessary but beware of bureaucracy. Weber’s analysis on the tendency of social organizations to move towards greater bureaucratization and routinization serves as important warning to social movements. If, as he argued, society is moving towards the iron cage of bureaucracy, “it is highly likely that the same logic will paralyse social movements organized along those lines” (Buechler, 2011, p.34, see also Weber, 1978 *SMS*). As Piven & Cloward argued, “effective protest emerges from popular disruption and mass action rather than from organized movements ... once organization appears, effective protest dies” (1979, quoted in Buechler, 2011, p.39 *SMS*). This tendency, though strong, may not be inevitable (Lipset et al., 1956 *SMS*). A combination of bottom up, local autonomy, dense interactions, democratic culture, and multiple leadership factions can maintain democratic organization (Lipset et al., 1956; Buechler, 2011 *SMS*). That said, the danger remains that the move to hierarchical, complex organization in movement organizations (that tends to happen as we try to be more efficient with our resources) can render them ineffective in bringing about change. There is a fine line to be walked. We need to be organized, but we are well-advised to not get so bogged down by bureaucracy that we lose the ability to act together.

Identity & coalition formation is important. Though some scholars focus on the material factors involved with making change, less tangible factors also play key roles. Social movements “invent and amplify emerging identities, fostering new solidarities and challenging the structures and practices of contemporary society” (Magnusson & Walker, 1988, p.58 *SMS*). Through identity formation and articulation, unity across struggles can be forged, helping form coalitions that make possible “a coherent, counter-hegemonic alternative to the dominant order” (Epstein, 1990, p.51 *SMS*). Social movements can create counter-hegemonic force through forms

of leadership that “help the masses to express, deepen and strengthen their self-engagement for socio-political transformation” (Thomas, 2013, p.26 *SMS*).

It matters how we make sense of and frame problems and solutions. Framing is crucial to how social movements mobilize to bring about change. “Effective movements develop collective-action frames that call attention to injustice and its socio-political sources, point toward alternatives and resonate strongly with broad publics. Movement outreach strategies need to maintain a democratic dialogue, so that frames, as they develop over time, enable an alignment between the movement and its social base” (Carroll, 2016, p.15 *HM, SMS* see also Snow&Benford, 1992; Tarrow, 2011 *SMS*)

Change can happen through symbolic, not just material challenge. Melucci (1989 *SMS*) identified 3 ways that social movements can work towards creating change through symbolic challenge. Buechler describes the three ways: “Through prophesy, movements announce that alternative forms of rationality are possible. Through paradox, dominant codes are exaggerated to the point where their underlying irrationality becomes evident. Through representation, movements separate form and content to reveal the contradictions in prevailing systemic logic” (2011, p.170 *SMS*).

Culture, values, worldviews, emotions, rituals, and stories all play important roles. Cultural beliefs and values are central to social action and play a key role in who participates in social movements and why (see Weber, 1905; Kznaric, 2007, p.15 *SMS*). Worldviews shape or guide human actions, limiting the scope of possible actions. Worldviews change through new experiences, empathetic relationship with other social groups and through long-term changes in educational systems (see Bourdieu, 1990 *SMS*). Emotional energy built during demonstrations and protests and other collective actions serve as important fuel for this social mobilization processes (Buechler, 2011, p.52 *SMS*). Collective rituals can serve to amplify and transform intense emotional states into a force for change (Collins, 2001 *SMS*). They also “help nurture beliefs about and visions for alternatives to the status quo. These benefits of ritual can increase the success of movements through helping sustain the commitment and motivation of ... members” (Buechler, 2011, p.51, see also Durkheim, 1965 *SMS*). Collective memories or new visions for a better world are held in stories and as such stories are a central tool for resurgence.

“Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism” (Simpson, 2011, p.33 *IRR*).

Pay attention to the material realm as well as the less tangible world of ideas and emotions when strategizing for change. Though some scholars tend to focus on more material factors while others focus on more ideational/subjective factors and forces of change, both are important, and we should engage with both in integrated ways.

3.3.5 Key lesson #5

There are many approaches to making change. Different approaches can work together to build transformative power.

The No and the Yes. As the title of Naomi Klein’s 2017 book states: No is not Enough. Though resistance to the current unsustainable and unjust systems is absolutely necessary, it is not sufficient alone. Many theories of change overviewed in this chapter work to conceptually link the processes of *resisting the status quo* with the *development of alternatives* to it (Temper et al., 2018 *PNA*; Loorbach, 2014 *SEST*; Macy & Johnstone, 2012 *SEST*; Simpson, 2017 *IRR*; Alfred, 2008 *IRR*; Gibson-Graham, 2006 *PE*; Miller, 2012 *PE*; Allard & Davidson, 2008 *PE*; Dixon, 2014 *SMS*). Temper et al. emphasize Paul Robbins’ concept of the “hatchet and seed” approach (Robbins, 2004) which involves a dual task of deconstructing the old systems, relations and ideas and creating the new (2018, p.14 *PNA*). Transition scholar Loorbach argues that there is need to navigate through phases of disruption, intentional dismantling and/or unintentional collapse of the old systems, ideas, and structures as well as the creating and diffusion of new systems, ideas and structures (see Loorbach, 2014 *SEST*). Ideally, we can work to manage the descent of the old at the same time as the ascent of the new, in order to minimize disruptions and suffering (ibid.).

Defensive and offensive. Habermas saw social movements as playing a dual role of social change, of both defense and offence. He understood the role of social movements as both defending the lifeworld from further encroachment as well as working to “conquer new territory for equality, justice and communicative rationality” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.38 *HM,SMS*). Contemporary critical scholars also see the need for this dual strategy. To them social transformation means both opposing the systems of domination and destruction, as well as

creating just and ecologically-viable alternative forms of livelihoods and relations (see Gibson-Graham, 2006 *PE*; Miller, 2012 *PE*; Allard & Davidson, 2008 *PE*).

Indigenous resistance and resurgence. Current Indigenous scholarship on change argues that resistance and resurgence are both required. Decolonial change calls for “actions that engage in a generative refusal of any aspect of state control, so they don’t just refuse, they also embody an Indigenous alternative” (Simpson, 2017, p.35 *IRR*). Rather than pathways for change that are contingent on changes in settler society, resurgence calls for a “turning inward to focus on resurgence of an authentic Indigenous existence and recapturing the physical, political, and psychic spaces of freedom” for Indigenous people ... resurgence is about “indigeneity coming back to life again” (Alfred, 2008, p.11 *IRR*). Where non-Indigenous settlers need to innovate and create new systems and lifeways if they are to live in just and sustainable ways, Indigenous people have existing knowledge, practices, and systems that are being reinvigorated. In this way, the dual strategy is different for settlers than it is for Indigenous people. This difference is critically important.

Prefiguring change. Some social movements aim to live now (or prefigure), the values, relations, and structure of the worlds they are working to create. They aim to render the system redundant by withdrawing energy from its structures (Day, 2005, p.124 *SMS*). In this way, movements can be “carriers of democratization ... not only in the claims they make but in their prefigurative practices. If the goal is a deeply democratic society, movements need to prefigure this goal by adopting thoroughgoing democratic organization ... by creating spaces “where we can live in the kinds of worlds we want to live in, here and now” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.25 *HM,SMS*; also see Day, 2007 *SMS*). “How you fight will determine who you will become when the battle is over” (Alfred, 2005, p.23 *IRR*). “Again and again it matters ... how change is achieved” (Simpson, 2017, p.226 *IRR*).

Prefiguration is necessary but insufficient. Chris Dixon argues that contemporary radical activism is not just about this exit from the dominant order that Day describes. Dixon writes “most of us are much more ambitious: we value prefigurative politics *and* we want a transformed world—the only real exit from the existing one” (Dixon, 2014, p.283 *SMS*). In order to bring about such transformative change, Dixon argues that movements need to develop deeper analysis about “what capitalism is and how we should go about fighting it” (Dixon, 2014,

p.69 *SMS*), and actively forge connections with anti-oppression mass struggles (Dixon, 2014, p.104 *SMS*). These movements should also embrace intentional, durable organization, and ... move beyond “purist principles and direct-action tactics” and work towards more effective strategy aimed at actual transformation (Dixon, 2014, p.111-12 *SMS*). Prefigurative politics is important but insufficient on its own.

Other frameworks for understanding and linking different approaches to change.

These bodies of literature offer many ways of thinking and working across different approaches to change. Carroll & Sarker argue that building counter-hegemony requires three things: 1) confronting and opposing the existing status quo and its legitimacy, 2) creation of alternative understandings of society that “pose a challenge to the dominant bourgeois-led view” and 3) the creation of alternative structures that prefigure a socially just and ecologically healthy world (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.48 *HM,SMS*; also see Gramsci, 1977 *HM*). Movements can create the conditions under which a new social hegemony can emerge through three kinds of tasks: *building community, meeting needs, and mobilizing and engaging in collective action* (Carroll & Ratner, 2001 *HM,SMS*).

In yet another framework MacKay (2017 *PNA*) argues that to transform society away from oligarchic control, movements need to focus on four strategic areas, arguing that *Resistance, Education, Solidarity-building, and Alternatives-building* are all required for bringing about radical change.

Joanna Macy’s framework names Three Dimensions of The Great Turning. These include *resistance, creating solutions, and changing hearts and minds*. These are all necessary but insufficient on their own (Macy & Johnstone, 2012 *SEST*). People and social change groups focusing on one approach should acknowledge the importance of the other two approaches. Communication and collaboration across the three approaches can help leverage change efforts and change initiatives that do all three at the same time may be particularly effective (Macy & Johnstone, 2012 *SES*). Radical change, according to Social Ecologists, requires that a unified movement work at three levels: 1) develop critical praxis and self education; 2) be oppositional and resist; and 3) create alternatives (Tokar, 2018).

Ethan Miller (2012 *PE*) provides his own framework in the “Four Wings of Transformative Movement” and argues that transformative movements will require 1) the work of *defending* our lives and communities from colonization and injustice, 2) the work of *actively opposing* oppression in all forms, 3) the work of *healing together* from trauma and hurt, and 4) the work of *imagining and building alternative ways* to live together and meet our needs.

All these frameworks help expand, nuance and flesh-out our understandings of how we approach the important work of making change. Though some theories of change emphasize one approach over others and while activists tend to be attached to their preferred approach, we begin to gain a wider view of what is needed, and this opens up potential for powerful collaborations across approaches.

3.3.6 Key lesson #6

It’s important to think about why change doesn’t happen.

There are many barriers to change. Understanding them can help us overcome the barriers more effectively. Green writes “[s]ystems, whether in thought, politics, or economy, can be remarkable resistant to change” (2016, p.41 *PNA*). To understand this inertia, he offers that a combination of *institutions* (management systems and corporate culture), *ideas* (conceptions and prejudices of decision makers) and *interests* (what do people stand to gain or lose materially or socially from the change sought?) often underlie this resistance to change (Green, 2016, p.41-42 *PNA*). Strategies that target these can be powerful.

Mackay argues that “ultimately, there are three factors that will determine the success or failure of a counter-hegemonic power to transform civilization”: *context* (objective facts about the crises), *consciousness* (awareness and mass concern about the crises), and *movement* (an organized, broad based radical movement for democratic socialism and ecological sustainability) (MacKay, 2017, p.216 *PNA*). Both of these framings can help movements understand why the change we seek is not coming about and where to intervene to alter this.

3.3.7 Key lesson #7

Power is key to change.

Power is central to understanding and bringing about change. Bringing about social change that fundamentally alters the power relations in society require a deep and nuanced understanding about the nature and functions of power. “Power is everywhere, and it is multifaceted” (Green, 2016, p.31 *PNA*). It plays a “central role in both stasis and change” (Green, 2016, p.36 *PNA*). Power is a key dynamic shaping who can bring about change and who can’t and what sort of agency and influence different actors have access to. It is precisely by impacting on hegemonic power structures that change can happen (Temper et al., 2018, p.8 *PNA*).

Power functions and is wielded in a variety of ways, from direct to more indirect ways. Habermas offered important insight about the way power not only shapes processes and outcomes in the public sphere but also in the private sphere of everyday life (Carroll & Sarker, 2016 *HM, SMS* see also Habermas, 1987 *HM*). Gramsci’s concept of *hegemonic power* refers to the domination of society by the ruling class through the manipulation of culture - through shaping the common understandings, values, and beliefs. These softer forms of power serve to render the status quo as seeming “natural and inevitable instead of as social constructs meant to benefit the ruling class” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.41 *HM, SMS*; see also Gramsci, 1971, 2000 *HM*).

Scholars have provided various frameworks for understanding different forms of power. Academic literature offers many frameworks for understanding different forms of power. Collins and Bilge argue that to create such powerful, intersectional strategies, clear analysis of power relations is required and that the “power relations are to be analysed both via their intersections, for example of racism and sexism, as well as across *domains of power*” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 27). They outline four distinctive yet interconnected dimensions or domains of the organization of power: 1) *Interpersonal* (how people relate to each other, who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged in social interactions); 2) *Disciplinary* (which rules apply to whom and how those rules are implemented); 3) *Cultural* (ideas shape how we understand what is fair and what is not and provide justifications for inequality); and 4) *Structural* – how intersecting power relations of class, gender, race and nations shape institutions and organizations (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.9 *IF*).

Another perspective is Lukes' 3 dimensions of power (1974) of *visible, hidden and invisible power*. *Visible power* is the world of politics and authority, policed by laws, violence and money while *Hidden power* is what goes on behind the scenes: the lobbyists, the corporate chequebooks, the old-boys networks. Hidden power also includes "the shared view of what those in power consider sensible or reasonable in public debate" (as explained in Green, 2016, p.29 *PNA*). *Invisible power*, on the other hand, is that which "causes the relatively powerless to internalize and accept their condition" (Green, 2016, p.30 *PNA*).

Temper et al. (2018) build on Lukes' framework by associating *visible power with institutional or structural power* and they write that it is "manifested through decision-making bodies (institutions) where issues of public interest, such as legal frameworks, regulations and public policies, are decided (e.g. parliaments, legislative assemblies, formal advisory bodies). This is the public space where different actors display their strategies to assert their rights and interest. Visible power is also manifested through economic frameworks that shape economic activities and productive systems in society" (Temper et al., 2018, p.8 *PNA*).

They go on to associate *hidden power with the realm of people and networks and refer to it also as relational or associative power* (Temper et al., 2018 *PNA* see also Foucault, 1971; Long & Van Der Ploeg, 1989). Temper et al. write that "... power is exercised in a 'hidden' way by incumbent powers attempting to maintain their privileged position in society, by creating barriers to participation, excluding issues from the public agenda or controlling political decisions "behind the scene" (2018, p.9 *PNA*).

Temper et al. *associate invisible power with cultural or discursive power* (see Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1980; Foucault, 1971; Galtung 1990). They write that

"power also works in an 'invisible' way through discursive practices, narratives, worldviews, knowledge, behaviours and thoughts that are assimilated by society as true without public questioning. This invisible, capillary, subtle form of power often takes the shape in practice of cultural violence, through the imposition of value and belief systems that exclude or violate the physical, moral or cultural integrity of certain social groups by underestimating their own value and belief systems. Here, people may see

certain forms of domination over them as ‘natural’ or immutable, and, therefore, remain unquestioned. In this way, invisible power and hidden power often act together, one controlling the world of ideas and the other controlling the world of decisions” (Temper et al., 2018, p.8 *PNA*).

Another helpful way to think about different forms of power is provided by Rowlands (1997), emphasizing the importance of knowing the difference between: Power *within* (personal self-confidence and a sense of rights and entitlement); Power *with* (collective power, through organization, solidarity and joint action); Power *to* (the capability to decide actions and carry them out); and Power *over* (the power of hierarchy and domination).

Analysing power is crucial for effective change strategies. According to Temper et al (2018) agents of change must “generate strategies to impact on these three areas in which power is concentrated: (a) institutions, legal and economic frameworks, (b) on people and their networks, and (c) in discourses, narratives and ways of seeing the world” (p.9 *PNA*). To affect change, we need to know “how and when to impact on each one of the types of hegemonic power” (p.9 *PNA*).

Power analysis should include knowing “who holds what kind of power related to a matter, and what might influence them to change” (Green, 2016, p.38 *PNA*). This includes an understanding of the kinds of power we, as individuals and activist groups, hold and where we are most likely to exert influence. Power analysis should also help us understand how both our allies and our opponents perceive the change (ibid). As interests are closely related to power, effective change agency requires that activists conduct analyses of convergent and divergent interests of all the actors involved (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16 *HM, SMS*). Ask who will benefit from the change you seek? Who will be harmed?

We need to confront power. Power inequity acts as a barrier to change and it is also a root cause of the crises we seek to remedy. “If we want a truly sustainable and equitable human civilization, then we have no choice but to directly confront the nexus of control that drives our current system of ecological destruction and human misery. *We have to take power back....*” (MacKay, 2017, p.27, emphasis original *PNA*). However, organized forces will resist transformative change and so “movements from below must, if they are to be effective, address

and ultimately defeat the sedimented power of movements from above” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.48, emphasis mine *HM, SMS*).

We need to build counter-hegemony. Building on Gramsci’s work, MacKay writes that “[a]s power in hegemonic states is based on perceived legitimacy, then a counter-hegemonic movement of movements must work to delegitimize the rule of elites, while simultaneously building the legitimacy and transformative capacity of the movement” (Mackay, 2017, p.205 *PNA*). A problem here is that the government provides important social services, so many people are “rationally averse” to destroying the current social order. “To overcome this reluctance, we have to believe that the movement seeking to overthrow the oligarchic power structure is more legitimate and a better guardian of moral community than the oligarchs” (Mackay, 2017, p.205 *PNA*).

Building counter-hegemony requires that we understand the way power works through classism, racism and sexism (and other forms of domination). Given the ways that capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and heteropatriarchy intersect in creating social system of injustice, developing a strong counter-force to these systems of domination requires understanding the intersections and developing alliances and change strategies accordingly (Collins & Bilge, 2016 *IF*). Activists need to develop strategies that begin with the question “how can ... forces for emancipation be strengthened through widening and deepening relations of solidarity across differences?” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.47 *HM, SMS*). Intersectional analysis and organizing is the promise of movement of movements capable of creating a counter-hegemonic, transformative force. Collins and Bilge explain that though people often, when referring to intersectionality, refer to race, sex, and class as the three primary forms of oppressions, there are many others that exists, are important and need to be considered as they are “enmeshed in the process of social justice and injustice” (2016, p.38). These other forms of oppression include: age, disability, gender identity, sexual preference, mental health, geographical (dis)location, rurality, colonialism/imperialism, Indigeneity, ethnicity, citizenship and the environment (Collins & Blige, 2016).

Building counter-hegemonic force requires overcoming the divisions and fragmentations of the left, created by divide-and-rule politics of the elite, and forging strong alliance politics of the left (Harvey, 2014 *HM*). Despite this need for alliance, currently in Canada “opposition

remains fragmented and episodic ... there is not much likelihood of an alternative, counter-hegemony powerful enough to bring about social transformation” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016 *HM, SMS*). To overcome this, we need to understand how struggles are connected and find ways to devise strategies and solutions that address as many forms of oppression as possible, leaving no one behind.

We need to address power dynamics and imbalances within our movements.

Movements themselves are social orders that can involve power inequalities that have implications for movement effectiveness (Carroll & Sarker, 2016 *HM, SMS*). We need to learn to build movements based on relations of equality and reciprocity that do not replicate the kinds of injustices we are trying to address in the world.

To form coalitions, we need strong relationships based on equality and mutual aid. Yet oppressive relations abound in and across social movements. These dynamics block, harm and sever inter- and intra- movement relationships. A focus on relationality can help create movements striving for intersectional coalitions which forge practices less likely to replicate oppressive relations in our movements. Andrea Smith envisions alliances built not just on a sense of shared victimization but on a deep understanding in the ways we are complicit in the victimization of others. “... We would check our aspirations against the aspirations of other communities to ensure that our model of liberation does not become a model of oppression for others” (Smith, 2016, n.p. *IRR, IF*). She writes that this requires “vigilance in reflecting about how we internalize and replicate oppressive logics in our organizing practices” (Smith, 2016, n.p. *IRR, IF*).

3.3.8 Key lesson #8

Relationships are at the heart of social change

One key theme that arose in many of the bodies of literature I engaged with is that building stronger, more just relationships is both the means and ends of radical systems transformation.

How we organize matters – towards democratic and intersectional movements. In the spirit of decolonizing our life worlds from the logics of commodification, accumulation, and hierarchy and reclaiming and democratizing our relations and communities, how we organize

within our movements is important. Lenin's (1870-1924) legacy in anti-capitalist thought begs deep reflection on forms of leadership and hierarchy within movements, warning us to defend against non-democratic tendencies in movement organizing (Buechler, 2011 *SMS*).

Intersectionality offers analytical tools to help us analyse whether our social change practices risk replicating oppressive dynamics and "to check our aspirations against the aspirations of other communities"; to help us develop accountability to each other and each other's struggles (Smith, 2016, p.3 *IF,IRR*).

Solidarity is important, but what kind? Durkheim identified two forms of solidarity which bind social movements together. Groups held together by 'mechanical solidarity' derive their cohesion from the homogeneity of their members and similarity of beliefs. Such movements are likely to be highly intolerant of internal dissent and disagreement and lead to fragmentation (Buechler, 2011, p.49 *SMS*). Movements that are integrated through what he called 'organic solidarity,' on the other hand, are bound together through the heterogeneity of their members and the interdependence derived from these differentiated roles. These kinds of movements are "less threatened by diversity of opinion in their ranks because their solidarity derives more from their interdependence than their belief system" (Buechler, 2011, p.49 *SMS*). Such movements tend to be more stable and better able to mobilize on a large scale but are less able to "inspire the passion ... that drives movements" (Buechler, 2011, p.50 *SMS*).

Building links between different movements is important, but how these relationships are built are key. Coulthard argues also for an intersectional approach, saying any strategy for decolonization must "directly confront more than mere economic relations; it has to account for the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behaviour, structures, and relationships" (2014, p.14 *IRR*).

Indigenous movements are distinct from non-Indigenous movements. "Indigenous Peoples whose lands are occupied by the Canadian state are currently engaged in the longest running resistance movement in Canadian history" (Simpson, 2008, p.13 *IRR*). "Indigenous political movements contest the very foundation of the Canadian state; most theories of group politics and social movements take the state for granted" (Ladner, 2008, p.16 *IRR*). Sovereignty and self-determination have long been the primary foundation of Indigenous politics and

mobilization (Ladner, 2008 *IRR*). Indigenous approaches to change, grounded in particular nations and territories, while sharing these commonalities, are diverse. Hayden King reminds us that while resurgence and resistance should be based in Indigenous knowledge, it is important that this is grounded in “particular, rather than nebulous, ‘pan-indigenous’ places” (King, in Coburn p.37 *IRR*). Indigenous scholars emphasize the diversity as well as the fluid nature of Indigenous worldviews and practices (King, in Coburn, p.39 *IRR*).

There are important distinctions between Indigenous-led and settler-led movements and these must be understood and boundaries between them must be respected if we are to forge just and strong relations of solidarity across movements.

Good relationships necessitate clear and strong boundaries, including respecting the boundaries between movements. Intersectional organizing across different movements requires the forging of just relations and we are well advised to center relationships in social change efforts and work to build respectful, reciprocal relationships (Collins and Bilge, 2016 *IF*). In this way we can learn from each other and work to strengthen each other’s efforts for change without appropriation. While working towards shared goals in intersectional organizing, we must also respect the boundaries between movements. We need to use that insight to think hard about where movements can work together and where we must go at it independently, along separate paths.

Indigenous theories and strategies of change are culturally grounded and must not be appropriated by settlers. Indigenous cosmologies and practices of vision, story, dream and prophesy inform understandings of change. Indigenous approaches to change are grounded in and need to be understood through Indigenous theories and frameworks. It is important to engage with Indigenous theories and approaches to change from the perspective of Indigenous peoples themselves, working to understand Indigenous perspectives and traditions on their own terms rather than through Western categories and frameworks (Ladner, 2008 *IRR*).

We need strategies that dis-alienate, that reconnect. Anti-capitalist scholars point out that capitalism creates alienation, for example between worker and the products of labour. As such, movements can work against various forms of alienation. They work on “transforming alienated work into creative agency with in democratized relations of production” (Carroll &

Sarker, 2016, p.48 *HM,SMS*). With the understanding that capital serves as the “great mediator,” critical movements need to move towards “eliminating the mediation that divides humanity against itself” (ibid). Decommodification in general and democratization of the work place are key strategies for dis-alienation.

Strategies that reconnect require relational ontologies that undo dualism. Intersectional analysis and other relational approaches help us see what we have in common with others, helping us overcome divisions across progressive movements, to connect our struggles. Where dualistic worldviews have ideologically undergirded systems of domination, non-dualistic worldviews are required to understand the problems and strategize change (see Plumwood, 2002; Moore, 2015). Many scholars promote relational ontologies as crucial to this. “Relationality shifts from analysing what distinguishes entities from each other ... to examining their interconnections. This shift in perspective opens up intellectual and political possibilities” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.28).

Relationship with land is central. Coulthard writes that “Indigenous struggles against capitalist imperialism are best understood as struggles oriented around the question of land—struggles not only for land but also *deeply informed by what the land as a mode of reciprocal relationship* ... ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way” (Coulthard, 2014, p.60, emphasis mine *IRR*). Relationship with land provides crucial guidance about the goals and strategies for change. This is Grounded Normativity (Coulthard, 2014 *IRR*). Stories, ceremonies and the land itself are procedures for solving the problems of life” (Simpson, 2017, p.23 *IRR*).

Decolonization is a process of (re)building reciprocal relationships with land and each other. This is the basis of Indigenous resistance and resurgence. “Survival demands that we act on the love we have for ... land and our people. This is the counter-imperative to empire. Our power is a courageous love” (Alfred, 2005, p.36 *IRR*). Indigenous “cultures have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist” (Coulthard, in Simpson, 2008, p.201 *IRR*). Building reciprocal relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers requires settlers learning to listen. And listening to learn ... learning how to build and maintain relationship that are just, mutually beneficial and transformative.

3.4 Conclusion

This literature review has reached across diverse bodies of scholarship, from social movement studies and critical social science to systems science and Indigenous scholarship, gathering rich insights about how social movements can forge radical systems transformation towards justice and sustainability. These different lenses all bring important perspectives that together create this wider view about the very complex process of change. I have brought them together and allow them to build on each other and shed light on each other's blind spots.

Several themes have emerged, largely around the need to think and act more holistically, in ways that account for, integrate, and include much more than our current modes of activism and understandings of change facilitate. We need to link across struggles (class, race, environment, sex) and also across approaches to change (alternatives, resistance) and across our understandings of change processes (material, narrative, and symbolic). We need to think more strategically about how to engage in ways that take into account spatial scales, stages of change and windows of opportunities. We need to transform the power inequalities within and between our movements so that we can build a movement of movement that can create the kind of counter-hegemony necessary to push back on those with power over us - those with vested interest in the status quo. The kind of transformation that is needed requires new ways of knowing and being, as well as critically engaging with lesser-known traditions of struggle and political ideas, ones that undo dualistic, divisive ontologies and instead forge deep understandings of relationality and connectivity; worldviews and approaches to change that center relationships.

The world we are trying to change is much more complex than common theories and strategies account for. It is my hope that by bringing these theories of change into dialogue in this way and bringing all the diverse insights into one lens, I can help contribute to the movements I am part of, with theoretical tools that can help to forge more powerful movements and create more impactful strategies.

Chapter 4 - Understanding the crises, uncovering the root causes, and envisioning the worlds we want.

“We are at a moment. We either change the narrative, change the story, bring in the people who have been marginalized, or we go ahead with business as usual” (Deranger, 2018, n.p.)

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, I argued that Canada faces multiple, converging crises that call for deep transformations in our social, political, and economic systems and that social movements are important actors in driving and shaping this needed change. In Chapter 2, I made the case that the collective theorizing, learning and strategizing of social movements have much to teach those who seek a more just and ecologically-viable world. In Chapter 3, I overviewed insights about change gleaned from reading academic literature. The next four chapters present the findings from my research, sharing what I have learned from conversations with activists, organizers, and land defenders across Canada. This chapter presents the many diverse answers I got to these two questions: 1) *What is the change you want to see; How do you envision the world you want to help bring about?* 2) *What is causing the social and environmental problems you aim to address in your work?*

Where chapter 5 focuses on how people in the movements think change happens and chapter 6 and 7 reflect on how we’re doing at bringing about change and strategizing how to strengthen our efforts, this chapter focuses on how people involved with these movements understand the crises, what they see as the root causes driving the crises, and importantly, how they envision the future they want.

I have developed this chapter by bringing different people’s answers - and the main themes that emerged from these - into dialogue. Although I did not include all quotes on any given theme for subject, I did include all the main themes that came up in people’s answers to my interview and survey questions. In general, although my own views on these questions have inevitably shaped the ways I understand others’ views and how I have presented these conversations and draw conclusions, I have not included my own opinions or theories, instead leaving those for the conclusions chapter. I do this so as to clearly distinguish between what

people told me (the subject matter of Chapter 4,5,6, and 7) from my own reflections on what people told me (Chapter 8).

I rely heavily on the activists' own words and voices as I stitch together their analyses into one conversation. Though relying as heavily on quotes, (as opposed to paraphrasing and summarizing), as I do in this and the following three chapters is not a common way to present such research findings, I have chosen to construct the chapters in this way for several reasons. One motivation for this is to take care that I do not misrepresent what people told me. By allowing the people I spoke with to speak for themselves, I bring to this thesis many voices, with their own tones and turns of phrase, rather than to subsume their ideas within my own words, voice, and framings. I do this to avoid misrepresentation, to reflect the polyvocality in these movements, and to use my thesis to create more space for movement voices in scholarly work. Additionally, I construct the chapters this way so as to be transparent about how I came to the conclusions I did.

To mitigate the risks of my quote-heavy approach rendering the conversations decontextualized and disconnected from wider conversations in activist and scholarly literature on these themes, I have woven the quotes through with scholarly discussions on the themes that were raised in these conversations.

4.1.1 Overview of this chapter

In section 4.1.2, I argue why activists' understandings of the crises and their causes as well as their visions of the worlds they want is relevant and important. In section 4.2, I explore the movements' understandings about the crises and their causes. In section 4.3, I turn towards the visions of the future that were shared with me. Section 4.4 sums up and reflects briefly on the implications of the understandings and visions brought to light in this chapter.

4.1.2 Why these questions are important

The ways that movement actors understand and frame problems, solutions, and visions of a better world help guide their strategies for bringing about change and thus help shape the processes and outcomes of social transformation (Moore et al., 2014; Staggenborg, 2011; Snow & Benford 1988; Davis, 2002). Through engaging in social change, activists develop, store, and

offer important insight about society's most pressing problems and these can influence and shape understandings and discourses in society more broadly.

The vital movement work of making sense of the problems and envisioning alternatives involves what various scholars refer to in different ways such as framing, sense-making, or storytelling, all of which are all important for providing direction and inspiration for social change. In contexts like Canada, where the mainstream framings and stories about climate change and inequality are failing to drive change, alternative frames, visions, and stories can be key to transformation. Mainstream environmental NGO efforts to catalyse a shift in Canada's energy economy – despite some victories – have come up short. Moreover, their narrow framing of “the environment” may inadvertently reinforce problematic discourses such as the Trudeau Liberal narrative of balancing the oil-based economy with the environment (Judd, 2018). Geographer Erik Swyngedouw (2011, p. 265) argues that a trend in NGO discourse and strategy that frames environmental and climate change mostly in terms of measuring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions can work against deeper systemic transformation. Quantification of impacts is certainly one important step in climate mitigation. However, an insufficiently deep engagement with the cultural dimensions and lived experiences of climate change may be blocking progress toward justice and sustainability and, at worst, institutionalising solutions that fail to meaningfully address and may exacerbate the problems.

In contrast to inadequate and problematic framings we see in Canadian mainstream discourse, the people I talked to reach deeper to expose the structural connections between extractivism, the violation of Indigenous rights, climate change, inequality, and other issues. And many discussed these issues as being symptoms of, and being driven by, much deeper problems including capitalism and colonialism which in turn are influenced by and influence worldviews that justify domination, and a fundamental disconnection from land and from each other. In the next section I braid together the stories, frames, and visions that I heard through the interviews, surveys, and other conversations I have been part of.

4.2 Understanding the problems and their causes

4.2.1 Uneven impacts of pipeline development, environmental destruction, and climate disruption

Although many of the people I spoke with have been actively involved with stopping oil and gas pipelines, no one I talked to framed pipeline development as the crux of the problem. Rather, people see them as driven by, and poignant symbols of, unjust and unsustainable political, economic, and belief systems; systems that are driving both climate change and inequality. One francophone settler anti-pipeline campaigner in Montreal told me that “pipelines are something really concrete that [people can connect to]. You need something to hold on to ... otherwise climate change is too big” (Int#15). A francophone grassroots activist in rural Quebec told me that pipelines help mobilize and educate people. They “connect local communities all across Canada with the larger issues of tar sands extraction, climate change, and the violation of Indigenous rights” (Int#17). These conversations explored the complex ways that the uneven distribution of the costs and benefits of extractivism and climate change are playing out.

As discussed briefly in chapter 1, the environmental and climate crisis are exacerbating existing social strains and inequalities at local, national, and global scales. The increasingly frequent impacts of anthropogenic climate change are hitting poor, racialized and Indigenous communities first and hardest (Parks et al., 2006). Nations and communities most impacted by climate change are often those least responsible for the problem, and those who have the fewest resources to cope with it (ibid). Citing flooding from Hurricane Mitch in Honduras, rising sea levels swamping entire Pacific Island atoll nations, and devastation from flooding among squatter settlements in Mozambique, Parks et al., explain that existing social and economic inequality are rendering communities such as these “brutally vulnerable to forces outside their control” (Parks et al., 2006, p.1). The understanding about the interrelations between the climate crisis and the inequality crisis has been deepened by climate justice activists and scholars across the world (Bond, 2012)¹⁶.

¹⁶ The concepts of climate injustice and climate justice evoke many ethical dilemmas and questions. These deserve greater attention than I can provide within this chapter. For a brief overview of scholarly discussions of what justice means in the context of the climate crisis, see Appendix 2

A climate justice activist from Quebec said that: “When it comes to climate change, we know who's responsible for the worst of emissions historically and also who is profiting from [the crisis]”. Later in the interview she made clear that “climate change is about power and who has the power in society” (Int#39). Like the uneven and unjust distribution of climate impacts, the impacts of fossil fuel extraction and transportation are felt by some people in Canada more than others, reflecting more general patterns of environmental injustice (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014).

Work on addressing *climate injustice* echoes the existing work of *environmental justice* movements who've sought to expose the dynamics of environmental injustice (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016; Gosine & Teelucksingh, 2008) and environment racism (Taylor, 2014; Waldron, 2018). These concepts of climate injustice, environmental injustice, and environmental racism do the crucial work of exposing the inextricable relationship between environmental destruction and uneven human suffering. Environmental degradation and pollution impact first and foremost the people already marginalized by the current systems, by way of class, race, gender, and other systems of domination.

The people I talked to all discussed to varying degrees and in various ways how existing social inequalities are being exacerbated by pipelines development, by extractivism, and by climate change. A woman of colour who organizes in Vancouver spoke about the environmental racism associated with the Line 9 pipeline in Ontario. It's “about environmental racism ... how violence is enacted on communities and land. [Line 9] pipeline goes thru Jane and Finch which is a highly racialized neighbourhood and then goes through Indigenous territories ... ” (Int#32).

A Montreal-based student organizer of colour who I spoke to named environmental racism as a part of oil and gas infrastructure development in Canada.

“Development of fossil fuel projects [happens in] communities that are already more marginalized because of the way that society is set up. Think about the tar sands. Who's living on the land? Whose land is there? [Industry and government think] ‘it's undeveloped, and we're just going to go and develop the tar sands over those people's land’. It's the same with refineries that are causing a lot of the climate change and pollution of land and water” (Int#13).

A Kanien'kehá:ka activist told me: “It’s ... environmental racism. But there is classism attached to it also. Because you have poor people living in these areas where [unwanted development] is happening” (Int#7). A divestment activist discussed how “people of lower economic means are usually the first to be affected by environmental pollution” (Int#23).

Intertwined with the ways the impacts of climate change and extractivism are unevenly being borne along racial and class line, women are also disproportionality impacted. In a webinar hosted by Indigenous Climate Action, Eriel Tchekwie Deranger (2018), the Executive Director of ICA and member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation made clear that “climate justice is gender justice” and that “violence against land is violence against women”. Women are “disproportionately impacted by climate and the drivers of climate change”, in many ways including the increase in sexual violence that accompanies man camps (housing for transient workers in the oil and gas industry)” (Deranger, 2018).

But these dynamics are not just about who is being negatively impacted, we also need to pay attention to who is benefiting. A Montreal-based teacher and activist made clear that the inequalities inherent in dirty energy extraction and production don’t just negatively impact marginalized communities, but directly benefit rich, white ones: “For every single industrial town that exists, there must be a Westmount ... For every single marginalized community, there is a core community that is benefiting from that marginalization” (TT#2). And we must attend aswell to the uneven nature of who is making the decisions that lead to these unjust impacts. Later in the interview he assigned responsibility for this repeated pattern of environmental racism and classism. A divestment activist made cleae that “the people that are upholding the actions and activities of fossil fuel companies ... are upholding racial injustice and social injustice (Int#23).

Of all the many unjust and unequal relations that people I interviewed described, the most common was the ways Indigenous peoples are most directly and pervasively impacted by climate change and extractivism in Canada are playing out. Mascarenhas observes that “whether by conscious design or institutional neglect”, First Nations communities face the worst environmental devastation in Canada (2007, p.570). Specifically, Indigenous peoples are

disproportionately suffering the impacts of the tar sands expansion (Stewart, 2015, n.p.). The impacts on Indigenous communities downstream from the tar sands in Alberta include pollution of land and water along with the associated health effects and the destruction of habitat for animal and plant species that are culturally important and valued food sources (Droitsch & Simieritsch, 2010).

Other Indigenous communities across the country are being impacted by the processing of fossil fuels leading to serious health impacts - such as the people in Aamjiwnaang near Sarnia Ontario, a center of petrochemical processing in Canada (Fung et al., 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2005). The Inuit in the north of Canada are being impacted by the effects of fossil fuel combustion driving planetary warming and the quickly changing weather conditions. This is having deep impacts on Inuit livelihoods and wellbeing (Ford et al., 2008). Meanwhile many First Nations (such as the Secwepemc, Wet'suwet'en, and Coast Salish nations in BC) are facing the impacts and risks of oil and gas pipelines currently proposed to go through their territories.

Whether at the points of extraction, transport, processing, or combustion, Indigenous communities are bearing an unfair brunt of Canada's ongoing dependence on oil and gas industry. The expansion of the oil and gas industry is currently a critical point of tension in Canada and the source of much resistance and conflict. As one interviewee put it : "Climate justice is social justice. Social justice is environmental justice. [Indigenous] people have been colonized for hundreds of years, they are the first to be subject to environmental injustice, all in the name of economic progress" (Int#23).

4.2.2 Structures and systems that drive environmental and climate injustice

The conversations I had with activists and land defenders did not end there. When I asked them how they understand the crises and their causes, their answers explored the ways that the uneven, unjust ways that climate change and extractivism are impacting different groups of people is due to the interrelated structures and systemic relations such as colonialism, capitalism, industrialism, patriarchy, and imperialism.

A member of Defenders of the Land told me: "It's not just that there is inequality [in Canada], we are operating in a violent system of disparity and systemic violence and injustice" (Int#36). A white settler activist and journalist from the prairies made explicit the link between extractivism and colonialism in Canada: "Colonization and disregard for Indigenous rights is

what has allowed for all the fossil fuel extraction projects in Canada ... the silencing of voices, for generations. That is pretty foundational” (Int#26).

An Anishinaabe/Ojibway scholar made clear that “we're still living in the midst of colonialism. Though some Canadians may not see this, it is because these unequal, unjust systems are so ingrained and foundational to Canadian culture and economy that it can remain invisible to people” (Int#34). A Kanien'kehá:ka elder, journalist and community leader put it this way, “Canadian culture is not built around having this equal relationship with Indigenous people. It's about colonization and domination. It's what we call institutionalized racism. Racism on Indigenous people is so ingrained in legislation and policy and rules and regulations and attitudes that it's hard to see it clearly. [Many] Canadians can't see it” (Int#9 Kanien'kehá:ka).

Colonialism can be defined “as an attempt to control territory or resources beyond the official boundaries of a state or empire. Colonies are founded in unsecured territories as a foothold for trade, military excursions, diplomatic contact, and to otherwise serve as an extension of central power” (Barker & Lowman, 2015). There are many different definitions of colonialism, but one characteristic they all share is uneven power relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. These “relations of power are shaped by hierarchies of race, culture, gender, and class, and lead to the political, social, cultural, and material subordination of the less powerful groups through domination and exploitation” (Waldron, 2018, p.38)

Settler-colonialism, the way by which European take-over of Turtle Island¹⁷ has played out over the last 500 years, is defined as “a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty” (Barker & Lowman, n.d.). With settler colonialism, the colony is not just a place to extract resources to send them back home, the colony becomes home (Waldron, 2018). Making home for colonizers requires the elimination of Indigenous peoples and their relationships with the land (Wolfe, 2006; Shoemaker, 2015; Veracini, 2011). Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land which is “most valuable, contested, required” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.5).

¹⁷ Turtle Island is how Indigenous peoples refer to North America.

Many people spoke about Indigenous people in Canada having been pushed off their lands continually over Canadian history, so that governments and industry can access, extract, and exploit resources. A Montreal-based film maker put it like this:

“A lot of it has to do with a disrespect to the [Indigenous communities] and to the lands that are being exploited for the extraction of hydrocarbons. What we have seen over centuries, is the forced displacement of people from the lands they inhabit ... for the wholesale destruction of those lands. During the colonial days we saw this in a much more brutal and overt form, a very violent form. These days it takes place in a more bureaucratic sense and happens through laws and permanent approvals and whatnot. But in the end what we're seeing is the taking of land from people who have a completely different relationship to that land than us settlers. And destroying it. Destroying their way of life. Destroying their traditions. And destroying the things that have kept them alive for millennia” (Int#30).

A Kanien'kehá:ka activist explained to me how Canadian extractivism depends on the violation and dehumanization of Indigenous communities. “They condescend to us ... make us think we're stupid, that we don't know the science ... about the extractive projects ... they say it's for the economy. It's part of the system, to break [us] down ... to open the land to exploitation and occupation” (Int#7).

Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson wrote in her recent book *As We Have Always Done* that “over the past 200 years, without our permissions and without our consent, we have been systematically removed and dispossessed from our territory” (Simpson, 2017, p.4). Dene Scholar Glen Coulthard makes clear that the primary purpose of settler colonialism is access to territory, for settlement and for capital accumulation (2014). This concept of *accumulation by dispossession* (borrowing from Marx's concept of primitive accumulation) is helpful in drawing the connection between capitalism and colonialism as the driving forces behind both the social inequality and environmental destruction faced in Canada (Coulthard, 2014). “The Canadian state has always been primarily interested in acquiring the ... rights to [Indigenous] land for settlement and for the extraction of resources” (Simpson, 2017, p.42).

The lands and waters that Canadian settlers now claim as their own, was never ceded - neither by treaty nor through war. In the cases where treaties were signed, the land was often seized through violation of treaty agreements (MacFarlane & Schabus, 2017). In various ways, Canada's claim to state control over these lands and waters lies upon racist and legally weak foundations (Reid, 2010). The basis of Canadian jurisdiction over lands generally rests on two assumptions: that the Doctrine of Discovery permitted the assertion of sovereignty by the colonists, and that by signing treaties Indigenous peoples ceded title to their lands.

A Mi'kmaw warrior and thinker made clear that “[racism] is at the foundation of Canada's claim to sovereignty, of having power over us. A Canadian state shouldn't exist. But because of racism, because of the Doctrine of Discovery they claim the right to exist. [Canada] exists because of racism” (Int#38).

When Europeans began to settle on Turtle Island, the Doctrine of Discovery was how they “claimed rights of sovereignty, property, and trade in regions they allegedly discovered” (Reid, 2010, p.336). The Doctrine is rooted in two 15th-century papal bulls: one gave Christians the right to take non-Christians as perpetual slaves and the other justified the colonization of the Americas with the idea that since the non-Christians around the world were not using the land as Europeans deemed proper, Europeans had the right to claim ownership to the lands (Vowel, 2016). This papal bull was a starting point in the “historic efforts by Christian monarchies and states of Europe in the fifteenth and later centuries to assume and exert conquest rights and dominance over non-Christian Indigenous peoples in order to take over and profit from their lands and territories” (Frichner, 2010, p.8).

As the British Crown asserted control over Indigenous land, it negotiated Treaties with First Nations or the land was simply seized and occupied. There are several ways that negotiation of Treaties, “while seemingly honourable and legal, was often marked by fraud and coercion” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p.1). Treaties were understood by Indigenous signatories as agreements to share the land, where this was clearly not what transpired. Secondly, often, the treaty negotiations were not conducted with the lawful hereditary chiefs and excluded women who by tradition in many nations had final authority. And thirdly, treaties have been breached many times in their history by the Canadian government, notably by the residential school system and resource extraction (Vowel, 2016; MacFarlane & Schabus, 2017).

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People affirms “that all doctrines ... based on, or advocating, superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust” (United Nations, 2007, p.3). Even though Canada has signed this declaration, no meaningful actions have been taken to relinquish the ownership of the land claimed through this doctrine. An Anishinaabe qwe activist and scholar from Northern Ontario reflected on Canada’s colonial history and present:

“Back then, we hadn't realized yet that what the Crown, and eventually the Canadian Government, wanted to do was resource extraction. It was kind of a forced Treaty. The treaty was signed under duress. And so, today, has anything changed? Has the Canadian Government consulted with us? Time and time again ... they end up in their own court system and are proven wrong ... [reprimanded for] not properly consulting with us, but yet they just continue to carry on” (Int#12 Anishinaabe).

Colonialism came up again and again in the conversations I had with activists across the country. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are naming colonialism as an ongoing system in Canada and a root cause of both the climate crisis and crisis of inequality. Understanding the ways that institutional racism, settler colonialism, and land dispossession are related to extractivism, climate change, and social inequality in Canada is critical for being able to understand what is driving the crises and being able to devise effective ways at intervening. That said, these understandings which have been and are being developed and refined in movements and scholarships are wholly missing from the mainstream discourses about inequality and climate change and pipelines in Canada.

A Mi'kmaw warrior and thinker told me that “we are rebuilding from an apocalypse ... The government and industry have never given up a single inch of Indigenous soil back to us. They've never given us our freedoms back ... [Yet] somehow it's our fault. Poverty is our fault. Social dysfunction is our fault. If anything, white society constructs itself as the hero, coming in to save us from ourselves” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Closely tied to ongoing colonial relations in Canada is capitalism. They were the two most common root causes discussed and were often discussed in relation to each other. When I asked a Michif-Cree organizer from Ontario what she sees as driving the current crises, she told me: “We’re never going to have climate justice or any sort of sustainable energy system under capitalism - it just doesn’t make sense. Capitalism is a system that necessitates infinite growth. Capitalism is never going to settle for the zero-growth economy or a degrowth economy” (Int#20).

An Anishinabe qwe activist and scholar from Northern Ontario pointed out capitalism’s role in driving over-consumption, which is also contributing to the crises. “It goes back to over-consumption. It’s a big vicious circle we are living in. The government is promoting it. They’re corporate driven and they’re promoting it and they’re not coming up with good long-term solutions” (Int#12). A Kanien’kehá:ka elder, journalist and community leader made the link between capitalism and colonialism: “We have to decolonize things: the capitalistic, extractive, destructive, money-making activities in the dominant society. All that has to change. That would work hand in hand with solving the issues of climate change” (Int#9). As another person told me “I’m not interested in the kind of solutions that would allow capitalism to continue” (Int#8).

A Kanien’kehá:ka activist likened capitalist greed for money and oil with rape culture and with drug addiction. He told me a story of being at a meeting with oil executives trying to convince his community to allow pipeline development on their land.

“I got up and said, ‘When you talk to Indigenous communities you remind me of a bunch of horny teenage boys that’ll say anything to get laid’ ... ‘oh ya, we got the best technology for extraction that’ll make for no waste, no pollution, no mess’ ... When I said this people had a laugh, but people stopped and thought. These companies are like hard core addicts - they’ll do anything to get their fix” (Int#7).

These understandings of the root causes of the climate and inequality crises in Canada emphasize different dimensions and causes – inequality, racism, extractivism, environmental racism, climate injustice, colonialism, capitalism, domination, patriarchy, and disconnection. Each of these is important to understand and address, but we also need to understand these as deeply linked in complex ways.

In several of the interviews, people explained how these various forces and structures are linked and how they drive the climate and inequality crises. A Montreal-based filmmaker and climate justice activist links it all together through imperialism:

“There's an ongoing process of empire, the Leviathan that continues, that requires constant growth of resources, expansion of territories, and constant growth. It's part and parcel of capitalism. Imperialism and capitalism are two sides of the same coin. It has different faces; the face of misogyny, it includes the face of racism. All of those things are true, but empire, imperialism and capitalism are flip sides of one another” (Int#11).

A Mi'kmaw warrior and thinker links it all together through industrialism.

“The carbon problem is a by-product of industrialism. Industrialization is one of the pillars of power of western society ... and is the manifestation of Western relationships with nature. In Western society, especially the ones that are dominated by Christian worldview ... nature is a spiritual waste land. The trees, the animals, the mountains, the rivers don't have spirit. Only humans have spirit. So, it's easy to objectify nature ... as nothing more than material. This becomes very supportive of capitalism. Because capitalism is all about objectifying something, exploiting it, and turning it into a commodity and then profit. Christianity and capitalism work together that way. The relationship is one of dominance, control, destruction, death. For profit. Industrialization is critical to the power of that relationship. Minus industrialization, Western society had to go out and use their hands to do this on their own. Cutting down trees by hand is exhausting, so the amount of destruction it can do is limited. But the introduction of industrialization ... the rate of exploitation has to increase to increase the rate of profit. The faster you can turn something into a commodity, the faster you can sell it, the more money you'll make. I think this is really important if we're going to have dialogue around decarbonization and decolonization ... Colonization provided the wealth that helped lead towards the periods of industrialization ...

you have to eliminate western industrialization to achieve both decarbonization and decolonization” (Int#38).

It becomes clear how deeply the roots of these crises go, as do the analyses in these movements. In quite a few of the interviews however, people also discussed the thought systems that are upholding and driving capitalism and colonialism.

4.2.3 Worldviews, values, and concepts that justify and reinforce unjust systems and structures

The concepts of dominion and domination both came up in several interviews, evoking the notion of human dominion of nature and of some humans’ domination over other humans. One Montreal racial-justice activist linked the concept of domination with white supremacy, the idea that “people want to be on top of other people” (Int#24). A west-coast anti-logging veteran activist puts it like this: “for radicals it has always been connected ... that capitalism is the problem. And patriarchy. We can clearly see that it is designed to subjugate not only the natural world but also people” (Int#14).

A Kanien'kehá:ka activist named “dominionism” as a mindset. “We have to look at mindsets of people. These companies, the mindsets where they are coming from. They’ve trained the public to think about the natural world as a resource ... Everything that exists becomes a commodity. Things to be bought and sold” (Int#7). He goes on to link the concept of dominion with colonization and superiority.

“This idea of colonization, this idea that we can be above other peoples, because of where we come from, you see that again and again, the notion of dominionism. In the bible God made the earth and gave Man dominion over earth. It’s all here for you to exploit. It’s very specific. Man has dominion. And women have been struggling so long, collectively, for rights, because in that biblical notion, women are a burden. This is something we’re fighting against all the time, Indigenous people. Because our society was opposite of that. Women were the title holders. Women decide what happens on the land” (Int#7).

Here we see the links between climate change, colonialism, and the oppression of women. Kanahus Manuel, of the Secwepemc Women Warriors and leader of the Tiny House Warriors

movement, argued in the same webinar that the solutions to climate change need to be shaped and led by women (2018). She states clearly that “we need to confront patriarchy and other things that drive climate change” (Manuel, 2018). Also on this webinar, Melina Laboucan-Massimo, member of the Lubicon Cree First Nation and leader in community solar energy projects, says: “We are fighting resource extraction, we are inheriting violence against the land, but we’re fighting for justice for our women. Our families are constantly fighting on many spheres, it’s not justice [for the] climate, it’s justice for the women, for the four-legged ones, the two-winged ones, that are all integral to our being on Mother Earth” (Laboucan-Massimo, 2018).

Several people, in these interviews, talked about disconnection as the root of the climate problem. A young Montreal-based Jewish woman explained her understanding of the link between destruction of the earth and oppression of people. “The distance that allows us to exploit the earth is the same distance that allows us to exploit other people.” (Int#10).

These wide ranging and deep reaching analyses provide important counter-narratives to the mainstream discourses about climate change and inequality in Canada which focus on non-renewable resources, emissions reductions, benefit sharing, and reconciliation. These analysis into the root cause, the systems of domination and the worldviews that underlie and drive the crises, open up the possibilities for much more transformative solutions and alternatives.

4.3 Envisioning the worlds we want

“I want a ton of things - the destruction of capitalism, the destruction of patriarchy, the destruction of colonialism, return of lands to the Indigenous folks. Equality. What else? Not have to work so much. A place where my kid can feel safe. I want all of that” (Int#30).

In the interviews, people not only explained their understandings of the crises and their causes, they also shared with me their visions of the world they want, the worlds they are working hard to bring about. Though most of these people are involved with opposing oil and gas pipelines, in all cases stopping pipelines is not their end goal. Their visions of the future include, but go far beyond, a Canada with no new pipelines. As I present in this section, they evoked visions of equality and justice, of healing relationships, of decentralized, autonomous communities powered by clean energy. They talked about decolonizing relations between settlers

and Indigenous peoples. They envisioned self-determination and rebuilding of diverse Indigenous nations; a fundamental redistribution of power and land. They talked about re-establishing mutually-beneficial relations with land and with each other.

I present these movement visions along the following four themes: Decarbonizing; Decentralizing & Democratizing; Decolonizing; Reconnecting with land & with each other. In order to ground these visions, I intersperse the activists' and land defenders' words with references to relevant scholarship and examples of existing initiatives in Canada that reflect these visions. It may not be obvious that there are concrete, achievable solutions to racial inequality and climate change crises. These may seem to be intractable problems. But there is lots of inspiring work being done, around the world and in Canada, to identify and develop policies, technologies, energy, housing, food systems, and alternative forms of social organization, all aiming towards justice and ecological sustainability, working towards the world(s) envisioned by the people I spoke with.

All the beautiful visions presented below hinge on human survival. A Montreal-based activist and writer told me that his "end goal is a society that works for the benefit of all beings. That's my aspiration. But mostly I'm focused on humans; human survival being the main priority" (Int#16). A young anarchist I talked with in Quebec said "I see this as a matter of survival. I see activism as a way to ensure that the people who come after us have what they'll need to survive". It's not simply any kind of human survival these folks are interested in. People spoke about a future of equality between humans. A young activist-artist of colour explained it like this: "[I want] a world where people can just live like they want to live, regardless of sexuality, gender, race ... where people are able to move where they want, no borders. And a more community-based way of growing food, of living like they want - not just living to survive" (Int#24).

4.3.1 Decarbonizing

Addressing the climate crisis means moving quickly away from fossil fuel-based energy and economic systems. Several people talked specifically about their vision for an energy transition away from fossil fuels. A Montreal-based activist and writer underscored the urgent need for this transition, and Canada's responsibility to play a leadership role in this:

“As a country that has benefited so thoroughly from the current order, at least in terms of its industrial development, I think incumbent upon Canada, in particular to not only reduce its emissions, but to be investing billions of dollars, hundreds of billions, into developing the technology that can move us past this and give it away to the rest of the world, at highly subsidised prices. Whether it’s transportation infrastructure, power generation, investing in geothermal energy, or renewables of various kinds, we should be just pouring all of our collective resources into that in order to make that transition happen globally at a very rapid pace” (Int#16).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describes decarbonization as ‘the declining average carbon intensity of primary energy over time’ (IPCC, 2007, n.p.). I use the concept of decarbonization to mean *a rapid transformation away from fossil fuel-based energy and economic systems towards ones based on clean, renewable sources of energy*.

Canada is a major producer of greenhouse gas emissions, due both to its high consumption rates and it being a major producer of carbon polluting fossil fuels. To have any chance of warding off worsening climate impacts, fossil fuels reserves must remain in the ground and other energy and economic systems must be developed. The Trudeau government claims that building pipelines will fund the transition to a clean energy economy and hopes that carbon taxes will inspire the changes needed. The IPCC states that the way to decarbonize most effectively and quickly is the complete transition away from carbon-intensive fossil fuels (IPCC, 2007). Though this energy transition to clean renewable power is urgently needed, is possible (Jacobson, 2011), and is affordable (CCPA, 2015), it is not happening in Canada at anywhere near the necessary scale.

A just transition away from carbon polluting fuels means creating jobs in climate-friendly industries. It means creating good jobs whereby people do not have to choose between decent work and a healthy environment. A community organizer in northern BC, who works closely with First Nations on energy projects, expressed her vision for her community’s future: “Industry can come in here and they can say whatever they want, [but] our vision is that we want jobs and

we want a solid economy and we want fish and clean air and rich, alive, functioning cultures that are respected. We don't think these things are mutually exclusive” (Int#37).

Currently, a strong coalition has formed in Canada to design and promote a Green New Deal (GND), inspired by the Green New Deal in the US and is now spreading around the world. It is a detailed plan for how poverty can be eliminated, while creating millions of jobs and tackling climate change. The GND calls for massive public investment to fund clean energy, transit, and climate adaptation work. “But the vision is bigger than that: it’s about transforming our entire economy to be safer and fairer and give everyone a better life” (The Leap, 2019, n.p). The GND is premised on a rapid transition from a fossil-fuel based energy system to one based on renewable energy. This can be done in ways that generate millions of jobs by 2025 in building trades such as renewable energy, green building construction, building retrofits, and transportation infrastructure” (Bridge & Gilbert, 2017).

That said, renewable energy sources are not the panacea we may want to believe they are. Indeed, in some cases they have negative environmental impacts which can be as bad as some conventional energy sources (Abbasi & Abbasi, 2000). Alternative energy sources, despite contributing less to climate change, are problematic in various ways and are limited to the extent to which they can solve the crises. Renewable energy’s “dependence on a massive amount of material resources (steel, concrete, rare earth metals) often leads to the dispossession and forced labour of vulnerable people, such as the Congolese who produce cobalt in terrible conditions. And it can also be difficult to increase the production of certain metals to meet growing demand” (Gauthier, 2018, n.p.).

This doesn’t mean that a massive, and rapid energy transition is not possible, it means that there are “no purely technical solutions to the problems we face. To be successful, the energy transition must also be based on a change in needs and habits ... We need to rethink consumerism and growth” (Gauthier, 2018, n.p.). The solution is not to replace one extractive industry by another, but rather address the mode of consumption leading us to such dependency.

We need to massively reduce rates of per capita energy consumption in Canada. According to 2018 report Canada's Energy Outlook, on a per capita basis Canadians consume energy at more than five times the world average (Hughes, 2018). In 2016 Canada consumed 2.5

% of the world's energy and consumption rates have been increasing over the past 5 years (Hughes, 2018). As over-consumers, reducing energy consumption in industry, housing, and transport is an obvious and relatively easy way to begin making significant progress in a just energy transition. This will help “maximize the effectiveness of investments in renewable energy, and will minimize overall expenditures on new energy supply and the inevitable economic costs and environmental impacts of developing it” (Hughes, 2018, p.24).

But targeting consumption is not enough, production rates of oil and gas also need to be rapidly decreased. An important step to tackling production rates is to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. According to Environmental Defense, “every year, the federal government and some provinces pay billions in hand-outs to Canada's coal, oil and gas companies, undermining climate action in Canada. Fossil fuel subsidies to producers total \$3.3 billion annually, which amounts to paying polluters \$19/tonne to pollute” (2016, p.3). These subsidies each year are the equivalent to what it would cost to install solar panels on 13,200 schools across Canada or to retrain 330,000 workers (Environmental Defense, 2016).

However, massive reduction in consumption and production, and eliminating subsidies is not likely within a capitalist economic system that is addicted to growth. Luckily, there are many who are working on this problem as well. Degrowth is both a global movement and a field of research that deeply questions capitalism's pursuit of endless growth (Kallis & March, 2015). It is concerned with “a downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions and equity on the planet” (Research and Degrowth, 2012, n.p.). Research by Paulson (2017) shows that there are many examples worldwide of diverse communities exemplifying these values in localized practices of prioritizing well-being, equity, and sustainability instead of growth and expansion. There are exciting degrowth initiatives in Canada, especially in Quebec's cooperative movement (Abraham, 2018).

4.3.2 Decentralizing & Democratizing

A Toronto-based social justice activist told me that she envisions a world where “people have more control over the decisions that affect their lives”. She told me “I want decisions to be informed by people who are most affected by the decisions” (Int#28). Decarbonizing energy systems is required but does not go far enough for addressing the social inequalities and systems

of domination that are driving climate change. Energy systems need to be decentralized and democratized as well. A Montreal-based divestment activist shared his vision for this.

“There's this opportunity that if we fix the climate crises, we have the opportunity to solve the energy crises forever ... The disparities in income and access to energy and access to clean water and to basic education, these opportunities can be facilitated with a decentralized form of energy. If people have access to energy, decentralized forms of energy, they have autonomy in a lot of other respects. It can help with access to clean water, it can help with access to food. It can help with access to income generation ... all these things are interconnected” (Int#23).

This vision reflects the movement for ‘energy democracy’ which works towards “asserting social control over energy generation, distribution, and waste disposal; advocates often envision publicly and/or locally-owned energy systems, created to provide safe, sustainable, and affordable power” (Griffin & Vukelich, n.d.). Energy democracy advocates seek to transform power relations, addressing dispossession and environmental injustice, while working to replace monopolized fossil fuel energy systems with renewable and democratic ones (Burke & Stephens, 2017). Energy democracy is being forged in many places around the world, including Nigeria, South Africa, Germany, and Canada (Griffin & Vukelich, n.p.).

Energy democracy reflects a larger trend of building ‘Solidarity Economies’; an alternative to capitalism and state-dominated economic systems whereby “ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental” (RIPESS, 2015, p.2).

Degrowth, energy democracy and solidarity economies all call for producing less, sharing more, and making genuinely democratic decisions about how to live together (Abraham, 2018). Schweickart (2009) shares a similar contention that radical democratization of the economy – specifically democratization of work places and democratic control over investment – is critical for transforming society away from capitalism.

To some people I spoke with, democratizing and decarbonizing energy systems does not go far enough. Some have visions that involves a fundamental restructuring and even dismantling of the Canadian nation state. A Montreal-based journalist and anarchist told me, “my

long-term goal is to build a society that is stateless, non-capitalist, and is based on principles on decolonization, mutual aid, direct democracy, and solidarity” (Int#5). Another anarchist activist pointed to the connection between decolonization, autonomy from the State, and defending the land.

“There's a slogan that says a lot: ‘For a life unmediated by the State, we must defend the land’. That's really on point. The more contaminated everything is, the more depleted the soil, the more water filtration is necessary, the more you require the forms of technology that require resources that we may not be able to produce ... In terms of decolonization, we need to get back to basics and meet our own needs in the territories we inhabit. I don't see decolonization as returning to the past ... that's impossible. But as a way forward ... The goal is the creation of autonomous zones that are able to meet their own needs without the fossil fuel economy and the state” (Int#8).

As communities build autonomy, social power, and ecologically sustainable systems through cooperation and solidarity, they can link through regional, national, and international networks, as envisioned by Symbiosis, a confederation of community organizations across North America. They are “fighting for a better world by creating institutions of participatory democracy and the solidarity economy through community organizing, neighborhood by neighborhood, city by city” (Symbiosis, 2019, n.p.). This, and other similar networks, are inspired by social ecologist Murray Bookchin’s libertarian municipalism, which works to democratize city governments, through popular assemblies, connecting them along confederal lines (Bookchin, 1991). Symbiosis’ vision is to bring radical change by organizing at the community level, meeting basic human needs and building “popular power outside the governing institutions of the present system, to challenge and displace those institutions through truly democratic ones of our own ... [to] eventually supplant the institutions of capitalism to become the governing structures of a liberated society” (Symbiosis, 2019, n.p.).

This vision of autonomy links to dreams of flourishing decentralized communities that a Vancouver-based social justice organizer of colour shared with me:

“I dream of decentralized, self-determining communities ... It’s better for health care, better for decision-making ... Most things would be better if things were smaller and we didn’t have these monolithic political, economic systems that we all need to contend with. There are a lot of traditional systems that can be reinvigorated and not all small communities need to run the same way” (Int#32).

She offers this vision as a radical alternative to the systems of oppression that her activism works to oppose and transform:

“Hetero-patriarchal colonial capitalism is so predatorial. It just doesn’t allow anything else to exist. This idea of having this mosaic of beautiful ecosystems of self-determining communities, is very decolonizing in my imagination. I truly believe that there’s a world out there that is so much better. There are communities out there that can be determined through place and collective tradition and culture. Decentralizing that power would be incredibly powerful ... Different communities will create different decision-making processes. Energy needs can be defined by your community and your land. Everything is defined by where you are” (Int#32).

4.3.3 Decolonizing

All these aforementioned visions of autonomous communities powered by decentralized, democratized renewable energy systems are important and powerful, but they are not the answer if they are built by settlers on stolen Indigenous land. Really addressing climate change and inequality in Canada requires a transformation of the economic systems and social relations driving the crises. It is not enough to just wrest power from the state and distribute this to settler communities. The fundamental injustice at the heart of Canada – settler colonialism – must be transformed through the return of self-determination and land to Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation - tinkering with Indian policy and making tearful apologies - will not solve inequality nor will it contribute to addressing climate change.

A Dene writer and organizer told me that her end goal “is to better the life of Indigenous people so that there’s no feeling of imposition and being stuck ... that kind of suffering my father

went through in residential school and that I feel the after-effects of in my life. I need to care for and nurture Indigenous culture and people. Hopefully Canada will be on this side of the story too” (Int#25). When I asked her more about her vision for a decolonizing Canada, she emphasized the need for more settlers to be better educated about Indigenous people, evoking a future in which settlers are “less ignorant”. To her, decolonizing means “that Indigenous people will have power and that there will be strong matriarchs heading their communities once again” (Int#25).

The Mi'kmaw warrior and thinker framed his vision for decolonization as being about reinstating Indigenous self-determination and the rebuilding of Indigenous Nations.

“When I say Indigenous nationhood - that will be the displacement of Western nation state sovereignty over Indigenous lands and it will be the rebuilding of Indigenous nations ... My vision of decolonization really is about let's wipe away the effects of colonialism. Let's wipe away the cultural dominance. Let's wipe away the political power. Let's push this stuff all to the side and rebuild Indigenous nations” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

To him, Indigenous self-determination means “dismantling the political economic social structures that support colonialism”. And it means rebuilding Nations. “The rebuilding of Indigenous Nations ... involves the political, social, economic ... rebuilding social institutions. We are rebuilding from an apocalypse. We are rebuilding everything. We're rebuilding the social institutions, we're rebuilding culture and language. We're rebuilding the customs, the ceremonies, the spiritualism, the economy” (Int#38).

Decolonizing Canada may seem impossible to some people, but there are many concrete steps that can be taken by settlers and the Canadian state to meaningfully work towards this. These include, but are not limited to: repudiating racist legal doctrines; actually respecting international, constitutional, and inherent Indigenous rights; heeding the recommendations of RCAP, TRC, and other government-commission reports; and fairly redistributing land.

A first step is to “repudiate the concepts behind the Colonial Doctrines of Discovery and recognize that every Indigenous Nation in Canada has underlying title to their entire territory”

(Manuel, 2017, n.p.). The federal and provincial governments must begin to make their policies, projects, and legal directions consistent with the rights of Indigenous Peoples which are set out in section 35(1) in Canada's Constitution (Manuel, 2017).

Prairie based journalist and activist raised up the issue of “Respect, respect for treaties. Canada has been ignoring these for 150 years. It’s had awful environmental consequences and other consequences” (Int#26). A Kanien’kehá:ka elder, journalist, and community leader made clear that this process is long-term, but has concrete steps that can be taken now. “I don’t know if we’ll ever fully decolonize. That’s not up to us. Canada has to decide to let go. And we will see [if they are willing to do that]. I think that the UN Declaration [on the Rights of Indigenous People] is a good way to start that” (Int#9).

A concrete step towards decolonization is respecting the international right to Indigenous self-determination as set out in Article 3 of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹⁸ and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. “The Supreme Court of Canada must understand the international context of our Aboriginal and Treaty Rights as the grounds to decolonize Canada” (Manuel, 2017, n.p.).

“The right to self-determination is ... spelled out in UNDRIP, in regard to land rights, governance and Indigenous prior informed consent (PIC). The latter principle is also increasingly enshrined in multilateral environmental agreements that recognize Indigenous PIC and therefore Indigenous decision-making power regarding access to their lands and resources ... It is clear that including Indigenous peoples as decision-makers and respecting their knowledge, which is

¹⁸ It’s important to note that there is a fundamental weakness in UNDRIP, which Hayden King and others point out, which provides a loophole for States and deeply compromises the transformative and decolonial potential of UNDRIP. Article 46 states: Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States. See <https://www.opencanada.org/features/undrips-fundamental-flaw/>

the most long-term knowledge regarding the respective territories, will ensure more economically, culturally and environmentally sustainable development” (McFarlane & Schabus, 2017, p.65).

Further concrete steps towards decolonization would be to heed the recommendations of the many reports commissioned by the federal government over the 30 years¹⁹. These include implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), and of Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019). Canada has commissioned these extensive and expensive reports, and then failed to implement the many important recommendations that came out of them. Heeding these recommendations is a concrete step towards decolonizing Canada. Writing about the RCAP process, Taiaiaike Alfred explains that

“So much work went into that document, from all across the country and taking into account the perspectives and voices of all regions, generations and segments of our Indigenous peoples ... What they told the Commission in a unified voice was that it’s all about the land. In a rare show of integrity and respect on the part of government, the commissioners listened and the voices of our ancestors echoed in the multiple volumes of the Commission’s lengthy and comprehensive report when they stated clearly and emphatically that what is needed to achieve the full decolonization of Canada is a massive transfer of land back to the Indigenous peoples” (Alfred, 2017, p.11).

¹⁹ As with UNDRIP, there are problems with relying on state-led processes such as TRC and RCAP to drive decolonial change. Indeed, Tamara Starblanket (2018) challenges the intent and politics of Canadian state reconciliation policy and practices, writing that: “It would have been viewed as absurd for any other regime engaging in crimes of genocide against other peoples’ children to evade its crimes internationally and domestically and then, as the perpetrator, to set up another destructive process that purported to investigate the issue and seek to resolve it. But such was the so called Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a body set up by the perpetrator government” (p.274).

Fair redistribution of land is the core of decolonizing Canada. Phrases such as “decolonizing the academy”, “decolonizing your mind”, “decolonizing movements” are becoming more common. Indeed, colonization is a multi-dimensional, wide-reaching process that emanates through most if not all aspects of society (Fortier, 2017). That being said, Tuck and Yang make the important argument in their influential paper ‘Decolonization is not a Metaphor’ that one must not lose sight of the core meaning of decolonization which is material (about land) and by definition unsettling to the status quo (Tuck & Yang, 2012). They write that “though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land...” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.7). Arthur Manuel also makes clear that settling the ‘land issue’ is foundational to the process of decolonizing relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Canada (Manuel, 2018)²⁰. Kanien’kehaka scholar Taiaiake Alfred states that “what is needed to achieve the full decolonization of Canada is a massive transfer of land back to the Indigenous peoples. A notion of reconciliation that rearranges political orders, reforms legalities and promotes economics is still colonial unless and until it centres our relationship to the land” (Alfred, In MacFarlane & Schabus, 2018). As colonization has, by definition sought to sever this relationship, decolonization by necessity must involve the full reconnection between Indigenous people and their lands. As Eriel Deranger, executive director of Indigenous Climate Action, states, “Decolonization is in its simplest terms a return of and connection to the land” (Deranger, 2018, n.p.).

There are Indigenous thinkers doing important work on proposing how land repatriation can roll out. “Canada is the second-largest country in the world ... the size, population, constitutional and legal framework could accommodate fundamental change in expanding the land base of Indigenous Peoples from 0.2 per cent to a size that could accommodate our right to self-determination” (Manuel, 2017, n.p). Enough land needs to be relinquished by the Canadian state such that each Indigenous Nation has enough of a land base to protect their language, culture, laws, and economy (Manuel, 2017).

²⁰ Manuel also lays out a 6 Step process for decolonization in Canada (See Manuel, 2017, pages 275-277).

This land issue is often considered a non-starter by many settlers who fear being pushed off the land they live on and no longer having a home on Turtle Island. And though some Indigenous people would indeed like settlers to go back to where they came from, many leading Indigenous thinkers on decolonization make clear that there is enough land to be shared, but it needs to be shared fairly. Arthur Manuel said to settlers: “if you recognize our collective right to our lands and territories and decision-making over it, we will recognize your human right to stay here in our territories” (quoted in MacFarlane & Schabus, 2017, p.67).

Colonization has violated Indigenous rights to self-determination, and so another key principle of decolonization is reinstating Indigenous self-government. In his book *Peace, Power and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Taiaiake Alfred characterized the process of decolonization as “the mechanics of removing ourselves from state control and the legal and political struggle to gain recognition of an Indigenous governing authority” (Alfred, 1999, p. 2-3).

This focus on land and governance points to decolonization as a radical restructuring of social organization and relationships in Canada, including the relationship between people and non-human nature. Harsha Walia states that “striving toward decolonization requires us to challenge a dehumanizing social organization that perpetuates our isolation from each other and normalizes a lack of responsibility to one another and the Earth” (Walia, 2012, p.252).

Decolonization does not just focus on the removal or destruction of the colonial systems, but the creation of new systems – ones not based on domination. “Decolonization is more than a struggle against power and control; it is also the imagining and generating of alternative institutions and relations. Decolonization is a dual form of resistance that is responsive to dismantling current systems of colonial empire and systemic hierarchies, while also prefiguring societies based on equity, mutual aid, and self-determination” (Walia, quoted in Fortier, 2017, p.283).

The Kanien'kehá:ka elder, journalist and community leader also talked about practicing Indigenous forms of governance but emphasized that diverse Indigenous Nations have diverse approaches to governance and that decolonization means not homogenizing Indigenous self-determination.

“Indigenous people have their own governance, have their own decision-making process and leadership selection process. That's all part of self-determination, is to determine our own political structures, and our own relationship with Canada. Canada can't try to have one formula that fits everybody because we are all different. The Mohawks are different from the Mi'kmaq, the Haida are different from the Cree. We are not all the same. We all have something in common and that's the land and the relationship with Canada. We've all been oppressed and dispossessed. That's what we have in common, but how we want to go from here, we might have different points of view. And Canada can't say, 'well now all you Mi'kmaqs, you Mohawks, Crees, and Haida all need to do the same'. That just won't work. We all have to develop our own way, at our own pace. You have to phase out colonization by exercising the right to self-determination. Exercise that, piece by piece” (Int#9).

Decolonizing Canada, Indigenous self-determination, and Nation-building have significant implications for the Canadian state and its sovereignty. These goals as well as the Indigenous title and jurisdiction undergirding them, constitute a fundamental threat to the systems of power in this country. And disrupting and transforming the systems of power in this country is what is needed to address the mounting social inequalities and the climate crises. It is the promise a justice based transformation which will benefit Indigenous people and settlers alike.

A recent report entitled “Land Back” put out by Yellowhead Institute, presents many rich examples of what communities are doing to get land back (Yellowhead Institute, 2019). The authors write that in light of the whole planet “at risk from the type of economic philosophy and practices perpetuated by colonialism and settler colonialism” (Yellowhead, 2019, p.64) and the structural conditions that act as barriers to real transformations of our relationships to the land, water, and each other, the efforts of Indigenous people to get land back, represents a “movement towards hope” (Yellowhead, 2019, p.65).

Land repatriation, and other dimensions of decolonization, require huge transformations of economic and political systems (Yellowhead, 2019). They will be deeply disruptive to the current political and economic order. But that's the point. A transition that doesn't force us to dig

up the foundations of our current society – which is built on extraction, accumulation, oppression, and theft – won't be a just transition.

A Prairie-based activist and journalist discussed the link between energy transition and respecting Indigenous rights. Respect[ing Treaties] goes hand in hand with a very rapid transition, all the way from fossil fuel extraction towards other forms of social order, community living, energy use” (Int#26).

The Mi'kmaq warrior told me that this is not only the solution to inequality and suffering in Indigenous communities, but it also “becomes a bigger solution ... The rebuilding of Indigenous Nations becomes the answer to how we deal with climate change. It isn't just another issue of political justice off to the side, away from the issue of climate change and pipelines. It's one and the same. [Decolonization] is a bigger solution to these problems” (Int#38).

“If non-indigenous readers are capable of listening ... they will discover that while we are envisioning a new relationship between [Indigenous people] and the land, we are at the same time offering a decolonized alternative to the Settler society by inviting them to share our vision of respect and peaceful coexistence. The non-Indigenous will be shown a new path and offered the chance to join in a renewed relationship between the peoples and places of this land, which we occupy together” (Alfred, quoted in Fortier, 2017, p.1).

As Leanne Simpson shows,

“Indigenous people have extremely rich anti-capitalist practices in our histories and current realities ... Indigenous peoples in my mind have more experience in anti-capitalism and how that system works than any group of people on the planet. We have thousands and thousands of years of experience building and living in societies outside of global capitalism” (Simpson, 2017, p.72-73).

Equipped with thousands of years of accumulated knowledge gained through actively participating in “the many ecosystems that inhabit their lands and territories ... [and helping] enhance the resilience of these ecosystems”, Indigenous people hold important wisdom, insight, and skill for surviving and addressing the crises we all face (United Nations, 2008). Meanwhile, instead of drawing on this knowledge, Canada continues to violate Indigenous lands and rights,

compounding poverty and suffering. Effectively addressing climate change cannot happen while we continue to organize economies on colonial social relations of domination. Decolonizing and decarbonizing are inextricable.

In Naomi Klein's preface to Art Manuel's book *Reconciliation Manifesto*, which was also her speech at his funeral in January 2017, she stated,

“What is good for Indigenous people, what will ultimately fight poverty and heal trauma, is the return of the land ... what is good for Indigenous people, is good for the land, is good for the water, and ultimately is our only hope for fighting catastrophic climate change and ecological collapse. Our only hope. The connection between respect for Indigenous rights and the safety of all humanity is the greatest lesson” (Klein in Manuel, 2017, p.10).

The work of decolonization is different for Indigenous people and for settlers. For settlers interested in transforming Canada to a place that is radically more just in our relationships with each other and with the land, this means working in active solidarity with

“Indigenous people fighting against the colonization of Indigenous lands and peoples, and fighting against the assimilation of Indigenous world-views and ways of life. I believe we must also be able to see ourselves, as non-natives, as active and integral participants in a decolonization movement for political liberation, social transformation, renewed cultural kinships, and the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet” (Walia, 2012, p.241).

4.3.4 Reconnecting with land and each other

Woven through all these powerful visions for a world we want, is respect, love and reconnection with land and with each other. A young Montreal-based Jewish woman spoke to me about love as central to the world she wants. “The essence of what I believe in is love. Cornel West said it best when he said ‘Justice is love in public’. It is about how we interact with each other ... creating spaces where people feel they're most able to be themselves. At the bottom of it is love. The earth needs to be loved also, and the earth needs to be healthy in order for us to have love” (Int#10).

A Montreal based film maker and climate justice organizer explained why she does the work she does.

“It's like Alice Walker's famous: ‘Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet’. That’s the thing. We get our core sense of self through compassion and caring, empathy, and collective work for the transformation for all. It goes back to the Indigenous world view - how people understand. If people are taught that they are all stewards of the land, then it becomes a natural way to respond to the crisis. If we're taught from an early age that your job is to be kind and support people, we try to figure out ways to do good with whatever passions and gifts we have” (Int#11).

People spoke to me about how capitalism and colonialism have separated us from one another and from the land and that to create a more just and viable world, we need to reconnect with each other and with land. A community organizer in northern BC said, “connection to land helps foster better decision making” (Int#37). A Mi'kmaw warrior and thinker explained to me why he focuses much of his life on working with youth. “By getting the youth back on the land they're going to rediscover what it means to be Indigenous. ‘Cause that's what it is. Giving them the tools to go back out on to the land and to start to have the experiences that are driven by the interaction with nature” (Int#38).

Indeed, Eriel Deranger concluded the aforementioned webinar saying that “connection with the land will be the answer to climate change” and she links this to decolonizing as well:

“Decolonization doesn't have to be complicated - it is the return to and connection with the land. Return it to the rightful owners and we all return to it. Develop that connection, then the solutions come more naturally. The people who can adapt to the changes are land-based people. Ceremony and connection are part of decolonization. If you want to stop the projects, decolonize your mind. Listen to what the wind says to you, what the land says to you. And put your bodies on the land. We have to reaffirm our connection to the land and stop the machines” (Deranger, 2018, n.d.).

4.4 Conclusion

Through this process of listening, braiding together, and retelling the analyses and visions, we see stories emerge that offer much-needed counter-narratives to the mainstream discourse in Canada about the climate and inequality crises. This movement of movements that has come together to fight oil and gas pipelines has been telling Canada a much-needed alternate story. These are not the stories we hear in the media, government policy briefs, or corporate publicity. They offer a fundamentally different story of what is wrong in Canada and what needs to be done about it.

Where mainstream discourse in Canada about climate change and inequality focuses on the surface layer of the problems - the symptoms of the crises - people in these movements are digging down much more deeply, uncovering the root causes. These conversations explain climate change and inequality as both being driven by colonial capitalism, which is undergirded by western worldviews that promote domination of people over nature and of people over other people. These systems have bred systemic disconnection from land and from each other, cutting us off from the communities, tools, and knowledges we need to get ourselves out of this mess.

While capitalist extractivism has been causing climate change, it is also actively hindering humanity's ability to reduce emissions and meaningfully address climate change, for example by foreclosing on any efforts to reduce GHG emissions that challenge capitalism's insistence on economic growth, individualism, privatization and deregulation (Klein, 2014). While these mainstream, Western approaches to climate mitigation - constrained by capitalist logic - are stalled, floundering, and failing, Indigenous people, seeking to protect and reclaim their lands and waters, have been leading the resistance to oil and gas pipelines and mines and other extractive projects in Canada and across the world.

Digging deep to expose and then target the root causes opens up much more transformative visions of what is possible. The visions of more just and ecologically-viable futures that these activists shared go far beyond renewable energies, carbon markets, reconciliation schemes, and apologies. They conjure up a future of flourishing networks of decentralized, self-determining communities, powered by renewable energy, and learning from the land. This is a future where a hard process of decolonizing relations will have rendered us all much more capable of living and making decisions together – decisions that benefit all beings.

This future depends on a fundamental restructuring of our systems and a massive redistribution of wealth, power, and land. This means some people – those most benefiting from our current system – will have to relinquish some things (namely land, power and wealth). But it is a small cost for a livable planet on which everyone's basic needs are met.

These stories are rooted in the lived experiences of people most impacted by the crises. These deeply grounded understandings, stories, and visions of the problems and solutions are crucial to bringing about the kinds of transformations necessary. For some of the people I spoke to, these are not new stories. Rather, they are based in longstanding Indigenous worldviews and theories that understand the fundamental link between people and lands and waters. For others, it is through starting to feel the impacts of the fossil fuel economy and/or through engagement with Indigenous people and other radical struggles, that they are deepening their understandings of the problems and beginning to envision beautifully different futures.

What this discussion offers is the understanding that the systemic mistreatment of Indigenous people in Canada, the climate crisis, and the systemic mistreatment of land and waters in Canada through unsustainable extraction of resources are inextricably linked. They are deeply linked through their shared root cause of colonial-capitalism and the “pathological drive for accumulation that fuels [it]” (Coulthard, 2010, p.82). To truly address these pressing crises in Canada, they need to be addressed simultaneously, and in ways that targets the root causes driving both. It seems clear that to move towards a future on these lands that is ecologically viable and socially just, we need to actively work towards *both decarbonizing and decolonizing* Canada. These two pathways and goals are entwined and inextricable.

Possible tensions. I have presented these analyses of the crises and visions of the future in a way that assembles them together like pieces of a puzzle, each interview quote contributing something to the growing picture. And I do believe that there are ways that all these visions of the future are compatible and could co-exist. But this is not necessarily the case. Although I have chosen not to focus on it in this chapter, different analyses and visions may be in conflict - *if* they do not take each other into account. For example, the anarchist vision of autonomy could work against decolonial goals if they build their autonomous zones on stolen Indigenous land without permission. Or if settler communities develop community-based solar power projects that are

only affordable to wealthy residents, this would be counter to the work of undoing class-based oppressions.

It is important to think deeply about what and who any given analysis of the crises leaves out and to ask ourselves who our own vision for a better future includes and who it does not include. We don't all have to fight on all fronts at the same time, nor do we all have to have the precisely same end goal or pathway in mind, but we can develop practices whereby our goals and strategies do not impede others'.

Last thoughts. I hope to have done justice in this chapter to the powerful analysis and beautiful visioning that is going on in these movements - at blockades, in meeting rooms, and on the streets. These analyses and visions offer important insight and inspiration to anyone interested in transforming Canada towards justice and sustainability. Though possible, decarbonization and decolonization involve huge changes – changes that seem politically infeasible. There is great resistance to these changes, in the form of vested interests by those in power, those benefiting from the unjust and unsustainable status quo. It is the work of social movements to build counter-power and to change what is politically possible. Thinking hard about how to build powerful movements and how movements then bring about transformative change are the guiding questions of this research project.

We turn now to the pressing question – how does large scale, systems change happen? - the central theme of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – The movements' theories of change.

“How does change really happen? ... These are pedagogical questions, meaning they are meant to be asked in community, in conversation with lived life. The answers are important, yes, but more important is the opportunity to think and feel through these questions collectively” (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.138).

5.1. Introduction

The mounting social and ecological crises we face globally call for massive transformations to our social, economic, and political systems. *But how does such large scale, intentional systems change come about? How can social movements push this change towards more just and sustainable futures for humanity and non-human life on earth?* Where chapter 3 brought together theories of change from across diverse bodies of scholarly literature, this chapter explores the theories of change held by activists in the anti-pipeline, environmental/climate justice, and Indigenous land defense movements in Canada to help answer those pressing questions.

In this introductory section I explain why investigating the theories of change held by movement actors is important. In section 5.2, I present the theories of change shared by individuals in the movements, categorizing them by four overarching themes and many subthemes. In section 5.3, I discuss the convergences and divergences across the various theories of change. Section 5.4 seeks to get beyond the divergences and presents frameworks for helping us *think across* different theories and *work across* different approaches to change. In Section 5.5 I summarize what I have learned from this exploration of the activist and land defenders' theories of change.

5.1.1 Rationale

Why focus on theories of change? Well-thought out theories of social change that can inform effective action are crucial at this moment in time (Tuck & Yang, 2013). Yet scholarship explicitly about social change remains limited and much of the time activists do not have the time to step back from urgent action on the ground to reflect on their own theories of change (Tuck & Yang, 2013). Our understandings of change often remain in the shady realm of unstated

assumptions, rather than being pulled out into the light of day for rigorous debate, scrutiny, and reflection (ibid). I contend that by remaining in the realm of unspoken assumptions, they 1) can render our strategies for change less effective and 2) can create tensions between agents of change who hold conflicting, yet unspoken ideas about change - and that these tensions may hinder collaboration.

Take for example the 2017 “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: A Second Notice”. Signed by 15,364 scientist signatories from 184 countries, the letter includes the following passage, rife with implied understandings of *how change happens*. They write:

“As most political leaders respond to pressure, scientists, media influencers, and lay citizens must insist that their governments take immediate action as a moral imperative to current and future generations of human and other life. With a groundswell of organized grassroots efforts, dogged opposition can be overcome, and political leaders compelled to do the right thing. It is also time to re-examine and change our individual behaviors, including limiting our own reproduction ... and drastically diminishing our per capita consumption of fossil fuels, meat, and other resources” (Ripple et al., 2017, p.1).

Implied in these calls to action are the assumptions that the kind of social changes that could solve the environmental crisis happen through expressing public will in order to convince decision-makers to make the right decisions and/or through individual consumption choices and life-style change. These assumptions point towards two of the more common debates over conflicting theories of change. One is *whether the kinds of change we need can be brought about from within existing political systems*. Duncan Green, author of the 2016 book *How Change Happens*, writes that “an enduring tension exists between ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ activists” (p. 229). “Unsurprisingly, outsiders think the insiders are sell-outs who muddy the waters through compromise or hijack their issues, while insiders often view outsiders as politically naïve purists” (Green, 2016, p. 230).

The other common tension is around the question of *whether individual actions can lead to systemic change*. In his response to the Wynes & Nicolas (2017) article advocating for

individual lifestyle changes to solve climate change (including having fewer kids, eating less meat, etc.), Canadian investigative journalist Martin Lukacs argued in the *Guardian* (2017) that the idea that we can fight climate change as individuals is itself an idea promoted by neo-liberalism precisely because it is ineffective. He urges those concerned with climate change to “[s]top obsessing with how personally green you live – and start collectively taking on corporate power”. He goes on to say that

“[w]hile we busy ourselves greening our personal lives, fossil fuel corporations are rendering these efforts irrelevant ... Eco-consumerism may expiate your guilt ... But it’s only mass movements that have the power to alter the trajectory of the climate crisis. This requires of us first a resolute mental break from the spell cast by neoliberalism: to stop thinking like individuals” (Lukacs, 2017, n.p.).

Clearly the assumptions about change expressed in the 2017 *World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity* are not givens. Change is remarkably complex, and theories of change are hotly contested. “If anyone knew what the answer was on how to make change, things would be very different ... no one has the answers” (Int#11). Explicit study of the process of intentional social transformation and deep reflections about our own theories of change are needed in order to generate more effective strategies and to forge wider collaborations towards systemic change.

“Much of daily life tries to facilitate change, but opportunities to think together about how change happens are far rarer” (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.137). I follow Tuck & Yang, who advocate for “a pedagogical engagement with change, involving conversation and reflections about how change happens” (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.13). Where Tuck and Yang “*think with youth* about theories of change” (2013, p.19), I have been *thinking with activists and land defenders in the movements I am involved with*, about theories of change.

5.2 Presenting the movements’ theories of change

In the following pages, I will bring into dialogue the theories of change held by activists in these movements, which I gathered through interviews (Int#), surveys (S#), and at public events (E#). The wide variety of perspectives on the process of change that are presented below

reflects the complexity of the problems and the complexity involved in the kind of change necessary. So much needs to change, and so many things are required to make such changes transpire. I have approached this with the contention that each person's theory contributes an insight, a piece of the puzzle, and by bringing them together in this chapter we gain access to a wider and deeper view of the process of transformation.

In the process of coding the interviews, surveys, and event data, themes began to emerge. In a wide sweep, these conversations provide insight into how transformation happens through a convergence of 1) *The Context*, 2) *How We Understand and What We Value*, 3) *How We Take Action*, and 4) *How We Relate*. Each of these 4 themes is broken down further into sub-themes. I have conceptualized the 4 themes and subthemes as indicated in the following graphic (Figure 2). The remainder of the chapter presents each theme and subtheme in turn.

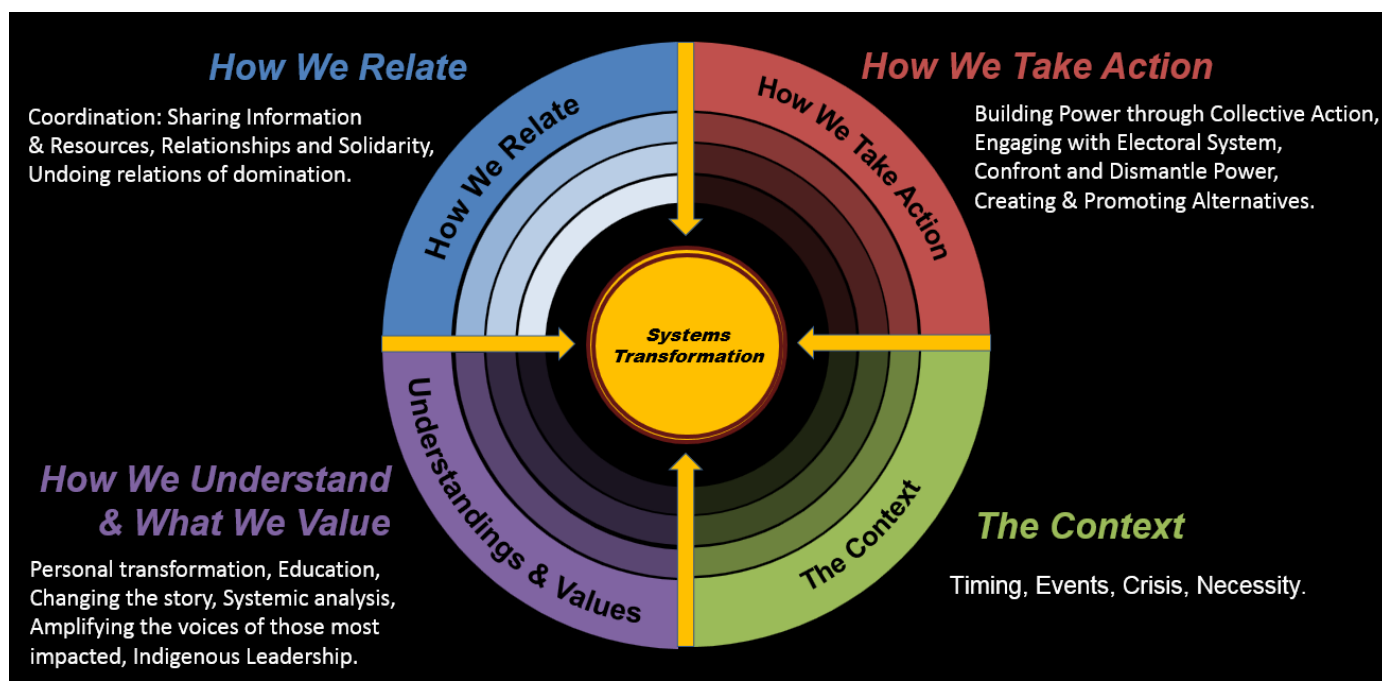


Figure 2: The Movements' TOC, All themes and subthemes

5.2.1 The context

When I asked activists how they think large scale change happens, many pointed out that so much depends on context. It's the relationship between what we do, and the context in which we do it, that shapes change. Context can determine which tactics work and when. It determines

whether your action gets traction (Int#19). “There is no one size fits all ... you have to examine the context, the location, the political climate you're in” (Int#20 Michif Cree). This requires activists to be fluid and “constantly attentive to context” (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). By being attentive to context, we can try adapt as conditions change. Being attentive to context can help us be more effective agents of change. People spoke about context in terms of *Timing, Events, Crisis, and Necessity*,

Timing. Timing is a crucial contextual factor. Different times in history call for and enable different forms of collective change agency, reshaping “both the terrain on which movements move and the human beings who take up these struggles” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.25). At certain points in time, change is more possible than at others. The people I spoke with described this in various ways: political opportunities, tipping points, key moments, and political sweet spots. SMS scholars such as Tarrow (2011) refer to opportunity structures. There are certain moments when the state is more ‘receptive or vulnerable’ to movements’ collective action (McAdam et al., 1988). Movements also shape the opportunity structures that open to them (Tarrow, 2011). Activists need to be “mindful of these changes as they come into view” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16).

For example, election outcomes and changes in political power can create differing constraints and opportunities for change and these call for different strategies for “wedging open and undermining the power structures ... With the more liberal government, you have to work around slippery rhetoric. While with conservative power, you have to deal with the hammer of law of enforcement and fear” (Int#29). The question becomes: what approaches to change work at which points in time? One activist told me that change is more likely to happen when our actions and messages resonate with the cultural zeitgeist of the moment in a certain place. He referred to this as the ‘Overton Window’. According to him, we need to ask: “what's currently possible, politically, here and now? And is our activism reflecting that?” (Int#6). Another explained this attentiveness to context as “revolutionary acupuncture ... you put the needle at the right spot at the right moment (Int#19).

Events. People spoke also of the impact events have on change processes. “Unfortunately, it can take drastic things to happen so people will start changing” (Int#7

Kanien'kehá ka). These 'drastic things' happen in the form of events which trigger change (S#34). "There's always a little spark that starts it. [Many] revolutions in history started with a riot and a bread line ... There were people organizing beforehand, but then all of a sudden, there's a flashpoint and then everybody comes out" (Int#5). Whether it be natural disasters, surprising election outcomes, an act of state violence, or the death of a movement leader, events can create conditions that make change more possible. Some changes in context are predictable and easier to adapt to – such as new governments taking power after elections. Other changes in context can be much less predictable, such as a natural disaster.

Intentional social change becomes more possible when powers that be are weak or experiencing crises of legitimation (see Weber), when events disrupt people's taken for granted understanding of social reality (Snow et al., 1998) or when periods of disruption and instability that social controls are weakened enough such that people become available to participate in collective action (Piven & Cloward, 1979). This can lead to social change, but may not be long lived as social control and routine re-establish themselves and serve to demobilize people (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

Necessity. Several people expressed the notion that people don't change unless they have to; that systems don't change unless they are forced to. For example, "most people are never going to be vegan, unless we run out of meat" (Int#14). Reflecting on the collective effort that was mobilized during the Second World War, another activist told me "it wasn't voluntary ... That was decided at a high political level, because it was a national emergency. They said, "this is the new deal". It wasn't a choice. So, everyone did it" (Int#2). Certain kinds of events create conditions that necessitate changes in how we understand, in how we live, and how society is organized.

Crises. Often, the kinds of events that make change necessary are crises. "We need some kind of other story to take us over, and sometimes that happens through crisis and catastrophe" (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). Crises can come about on their own, or they can be triggered by human agency. The many contradictions inherent within capitalism promote inequality and instability and economic crises, all of which serve as grievances and opportunities for collective action (Harvey, 2014).

Direct action can be a means of creating crises. People blocking train tracks and roads, for example, creates crisis in the system. Crisis and other disturbance within a system can make it more amenable to change (Moore et al., 2014). The disruption of the status quo which occurs in times of crisis makes transformation more possible than during times of stability.

Crisis can change people's perceived self-interest and what they will stand up for and stand up to. "A lot of people engage in conflict because there is no choice. They know that their future depends on engaging in conflict" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). One activist explained her TOC as "kind of cynical ... I think there are windows of opportunity that are presented, often in times of crises, often manufactured by massive systemic forces we have no control over. The people who are able to have a massive impact in those moments are the ones who are expecting them and are organized and able to take those opportunities" (Int#28).

According to several people I spoke with, echoing Naomi Klein's arguments in *The Shock Doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism* (2007), crisis provides opportunities for change but unfortunately, the political right has proven to be better than the left at creating and seizing crises. They do so through a politics of fear that produces hostility towards others. "It's not to say that we need to organize the way that the right organizes. But we need to understand that over the last few decades they've done an incredible job of seizing those crises and taking over all the institutions. [They are] better than us at movement building and at actually governing" (Int#28).

Given how much needs to change on such a pressing timeline, learning to understand the contexts in which we act and to strategically seize moments of opportunity can help speed up and leverage our work. Context is important, but there are many more forces and factors that determine change. This brings us to the second dimension of change: *How We Understand and What We Value*.

5.2.2 How we understand and what we value

In this dimension of change lies the realm of culture, the realm of hearts and minds. It is how we work to shift the thought systems and values systems that prop up the structures and institutions that drive the social and ecological crises. It's how we foster the values, understandings, and worldviews from which a more just and sustainable future can grow. As one

Indigenous land defender from Ecuador told an audience at the World Social Forum in Montreal in 2016 when I asked him what was holding back the changes that are needed, “the barriers are inside of us. The most important thing is to change our mentality” (E#2). We need to “shift the conversation, shift the frame, the imagination” (Int#26).

The contention here is that as peoples’ understandings and values change, so can their willingness to act to bring about transformation. How we understand and what we value informs strategies when we do take action for change, rendering them more or less powerful and effective. Conversations about how we understand and what we value were discussed in the following ways: *personal transformation, education, changing the story, systemic analysis, amplifying the voices of those most impacted, and Indigenous leadership.*

Personal transformation. Beliefs and values are central to social change and play a key role in who participates in social movement and why (see Weber, 1905; Kznaric, 2007). Worldviews change through new experiences, empathetic relationship with other social groups, and through long-term changes in education systems (See Mannheim, 1997; Bourdieu, 1990). Worldviews matter in terms of understanding how change happens because they shape, guide, and constrain the actions we take.

According to several of the people I spoke with, personal healing and transformation - the work of changing *our own* hearts and minds - though often not seen as such, is a form of activism and is an important dimension of how change is brought about. As the social and environmental crises unfold people experience grief for what is being lost and who is being hurt. Personal transformation is the work of unlearning internalized hierarchy that hinders our capacity for just relationships. We can unlearn the idea that there is no alternative to the status quo, that we are not powerful enough to change the world. As we wake up to the crises and wake up to our own power and agency, our own hearts and minds transform. We begin dreaming of profoundly more just futures and we become better equipped to act.

“[It’s] not just the government and the physical, financial, and economic conditions ... can we create transformation of the self along the way? That’s critical because we may change the government, we may change the industry,

but if we don't change ourselves, we're going to still have that insatiable need and greed that will drive us to find new ways of exploitation. So, we have to change ourselves. And until we do that, none of these strategies work” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Several people spoke about activism itself being transformative to individuals. One young settler activist told me his story of 5 months spent at Unist'ot'en camp in 2012 and how deeply transformative it was for him.

“[T]hat was an incredible experience for me. Everything that I did there was very meaningful for me. I'm someone who has a deep, deep need for meaning. I knew that everything I was doing there mattered. I chopped wood, that's direct action. I hauled water, that's direct action. Everything that I was doing was contributing not just from preventing something bad from happening but also contributing towards the creation of something really beautiful, a nurturing vision of a different society. Since that point, I'm really committed to doing this for life” (Int#8).

Several people pointed out that for personal change to be transformative, it needs to address power and privilege. We discussed how personal transformation looks different for Indigenous people and for settlers. Healing and personal transformation for Indigenous people is the ‘turning inwards’ to community, land, and culture, a resurgence and rebuilding of Nations and collective identity and strength; it is relearning and revitalization of existing culture and ways of life (see Couthard, Alfred, Simpson on this).

Whereas personal transformation for settlers is more about unlearning and relinquishing. Personal transformation for settlers means a profound humbling, an acceptance that we are not the heroes and do not have all the answers. It involves a relinquishing of privilege and the uneven power we hold. Settlers are being asked to “overcome the system of oppression that we have perpetrated” and to forge a culture that is “beyond rape and pillage” (Int#4). When settlers can humble ourselves, unlearn superiority, and accept that we do not have the answers, we become more “ready to hear other solutions, other answers. And maybe that's where transformation starts to take place” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Ideally, movements can be spaces where we unlearn domination and forge reciprocal, just relationships and model those for the wider world. In our activist work, we are transformed. Our worldviews are transformed. Our relationships are transformed. Our movements can be more powerful when we take care to create spaces where this healing and transformation can happen. In these ways, personal transformation can contribute to social change on a larger scale. However, there is a tendency for people to focus inwardly and stop there. Personal transformation must lead to collective action or it does not contribute to systems change.

Education. Where personal transformation is about changing our own hearts and minds, education (in this context) is the work of changing others' minds through gathering and sharing information, knowledge, and important perspectives. This is critical because "the general public has very limited knowledge on what colonialism actually is, what the treaties actually are, and even about what climate change is" (Int#12 Anishinaabe). Many activists emphasized the role that education plays in social change in terms of: educating youth in school systems; pedagogical and curriculum change; popular education as a way to mobilize more people; and educating each other within our movements. The contention here is that "the more people know about things the more likely things are to change (Int#29).

Popular movements help educate the wider public. But for movements to be able to bring about change more effectively we need internal education as well. "We need to do more trainings, more education, we need a sense of history of the movements ... about how to fight, what happened before us, what can go wrong, what can go right, how to build a strategy, a more collective strategy. That's a lot of work, that's long work, that's tiring work. But it has to be done" (Int#19).

As much as some people argued for the need for more public education, others argued that there are very important limits to this approach. One person told me "I don't have a whole lot of optimism around the idea of educating the general Canadian public. There are just too many barriers there, things that people don't want to hear" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). As another person put it "we're facing cowards, who don't understand that they've grown up colonized, that they've grown up racist" (E#21). Education on its own does not lead to transformative action. It is important but insufficient on its own. Change must be enacted.

Changing the story. Where education, in this context, is about changing minds with information, changing hearts is more a matter of culture, of narrative, of values. Some social movement scholars are attentive to ‘*collective action frames*’ which movements collectively formulate to express their grievances, the need for change, and reasons for action (Davis, 2002). Social-ecological systems transformation scholars Moore et al. (2014) identify ‘*Sense-making*’ as an important stage in bringing about transformative change. This happens as people work to make sense of the current situation, by analyzing which parts or dynamics of the systems most need changing (Moore et al., 2014). Through this, people “construct meaningful explanations for situations” they want to change (Gioia, 1986, p.81). Related to this process of framing and sense making is the work of *envisioning* which helps foster the idea that a different order of things is possible and helps flesh out what the alternative ‘order of things’ may be like (Moore et al., 2014).

Stories are central to this. We live by stories which turn information into meaning. Movement stories can foster “a powerful collective identity” that compels action and brings in new participants to the movements (Davis, 2002, p.24). The stories we tell ourselves and each other are key to facilitating or hindering social change. As Reinsborough and Canning put it, “every social change effort is inherently a conflict between the status quo and the change agents to control the framing on an issue. This is the battle of the story” (2010, p.17). They go on to say that “many of our current social and ecological problems have their roots in the silent consensus of assumptions that shape the dominant culture (e.g. humans can dominate and outsmart nature, women are worth less than men, racism and war are part of human nature, economies must grow). To make real and lasting change, these stories must change” (Reinsborough & Canning, 2010, p.5). Identifying and challenging underlying assumptions is probably the most important element to changing the story.

This realm of change is both about creating and sharing stories that can undergird a just and sustainable human presence on these lands we call Canada. But it is also about disrupting the problematic stories that hold injustice in place. People spoke about the need to develop compelling stories of radical change being possible. We need new stories that disrupt the old narratives such as ‘jobs versus the environment’. We need stories that re-embed humans as part

of nature, stories that compel us to believe that humans are capable of so much more beauty, empathy, and co-existence. Sometimes we teach new stories to each other, sometimes with words and sometimes through our actions. Environmental and social crises can also change the stories people live by. They can fracture old logic and create cracks through which new narratives emerge.

Often in our work of changing culture, we are talking to people who already agree with us. We need to reach beyond the usual suspects, to talk beyond the choir. This means talking to people that don't already agree with us. It means talking to them from where they are at and finding common ground. It means waking people up, but not necessarily by scaring them. It means creating new characters that transcend stereotypes. Many people emphasized that person-to-person contact is a powerful way to change hearts and minds. "There's no greater force than minds coming together to understand and respect how we're going to share this earth. Dialogue is best" (S#37).

Many people made the important point that it matters deeply who is telling the stories. A Dene woman told me "being able to tell stories and to say things truthfully in a good way ... That's a bit of an obstacle. Who gets to talk? What does it mean to have a voice and to share that voice? That's a big thing" (Int#25 Dene). Who is doing the telling can shape the story. Stories told from the frontlines are very different from those told through mainstream media or through big NGO media campaigns. "It matters who are the heroes, who are the villains in the stories we tell" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Many of Indigenous people I spoke to emphasized story-telling as central to their cultures and their approaches to change. Coburn writes: "the reinvention of Indigenous stories, the creation of specifically Indigenous narratives rooted in Indigenous understandings of relationships, is an instance of resurgence, (and) it is, at the same time, necessarily resistance to colonial narratives and relations of violence" (Coburn, 2015, p.33). Kelly Aguirre, mestiza scholar of Nahua and Nùu savi descent writes about the "difficult process of relearning our own stories, internalizing them, as well as challenging and dislodging those that have been imposed on us" (in Coburn, 2015, p.33). Hayden King writes that understanding and interpreting Indigenous stories may be a principled way of beginning to reimagine healthy relationships

among Indigenous peoples – and perhaps if they are willing to listen, with non-Indigenous people (quoted in Coburn, 2015, p.37).

Systemic analysis. Another key insight that emerged from these conversations is that to bring about change we need to understand and accurately name the problems we face. This means understanding the systems and structures that generate the social and environment crises. This is not easy because the roots of the crises lie in systems and structures that are hard to see. We need to uncover and lay them bare, developing shared political analyses that allow us to agree on targets that can bring about transformative change. To change a system, we need to understand how that system works. This is no easy task.

As one person said, “part of my theory of change is that it is very difficult to see what the structures are because we are so deep in them” (Int#29). But it is vital to be able to, to ensure that we’re choosing effective targets for our change efforts. We must ask “do we have our eye on the proper problem? The real thing that’s concerning us?” (Int#28). In comparison to other times in history of social movements, “our political consciousness is a little less deep now” (Int#32).

To develop “more than a superficial understanding” of what’s wrong (S#37), we need a really deep “systemic analysis of colonialism and capitalism, to really build revolutionary mindsets, that don’t sacrifice anything” (E#15). Do we want to “just replicate what the system looks like now? Just replace the people in power? Or can we move on to a more meaningful dialogue and start talking about how to change the system that created this?” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw). Indeed, much promise for social transformation lies in these “analyses and connections [that] are only starting to be made” (Int#11).

Systems thinkers emphasize that understanding of systems comes from the examination of how the different elements of a system relate to each other and operate together, and not from the examination of the components in isolation. These relationships determine how a system behaves (Meadows, 2008). But understanding the different forms of agency and power that shape these relations is crucial. Intersectional feminist scholarship has contributed greatly to analysing how different forms of domination and how different forms of powers interact to shape people’s lives and societal dynamics. Collins and Bilge argue that to create powerful strategies, clear analysis

of power relations is required and that the “power relations are to be analysed both via their intersections, for example of racism and sexism, as well as across domains of power” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 27). It is these more complicated strategies that can really transform the political and economic status quo (Smith, 2016). For example, really understanding the economic and political systems that drive extractivism in Canada – analysing which people in the country are most benefiting and least benefiting from it, who is making the decisions and who is excluded and why, how decisions are made, and that underlying forces prop all this up, can really help us design more deeply transformative strategies.

Systemic analysis helps us connect the dots between struggles which are often understood and waged separately - environment, labour, Indigenous rights, women’s rights and others. Developing this systemic analysis can help us get past some of the ideological infighting that plagues the left. It deepens our understanding of what’s wrong and strengthens our ability to make radical change by forging connections across struggles. Indeed, Cox and Nilsen contend that if activists can “engage in a critical interrogation of the structures the engender the problems they seek to address” they then stand a chance of developing counter hegemonic power for transformation (2014, p.82).

Amplifying the voices of those most impacted. Many people I interviewed made the point that no one can see more clearly the systems and what is wrong with them better than the people most impacted by them. The call to center, raise up, and amplify the voices of those marginalized and most impacted is central to bringing about the kind of change the I am part of seek. It is both a moral imperative and a strategic one because when those impacted have a say, better decisions get made. Indigenous people, racialized people, women, LGBTQ2S peoples – those most harmed by and least benefiting from the current system – have critical perspectives about what is wrong and what needs to be done. Hearing and heeding these voices is key to decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada. A major challenge and point of tension with this pathway for change is that “narratives are usually hijacked and dominated by the more powerful media sources” (Int#21) and the voices that are most important to be heard are silenced or tokenized.

Indigenous leadership. Indigenous leadership is pivotal for transforming Canada. I heard this again and again, in different ways in my research. “Militant organizing by Indigenous people is the most promising force we have for real change” (S#3). “These are constructive movements. They are resisting pipelines but they offer an alternative to how we can live together in peace and how to be wiser with our lifestyles” (Int#17). “Indigenous Nations, and the ones specifically fighting pipelines are the ones with the solutions, not just the band-aids” (Int#12 Anishinaabe). “The fact that so many environmental initiatives are now being led by Indigenous activists. That gives me hope” (S#23).

To put dignity and justice into our relationships in this country and to build powerful movements, it is crucial that settlers, especially those who continue to benefit most from the status quo (wealthy, white, cis, straight men, for example) step back from positions and attitudes of leadership and instead listen to, take leadership from, and actively support Indigenous people and others marginalized by the unjust systems. This is central to many people’s theories of change.

Many factors prompt the need for centering and elevating Indigenous leadership in these movements. These include that: Indigenous communities are most (and first) impacted by the social and environmental crises and as such their struggles have the urgency of struggles for survival; Indigenous people hold special rights in relation to their territories; their agency inherently targets the systems driving the crises; they have been fighting this fight for hundreds of years; their worldviews, identities, livelihoods and laws, characterized by connection to land and water, inspire a powerful willingness to defend them; and their worldviews do not separate human from non-human nature. They are best positioned to envision beneficial futures for both. Also, it’s their land.

All these factors stand in contrast to settler agency. Though people I talked to brought up the important point that Indigenous change agency should not be essentialized, or over-generalized, there is clear consensus that Indigenous communities are powerful leaders. Settlers seeking radical change can best help make change by actively supporting Indigenous communities on the frontlines of these struggles. Though settlers need to follow direction from Indigenous people, this doesn’t mean settlers should leave the fight up to Indigenous people.

Importantly, while playing an active but supportive role can mean strategic use of colonial privilege, mostly it means relinquishing this privilege and giving up the plunders of colonialism that have accrued to settlers.

This section has explored the TOCs emphasizing the transformative power of changing *how we understand and what we value*. Personal Transformation, Education, Changing the Story, Systemic Analysis, Amplifying the voices of those most impacted, and Indigenous leadership all play important roles. But important tensions are uncovered in bringing these TOCs together: If white settlers are still holding the mic, amplifying the voices of others is not transformation; personal transformation doesn't lead to collective transformation, it must be linked to collective action; facts on their own don't change people's minds; changing the story is important, but this work must not replicate the coercive tools of marketing. Many common strategies in the movements stop at education, or stall in the realm of the individual. Each of these dimensions, in themselves, can be done in ways that are transformative and in ways that are not. Each is not enough on its own. Each of these approaches for change becomes more transformational when working in concert with and bolstered by the other approaches. Importantly, changing hearts and minds will not lead to change without the more direct work of taking action. It is action we turn to next.

5.2.3 How we take action

Along with Context and How We Understand and What We Value, *How We Take Action* was another key dimension of activists' theories of change. This is where the fruits of changing hearts and minds hits the ground, translating knowledge, concern, and intention into concrete action and building power. It is how activists work to impact on the systems, structures, and institutions that drive the social and environmental crisis.

Building power from below through collective action. There is broad agreement among the people I spoke to that for systems transformation to happen, there need to be masses of people coming together and forming collectivities to organize, mobilize, provide leadership, and take action together. Doing this while combining forces through coalitions with other groups is how we build people power from the bottom up. There is agreement that building a broad base is best done through the grassroots. Building power from below doesn't just happen automatically

when a bunch of people come together. Their numbers need to be translated into power. This happens though *organizing*. Building power also requires reaching beyond the choir and attracting many more people to our movements. This is the work of *mobilizing*. Activists I spoke with also emphasized leadership and the importance of *coalition building* – within and across movements - and that *campaigns* are a key way for channeling power from below.

Another form of collective action for building power from below is self-determination of Indigenous Nations. This was central to several people's TOCs. This is power generated through community and culture and through connection to place. The theory of change here is that when Indigenous people enact their own governance systems, lifeways and culture, colonial structures begin to lose power. "We have to [gain] control of ourselves, and we have to be able to form our own governments ... have our own decision-making process and our own leadership selection process" (Int#16 Kanien'kehá:ka). Decolonial change also involves the collective action of settler Canadians. One Indigenous activist emphasized that people-power generated by settler social movements should be used to "funnel money and legal support to the front lines", to support Indigenous land claims or communities fighting pipelines (Int#12 Anishinaabe).

There is consensus that movements from below are how we build the power needed to make change, but there are important divergences among activists' TOCs in term of how best to wield this power. One organizer provides a very useful metaphor that helps us think through these divergences. He argues that change is brought about through "chaotic, creative, people-powered movements" and directing "a firehose of people-power" at key targets (E#10). One crucial question is which actors constitute the grassroots. Some envision communities themselves holding and directing the firehose of people-power, whereas others see organizations and unions holding and directing that firehose. Some activists emphasize that the communities are the key agents of change in and of themselves, where others (especially those on the traditional left, involved in union organizing) emphasize the pivotal role of organizers and leaders who "need a following and people on the ground" (S#37).

Many people stress the importance of 'campaigns' as a key way to mobilize, concentrate, and direct the firehose of people-power. In contrast to 'one-off reactionary' efforts in 'moments of crisis', with campaign organizing "there's an actual goal to work towards and you make a

change through concerted efforts to bring about that change” (Int#11). In contrast, some think that campaigns, limited by achievable, measurable goals, keep our focus too constrained and can cause movements to lose the longer-term vision for more radical systems change.

Perhaps the most conflicting point among theories of building power from below pivots on where to point the firehose of people-power. For some people I spoke with, the pressure forged in collective action makes change through influencing government decision-makers. For others, who place less faith in governments’ ability to bring radical systems change, power from below does the work governments won’t do. Movements bypass government to bring about changes to culture, lives, and systems. They advocate for directing the fire hose of people-power at directly delegitimizing and dismantling the existing systems, and creating new systems based on just and sustainable ways of meeting our basic human needs. Despite all these divergent ideas of building power from below, there is full agreement that the resurgence of Indigenous self-determination and culture is a powerful transformative force for building collective power towards decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada.

Though the people I spoke with all agree that building power from below through collective action is crucial, we are in less agreement about which actors constitute ‘from below’, what forms of leadership are best, and how that power is best wielded and directed. Is this divergence a problem or does it represent a useful diversity of approaches to change? Can building and directing people power ‘from different angles’ be effective or is there a need to channel all the people power that we can muster through the same hose, and at the same target? We will address these questions further in sections 5.3 and 5.4. But first we will go more deeply into some of the different and divergent targets for the fire hose of people-power to aim at: *engaging the electoral systems, confronting and dismantling power, creating and promoting alternatives.*

Engaging with the electoral system. The electoral system came up many times when people spoke about their theories of change, but in wildly different ways. Where some believe that the work of social movements is to influence government decision-making and that change happens through this interaction, others argue that system change cannot come through governments because they will always serve to maintain the system.

It is clear that important changes can and do come through putting pressure on decision-makers and that whoever gets elected has enormous impact on environmental and social outcomes. As some see it, social change usually involves “a very large social mobilisation linked to a progressive political party” (S#33) and “mass movements pushing governments to change” (S#36). Policy and legislative change happen when “politicians feel supported” to make those changes (Int#6). Arguing for social movement engagement with electoral politics, one person told me “fundamentally, we’re trying to push the political system. And if we can’t do that, we might as well go home and start drinking (S#37).

Some of the people I spoke with emphasized electoral politics as key to social change. That said, the conflicting views on this suggests important limits to seeking change through the electoral systems. For people who have been working to influence politicians for decades, the lack of impact is dispiriting. “Organizing is something I’ve been doing for 40 years. I feel lost. I recognize we have to challenge the state. But I don’t know what the vehicle for that is. Relying on [political parties] ... I’ve lost faith in that. We need something beyond the [usual approaches to change]. We talk about this almost every meeting: How *do* we resist? (S#37).

People explained the limits to change through the political system in various ways that include: huge scale systemic change will not come through electoral politics, that is not its job; looking to the governments to do something they cannot do diverts our energies from creating the necessary changes ourselves; the incentives created by the political systems mean politicians need to care about short-term, narrowly-focused issues; corporate influence hugely biases governmental decision-making; we can’t afford the lobbying and backing of candidates that the other side can, so we will always lose that battle; and lastly, we don’t actually live in a democracy.

“[People] buy into that myth that a political party represents our interests, but they really don’t. They represent what’s going to get them elected. We’re recognizing that government can’t rescue us ... when it comes to figuring out how we are going to get through [climate chaos] and work together, it comes down to the people at the community level who can make change happen. So, we’re not waiting for government. We’re going to look to ourselves” (Int#37).

How do we make sense of these compelling arguments for and against engaging in electoral politics to drive change? Engaging with politics may be necessary for damage control, for slowing and stopping bad policy, and destructive development. Some important reforms, such as legislation to implement carbon taxes and to subsidize clean energy, can only come through the political system. But other kinds of deeper change will not come about through politicians making policy and legislation. In terms of decolonizing Canada, it is unlikely that the federal government will ever willingly give up its power and control over Indigenous people and their lands.

There are clear limits to what can be achieved through the official political process, but it also seems true that “no movement has the luxury of ignoring the electoral front” (E#9). “We need to use the full toolbox and we need to be constantly finding new tools. We can't be ruling anything out” (Int#16).

How do we devise theories and strategies that take all these divergent insights into account? We need strategies that neither completely disengage from the electoral process nor invest everything in it. And “that's hard to do. It's hard to hold both ideas in your head” (Int#16). Knowing that some changes can be brought about through electoral politics but not others and seeing that policy and legislative changes are useful at certain phases of transformation but not others, we begin to ask more nuanced questions: ‘which social or ecological crises can be addressed this way?’, ‘at which stages of the long-term fight is engagement with electoral politics most likely to help reach movement goals?’, ‘which activists/groups in a movement are best positioned to engage on this front?’, and ‘how does fighting on this front fit into the broader ecosystem of change work going on, on other fronts?’

Perhaps the most pressing question is: if the electoral system in its current state cannot bring about the radical changes in our social, economic, and political systems that are urgently needed, what can?

Confront and dismantle power. The above conversation about engaging in electoral politics reflects a larger ongoing conversation about whether transformative change comes through cooperation or through confrontation with the powers that be. Where some of the TOCs

presented above see the purpose of building mass movements as demonstrating broad public will to pressure politicians in their decision-making, other activists see it as building counter-power to challenge the power wielded by the state. “We have to build a mass movement to bring about change. You can’t beg for change; you have to demand it ... power will [not] yield without force” (Int#11). Several people spoke about how historically, social changes that were big enough to restructure political and economic structures came through revolution and war. “Slavery didn’t end by slave owners deciding to be nice and free their slaves. It happened through civil war” (Int#2). From this view, all the tactics we use, from awareness-raising to mobilizing, should be part of a larger strategy that escalates in order “to force change ... This requires a diversity of tactics that include a confrontational stance” (Int#11).

Scholars of historical materialism can provide guidance here. They position contemporary movements within the context of capitalism as a way of life, a mode of production which includes the “institutional arrangements and alliances that stabilize the dominant regime, as well as the networks of alliances ... the relations of ruling and the relations of struggle” (Kinsman, 2006, p.136). Understanding capitalism (and anti-capitalism) as constituted by relations can help us see how the “alliances which underpin it work and how they can come to be taken apart ... understanding how we can form the kinds of alliances that are capable of bringing about the change we want” (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p.181). In neoliberal globalization we have been witnessing “a very effective movement from above, in conjunction with the relatively weak and ineffective forms of organization and solidarity ... in movements from below” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.28). The key insight here is “that exploitation and oppression are underpinned by powerfully organized forces who will resist all serious attempts at structural change and who will, in some form, need to be taken on and defeated” (Barker et al., 2013, p.20).

Some of the people I spoke to see the point of social movements to organize and mobilize in order to create enough force to be able to topple the existing power structures and to replace them with something else. It is only through conflict and confrontation that we can dismantle the power. They offered the following strategies for doing so: *Delegitimize, Polarize the issues, Hold Power to Account & Pose Real Threats to their Power, Cost the Bad Guys Money, Engage in Direct Action & Civil Disobedience, Collectivize the Costs of Direct Action.*

Delegitimize. “Legitimacy is the key, when you're talking about one of the powers of perception in Canada. You've got to challenge legitimacy” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). Rather than snuggling up to politicians and lobbying them to take seriously the movements' goals, instead activists can work to expose and call them out on their hypocrisy (S#37). Poke holes in the “liberal double-discourse: 1) prove they're lying, 2) attack them” (E#9).

Gramsci teaches us that “power in hegemonic states is based on perceived legitimacy”, and as such, “a counter-hegemonic movement of movements must work to delegitimize the rule of elites, while simultaneously building the legitimacy and transformative capacity of the movement” (Mackay, 2017. p.205). A problem here is that because the government provides important social services, many people are ‘rationally averse’ to destroying the current social order. “To overcome this reluctance, we have to believe that the movement seeking to overthrow the oligarchic power structure is more legitimate and a better guardian of moral community than the oligarchs” (Mackay, 2017, p.205).

Polarize the issues. “Revolutions have usually happened when you had a really big divide ... the tension builds up until people can't take it anymore and they take to the street” (Int#15). In the Canadian context, much of the injustice and inequality remain below the surface, hidden by liberal discourse. Conflict can take a problem, often hidden, and bring it to the surface. Through polarizing issues, you can take something that seems fuzzy and make it clear. Conflicts can “make clear that something is right/wrong/ridiculous/hypocritical” (S#37). Engaging in confrontational strategies helps polarize issues by showing that the state is willing to use force against people who are defending their lives and lands. This can help delegitimize the state, expose the ‘real nerve’ of what is going on and encourage more people to take a stance (Int#10).

Hold Power to Account & Pose Real Threats to their Power. “Change happens when the powerful are the ones who have to concede. This happens when there is a very real threat to the powerful people and to the power structure. In the case of the civil rights movements, it was widespread riots” (Int#30). “If we make it impossible for them to make a profit or to stay in power, they are going to change their ways” (Int#14). There are various strategies social movements have devised and used throughout history to make change, through applying force to power. They include: strikes, boycotts, property damage, lawsuits, and public shaming. These are

diverse tactics aimed at depriving corporations of their profits and removing the power of decision-makers to maintain the status quo.

Cost the bad guys money. One activist called this tactic ‘punitive strikes’, which are used to “actually punish the responsible parties” (Int#14). This can range from damaging a company’s reputation in ways that can erode shareholders’ confidence, to ‘spiking trees’ in order to “deprive the company of the profit they would hope to get from [a logging] operation” (Int#14). Citing many success stories from anti-logging activism over the last 30 years, this activist told me, “my motto still is, ‘we’re down with any action that slows down the destruction or stops it even for a minute’. If it costs the company money, affects the bottom line ... they ultimately lose over the long run. Also, it is a lesson for others who might think they can get rich that way” (Int#14).

Take Direct Action and do Civil Disobedience. To bring about the massive transformation of decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada, there is the “absolute imperative to be engaged in struggle. This 150 years of colonialism has to be confronted” (E#19). This is both a moral and a strategic imperative. “Direct action gets the goods” (S#37). “Direct action has been the most effective way of stopping [unwanted] projects ... people physically stopping projects from happening. The Unist’ot’en camp in BC, Elsipogtog in Mi’kmaq territory ... physical blockades. That has been the most successful way to go” (Int#30). Acknowledging that there have been significant victories through lawsuits and court cases, one activist argued that these wins are made more likely when mass awareness is raised through “sustained direct action, blockades, lock downs, and nonviolent civil disobedience” (Int#30).

Collectivizing the costs of direct action. The risks and costs associated with direct action and civil disobedience are usually borne by a few individuals. They face risks of police violence, arrest, incarceration, as well as legal fees, criminal records, and more. There are huge costs to this form of activism. Yet, if this form of activism is required to actually force change, we need to think hard about how to reduce the costs for people willing to engage in this way. We need to practice ways to “maximize or optimize the impact of direct action and negate the risks of it ... I think the answer is to collectivize that action and to socialize that risk ... that’s the formula whereby direct action can be translated into meaningful change: collectivize the action, socialize the risk, universalize the benefits” (TT#2).

Conflict versus Cooperation. This discussion represents another key divisive debate within and across movements. Some climate activists work to create broad support for climate action and so they discourage the kinds of conflictual tactics that could lead to losing support of large swaths of Canadian society. Some activists with goals such as dismantling capitalism, colonialism, and the Canadian state know they cannot rely on strategies requiring mass support from Canadians, which is very unlikely to be forthcoming, and so they advocate for more confrontational tactics. Confrontational tactics are criticized by some activists for being violent, but others argue that conflict is not necessarily violent, and that when it does become violent, the violence is usually initiated by the state. “I understand the nature of decolonial activism in Western society. At some point, it will lead towards conflict. Not because we want it. Not because it’s our pursuit or even a by-product of what we want. Violence, force, conflict will emerge as we challenge the power, privilege, and benefit of the elites” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw) “Conflict doesn’t just mean on the ground physical fighting. Conflict can mean economic struggle, social struggle, spiritual struggle. It means something a lot broader” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

Radically transforming Canada will require confronting the power elite and dismantling the power structures that be. However, these confrontational strategies, while necessary, aren’t sufficient. It’s not enough to confront injustice, we also need to build new systems and structures to replace the ones we seek to dismantle.

Creating and promoting the solutions. Another key theme in the movements’ theories of change, is that change happens through innovating, promoting, and living the alternatives and solutions to the problems we’re working to address. This is another direction to aim that ‘firehose of people-power’: we build collective power to build the infrastructure, institutions and relations that will comprise the world we want.

“We must find alternatives” (Int#17), and “more inspirational politics” (E#3). “When you’re yelling ‘Fire!’, everybody can hear that, but they don’t necessarily know what to do. It’s not as potent as saying ‘Here’s the pump, here’s the water’” (Int#1). As movements, how can we not only yell fire, but actively help communities access the pump and the water?

“People often find it very hard to envision themselves in this zero-carbon world” (Int#35). How can 36 million people house, feed, employ, transport, and otherwise organize and care for ourselves and each other, in equitable ways within ecological limits, and in ways that reverse the climate destabilizing impacts our industrial capitalist system has created? How can we do this in ways that undo the extreme inequality between Indigenous people and settlers? And how can we enact these solutions while settler capitalism remains the order of the day?

Systems theorist, Joanna Macy, refers to this dimension of change as the development of ‘Life-sustaining Systems and Practices’ which involve a rethinking of the way human societies are organized and function and how they provide for human needs. This work is the “creative redesign of the structures and systems that make up our society” (Macy, 2009, p.96). This can include green building, alternative energy systems, cooperative forms of ownership, new forms of governance, permaculture and agroecology, alternative transportation, ethical financial systems, skill shares and community teach-ins.

Feminist economic geographers J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) offer important work on thinking passed capitalism. They define alternatives as “practices, performances, systems, structures, policies, processes, technologies, and concepts/frameworks, practiced or proposed/propagated by any collective or individual, communities, social enterprises, etc. that usurp, challenge the capitalist mainstream and that reflect a diversity of exchange relations, social networks, forms of collective action and human experiences in different places and regions” (Temper et al. 2018, p.12).

Aligned closely with Gibson-Graham’s theory of change which focuses on building alternatives, scholars of Solidarity Economy such as Ethan Miller emphasize that ‘the economy’ is a social construction. He points out that there are no ‘economic laws’, and as such there is nothing inevitable about capitalist economic relations. “We make our economies, and therefore we can make them differently” (Miller, 2012, p.12). The solidarity economy movement works to build alternative practices, institutions and policies, “while other social movements have a greater focus on resistance and building power to achieve demands for social and economic justice. These are two ends of a spectrum, groups in between practice a mixture of both, but the important thing is to see the spectrum as one movement that needs to be united in order to

achieve justice and transformation” (Allard & Davidson, 2008, p.20-21). For these and other anti-capitalist thinkers engaging with the Solidarity Economy movement, social transformation does not hinge on revolution, nor does it wait for capitalism to ‘hit the fan’. “We can begin here and now, in our communities and regions, connected with others around the world, to construct and strengthen institutions and relationships of economic solidarity” (Miller, 2008, p.26). This process becomes transformative is “through the accretion and interaction of small changes in place” as a movement of movements grows connecting people across different places and circumstances. “This is one way that (counter)hegemony is enacted” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.196).

The following are insights, shared by the people I spoke with, about how building the solutions and alternatives can drive transformation.

The Yes brings more people to the movement than the No. Showing people viable alternatives is a great way to engage people around a social or environmental problem. It can inspire, rather than scare them (Int#1). Concrete examples can help solutions seem possible, and this can help compensate for the fact that “people are unlikely to support or mobilize for social change if they see alternatives as unlikely or radical” (S#23). It’s very easy to see capitalism and colonialism and climate change as inevitable. “We need to show there are alternatives to the god-awful capitalist system” (S#28). In addition, having concrete solutions to point to can be impactful, when lobbying decision-makers about an unwanted development project. They can be more easily persuaded to support your position if they see a viable alternative available.

Living the solutions can help us ward off activist burn out. Resistance is stressful and exhausting and often done under great pressure. Spending some of our energies living and promoting the solutions can help ward off activist burn out. Helping enact the solutions can be the inspiration and hope that fuel our continued resistance work (Int#10).

Providing for ourselves can reduce our dependence on the state and their services. The colonial state maintains significant legitimacy and control by providing essential services for citizens. By relearning the skills to provide for ourselves, to make decisions together, and govern ourselves, we build towards the world we want and we reduce our dependence on the

state. This allows us more space from which to resist; it is easier to oppose and dismantle something when there are other systems to move towards. This can be important work, but we must ask how those who are forging independence from the state (e.g. ‘back-to-the-landers’) can remain connected to movements, to other fronts of the struggle (Int#17). And we must ask whose land we are enacting the solutions on.

Meeting people’s real needs. What if activists brought jobs to communities? Perhaps most importantly, by focusing on the solutions, our movements could help frontline communities identify and build viable alternatives to the jobs and revenues from extractive industries. It is a momentous challenge for communities facing poverty crises to turn down the revenue brought by polluting industry. Movement and community efforts to create alternative sources of jobs and revenue to front line communities can be a very high leverage strategy for bringing radical change - we resist by enacting solutions. “So maybe [change] comes down to those sparks where people can say, we don't need the fracking, we don't need the pipelines. Because in actual fact, we've got lots of other stuff going on already. We don't need to sign up for that” (Int#2). This requires the skills and capacity to do so and it also requires relationships of trust and accountability with the frontline communities.

Survival Pending Revolution. One activist argued that a crucial aspect of activism is helping provide for the basic needs of communities, ensuring their survival until a more just society is brought about. “I draw upon lessons from the Black Panthers. They had a saying ‘survival pending revolution’. They had breakfast clubs [and provided other community services] knowing that having their community survive was incredibly important” (Int#32). As one Indigenous leader told me, “change in Canadian culture has to take place. It's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take a long time. But it is achievable. In the meantime, we do the best we can, to survive until that part is reached” (Int#9 Kanien'kehá:ka). In a society where many people’s basic needs are not being met, helping those communities survive and be well is crucial work.

Enacting Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous sovereignty is both resistance to the state and the living of powerful alternatives to colonial relations in Canada. Resurgence of Indigenous ways of living with these lands and waters, as is happening through blockades and occupations

that are blocking pipelines, is currently, according to many people I spoke with, the most powerful and promising force for radical change in Canada. The Unist'ot'en camp as well as the [Tiny House Warriors](http://tinyhousewarriors.com/)²¹ (a group of Secwepemc women who are building small solarized homes, on wheels, along the path of the Trans Mountain pipeline in their territory) are good examples of interventions involving many approaches to change – resisting destruction, enacting the solutions, and providing for the basic needs of communities. “Our idea is to start occupying our land. It’s not just blocking the pipelines” (E#21).

Different scales of solutions. The solutions and alternatives can be practiced on different scales. The individual level of our personal lifestyles, livelihoods, and home lives: growing food on the balcony, buying food from local farmers. This is easiest to enact but does not have huge impact against a capitalist system. It becomes hard to scale up from individual- and community-level solutions to regional, national or systems level, but experimenting with ways to do this can have powerful impact.

Different dimensions of solutions. There are multiple dimensions of alternatives to unjust, unsustainable systems. The most common dimension that is conjured up in conversations about climate change is around technological solutions such as alternative energy systems. But it’s clear to many that technical solutions are important but are just the tip of the iceberg of what is needed. There is need for creating alternative governance structures and institutions whereby collective decisions are deliberated and made and through which we care for ourselves and each other. “We need different institutions; you’d have a huge change if that occurred” (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). We need alternative worldviews, ways to live, ways to govern ourselves and new ways of relating that reflect the world we want to live in.

Challenges associated with the YES. There are important challenges specific to the work of creating and implementing solutions. One key point that several people brought up is that ‘The No’ is easier to galvanize around than the ‘Yes’ (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). It may be easy to get wide agreement across movements that are against the expansion of the tar sands. However, “we all have different visions of what the Yes means. It’s hard to get agreement on

²¹ <http://tinyhousewarriors.com/>

what that actually is” (Int#35). Environmental groups and First Nations may ally to stop a pipeline, once the pipeline has been stopped, the environmental group’s goal has been met. Yet settler colonialism and capitalism are still firmly in place. It could be that our movements, in part, are more focused on resisting what we don’t want, than focusing on enacting what we do want, because there are real tensions raised when we turn our gaze to the different futures we seek.

Another challenge of the solutions approach to change is what one activist referred to as the ‘implementation bottle-neck’. “There are so many solutions and they are ready to go right now. The hard part is we are realizing that we are bottle necked” (Int#37). For example, resources and capacity are lacking to scale out community-based energy and housing projects. This is the kind of problem that could so easily be remedied by government funding, which is challenging to access through bottom-up, grassroots processes.

Solutions are not enough. Most people who emphasized the need for solutions in their TOCs did so as part of a wider TOC. As with many of the other approaches to change, making change through solutions is necessary but insufficient. Having certain groups or individuals who engage in both resistance and solutions can be powerful. “There’s a real exciting overlap to me which is putting solutions in the pathway of the problem. Like the Tiny House Warriors, like putting solar panels along the XL route etc. to inspire people to do what’s possible” (Int#39).

Like all the other forces and factors of change explored in this chapter, how we take action is hugely important but not enough on its own. What matters most is how all these different approaches raised in this chapter are brought together, how all of us working on different fronts of change, mounting diverse strategies, come together and combine forces to transform our systems. That brings us to the final over-arching theme in the movements’ TOC: How We Relate.

5.2.4 How we relate

Coordination: sharing information and resources. As we’ve seen, there are many factors and forces involved in change, and none of us can engage in all of it or do all of it well. That said, it becomes important that we think about how all the different kind of actions and initiatives fit together. How do we plan them, so they are mutually supporting? It’s not enough

that we're all doing different things, we need to think about how all these different projects, campaigns and initiatives relate to each other. Many people's TOCs emphasized that change happens when different groups and communities coordinate together. Building power happens when movement groups work well together, sharing resources and information.

Rather than seeking the next new thing, we should look around at what exists now and "think about new ways to bring it together and leverage it ... How do we connect the dots ... maximizing the impact of what everyone is doing?" (S#37). In order to "reinforce what each other is doing ... it would be helpful to develop a shared roadmap so that we're all heading in the same direction" (S#37). Such a road map requires that we be explicit about our end goals. "Maybe your strategic goal doesn't match ours but it's along the way. Maybe your strategic goal goes as far as our intermediate goals. And that's fine, let's find a way to make those goals work together and support each other. We want to see where everyone is at and start to see how a possible overall strategy can start to be assembled" (E#12). What is needed is devising ways to synergize our efforts more, without increasing administration, bureaucracy, and meeting commitments. What might that look like?

Relationships and solidarity. Relationships were a recurring theme in these conversations. "Regardless of what kind of change you want to make, it all boils down to relationships" (Int#37). One person said that "my theory of change is that relationship is the basis of everything, and then you go from there" (Int#16). People spoke about the importance of building stronger relationships between movements, between frontlines communities, between Indigenous people and settlers, between activists and communities. They spoke about people relating more within communities, across borders and across differences. People spoke about the importance of face-to-face contact and the vitally important relationship between people and the land.

Relations of solidarity between movements/sectors/groups. Change happens by "creating solidarity between social movements" (Int#24) and between social sectors. This can be especially powerful when relations of solidarity are built between unlikely allies, who aren't as yet working together, such as public sector unions and First Nations or between the environmental movement and the Movement for Black Lives. Building these relationships can

“create cross-opportunities and forge new ways of looking at the issues” (S#37). “Doing cross-sectoral organizing ... bringing these groups together is powerful” (S#37). As we organize together, we build relationships. “You can't really quantify it, the relationship building that goes on. And the shared understanding and the trust that builds up over time. That translates into better decisions” (Int#33).

“We need to work as closely as possible with First Nations, people of colour, artists and culture creators, and elders, help overcome divisions, build solidarity, and energize people to persevere through a long difficult struggle” (S#18). Fostering relations between the diverse justice movements is important – “reproductive justice, water justice, migrant justice, environmental justice, and climate justice” (E#21). Furthermore, we need cross-border strategies. “Together we are all stronger. We need to connect the struggles across borders” (E#18). “I think probably one of the things that we need to be most mindful of is expanding our allies ... strengthening our allyship among much broader political, personal, ethnic differences will allow for this movement to expand exponentially, not linearly. It's the multiplier effect” (Int#23).

Relationships between frontline Indigenous communities. There is a call for building on existing networks and developing stronger relations of mutual support among Indigenous communities. “Bringing all the frontlines together is critical for the success of all the frontlines” (E#12). Much power would be built by creating a network of mutual support among Indigenous communities all facing similar threats. This could help them share information, strategies, resources, and infrastructure (E#14).

Relations between Indigenous people and settlers. Relationships between Indigenous people and settlers are critical for transforming Canada. These are important but often deeply damaged relationships. Settlers have a way of carrying power and colonial dynamics into their relations with Indigenous people. Some environmentalists have been working to build these relationships over the last few decades of anti-logging and now anti-pipeline activism. They have often done so, in ways that reinforce rather than heal the oppressive dynamic and mistrust that

exists²². These relations, strengthened through a more just power balance, hold the potential for building the power needed to transform Canada.

Relationships between activists and communities. Change happens when activists work well with communities on the ground, such as those facing pressure from extractive industries. But these relations are not always navigated with care. “We have to meet communities where they are at. We can’t go into a community and talk about climate change and talk about fossil fuels as if these communities are the bad guys ... We are in this crisis and as a result of pushing so hard, we end up pushing people into standing more firmly rooted in their opinions” (Int#37). Increasingly, government and the fossil fuel industry have been using relationship-based strategy too. “The LNG industry came in super early and they started sitting down with hereditary chiefs and band counsels, and they started creating relationships. So, it is relationships that creates change in either direction. Whether we agree with it or not, it is relationships” (Int#37).

Relating across difference is critically important. Several people’s TOCs pivot on people relating to others who are different from themselves. “We change the world by talking to people who don’t think like we do” (E#10). “At a strategic level ... People need to meet people who are different from them ... and talk about things that are hard. And that’s the foundation of everything” (Int#28). Activists can help create spaces where we can “have these conversations to break down barriers ... that transcend political allegiances” (S#37). We need to connect across difference. “Mostly people want to feel like you understand what they’re saying. And even if you don’t agree with them, if they feel that you’ve understood their perspective or where they’re

²² See the following sources for examples of problematic, colonial relations between environmental organizations and First Nations in anti-logging struggles in British Columbia:

Clapperton, J. (2019) Environmental Activism as Anti-Conquest: The Nuuchahnulth and Environmentalists in the Contact Zone of Clayoquot Sound. *Activism on the Ground*.

Stainsby, M., & Jay, D. O. (2009). *Offsetting resistance: the effects of foundation funding and corporate fronts from the Great Bear Rainforest to the Athabasca River*.

coming from, it makes a world of difference ... that feels like the heart of the transformation, that's transformative capacity there ... the heart of what makes a good relationship" (Int#37).

"What we have to do is have lots of conversations with a lot of people. And not just on Twitter. We have to talk to *people* ... Bringing people together face to face is crucial for building relationships. There's a lack of civil space where we can talk. We do it online and that's dangerous" (S#37).

Connection to the land is at the heart of both decolonial and decarbonizing change processes. "The connection to the land will be the answer to climate change" (E#18). Connection to land and to water then connects communities, and movements, and brings change. "This water that we're fighting to protect, all across from the East to the West, is what connects us. And the impacts that these destructive projects are having on our water also connect us. That's how we're going to create a big strong force - those connections" (E#17).

Relationships undergird other approaches to change. The strength of the relationships we build strengthen our ability to mobilize, to coordinate strategies, to change the stories, to build people-power. All these are done much more powerfully and sustainably within strong relationships. As one person put it ... our work as activists is "drawing people into living in a way that puts dignity in all their relationships with all ... with self, others, planet" (S#37).

Undoing relations of domination. To build strong relationships that would make our movements powerfully transformative, we need relationships to be just. We cannot have strong relationships with people we have power over, or who have power over us. As such, we must undo relations of domination in our movement spaces. Where colonialism and capitalism have taught us relations based on competition and domination/subordination, we must learn to have just relations in our movements and communities now. "It's about painting the vision that this 'other world' is not only possible, but we're going to do it *together*. To do that, you need to be fucking solid in yourself, because so much of what we see, the Left exploding on itself - eating each other alive because we're so quick to judge and reproduce these [relations of domination] and not examine where we fuck up" (Int#10). The solutions are in our relations with each other, as we learn to "be better with each other" (Int#10).

In this section we've explored the many ways activists in these movements understand change; how they articulate their own theories of change. The overarching themes of *Context*, *How We Understand & What We Value*, *How We Take Action* and *How We Relate* provided a framework for seeing the many factors and forces of transformation that different activists brought to the discussion and emphasized. Where this previous section assembled the various pieces of the puzzle into one big picture, the next section unpacks some of the convergences, overlaps, divergences, and debates that have come to light as the pieces have come together.

5.3 Convergences, synergies, divergences, and debates

Convergences and synergies. As has been pointed out again and again, not any one of the specific approaches to change (direct action, changing the story, coordination, etc.) is itself enough. Systems change is forged through a convergence of many or all of the approaches chronicled above. One person put it like this: change is “part education, part disruption, part interrupting the colonial narrative, raising consciousness, providing platforms” (Int#36). Another said that it's

“through convergence of tactics and strategies that build political power at different levels (grassroots, civil society, sometimes government) that slowly evolve social norms and/or that create pressure for change from different angles. It sometimes relies on fortuitous timing and combination of events. It is always grounded in long-term, patient, under-thanked/-paid/-recognized work - at least those who carry the brunt - the most marginalized people who are the hardest-hit by the issue - inevitably get the least amount of glory among all the actors” (S#32).

It's the ways that different forces for change build on each other that renders them transformative. There are many examples of this and many lines of synergy we can draw between different themes presented in this chapter. Developing a shared *systemic analysis* helps activists know where to aim the fire hose of people power. Once they've *built power through collective action*, they can then most effectively target the root causes of the climate and

inequality crises. *Changing the story* about what is wrong and what can be done about it, while also *offering real viable alternatives*, can bring way more people to the movements, increasing our ability to *build power from below*. *Crises* can offer moments where people are more open to hearing *new stories* and *practicing alternatives*. These new stories and alternatives can be most transformative if they *amplify the voices of those most impacted* and follow *Indigenous leadership*. *Confronting power* through *direct action* can help create *crises* that make space for *alternatives* and new *relations* to take hold. *Undoing relations of domination* in our movements makes *building the links between different movements* much more possible, as more people find the shared movements spaces where they feel valued and welcome. With this movement of movements, we can build unprecedented *power from below through collective action*. There are endless examples of how all the different factors and forces for change work together synergistically. Thinking about how they work together can help inform our collaborations and think up ways to combine strategies and tactics to increase impact.

That said, there are also important ways that these different factors and forces for change are in tension. In certain ways and under certain circumstances they can work against each other. It's important to understand these dynamics as well, if we hope to do our work in ways that do not hinder each other's efforts.

Debates, divergences, and tensions. In bringing all these many theories of change together, we access a wider view than each of us may hold, but the wider view also exposes tensions, conflicts, and debates that exist in these movements. These points of conflict are important to attend to for several reasons: they point to some approaches to change that might need to be critically examined. Also, conflicting theories of change impact our relationships and hinder collaboration in movements and so understanding them and finding new ways to navigate these differences can open new possibilities for working together.

Here are some of the ways that, to my mind, the themes explored in section 5.2 may be in conflict. It's important to *develop strong relations* and *coordinate* within and across movements but working in coalition and having to make decisions with large groups of people can hinder our ability to respond as *context* changes, and as *events* occur that open up windows of opportunity. *Engaging with the electoral system* can be extremely useful in winning certain policy and

legislative changes but can also serve to reinforce the state and thus be counter-productive to *confronting and dismantling power*. *Direct action and civil disobedience* are powerful tactics that have won significant changes for social movements through history, but these confrontational approaches can make it harder to win the support of masses of people you may need to win an election, and thus counter-productive to strategies centered on *engaging with the electoral system*.

These and many other points of conflict reflect wider debates that are ongoing in movements around different approaches to change: reform vs. radical change; change from inside vs. from outside the systems; change from the top-down vs. the bottom up; and change through individual vs. collective action. Duncan Green, who wrote the book ‘How Change Happens’ said this about conflicting theories of change:

“Relationships between ... activists are often fraught. People bring their own worldviews to the questions of change. Do we prefer conflict (‘speaking truth to power’) or cooperation (‘winning friends and influencing people’)? Do we see progress everywhere, and seek to accelerate its path, or do we see (in our darker, more honest moments) a quixotic struggle against power and injustice that is ultimately doomed to defeat? Do we believe lasting and legitimate change is primarily driven by the accumulation of power at the grassroots/individual level, through organization and challenging norms and beliefs? Or by reforms at the levels of laws, policy, institutions, companies and elites? Or by identifying and supporting ‘enlightened’ leaders? Do we think the aim of development is to include poor people in the benefits of modernity (money economy, technology, mobility) or to defend other cultures and traditions and build alternatives to modernity? Do we want to make the current system function better, or do we seek something that tackles the deeper structures of power?” (Green, 2016, p. 3).

These debates and tensions over conflicting theories of change are alive in the movements and among the activists I spoke with. These tensions are discussed further in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. In these conversations, we reflected on the conflicting theories of change and the ways they are generating tensions and, in some cases, hindering our ability to work together, across

difference. The next section offers helpful ways to think and work more effectively across different approaches to change.

5.4 Beyond debate, bringing it all together

This wide diversity in theories and approaches to change stems in part from the fact that these people, converging to resist oil and gas pipelines, come from many kinds of backgrounds. From anarchist punks to popular educators to policy analysts to Indigenous land defenders, we all bring with us different values, worldviews, social change goals, and theories of how to get there. The urgency of the climate crisis and the ongoing push to expand the tar sands has been a catalyst for many different people and movements coming together.

“I think that the real opportunity we have with the climate movement is to organize behind one cause, and there's many solutions. The real beauty of all of this is that it's such an urgent issue that no one action is enough, and all actions are necessary, and so whatever people can bring to this movement ... We need everybody” (Int#23).

“We need people inside and people on the outside. We need people at the grassroots and people at the top” (S#37). We need radical change and incremental steps for getting there. “The fact is that different parts of the movement need each other and work together whether they actually work with each other or not” (Int#19). So, “we need movement theory that over arches and sees where people are at ... where there's a role for everyone” (Int#32).

Finding ways to bring the diverse efforts for change into one “heterogenic front” (Int#19) is promising. But at the same time, there are “some ways that things are irreconcilable. Theories of change are different, politics are different. Trying to make everyone work together all the time ends up watering down messages until they are palatable for everybody” (Int#19). Indeed, we need to find ways to work across difference that neither ignore debate nor erase difference. And we need to find ways to work with the diversity that exists in ways that are synergistic and whereby we are not pushing against each other. Indeed, “how do we make sure that what we do is in solidarity with the others' tactics?” (Int#32).

Frameworks for thinking and working across difference. Several people I spoke with offered helpful frameworks for thinking about ways to fit together different approaches to change.

End goals. Thinking about different end goals can help us think through which TOCs make sense in which context. For some radical change goals (like eliminating all power inequities) it may be that collective action, from the bottom up, is necessary. And that maybe for smaller reformist goals that don't threaten the power structure in place, top-down, insider strategies may indeed work best. For deep pervasive change, like decolonizing Canada for example, we need the agency of strong movements from below. These points of disagreement in our theories of change often hinge on exactly what kind of change we're talking about. If we can be more explicit about our end goals, we can lay them out and see where certain more surface goals, such as stopping a pipeline, or getting a left-leaning politician elected, can help support longer term end goals such as Indigenous self-determination.

Doctrines. Knowing each group's *doctrine* can also help determine how different groups' work can fit together. "A lot of us have very different doctrines. Doctrines are how you fight; the kinds of tactics you are willing to engage in. Once I know your doctrine, I know where you can fit" (E#12). Different phases of social change campaign strategies call for different kinds of tactics. Different activist groups' end-goals and doctrines both help determine where their work can best help support the overall movement (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Different phases of a fight. At various stages of a campaign or fight, different tactics are called for and different groups are called to take the lead. For example, at the beginning (when a pipeline is proposed) you may need mass support that is generated by massive awareness-raising efforts, best done by large NGOs. But as things escalate (the pipeline is getting built) you move on to direct action and more confrontational strategies, most likely to be led by grassroots groups and local communities. An activist offered another way of thinking about stages of change. "1) gather knowledge, 2) articulate and disseminate this knowledge, 3) gathering allies, 4) speak truth to power, 5) reassess where you're at, and if you haven't yet won, then you can escalate" (Int#23). Different groups have important roles to play at different phases of a fight (Int#38 Mi'kmaw, Int#14).

Three Kinds of Actions. Different kinds of action make sense at different phases of a fight. There are shaping actions, “the actions that make it possible for people to revolt. Sustaining actions which allow people to continue to revolt. And then there is decisive actions, where you win” (Int#14). These correspond to short term, medium term, and long-term goals. And we can

“align with people who don't share the same long-term goal, like maybe their vision is to send another Green MLA to Ottawa. For others the ultimate long-term goal is revolution. So those are in opposition. But if we share an interim goal which is to protect this park, for example, or to support an Indigenous blockade, then we can set aside [differences in end goal]. But this kind of collaboration requires an explicit mutual nonaggression pact, where we agree that we won't denounce each other. We are going to work together up until this point and then we are going to move to direct action, lawsuits, and punitive strikes” (Int#14).

Four Roles in a Movement. There are four roles that activists tend to play. One person offered this way of helping identify where each one of us fits.

“Imagine there's an earthquake and there's a group of people who are being impacted and the government isn't bringing aid to these people. What do you do? Do you a) go to the government and do lobbying, are you a *lobbyist*? b) Do you organize a demo, are you a *mobilizer/organizer*? c) Do you go to the site where the people are impacted and give direct support, care, water? Are you a *frontline helper*? Or d) Do you shut down a highway until the government acts ... are you a *rebel*? Lobbyist, organizer, front-line help, or rebel? All necessary” (Int#10).

This is a helpful way to think across the inside vs outside and reform vs radical debates in that some of these roles need to be played by those with access to formal power (lobbying) and others by those on the periphery of the systems (rebels). This nurtures a sense of the value of diverse roles to be played.

Multi-pronged strategy. This inclusive approach to movement-wide strategizing weakens the debate over which is the ‘right’ tactic. It embraces a “sophisticated and multi-pronged

approached that can include legal interventions in the courts of Canada, that include civil disobedience” (E#16).

“But we need to make sure that in such diverse tactics, there are not unintended consequences to marginalized communities. How do you hold institutions and those big oil companies accountable in a way that is led by and takes leadership from those frontline communities that are the most at risk, in the way that these entities will respond? And these are the kinds of power calculations that require an in-depth analysis on anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-oppression. It’s really critical” (E#16).

Four Strategic Approaches. There is a need in our movements for different strategic approaches. One person offered these four:

“There is *facilitating change*. That’s your planning process where you sit down and figure things out together. There is the *enabling change*, which is more advocacy, creating space for new solutions. Which can be legal work or political advocacy. There is *demonstrating change* which is the pilot project model which shows that something is possible, because you have just done it. And then there is a *forcing change*, which is more the court cases or the market campaigns” (Int#33).

According to this activist, the strongest campaigns do all of these. It’s important to be able to adapt to the different strategies, as conditions shift “but not all groups can or should move between those. Some groups are really specialized and have real skills and talents in particular approaches. Having groups that only do one thing, that can be powerful, but you need to figure out who else is in the mix. To put that whole package together” (Int#33).

Four Levels to Work Through. Another person offered a framework of four levels that we have to work through when making change. He calls these the Four ‘I’s: Issues, Individuals, Institutions, and Ideas.

“First, we have to make sure that we're dealing with the right *issues*. Do we have our eye on the proper problem or the real thing that's concerning us? And second, do we have the right *individuals* involved? Often, we don't have the right people there because they've been marginalized or disenfranchised, or they're not regarded as having the information because they're not the experts in the field. The third is that we need different *institutions* [that allow] these individuals to talk together to deal with the issues ... Those are three important steps and I think you'd have a huge change if that occurred. But without the fourth step I think we'd revert back to where we were. Fourth is the *ideas* by which we judge what we do. These also have to change. We can get all the right people involved and create these brand-new institutions that are designed to address that issue. But if we judge that by all the same old idea, then it's not going to be able to do its job, those individuals are going to get frustrated. We need to be taking all four of those aspects into account for big picture change” (Int#34 Anishinaabe /Ojibway).

These frameworks are all useful in helping us see how different people and groups can fit together within and across movements in mutually-beneficial ways. But frameworks like the ones above should not be adhered to blindly.

“If we approach strategy from a rigid template, as in - this is how you do it in every single place, every single time, follow step 1 thru 10 and you'll win - No. It ignores the social conditions. It ignores the cultural conditions. It ignores the resource condition of what you have available to you and it ignores the political will. Every place. Case by case. The scenario has to be strategically analysed to determine its vulnerabilities, to determine its opportunities. And that's why we say 'be like water' because you can't come in with this rigid template of strategy” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

5.5 Conclusion

As I finish this chapter having compiled such diverse insights into change theory, what is becoming clear to me is that to make the radical change towards decarbonizing and decolonizing Canada, it's going to take "a lot of people and groups doing a lot of different things" (S#24).

We need to be attentive to context and timing, as events and crises change what is possible. We need to help shift understanding and values, and engage with this through personal transformation, education, changing the story, and systemic analysis. But we must do all this in ways that amplify the voices of those most impacted and follow Indigenous leadership. All of this attention to context, understandings, and values is vitally important but not sufficient on their own. It's important that we take action, that we enact change, and it's important how that's done. We build power through collective action and then direct that people power to influencing policy change and election outcomes, and we direct it to confronting and dismantling power. We use that people power for innovating, promoting and living the solution and alternatives – and become the world we want. All that is absolutely critical for transforming Canada, but if groups and individuals go about doing things in isolation from each other and in ways that are in conflict, making each other's goals harder to achieve, our efforts are rendered less transformative. So how we relate is central. We need to coordinate efforts, sharing resources and information in order to strengthen the overall force for change we can build together. To do this, we need to build strong relations of solidarity within and across movements. But this won't happen if we allow relations of domination, the legacies of colonialism, racism, classism, and sexism that we carry with us into movement spaces, to continue to shape the ways we organize. We must unlearn relations of domination.

There is much to be done, on a very pressing climate deadline. The overarching theory of change that I see emerging from these conversations is that we'll transform this country as we become better at thinking and working across difference.

There is no one right way of making change. We are all necessary but individually insufficient to bringing change. "I think that it's really important that we understand that one tactic isn't going to do it (E#16). "Diversity is what makes us strong - in nature and in the

movement” (S#27). We need to develop and “embrace sophisticated and multi-pronged approaches” to making change. And to find ways to do that together, without erasing the important differences between us.

One person I interviewed told me cogently that “if anyone knew what the answer was on how to make change, things would be very different ... no one has the answers” (Int#11). I close this chapter by proposing that as individuals, we indeed may not have the answer to *how change happens*. But together, I believe that we do.

Chapter 6 - Identifying the barriers to change

“The people who control the money want to keep the system as it is” (Int#10).

“What would be most threatening to the corporate political structure in Canada is if all the activists got together ... But we are going the opposite way” (Int#14).

6.1 Introduction

In this thesis so far, we’ve explored how activists in these movements understand the climate and inequality crises and how they envision the more just and ecologically viable world that they’re working hard to create (Ch.4). We’ve also delved into the ways that activists theorize change (Ch.5). This chapter reports on the conversations we’ve had about what’s working and what’s not working in the movements we are part of; it identifies the most significant barriers - both internal and external to the movements - to forging transformative change.

Section 6.2 overviews a collective reflection on what is working well and what is not working in these movements. Section 6.3 focuses on the daunting work of seeing the barriers that exist to transforming Canada, with 6.3.1 examining external barriers and 6.3.2 examining those internal to the movements.

6.2 What’s working and what’s not working in the movements

What’s working. There are many things that activists report as going well in their movements. Things are going well in terms of working together more, across the country, and “building networks that extend beyond the [usual] people that show up” (Int#5). Pipeline fights have connected people “from coast to coast ... mobilizing on so many fronts” (Int#27).

There is a sense that people in Canada are starting to understand climate change, racism, colonialism, and other issues and the ways these are connected. “People are understanding the issues more and more” (Int#29). That is a “huge shift in Canada” (Int#32). The climate justice movement has been getting better at centering Indigenous peoples and their struggles and voices. “Making space for Indigenous leadership has been a cultural shift. It’s not perfect but the space of Indigenous leadership is like wildly different [than it was in the past]” (TT#3). The

environmental movement is learning to think and organize more intersectionally and this is helping open up the capacity for building coalitions across diverse movements.

Fights like the one against the Kinder Morgan pipeline have been a space for NGOs to practice following the leadership of frontline Indigenous communities. There has also been progress made where more women and people of colour are in leadership positions in the movements. “There's a real willingness to do things differently ... being intentional about who is speaking and when. And about who needs to step back to make that space” (TT#3).

People talked about more direct action being taken and more widely accepted “as an effective way of attacking extraction projects” (Int#37). Indeed, “direct action and land defense have been working” (Int#14). It is no longer something that “just radicals do” (Int#30).

Other successes include divestment campaigns spreading across the Canada, seeing significant wins. Several people mentioned that the movements’ collective capacity for strategic thinking is also improving. In addition, our ability to navigate the challenges of working together is slowly improving.

We’re seeing a willingness to really reflect on what’s working and what’s not. “In some of the movements, people are like, ‘we're losing, we're failing’. It’s a wake-up call. We need to reassess, and that has been liberating. There's this big external crisis, so people are willing to talk about what can change” (Int#28). There’s an openness to changing our approaches to activism, based on a greater reflection on what’s not been working.

What’s not working.

“Everything is challenging right now. It seems like there is a lot of backlash of the gains that have been made in the last 50 years on most fronts, from the initiatives for climate change in the US, to equality between races and sexes, worldwide. Violence against women is increasing. Poverty is increasing. The divide between rich and poor is greater. Environmental degradation is accelerating. [We need to] start with a realistic assessment that we are not winning, [old tactics] may not be adequate to the challenges that we face now” (Int#14).

“We're not losing because our analysis is wrong. We're not losing because our politics are not moral enough. We are losing because we are overpowered (Int#14). “The movements just have to get so much bigger” (Int#16). This feeling of being out-numbered is even more so “if you are an activist of colour. If you are black, or Indigenous, you are a minority in a minority” (Int#7 Kanien'kehá ka). We are not doing well enough in growing our movements. “Groups spend a lot of time talking to their supporters but there's still the 95% of Canadians that don't really know or care, and that's a big challenge” (Int#33). “I don't think people know how to build broad-based movements” (Int#36). “There are new allies and we need to absorb them. And that's a particular challenge. We need to bring in and train more people, to help take the pressure off ... to avoid burnout” (TT#3).

We need more people, but we also need the right people. “The huge problem with the climate movement is that we're still very Western-centric and very white” (Int#6). There are white settler groups that are not doing well enough in educating themselves about colonialism and Indigenous issues. “There are people with years of doing climate change work and they desperately want to be allies with Indigenous people and have them in their movement but ... they don't know the actual history ... It's a real lack of knowledge” (Int#20 Michif Cree). This places unfair labour on Indigenous people. “There is a lot of pressure we are under ... it gets really old and tiring to teach successive waves of activists” (Int#7 Kanien'kehá ka).

Others pointed out that the movements are not organized enough and we're using our energies inefficiently, spreading ourselves thin. “Everyone is too busy” (Int#21). When we don't coordinate efforts “the danger is to spread out the energy” (Int#17). “We need to be smarter and more strategic” (Int#14). “Industry and government do a lot of strategic planning. And we're up against that and we're not doing anything to counter that” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Several people spoke about there being too much emphasis in top-down approaches to change. Looking to politicians to make changes and the “NGO-ization²³” of the movements is also weakening our ability to bring about radical systems change. The most common answer to the question of what is not working in these movements, is that we are fractured and at times

²³ The concept of NGOization is discussed in more depth in section 6.3.2

we're pushing against each other rather than pulling together in the same direction. "What would be most threatening to the corporate political structure in Canada is if all the activists got together ... if all these groups linked up into one powerful network ... But we are going the opposite way" (Int#14).

Perhaps what's most promising is increasing willingness to think together about our weaknesses and aiming to build bigger, stronger movements than we've seen before in Canada. "We are in the process of working together trying to understand each other, in our different strategies" (Int#27).

"[In the past] building good interpersonal communication and moving through conflict wasn't something that was valued. Now we're seeing that to be able to do coalition work, we need to be able to work with people who are not the same as us ... we need to be able to work in large, diverse groups. That requires time and ways of communicating that are healthy and that help us to get through differences and conflicts. There is a shift towards valuing this, understanding that we need to work on this, we need to take time for this. But, it's so hard to think like that, when shit is hitting the fan" (TT#3).

6.3 Barriers to decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada

In writing about the applicability of Freire's approach to social transformations to Canadian social movements, Findlay (2002), delineates two dimensions by which movements develop critical consciousness. He labels these internal and external. The external work of movements involves exposing and making the clear the 'root structures of domination' so that they can develop and pursue effective targets and strategies for change. Internal work also involves the development of critical consciousness as social movement face internal (interpersonal and inter-group) tensions, conflicts, and challenges. Here the critical work is in understanding and addressing the sources of social antagonisms and finding ways to address them such that people and groups can continue to organize and mobilize together. Both the internal and the external work are necessary for movements if they are to be effective in driving transformation (Findlay, 2002).

In the interviews and surveys, I also asked people what they see as the most significant barriers to the change they are trying to make. There was a wide variety of answers to this which I have, echoing Findlay, categorized as barriers that are either *external or internal* to the movements. By external I mean forces and phenomena that exist outside of the movement spaces, within Canadian society more broadly, and which the movements have limited control over. By internal, I refer to dynamics and situations within movement spaces, which activists have more responsibility in shaping. About 60% of the barriers named are internal and about 40% are external. We turn first to the external barriers.

6.3.1 External barriers to change

The external obstacles to change centered around several key themes: The Economic System - Capitalism; Lack of Public Will; The Political System - Corporate Influence; the Legal System & Criminalization of Dissent; Lack of Alternatives & Fear of Job Losses; False Solutions & False Understandings; and The State. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of these key themes – the number of times each theme was mentioned in the 40 interviews and 37 surveys. I will present and discuss each in turn.

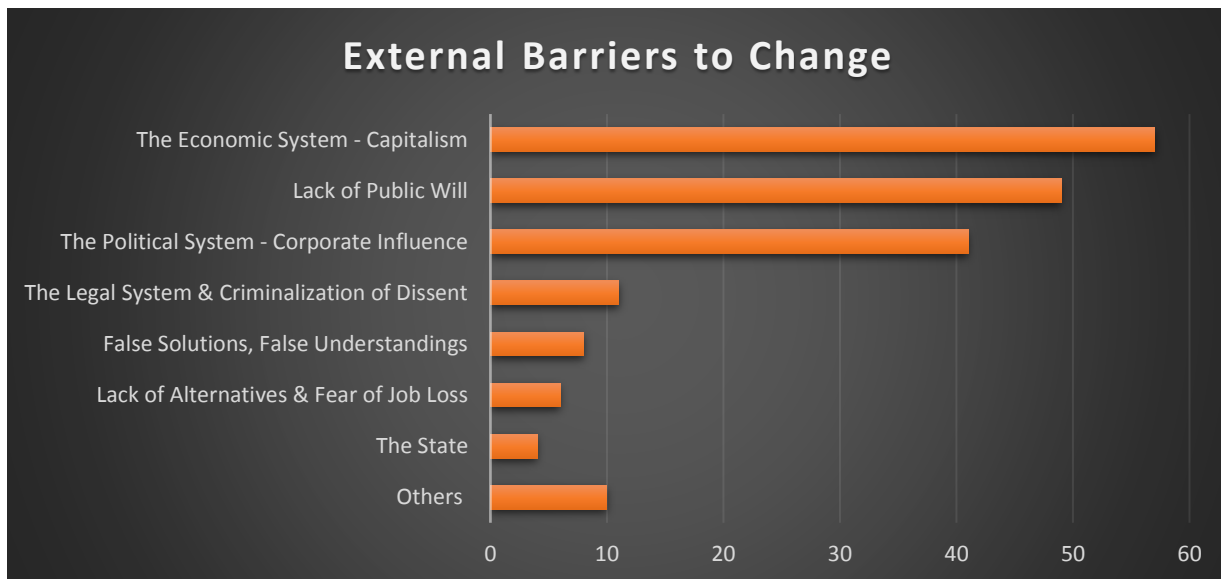


Figure 3: Bar graph showing the distribution of the external barriers mentioned

Lack of public will. There's a shared sense that we're outnumbered, our movements are still too small, and the mass public engagement needed to steer Canada to justice and

sustainability is lacking. This lack of public will is a significant barrier to the kind of changes we're trying to make. For some, the lack of public will is rooted in public apathy, that people may have the information, but still don't feel compelled to act, that it takes suffering to inspire action and as it is, many Canadians are not "suffering enough to make change. They haven't felt it yet" (Int#7 Kanien'kehá ka). One person talked about how certain stark realities, like climate change, "can be paralyzing" (Int#13). "Most people are not apathetic because they don't care, they're apathetic because they are overwhelmed or scared" (Int#37).

For others it's more about people not believing that change is possible (S#11), or they don't feel like they have any power to change things (S#19). "People have forgotten that the rights we now have, were won through struggle by activists before us" (S#25).

Over the "last fifty years of consumption, of the 'century of the self', capitalism has done a very good job of getting people to opt out" (Int#11). The lack of public will for change lies in the "the confusion and demoralization that decades of neoliberalism have created" (S#13). People are both disengaged and distracted. "It's hard to make information on complex issues resonate while competing with all of the rest of the internet click-bait" (S#31).

Some see the lack of public will to meaningfully address climate and inequality crises as stemming from disconnection from each other and the non-human world (Int#27). This makes it hard for people to feel the urgency and empathy for people for whom the situation is urgent. Most of us don't feel directly impacted by things like climate change and the risks of pipeline leaks, nor do we feel connected to the people whose lives are directly put at risk by them (Int#5). This disconnection from each other and from the earth contributes to "the mass mental health crises in the West and it is also a major inhibitor to movement building" (Int#5).

Many people are busy just trying to get by. "It's tough to ask people to be involved, when they work so hard to support their family and they are tired. It's normal, they have kids, debts" (Int#18). "The pressures of life, where you work, come home and barely have time to reflect on your life and your position in society, you're just trying to make it to next month. It's designed to distract you from your bigger connection to this state apparatus and from seeing we're all enabling these systems to continue" (Int#21).

Lifestyle expectations came up as well as an explanation of the lack of massive public will to transform Canada. “People have grown up with steadily increasing expectations ... that we can just fly wherever we want ... they are not going to embrace a transition unless it enables them to keep everything and get more. It makes it hard for people to want to attack the problem. People know that they are attacking their own interests” (Int#2).

Indeed, many told me that people’s need for security and wellbeing is a barrier to getting mass public will behind a transformation away from an extractive economy. For many people, their sense of security and wellbeing is tied into corporate jobs, extractive industries, and in general, the benefits that the fossil-fuel economy brings. There is a sense among those I spoke with that most Canadians probably believe that their lifestyles will not improve from decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada.

One person told me, “the biggest problem is that in the first world, we don't have that much to lose. No, I should say that differently - we have a lot to lose - and that is privilege” (Int#30). Most people are unwilling to give that up (S#2, Int#30). “There's such a self-satisfied, self-deluded narrative in Canada. There's so much colonial, racist, sexist baggage to unlearn and undo” (S#32). All these many factors work together to limit the public will for systemic change in Canada.

The economic system - capitalism. “The domination of society by capitalist relations of production (interlocked with sexism, racism, settler-colonialism etc.) is the fundamental barrier to changing society” (S#3). Chapter 4 made clear that capitalism is driving the climate and inequality crises, but it also acts to hinder our efforts to meaningfully address those crises. “We're never going to have climate justice or any sort of sustainable energy system under capitalism. Capitalism is a system that necessitates infinite growth. Globalization completely locks that in” (Int#20 Michif Cree). That system “is not there to serve us. It's there to serve a few. People are sacrificed all the time to state and corporations” (Int#14). Additionally, “the way that capitalism has structured our social systems and lives is not conducive to mass mobilization. People are working beyond their limits, working too hard at jobs doing work they don’t like because they have to” (Int#18).

Under capitalism, “corporations and other special-interest lobby groups wield an anti-democratic influence over our political system” (Int#11). This locks-in counter-productive incentive structures (Int#33). For example, industries that need to be quickly phased out are instead given huge subsidies (Int#2). Under globalized capitalism, regardless that oil and gas pipelines make less and less sense, trade deals create the imperative to build them anyway. “We’ve reached capacity, we don’t need new pipelines. Industry is still pushing for them because they have contracts signed to ship the oil. Whatever happens, the shippers still have to pay the pipeline companies. The companies really don’t care about how much oil is produced, they want to build the pipelines, so they can get the money” (Int#8). These perverse forces and incentives created through globalized capitalism make it very hard to quickly transition away from the fossil fuel industry.

Under capitalism, only false solutions are on the table. “There is far too much emphasis on carbon pricing as a panacea. For some, all you need to do is get the prices right and it will take care of itself ... This view fails to see that markets are out of control” (Int#35). There is a “lack of analysis on how to diversify the economy, identify competitive advantages, and economic opportunities outside of fossil fuel development and plan/prepare for the transition away from fossil fuels” (S#26).

This survey respondent went on to explain that politicians and the oil industry are promoting a 'low carbon economy' and 'decarbonization' as possible without production declines. Federal and Alberta governments are approving new fossil fuel projects, locking-in greater dependence on fossil fuels, while claiming this is in line with the Paris Agreement. The pervasive influence of capitalism on national and global decision-making means that

“climate policy is currently completely disassociated from project approvals and until we recognize our responsibility not only for production emissions but also for the development of fossil fuel supply, we will continue to extract more carbon than the world can safely burn. We need our national interest determinations and economic analysis of projects to be consistent with a global market scenario of staying well below 2 degrees” (S#26).

By assessing projects according to business-as-usual market demand, which capitalism promotes, governments are approving projects that will lead to the disastrous climate impacts of “a six-degree world” (S#26).

Countries like Canada, Norway, and others are trying to reduce domestic emissions while simultaneously developing fossil fuels, because capitalist logic promotes the idea that everyone has the right to compete in the world market. “We need countries like Canada to acknowledge that this pathway is leading to an unsafe climate and that the market driven changes - demand side policy and carbon pricing, etc. - will not happen quickly enough to constrain supply” (S#26).

Capitalist logic creates problematic incentives on both macro and micro scales. The financial and credit systems also act as barriers to change. One organizer in BC told me a story of an Indigenous community that was forced to sign an LNG pipeline benefit agreement because their preferred plan, which was to develop a geothermal energy business, failed when they could not secure a start-up loan from a bank. “They were refused because reserve land, held in common, cannot be considered as collateral assets that can be seized if they do not repay the loan” (Int#68). The financial system of growth and debt drives the climate and inequality crises while hindering just and sustainable solutions from taking root.

Capitalism promotes competition among people and as such can be divisive to communities and movements trying to collaborate towards change. “There's only so much money to go around, and we fight over the same pools of money to keep ourselves going, and that just creates a lot of bickering” (Int#31). “You know what's not effective? Bringing people together around money. There's an external barrier! Don't give one person all the purse strings!” (Int#28).

Under capitalism, funders will only fund activism that doesn't threaten elite vested interests. “Funders are still funding a failed strategy” (Int#4). Organizations that are funded by foundations and government are unlikely to denounce capitalism and are unlikely to devise strategies that tackle root causes because “there can be threats to that money” (Int#19).

The economic system, dominated by capitalism, acts as a barrier to change: by insisting on continual growth over justice and sustainability, by creating perverse incentives, by locking in fossil-fuel dependence through market logics and global trade deals, by offering only false solutions, by promoting competition among people when we need to be working together, and by funding only the kind of social change that doesn't threaten the status quo.

The political system – corporate influence. Although I present the barriers related to the economic and the political systems in separate sections here, the damaging influence of capitalism on political decision-making is a key dynamic people raised when I asked about barriers to making radical change in Canada. “The most significant barrier is the power of big business” (S#20), and “powerful fossil fuel lobbies” (S#8). It’s the current capitalist system and the anti-democratic influence that corporations and other special-interest lobby groups have over our political system (S#21, S#27). “Both Liberals and Conservatives are greatly influenced by big business especially oil and mining interests” (S#6). Corporations also wield massive “control of media and government” (S#24). “The most significant barrier is that there is not the *political will* for the kinds of transformative changes that climate change and social justice require. Decades of neoliberal rule have empowered the wealthy and corporate class. This is the force we are up against” (S#10).

In sum, “the powers that be are profiting too much from the status quo” (S#34). “The people who control the money want to keep the system as it is” (Int#10). There are “extreme political and economic forces” working to maintain the status quo and they have disproportionate access “to loudly and repeatedly have their views and ideas aired in the public realm” (S#22). “The elite fighting dirty to hang on to their power and ill-gotten wealth” is a massive barrier to decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada (S#18).

“These entrenched financial interests are incompatible with decarbonising our society. Some of the largest companies in the world, their entire business model is made on the combustion and processing of fossil - the discovery, the processing, transportation, the selling and the combustion of fossil fuels. Financial interests that are entrenched in this industry are the same ones that are entrenched in the political process. The inability of these companies to diversify

their business model has hampered them in adapting to this changing political environment where we see the necessity for decarbonising our society. So, because their business model has been entrenched in this carbon intensive industry, it makes their business model now incompatible with what we need to do. Why have they been resistant to change? Because their entire business model is based on the extraction of fossil fuels and their stock value is only valued by what they have in reserves. These companies are realizing ‘wow we're really in trouble’. They're putting all their chips into obstructing justice and influencing the political system” (Int#23).

The legal system & criminalization of dissent. Some people put much of their change efforts into pushing for legislative change. “With one stroke of a law, they can change everything all at once” (Int#6). Although there have been some important wins in Canadian courtrooms - key cases where Indigenous rights have been affirmed and where the fossil fuel industry was impeded - some still see the legal system as more of a barrier than a pathway to change. A predominant example of how the legal system hinders social change efforts is through the criminalization of direct action and land defense.

In a political system based on capitalism and so broken by corporate interests, representative democracy often fails as a way for citizens to influence decision-making. In a failed political system, direct action can be the only way to push for more just and sustainable decision-making (TT#2). But the legal system was not designed to protect activists taking direct action for justice. “Our laws are created to protect people that own things, ownership, privacy. The rules are very vague, and they permit officers to arrest anyone in almost any situation” (TT#2). “A lot of people still treat activism like we’re a bunch of criminals disrupting Canadian business” (Int#26). Instead of law and governance that can defend the rights of communities, ecosystems and the people fighting to protect them, the current legal system is regularly employed to arrest and criminalize activists.

“There is a conflict between companies and Indigenous people ... to the point that ... if you’re a native then you are a terrorist. If you look at how policing is used against activists and environmentalists, it's fucking disgusting. [They justify it by] painting us as wack jobs ... Crazy

people, not like everybody else. They try to make us out like we don't know what we are talking about, like we're not part of society" (Int#7 Kanien'kehá ka).

It's understood that criminalization of activism is done "to discourage the protesters. That is certain. To discourage you from returning to the street" (Int#17). The impact is that people are afraid to protest ... "to keep the pool of protesters and to find and mobilize other activists is difficult. Many people feel it's discouraging to do direct action" (Int#17). "The state apparatus has done a wonderful job maintaining the complete monopoly of violence and bringing in the heavy guns ... it's becoming normal for the military to come to protests and make mass arrests.

It has had a long-term paralyzing effect on us ... That's the main hurdle, that's what's holding us back" (Int#11). "This closes the space for open expression and the ability to denounce unwanted projects. This is an enormous injustice" (Int#18).

The risk of criminalization is higher for Indigenous people and people of colour. Indigenous land defenders face more risk of arrest and criminalization than do settler activists.

"When it comes to Indigenous people defending their own territory, there is a history of law enforcement escalating quickly. This is not a new thing, this has been happening for a long time. It is a racist system playing out ... white supremacy that is keeping Indigenous people in fear because either you're going to get shot, the military is going to be called, or you're going to be facing life in prison. So, it's not the same story when it comes to a bunch of white people in kayaks blocking the freighters ... For Indigenous people it's our lives that are at stake when it comes to defending the land and the water" (TT#2 Anishinaabe).

There are special forces trained in Canada to counter Indigenous resistance. As one person told me "Since Oka, the military and the police have been practicing at taking down Indigenous blockades" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). That Indigenous resistance is criminalized more than settler activism is a matter of politics, not a matter of law. "It's important for us to acknowledge that every act of enforcement is an exercise of discretion. It's a political choice" (TT#2). "What they actually want to do is to criminalize political dissent. They want to create such a condition of fear that even people who are acting under moral necessity or democratic justification think twice

before they engage in their action. It amounts to an attempt to criminalize Indigeneity itself” (TT#2).

In response to the Idle No More movement in 2012, the RCMP set up [Project SITKA](#) to monitor and track Indigenous protests and activists (Nikiforuk, 2019). This has been part of an ongoing increase in the criminalization of environmental and Indigenous activism in Canada. Monaghan & Walby (2017), explain how, as with other countries, security agencies in Canada are now classifying environmental activities as domestic terrorist threats. This categorization has mobilized considerable national security resources to monitor movements. They trace the development of the use of the concept of ‘critical infrastructure protection’ used to justify domestic surveillance. In the 2018 book *Policing Indigenous Movements*, Crosby and Monaghan investigate how policing and other security agencies have been working to surveil and silence Indigenous land defenders and other opponents of extractive capitalism. They make the case that the expansion of the security state and the criminalization of Indigenous land defense have been allowed through the norms of settler colonialism.

The legal system, like the political and economic systems discussed earlier, is failing to address the multiple social and environmental crises we face. Instead, it is monitoring and punishing those who are fighting for their communities, their land and waters, defending justice, and life itself.

Lack of alternatives and fear of job loss. Some people spoke about *the lack of alternatives* to these systems as also being a substantial barrier. “We lack a coherent economic analysis and plan that could offer an alternative to capitalism” (S#19). One way that the lack of alternatives is playing out on the ground is that “many Indigenous communities across the country have very, very few economic options” (Int#2). For many, the options are to work in extractive industries or to collect social assistance. “We really need to come up with a third option” (Int#2).

A lack of alternatives also has implications for fossil-fuel sector workers. “Many workers will support new pipelines because they do not see any viable alternatives to the kinds of jobs and pay levels the pipeline jobs represent” (S#25). There is considerable opposition to both

moving away from fossil fuels and respecting Indigenous rights and sovereignty, galvanized by the fear of loss of jobs, loss of revenue, and loss of economic growth.

This is an understandable fear given that many of the solutions currently on the table are admittedly wholly inadequate for dealing with the crises we face.

Perhaps real, compelling solutions, that could transform the economy and allow it to provide for people and planet, could undo inequality, and could offer meaningful work to all, would reduce the fear of change. These are not yet on the table, largely because the perverse incentives created by capitalism are hindering them from scaling up and out. The solutions that are on the table are unconvincing. It is in this way that false solutions become barriers to transformation in Canada.

False solutions. Mainstream solutions to the crises in Canada (carbon taxes, bike lanes, etc.) are ineffective at best, and can even be counter-productive, by strengthening the systems that are driving the crises. Mainstream climate action and reconciliation do not target the root causes that are driving the crises. These “will not bring the change” (Int#18). Instead of addressing the causes of the problems, what is on the table is “band-aid solutions or false solutions that continue to perpetuate the root causes” (Int#32) while not threatening the status quo. These kind of “half measures being presented are hindering the movement” (Int#39).

“One of the barriers is that a lot of the discourse [on climate solutions] is so individualized” (Int#30). The transformation on the scale needed requires massive collective action. Mainstream focus on individual action, like driving less and eating less meat, ignores the scale of collective action needed to transform economies and communities. Solutions on the table are still being generated through a lens that sees issues as separate and compartmentalized. “When I think of politicians in power and the platforms they propose, they’re still putting ‘environment’ in a box rather than promoting policies and solutions that understand the interconnections between climate crisis, poverty, inequality, and racism” (Int#39).

For example, industry and government alike have been touting natural gas as a climate-friendly fuel. Yet, not only does natural gas contribute to climate change and lock-in fossil fuel infrastructure, unwanted projects violate Indigenous rights, threaten livelihood practices, and

deeply divide communities. Whereas opposition to oil pipelines has been strong, “a unifying force for the entire coast” (Int#33), LNG has been a hugely divisive conversation. “Families have broken up over whether or not to go with LNG. A couple of the organizations have come close to dissolving over this” (Int#33). False solutions are not only ineffective, they divide communities and organizations.

“This idea of ‘we can have economic growth and save the environment’ – that’s not the vision of the world I want to see. Economic growth forever is not sustainable” (Int#13). Not only will the false solutions offered by capitalism not work, they are wasting precious time and diverting people’s energies (Int#36).

False understanding. It’s not just false solutions that are barriers to transforming Canada. It’s also a lack of accurate and sufficient understanding of the problems – false understandings. There is a lack of education on “the dangers of climate change” (S#6) and a “lack of knowledge about the realities of renewable energies. [This allows] fossil fuel companies to rig the tenders or laws to promote gas and disseminate false information” (S#15). There is also a huge deficit in understanding about Indigenous issues. “There is a population that is born in Canada, and people who migrated here, who are never introduced to anything to do with Indigenous rights. Climate and colonization are major issues here, and growing issues in this country, yet most people know so little” (Int#26). “The biggest barrier ... is ignorance of the legitimate problems we face, the scale of these issues, and how they intersect. This translates into apathy” (S#31).

This lack of understanding as a barrier is strengthened by “human arrogance. It hinders our ability to learn. We need humility” (Int#12 Anishinaabe). Ignorance and false understanding is also made worse through privilege. “I think we’ve been very sheltered in Canada. Most white people are extremely sheltered ... And I think people who are less privileged, they have a more realistic assessment of the world politics” (Int#14).

The lack of understanding as a barrier is also exacerbated by the media and corporate control of the media (S#9, S#24, S#22). “The media trains people how to think” (Int#25 Dene). “Media colours our view ... it’s an arm of neoliberalism ... they propagate racism and fear of each other. When you cut the links between people, you can more easily manipulate them. When

people are scared, there will be less solidarity and less beautiful things will be created” (Int#27). “Our whole political system is challenging right now, and the information, and the fake news, and the era of Facebook running political campaigns makes it tougher” (Int#32).

The state. For some people I spoke to, it’s not just capitalist and corporate control over politics, economy, the legal system, the media, and public understanding that we’re up against. To them, the biggest barrier we face is how all these forces are linked together. The state itself is the barrier.

“The main barrier is the bureaucracy in the Canadian government. Indigenous people are one of the most legislated peoples in the world. Jody Wilson Raybould [former federal justice minister and first Indigenous person to hold that position] recently said UNDRIP could not be implemented. And she’s right. Because Canada is a bureaucratic state. It’ll take a lot of work to get rid of all that regulation” (Int#9 Kanien’kehá ka).

“These structures that have been built are so powerful. It would be really hard and really destructive to try to overthrow those systems The centralized systems of power” (Int#20 Michif Cree).

“The external barrier is the fact that on the other side, what we’re fighting against is an extremely well organized, extremely large, extremely well-financed enemy - the monolith of the state. They are aware that we exist and have been planning against our challenges. They’re increasingly good at it. This doesn’t make it impossible. But we need to realize that we’re up against pretty big odds” (Int#5).

6.3.2 Internal barriers to change

When I asked people about the most significant barriers to the change they want to see, the majority spoke about barriers that are internal to the movements. I have categorized the types of internal barriers people spoke to me about into 8 themes: Fractured Movements- Us/Them; Relational Tensions; NGO-ization; Activist Culture; Centralized, Hierarchical Structures; Activist Burn Out; Lack of Financial Resources; and Bias, Self-Interest, Privilege. There is much overlap between these. For example, the movements are fractured by relational tensions which

include tensions created and exacerbated by NGO-ization and Bias, Self-Interest, and Privilege. These and other overlaps will become clearer, as I present each barrier in turn. The following graph (Figure 4) illustrates the relative frequency with which each theme came up in the interviews and surveys, showing that Relational Tensions is by far the most common internal barrier raised in these conversations.

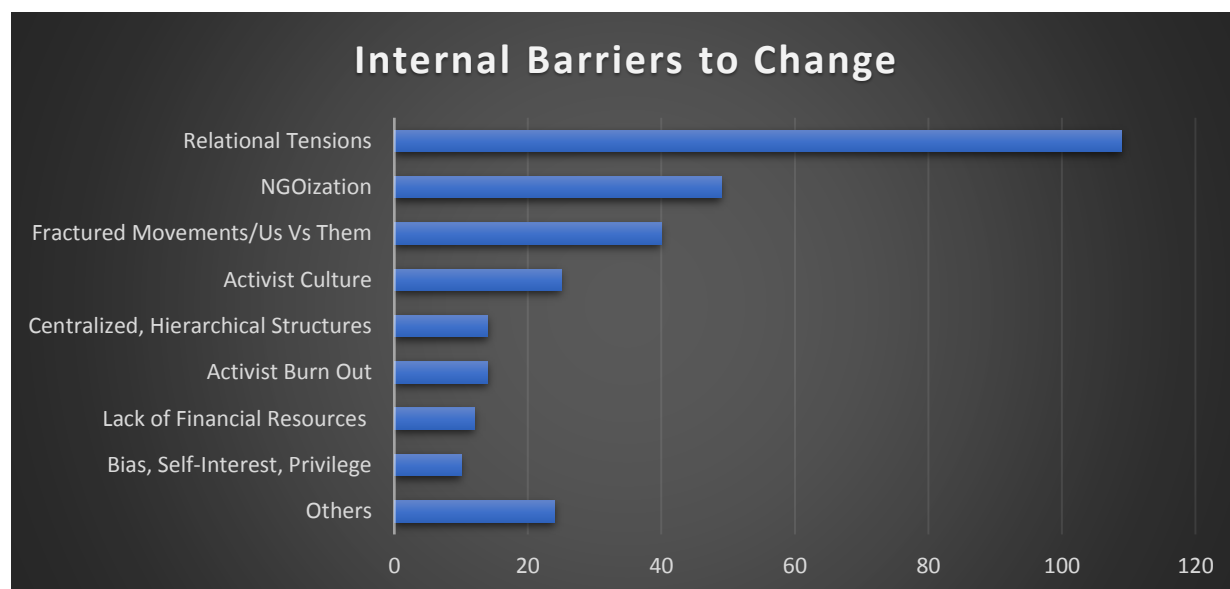


Figure 4: Bar graph showing the distribution of internal barriers that were mentioned.

Fractured movements/Us vs. them. Previous sections in this chapter reflected on the reality that our movements are still too small in numbers and marginal, and that we're outnumbered. From conversations about internal barriers, it also becomes clear that it's not just that we're small that impedes success; our movements are fractured. Though there is a lot of great work going on, our efforts are dispersed and fragmented. The activism and organizing is to a large extent still happening in silos, in isolation from each other, and is not adding up to as much force as we could have were we working in alignment with each other more.

This fragmentation is happening within movements and across movements too. "The biggest barrier I see is the lack of solidarity between movements" (S#14). "I see sparks, tonnes of small ones ... But we're very fractured ... super atomized" (Int#2). "In a lot of the movement work I do, there is no consensus among people. What is the plan? How are these different moving parts going to fit together, so that they all push in the same direction? It is kind of

stressful watching and being part of it. [There is no] cohesive strategy of moving forward” (Int#14). “Sometimes it’s contradictory” (Int#15).

Sometimes the tendency to fragment is strengthened by the cognitive bias we humans have, driving us to divide the social world into ‘Us and Them’. Some grassroots people see NGOs as ‘others’. Some organizers working hard to reach mainstream audiences see disruptive radicals as ‘the other’. There are all sorts of dividing lines like these in the movement that divide us into many ingroups and many outgroups. “You see yourself; your identity is clearly on one side and then you see anarchists or people who talk to the government as ‘the other’. You go towards the groups that resemble you the most” (Int#18).

“Activists have a lot of anger toward the big enemy, but it can also fuel that ‘Us vs. them’” (Int#15). The fire that we activists have inside can turn us against each other.

The fractured nature of our movements is not surprising given the incredible diversity and wide spectrum of people and groups involved. It’s not surprising, it’s not new and it’s not unique to these movements. “This stuff has plagued movements forever. The right wing knows the left is fragmented. They bank on it. That’s the difference between us. [The right] doesn’t mind hierarchy - that allows them to choose one message and force everyone to stick to it” (Int#10). The radical left doesn’t have the same hierarchical tendencies that are useful for fostering unity.

Diversity is a good thing, as is the radical left’s aversion to hierarchy, but fragmentation is a problem when trying to build collective power. Part of this fragmentation is due to internal tensions, but also, those ‘on the other side’ actively work to divide and conquer the movements (Int#14). Government, industry, and police use specific strategies to create tensions and divisions between activists (Int#8).

Activist culture. Another internal barrier that arose in the conversations is that the much of the current activist culture in Canada espouses narrow notions of activism that appeal to very few. It is inward-focused, blocking communications outside our circles, with inaccessible activist jargon. The activist culture is also critiqued as being overly critical and too focused on what it is against. The over-criticality can make us cynical and lead us to disengage. These characteristics

of our movement culture limit our ability to bring in new people, it burns people out, and leads to loss in our ranks.

“We need to go beyond the activist subculture that exists” (Int#5). “Organizing is done around subcultures, and it can lead to insularity” (Int#5). “The direct-action sphere has been dominated by a particular vision that has tended to come with the ‘fuck capitalism, fuck the cops, fuck the man’ mentality, which turns people away. The more that you look like a weirdo and some sort of [radical activist], the harder it is to build a community of resistance” (Int#4). We are organizing in the self-selecting groups ... we have no way to access the people who wouldn’t choose to talk to us” (TT#3). “We just really don’t know how to talk to regular folks. We’re much too deep in our bubble, in all this jargon that is super specialized” (Int#30). “We are mired in language that the rest of the world does not understand and so we create fairly inhospitable spaces for new people to come in” (Int#30).

Another part of this activist culture is being overly critical. “One of the biggest challenges that movements face is ... criticizing each other, endless critical thinking ... sharp sticks for everyone. Critical thinking is an absolutely necessary tool, but in what dose?” (Int#16). We critique each other over tactics, over flawed analysis, over how we should be structuring the movement and designing messages. “All these things are frustrating. It can make a lot of good people become cynical, throw their hands up and say, ‘Fuck it’” (Int#23).

Several people made clear that some critiques are very much needed, for example when marches are organized and led by white people, when voices of those most impacted are not included, and are not heard. These are necessary critiques. But we mustn’t allow criticality to be a defining feature of our movement cultures. We need to find ways to handle our relations with each other with care, creating spaces we want to stay in, and where others feel drawn to join us.

Relational tensions. As the bar graph indicates, relational tensions within the movements is by far the most significant internal barrier to change that the people I spoke with identified. The quotes from interviews and surveys that I put together while analysing relational tensions in the movement fill over 80 pages of text. Here I attempt to summarize a huge conversation in a few pages.

The fracturing of the movements is driven, in large part, by relational and ideological tensions between people and groups. One person jokingly told me that she “define[s] a coalition as being 'a group of organizations that spend 95% of their time arguing over the 5% of their things they disagree on'” (Int#33). One person named this “horizontal hostility” (Int#14), and another “friendly fire from allies” and a “propensity to attack those who are (or who ought to be) allies” (S#1). One person told me that fighting inside the movement is burning him out more than fighting against big corporations because “you're fighting your own people” (Int#19). “I don't know why we eat each other. If we can't work together, we're fucked” (Int#28).

People raised many different sources of tensions – power imbalance, identity politics, and unequal access to resources to name a few. There are tensions over which different social and environmental issues and change goals are being prioritized and there are tensions over conflicting theories of change and tactics. People also reported tensions between anglophones and francophones in Quebec, while the relational tension most frequently raised in these conversations is the tension between Indigenous people and settlers. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

Problematic relational dynamics are created by the ways that power inequalities are reproduced within our movements. When “women aren't given the platform to speak or the white people are dominating the conversation” (Int#23), or “when it's white dudes being shitty” (Int#26). These power imbalances are always present (Int#23) and they cause relational challenges that need to be addressed. One woman said “I've experienced them to be barriers. I have certainly walked away from many conflicts because I don't have the emotional energy to explain something to a white man that I've explained to countless other white men” (Int#28). And as one Indigenous person organizer put it “there are a lot of privileged white people in positions of power who don't want to be uncomfortable, who we've needed to work with” (Int#18). Power imbalances within and across these movements abound, driving wedges and building tensions.

As activists try to figure out how to hold each other responsible for reproducing inequalities, some struggle to do this in ways that foster a sense of there being more than one right way to engage. “There's a lot of paralysis right now that comes from identity politics gone

amok” (Int#11), from “purity politics and the politics of denunciation” (Int#14). We don’t always “have proper vocabulary for everything. Sometimes I say the wrong thing and people very quickly put you in a box and then assume your politics based on that slip up” (Int#21). This can make movement spaces feel “exclusive” (Int#23) and intimidating. One person described this as “reproducing carceral logic. You no longer belong in the community if you fuck up. The left [is] exploding on itself ... eating each other alive because we're so quick to judge” (Int#10). “It’s making it hard to collaborate, it's hard to bring new people in” (Int#32).

That said, “we really, really, really do need to be called out. We have a lot of shit to change” (Int#10). But to develop non-oppressive, intersectional movements, we need to go deeper than merely learning to “say the right thing and use the right language. You know, that’s shitty for all the folks who are on the frontlines who don't say the right thing. That's not the work” (Int#32). The work required is to actually develop a shared understanding of the ways the many forms of domination intersect and work together to undo them all. We must do this without undoing each other.

As evidenced in Chapter 5, there are many differing, and sometimes conflicting theories of change held by people in the movements. People reflected on the relational tensions created by these conflicting TOCs and about how these tensions act as barriers to change. For example, some believe “that working within the system is the only and most important way of affecting change”, whereas others maintain “that working outside the system is the only way” (Int#10). Tensions exist between those who think change happens through conflict versus those who believe change happens through collaboration. People “get locked into a certain theory of change” (Int#31). “The problem often is that people don't question their own assumptions. They assume they know how to do change and that other people don't know how to do change properly. I see a major barrier there” (Int#3).

“There is a lot of fracturing in the movements because of ideology. Even a slight difference, where someone doesn't believe in a certain tactic and someone else does and so they won't work together” (Int#26). This plays out a lot between groups that believe in engaging with the electoral system and those that don’t. Under the Liberal government, there has been a lack of

cohesion in the movements as some people seek to influence politicians, while others consider that a losing strategy. These tensions are intensifying in the lead up to the next federal election.

“With the upcoming federal election, I fear there is going to be a retreat to defend the lowest common denominator ... defend the carbon tax, or ‘don’t hurt the Liberals too much because we’re going to get worse’. [It’s going] to be very messy because some people are going to want to defend the Liberals’ environmental programs and the carbon tax and others are going to be like ‘Trudeau sucks because of pipelines’” (TT#3).

Tensions over tactics also play out between those who engage in direct action and those who don’t approve of confrontational tactics. One activist told me a story of a direct action she engaged in while opposing a proposed pipeline project. She was arrested and charged. At the moment of her arrest she was more concerned about what other activists would say about her than she was about the legal consequences to herself. She said “we want a diversity of tactics but we have a lot of difficulty in applying that. We put so much energy in judging each other. That energy could be used much more effectively, against the [pipeline] projects. It creates the lack of solidarity” (Int#18). She told me, “we need to be careful, mindful of our dynamic within the movement. And we need to be in solidarity with those willing to take risks” (Int#18).

One person said that the “deepest divisions” exist between Indigenous and settler activists over the fact that each is facing very different strategic conditions. These different conditions call for very different tactics that can be in conflict with each other. Many settler groups’ strategies are based on garnering mass mobilization. “To mobilize masses of people, you have to create very, very powerful appeals, you need to have a broad appeal” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw). This interviewee went on to explain that climate movements have a chance of being broadly appealing because the majority of Canadians may be able to see climate action as in their self-interest. But Indigenous people fighting for self-determination and decolonization must design strategies that do not require mass mobilization, because their goals do not resonate with most Canadians.

“As Indigenous people, we know there is no mass mobilization. We have a strength in direct resistance. We have a strength in exposing the levels of

repression the state is willing to go to, through violence and force, to preserve industry ... that's what we have to work with. There is tension between non-Indigenous activists and Indigenous people because the non-Indigenous activists come in trying to impose their strategy or ask us 'why aren't you doing this tactic?' They tell us: 'your Indigenous tactic is undermining my tactic of social mobilization for the masses'. So, when [settler activists] are trying to win over the masses in Canada they are in effect doing nothing to support an Indigenous strategy. Their reformist strategies work well for mass mobilization, but they can be very counter-productive to Indigenous Nationhood ... all they do is re-entrench colonialism" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

In these ways, settler and Indigenous strategies and tactics can be directly in conflict.

"There are some contradictions hidden within the environmental movement. We don't all have the same end" (Int#8). As explored in Chapter 4, these movements involve people with a very wide variety of change goals that range from stopping an individual pipeline project, to reducing GHG emissions in Canada, to taking down capitalism and reinstating Indigenous sovereignty over the lands and waters known as Canada. Sometimes efforts towards one goal can work against efforts to other goals. Conflicting end goals cause relational tensions too.

In Quebec for example, the people aiming for decarbonization and those working on decolonization are not aligned nearly as much as they are in BC. Quebec sovereignty and rights to its land and resources are at the heart of Francophone Quebec culture and politics. This stands in stark conflict with the movement for the acknowledgement that Quebec is stolen Indigenous land and for the defense and promotion of Indigenous rights. "People in Quebec feel that they are the colonized people" (Int#10). "Quebec is doing really poor on the whole decolonizing issue. Really worse than the rest of Canada and Canada is just getting started" (Int#15). This is exacerbating existing tensions in movements in Quebec over language, tactics, and activist culture.

Difficult relations between Indigenous and settler activists is by far the most common kind of relational tension that came up in these conversations. The environmental movement in

Canada has a long and sordid past of problematic relationships between environmental groups and Indigenous communities. This legacy is alive and continually navigated in the anti-pipeline, climate justice, and Indigenous land-defense movements currently in Canada. When I asked a Mohawk leader about how settlers can actively be supportive of the change he wants to see, he told me “Get out of our way. We appreciate the support, we appreciate the sympathy, but don't try to tell us what to do. Don't try to speak for us. We can speak for ourselves” (Int#9 Kanien'kehá ka).

There are deep differences in worldviews and knowledge systems. “[For settlers] everything revolves around money and [Indigenous people] don't necessarily see it the same way. We see land as life. We value life more than we value money” (Int#9 Kanien'kehá ka). “There's this [difference] between the reason [settlers] want to stop climate change and the reason that Indigenous people want to stop climate change” (Int#20 Michif Cree). Where settlers learn from science that we should protect nature because we recently learned that we may need it to survive, Indigenous people have long held nature as sacred, as kin, as having inherent worth. “There's just a lack of legitimate effort on behalf of many settlers to actually understand that (Int#20 Michif Cree). “The most annoying thing about collaborating with ‘environmentalists’ is that white folks have this concept of ‘the environment’ as its own issue. All of the sudden, it compartmentalizes it out, and you just separated environmental from social justice, from human wellbeing. In Indigenous worldview it's not separate” (S#37). “If you're creating parks, you are saying you need to protect the land from yourself which is an admission of failure and you need to think about that”. This vastly different sense of “what environment means” plays out constantly in our collaborations, exacerbating difficult relations (Int#33).

There are many tensions that form from unjust relations between settlers and Indigenous people in these movements. Many environmental groups seek to work with Indigenous communities because Indigenous rights are powerful for protecting lands and waters, but the environmental groups often end up co-opting the message, tokenizing Indigenous people, financially benefitting from the relationship, and are not accountable and not being transparent. “First Nations people don't want to be used just because there is a perception that they have certain veto power over projects. They want more fundamental self-determination, free and prior

informed consent” (Int#36). There are many problematic reasons why settlers seek collaborations with Indigenous communities. “Settlers should not be reaching out to Indigenous people out of a sense of guilt, it should come from a place of shared understanding that colonialism and oppression is fucked” (Int#21).

There are also ongoing tensions inherent in living on stolen land. One settler organizer in BC told me “I know that I live on unceded territory. I know I have received something that was stolen. And I know from just basic morals and ethics, if you receive something stolen it is your duty to give it back. Except I don't want to give it back. I really like it here. And I can't afford to just give back all this stuff I have paid and saved for. There is this tension that is really ugly” (Int#37).

There are genuine conflicting material interests present in the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists. Allyship between Indigenous and settler can only go so far if settlers want to hold on to the benefits and privileges that colonialism has bestowed on us, namely power and land. We often avoid discussion of land. As one Indigenous organizer told me “even white allies with the best intentions won't give up power. The minute you talk about land suddenly the limits of allyship presents itself” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). These real conflicting interests are constantly present in movement spaces and make for shallow or strained collaborations at best.

“There's power imbalance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. That's a huge barrier” (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). “Historical and ongoing inequalities have brought us here, and there is a lot of the damage done and traumatic relationships between the people who are living together on this land” (Int#28). This is true in Canada in general but also true within social movements. “One of the huge challenges that Indigenous peoples have faced is that [settlers] have tried to use them instrumentally to advance their [social change] goals. We've learned that good intentions can sometimes be very, very damaging” (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway). In many collaborations within the movements, settlers still hold the reins of power and this continues to damage relationships. As one Indigenous land defender put it, “this has been the problem for 500 years. We've been forced under their agenda” (Int#38

Mi'kmaw). There is certainly a need for accountability and trust to be built if we are to begin to heal these relationships.

Part of this process of building better relationships is for settlers to really understand historical and ongoing colonialism. "The occupier of Indigenous territory has to hear a story that they don't want to hear. A story of how they are the villain. They are not the hero, they are not the savior ... In these relationships with Indigenous people, this truth is being exposed. And that's a hard thing for them to swallow" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). "There's a lot of fear both in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities around these kinds of engagements. People don't trust one another" (Int#34 Anishinaabe/Ojibway).

NGO-ization. The second most common 'Internal Barrier' identified is the dynamics between large NGOs and other groups' actors in these movements. This constitutes a 'relational tension', but it came up so often I have given it its own section. These critiques come from interviewees who work in NGOs and others who don't.

"One of the big barriers is NGOs. There are many ways that NGO-ization is decimating the movement" (Int#32). NGOs are "not in touch with grassroots and marginalized movements" (S#14), rather they have the "impression that they're the ones doing the most and the most important stuff" (Int#10). The collaborations they do have with communities and grassroots groups are often instrumentalizing. "The NGO wants to control the messaging - they're creating a container that they want people to fill" (Int#23). "They'll make their grand master plan, then just be like, 'You grassroots people can just be the bodies in our master plan'" (Int#13). "It's really presumptuous, this model of 'we'll do the thinking and you do the doing'" (Int#32).

"Big NGOs often will talk to the people who agree with them in Indigenous communities and use those viewpoints to further their goals for the environment without supporting Indigenous sovereignty in itself. Co-option is a big problem" (Int#13). "They are just so good at co-opting our language and resources and then deciding what to do with them on behalf of everyone else" (Int#32). NGOs will enter into coalitions with grassroots and communities, agreeing on certain goals, and "then the NGO all of a sudden pulls a 180", changing the goal without consulting the broader group (Int#16).

There are critiques of them co-opting movement efforts, watering down goals and messaging. They tend to have narrow framings of the problems and don't take on systemic analysis or strategies. "NGO's suck up all the oxygen and actually don't fight systemic issues" (Int#36). "We want to change the roots of the problems and NGOs just focus on the surface of the problems, they never go into the structural, the roots of the problems" (Int#18). Having "bought into the system" (Int#33), "their frameworks are so in line with capitalism and asking the government to do things. At the end of the day, I don't believe that will ever bring about wide-scale change" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). "There is so much money that goes into these large organizations who are not capable of delivering the goods" (Int#19). In fact, "NGOs historically were created specifically with the aim to take the teeth out of the movements, to make them less of a threat"²⁴ (Int#30).

People I spoke with explained that NGOs' funding structure renders them timid and risk-averse in their strategies, and therefore ineffective. "NGOs keep their messages moderate to keep funders happy ... people with money want to keep the system as it is ... funders won't be excited about radical messages" (Int#10). "The reason they get the most resources is because they are not as threatening as the people who are advocating for system change" (Int#20 Michif Cree). They end up focused more on maintaining their organization, building their base, and fundraising, driving the professionalization of activism than actually working for social change. As they become "mainly concerned with their survival as an organization, a lot of the actions that they do are done in the end to produce victories - even though those victories might be hullabaloo - so they can take those victories to their funders and they can get more funding, so they can keep going" (Int#30).

Many NGOs tend away from direct action and sometimes denounce those groups that do engage in direct action. "The biggest downfall in that movement as a whole I think, is the tendency of those larger NGOs to actively discredit people doing direct action in order to save

²⁴ "If you want to dig deeper on this, read Arundhati Roy's, 'Capitalism, A Ghost Story' or 'The Revolution Will Not Be Funded' by INCITE's Women of Colour against Violence" (Int#30).

their own capitalist, liberal legitimacy in the view of the public and the funders” (Int#20 Michif Cree).

“If you work in the system, in the structure, like an NGO or the government, it makes it harder to talk about the structural problems. It's more difficult to make this kind of change because you are constrained. But what's going on in these movements is that the people who are constrained in their analysis are the ones who have the resources. It's that closeness, working within the system, that allows them access to such resources. It's a barrier to systemic change that the people with the radical analysis and the goal of changing the system are not the people with the resources and access to put towards this kind of systems change” (Int#18).

“It's a very big challenge for social movements to not be co-opted and to maintain the radical demands that are necessities for human survival, and not co-opted into something short of that, because human survival is at stake” (Int#16).

NGOs tend to be structured hierarchically, espousing a top-down structure within the movements they are part of. They are often not accountable to the grassroots groups, communities, and others in the movement and some collaborate with government and industry, sometimes cutting deals behind closed doors. Different NGOs are often in direct competition with each other for funding and media attention, creating tense relations *between* the organizations. “Because they are direct competitors, they are a less effective force for change” (Int#33).

NGOs need to be held to account for hoarding resources, for using others instrumentally, for co-opting movements, for paying high salaries to CEOs while frontlines communities struggle to survive the very crises around which the NGOs craft their careful messages. “How do we hold them to account effectively without being divisive? I don't know. That's a barrier” (Int#16). All these dynamics make for very challenging collaborations, hindering effective, powerful coalitions. They represent a very significant barrier to the kind of collective action that can foster radical social change in Canada as envisioned by the people I spoke with. The

imbalance of power between large NGOs and others in the movement makes for tense and unjust relations.

These observations and critiques of NGOs are grounded in the specific dynamics of these particular movements, but they reflect wider phenomenon that has been discussed in many different movements contexts and by various scholars. In the 2013 book *NGOization: Complicity, contradictions and prospects*, Kapoor and Choudry define NGOization as the process of institutionalization, professionalization, depoliticization, and demobilization of movements and struggles (see also Armstrong & Prashad, 2005; Kamat, 2004; Smith, 2007).

Work by Kamat (2004) and Piven and Cloward (1977) corroborate the activist views above that the funding structure of NGOs, whereby they must show managerial and technical capacity to administer funding and prioritize the financial survival and organizational maintenance, tends towards diverting efforts and resources away from pushing for actual structural change. Choudry (2010) compiles other critiques of NGOization, which include the failure of NGOs to name and address the roots causes of the issues they aim to address. Not only do they fail to name capitalism, their work can serve to obscure capitalist assumptions underlying their approaches to change, as well as obscuring the organizations' complicity with these underlying systems.

“This frequent failure to name capitalism, imperialism and colonialism, alongside commonly articulated NGO platforms on participation, fair trade, sustainable development, vaguely defined claims about democracy, rights and justice, and sometimes a kind of stylized, ‘respectable’ militancy, also helps to obfuscate the ways in which many of these organizations are implicated in ruling relations, forms of discursive and practical organization which coordinate these activities and actors in the interests of the state and capital” (Choudry, 2010, p.20, see also Smith, 2006).

Others have written specifically about NGOization in the Canadian context. According to the 2014 article *NGOization: Depoliticizing Activism in Canada* by Dru Oja Jay, there are hundreds to thousands of grant-dependent, mission-oriented organizations in Canada, all

dependant on a comparatively small pool of funders. While there is a wide diversity of kinds of organizations, the foundations that fund them tend share certain characteristics.

“Almost all funders prefer solutions that don’t question prevailing neoliberal policies or capitalism. When they tolerate questioning, effective mobilizing is strictly forbidden. Funders demand centralized control and accountability in the form of regular and extensive reporting, and often direct oversight. Funders avoid grassroots organizing that directly empowers people whenever possible, preferring structures that provide tight, centralized control” (Jay, 2014, n.p.).

Examples of the ways that the NGOization has been playing out in the environmental and climate movements in Canada are offered in the 2009 report *Offsetting Resistance: The effects of foundation funding and corporate fronts*. Using as case studies the Great Bear Rainforest deal in northwestern British Columbia as well as reflecting on the then-emerging North American Tar Sands Coalition, the authors contend that these cases show the track record of corporate and foundation-funded Environmental NGOs making closed-door, backroom deals with industry and government, serving to concentrate decision-making power, ignore affected communities, developing abstract policy proposals, and working at odds with actual effective community-led resistance efforts. The lack of transparency, the absence of democratic structures, the questionable sources of funding, and other deeply problematic ways NGOs do their work, call for an open and informed discussion (Stainsby & Jay, 2009).

Furthermore, Lee (2011), drawing on the 2010 Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement case, argues that NGOs play a role in perpetuating colonialism in Canada. When NGOs partner with First Nations governments (which were established expressly to serve Canada’s interests), the partnerships end up legitimizing the state’s control over Indigenous people, strengthening the state’s claim on Indigenous territories and resources and acting counter to Indigenous rights, title, and their responsibilities to their lands and waters.

Clearly NGOization is a significant barrier to transformative change in Canada.

Centralized, hierarchical and top-down structures. Another barrier that came up in these conversations is the barrier of different and sometimes conflicting organizational structures. Where NGOs tend to be organized in centralized, top-down hierarchical structures, many community and grassroots groups organize themselves non-hierarchically. Some people feel that top-down structures are inherently non-transformative and therefore constitute barriers in and of themselves, while others reflect on the barrier created by the tensions between groups, over incompatible organizational structures.

One activist in Quebec told me of the large coalition she is part of:

“We’re stuck. It’s not going well. The movement is split 50/50 over whether we should structure ourselves in a centralized or decentralized way. The more radical folks want decentralized - it empowers more people. Whereas other folks are like, ‘It’s urgent!’ so we need a small pocket of people to make those decisions. There a sense that there’s not enough time for horizontality or that we’ll do it [hierarchically] because we’ve always done it this way” (Int#15).

There is a sense that though horizontal, non-hierarchical decision-making might be better in some ways, hierarchical, top-down decision-making helps decisions be made faster, with more efficiency. But to some, this sense of rush and competitiveness is part of capitalist ideology. If we want to transform our worlds away from capitalism, we need new, non-capitalist ways of relating and that means finding ways to work together and make decisions together where everyone’s voice matters. We need “spaces that can allow us to take the time to explore new ways of relating and new ways of structuring our relations” (Int#18).

In horizontal structures, you “recognize the value of all the competencies of each person and ... believe that everyone has something to contribute to the struggle and making social change. If we are not able to recognize that, we lose opportunity to have a diversity in our ways of reacting, our ways of bringing social change” (Int#18). “That’s how you spread power, you create spaces that allow communities to reshape the power, reshape the context of control, according to their own culture of values, according to their own practices” (Int#21).

There's a shared sense among the more radical strands of the movements, that organizing ourselves in horizontal ways helps prepare us for the world we want and helps in undoing power imbalance. Decentralizing governance is both the means and the goal of transformation. It is in this way that, by developing non-hierarchical, decentralized movement structures, we begin to prepare for and live the futures we want, now. "Canada does not need another NGO, we need something else. We need some other model of organizing that can help coordinate but in a bottom-up, horizontal way" (Int#33).

Activist burnout. "The biggest threat I see is people getting burnt out" (Int#19). "There is emotional fallout from doing this kind of work" (Int#14), "there are many people who are really exhausted and take on too much" (Int#18). "We have no time for ourselves" (Int#27). "We end up with a lot of mental health problems. [Colonialism] is such a hard thing to fight against, it's very frustrating and a little isolating too" (Int#13 Kanien'kehá ka).

Lack of financial resources. According to one, "right now in Canada, the most significant barrier is the lack of financial support for frontline communities and organizations opposing fossil fuel development" (S#26). As made clear in the section above on NGOs, there is money in the movements, but it's being held and used by the NGOs. The most transformative work is being done by frontlines communities and grassroots movements, where there is a lack of money available to these struggles. "There is a handful of groups who have money but there is not a whole lot of money around for activism for Indigenous land rights, and for shutting down the tar sands" (Int#26).

Many of the communities on the frontlines of unwanted oil and gas development live in very remote areas and there is huge geographical distance between them and their supporters and between various frontlines. "These distances are difficult ... it requires financial resources" (Int#17). The capacity is "limited because we don't have money to pay to get people to be in the right places" (Int#26).

But it's not just the money required to get the word out and the support to the frontlines; another very real barrier is a lack of financial resources in many Indigenous communities. That makes refusing and standing up to extractive projects very challenging. "They either need the

jobs or just don't have the resources to fight (Int#25 Dene). Communities that want to build alternatives to extractive industries on their territories often “don't have the money upfront to invest” (Int#37).

Resisting through the courts has been an effective strategy for Indigenous Nations opposing the violation of their rights and destruction of their lands and waters. But this is a “very expensive strategy. The costs are huge, and many communities just can't afford that” (Int#31). Communities that take a direct action approach to resistance often face extremely high legal fees in cases where arrests have been made and charges laid.

There's a clear sense that a major obstacle to scaling up much of the work being done, is the lack of the financial resources available to make that happen. Activists and communities are compensating with their labour but are tired and burning out. There is a need to find “some reliable economics that would make it work for people so that [activists and land defenders] can continue to do their work ... something that provides a livelihood ... With some real funding you could have armies of people doing incredible work” (Int#2).

Bias, self-interest, privilege. Underlying many of the other barriers is bias, self-interest, and privilege, all significant obstacles to social change towards justice. The resistance to giving up the privileges and personal benefits of extractive colonialism makes it very hard to bring the masses to the work of radically transforming Canada.

There are two really tough discussions people need to have within the movements and in Canada, in general: about power and land. “What will provoke the Canadian, non-Indigenous Canadian society to a point where they are willing to give up power and land? ... 97% of the population benefits from the existing condition. This makes it extremely difficult to get them on board. How do I get potential white allies on board, when they feel it's not in their interest?” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). “Basically, if we want revolution, we need to convince people to [remove themselves] from positions that are upholding the system. [Their unwillingness to do that] often comes from a deep fear that they won't be secure” (Int#10).

Preserving privilege and self-interest makes it hard to bring large numbers of Canadians to the movements. It also makes it hard for activists in the movements, with all the different

positions they hold, to align around truly radical and just goals. Many of the tensions around different theories of change, about strategies, and about end goals discussed in previous sections are not just about personal preference or ideology. They are rooted in internal biases and self-interest (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). It's not enough to discuss that there's different doctrines, end goals, and theories of change; "a better part of the analysis is why people choose these. They choose them not based on the merit; they choose it based on the preservation of self-interest" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). People who benefit from the status quo are more likely to hold more shallow reformist tactics and theories of change. The people most negatively impacted are more likely to hold radical approaches to change. "The tensions that exist aren't usually just based on the relative merit of different approaches to change. They are based on people's biases and self-interests ... these biases are the real roots of the tensions [in the movements]" (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Chapter 7 - Overcoming the barriers and strengthening the movements' transformative power.

"We need to be more unified. We need movements that, not just theoretically, but in practice embrace different people" (Int#24).

"Diversity is what makes us strong - in nature and in the movement" (S#27).

"Being really good allies, that's the only thing that matters" (Int#33).

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter laid out a daunting collection of the many internal and external barriers to change, painting a bleak picture for the prospect of transforming Canada. Movements are up against powerful structures and very challenging internal dynamics. But the conversations did not end there. Much of the time I spent talking to activists across the country was spent strategizing, brainstorming, and dreaming up ways to confront, dismantle and overcome these barriers and build bigger, stronger, more powerful movements.

7.2 Confronting & overcoming the external barriers

Discussions with activists laid out several interlocking barriers, external to the movement, that hinder large-scale systemic change. These include a general lack of public will, an economic system that incentivizes social and ecological destruction and allows and nurtures corporate interests to drive public decisions and all kinds of vested interests in the political and legal systems to maintain the status quo. Criminalization of activists and land defenders disincentivizes the direct action needed to force change. Mainstream focus on false solutions, and a lack of widespread availability of real alternatives, lead to understandable fear of job losses. These barriers work together to obstruct our paths to a decarbonized and decolonized Canada. In thinking together about how to confront and overcome these barriers, several key issues are emphasized. One thing is clear: to build the necessary counter-force, we need much bigger movements, with many, many more people involved. To do this, according to the people I spoke with and as this section lays out, we need to adopt a movement-building approach to activism, we need organizing and mobilizing structures that are conducive to building massive

movements, we need to widen conceptions of what activism and activists look like, we need to learn to talk to the people who don't already agree with us, we need to make activist spaces pleasant and welcoming, and we need to focus on building strong alliances among the various movements. A key dimension of building bigger movements will be changing the story about what is at stake and what is needed. Increasing climate impacts are helping us do this. Finally, helping provide viable alternatives will help inspire people to join us as they begin to disentangle themselves from destructive, exploitative systems and start to see that so much more is possible. There is this profound need to reach more people and to reach out widely to communities. And then we need to find ways to connect with them and communicate our visions of radical change in ways that will resonate with many, many more people.

Building massive, diverse, and powerful movements. “The domination of society by capitalist relations ... can be weakened by massive social struggles” (S#3) and “civil resistance” (S#1). “We apply pressure ... by building very strong movements” (S#10). To bring many more people to the movements, “we need to adopt a movement-building framework within our organizing” (Int#5) and learn what it is “to organize millions of people” (Int#28). This means making the “space and time to actually connect with others,” (Int#11) creating spaces that make it easy for people to get involved, helping them find and accomplish concrete tasks that make sense given their skills, interests, and time available (Int#29). We need to help people “see how they can make a difference, remind people that they have agency to shape their world and to be a part of history” (S#24).

We need new organizing and mobilizing structures that help grow movements quickly - like unions were in the past. How can we organize through work places, communities, and other existing social groups such that we can tap into the transformative potential of people, where they are - as opposed to waiting for self-selecting people to come to us? We should seek out and create mobilizing structures that can “nourish grassroots organizing at every level” (Int#16).

To attract and hold many more people to our movements, we need to work hard on making movement spaces wonderful places to be. This calls for “more spaces, more activities, more actions that bring more happiness inside the movement ... that will bring more people to

join the movement” (Int#19). “More participatory and celebratory events and practices will help build trust and bonding” (S#18).

We need to widen conceptions of activist and activism (Int#10). We should be “doing direct action trainings in neighbourhoods, with people outside of activist circles, making everybody activists” (Int#10). “We’re still a niche bunch of weirdos. We need middle-aged church ladies blockading shit. Then we’ll be unstoppable” (Int#4). To do this, we need to divorce the radical message from the radical activist stereotype (Int#10). We need to get outside of our issue boxes and “engage in a bigger social imagination” (Int#33). “We need to speak in more accessible terms and clearly show how these important issues intersect” (Int#16). We need to help others see viable “alternatives to capitalism and deliver these messages in ways that can reach people” (S#13).

Going ‘beyond the choir’ means talking with people we don’t usually talk to and with people we don’t necessarily already agree with. This means being attentive to people’s needs, ideas and worldviews and relating to them with respect. “To reach people who are not already on side, we need to figure out communications, strategies, and tactics that reach people and that make it safe for them to engage. We have to remember who we are communicating to” (Int#37).

You’re not going to “get people on board by telling them about the issue. It’s about asking them relevant questions and asking them to reflect on their situation. We need to be talking about issues in ways that people can relate to (Int#11). “It’s important to have these discussions in a respectful way, to answer people’s question, to answer their concerns” (Int#23). Really communicating and working across these differences means actually caring about people. “You need to go where people are at and always offer a helping hand. That’s really an important part of how you grow the movement ... Be super respectful. Don’t ‘other’ them. Don’t shame them for not having the same views” (Int#19). We need to be having really respectful, non-shaming relationships with potential allies” (Int#23).

The most important conversations we need to be having are with people who do not agree with us. “People need to meet people who are different from them and have conflict with them

and talk about things that are hard. And that's the foundation of everything" (Int#28). This involves

"making our arguments in unfriendly forums ... take our arguments and our voices and having the courage to raise them in settings where we can't be so sure that everybody in the room is going to nod when we make the argument. Especially those of us that are in situations of privilege, of security, in situations where raising our voices is a low-risk proposition, we have to do that. We need to routinely and specifically speak in places where we're pretty sure it's not going to be welcome. That's where we need to speak" (TT#2).

To one person I spoke with, this call for 'respect for the other' even includes communications with decision-makers and power-holders. "We can humanize those decision-makers, instead of dehumanizing them. We dehumanize somebody when we pigeonhole them. And we then make it likely that they will disregard us as 'the other'" (Int#23).

Engaging more closely with the systems of power helps access the levers of power but engaging with people who wield power over others can be in conflict with the important work of building movement spaces that undo relations of domination. As such we need to carefully navigate the ways we 'engage across difference' with people who wield power-over, continually centering the voices and needs of people most impacted by systems of inequality and exploitation (S#19). We need to make movement spaces warm, supportive, and just, "really thinking about how to embody just, equitable, and supportive values as we organize" (Int#28).

Bringing new people to the movements and engaging 'beyond the choir' is important, but also central to growing bigger, more powerful movements is building connections across different social movements. "Strengthening our allyship among much broader political differences will allow this movement to expand exponentially ... expanding our circle of allies" (Int#23).

Some people suggest that creating the kind of counter-power necessary to hold government and industry to account, means working in uncomfortable alliances, such as with big labour, political parties, and even industry. But again, we need to be thinking carefully, as we work to

expand our circles, build movements, and collaborate across difference, about how alliances with one group of people may be alienating other groups and damaging relations with other important allies.

Changing the narrative. To overcome the barrier of being outnumbered and overpowered, we need to build mass movements, and part of doing so is creating compelling shared narratives that inspire many more people to stand up against ongoing injustice and work for a better world.

This requires changing common conceptions of what constitutes wellbeing and self-interest. Much environmental messaging over the last four decades has been centred around having to make sacrifices for the planet and decolonization also suggests that settlers give things up. What are ways to frame the changes called for as moving towards a life that is better for all? Rather than “life is going to be worse because you're going to consume less, we say ‘your life is better because you're going to be freer’” (Int#5). Neoliberal capitalism has taught us that “your happiness is based on your ability to consume things” (Int#5). We can counter this narrative by exposing the fact that as we consume more and more, we are not happier. In fact, “depression rates are fucking enormous because we live in an alienated and alienating society” (Int#5). By forging compelling messages and showing by example that lifestyles and activism based on respect for nature and for other people, based on deeper connections and deeper meaning, actually grant us access to “much happier, more meaningful lives than endless shopping ever could. We need to send the message that creating transformative social change can genuinely improve people's lives” (Int#5).

For people who are not likely to readily give up the spoils of capitalism, climate change may provide the catalyst to look for other paths to wellbeing. “People are bought out by the comforts of the system and a lot of people don't want to lose that. And I think if we could tell them that, ‘you could actually lose all of that if climate change actually continues unopposed’, we may be able to inject the sense of urgency that can spark people to join the fight” (Int#30).

“The climate crisis offers a pressure that forces western society to rethink self-preservation” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). Climate change is teaching settlers what Indigenous people

have long understood, that Western society, through colonial capitalism, is bent on destroying nature which includes humans. “Some people won’t [learn this lesson]- they’d rather die than give up these notions. But others will [begin to see] that Indigenous ways of life are how we’re going to mitigate the existing destruction and reduce the rate of the ongoing extinction of life on this planet” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

As more and more people begin to feel the existential threat of climate chaos and as this leads them to fundamentally rethink wellbeing and what is in their self-interest, new common ground is built. “Creating a narrative based on a common problem - direct threats to people’s lives - this can help bring people to a movement” (Int#4). “At the end of the day, we all want a safe dry place to live, and we all want to be able to turn on a tap and drink water. Part of the social change is finding that commonality. If we all can agree that water is life and we need that to live, that will pull different peoples together” (Int#12 Anishinaabe).

Transformative narratives and visions need to be backed up materially. It’s not enough to offer visions and narratives of a better world ... we need to be “changing on the ground practicalities” (Int#2). “People need livelihoods ... it’s very difficult for a lot of people to get by”. For us to transform this country, “the livelihood issue has to get addressed” (Int#2). When the extractive industries come to town, what if our movements showed up to help communities identify and build ecologically viable, culturally-appropriate, viable, scalable livelihoods? What if these alternatives were not only climate-friendly, but were decolonial, addressing poverty, inequality and other issues? “An environmental justice movement that offered alternative, meaningful livelihoods, that would be powerful” (S#37).

Movements that actively help create alternative systems and structures are how we overcome the external barriers to the change we want to see. It’s about mass movement building, reaching beyond the choir, reaching people where they are at, and meaningfully engaging with them while creating welcoming, inclusive, and just spaces that people want to be part of. Allying across movements and across sectors to build power to hold government and industry to account, that’s how we will overcome the many external obstacles we face.

7.3 Confronting & overcoming the internal barriers

As for the many internal barriers we face – fractured movements, many relational and ideological tensions, NGO-ization, insular activist culture, burnout, a lack of financial resources, and people’s bias, self-interest, and privilege – these too are daunting but not insurmountable. When I asked people how to confront and overcome these, they offered many inspired and well-thought-out strategies for making our movements more internally cohesive and powerful. Some spoke of more self-education, training and learning to be better at strategizing. People talked of ways to bring more funds to the radical work being done. Some said we need to be making the internal issues we face more explicit and addressing them head-on. Many provided ideas on how to restructure movements to address the problems associated with NGO-ization. The central themes that emerged in response to this query about overcoming internal barriers were about learning to work better across differences, finding ways to coordinate efforts, and getting the information and resources to where they need to be, to most effectively drive change.

Self-education, training, celebration, and being explicit about tensions. “We need to do more trainings, more education, we need to get a sense of history of the movement, how to fight, what happened, what can go wrong, what can go right, how to build a strategy, a more collective strategy” (Int#19). “Don’t think that you’re the first revolutionary, radical, activist, social justice organizer who is thinking through these things” (Int#11) “Know your elders. There are many great [movement thinkers] over the last 150 years. Don’t let that history become forgotten. It’s important to keep those ideas alive and that we’re not always reinventing the wheel” (Int#11).

One person advised us all to “get good at your skills. Get damned good at your skills, because the way to overcome the asymmetrical relationship in this conflict is not through quantity, it’s through quality. And quality means training. I don’t care if its passive, legal resistance or civil disobedience, but get damned good at it. Because then, that will start to offset the advantage that the opposition has, in terms of resources” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

Keeping our movements strong and warding off burn-out “will require celebrating victories” (S#13): the big wins like the cancellation of a pipeline but also the smaller wins. We need to be celebrating the “big lofty things but also celebrate having coffee with somebody from

another movement or eating from your garden. That kind of culture of encouragement can kick start more ambitious things” (Int#6).

If we want to be able to work together in much more powerful ways, we need to practice talking openly about the internal tensions and power asymmetries that exist in our movements. “The tensions are always there ... When I've experienced them to be barriers, it's been because they're there, but they are unnamed ... We need to be making issues explicit” (Int#15). “Acknowledge it all, that helps” (Int#28). We need to talk about “our complicated alliances so that we can move forward. Name the tensions ... Say okay, I'll work with you but here are my grievances. Is there a way we can live with our difference?” (Int#40).

Getting better at strategy. “We need to be smarter and more strategic” (Int#14). We need to get better at studying the industries we oppose, better at identifying their weak points” (Int#8). We all know how to state a goal – eradicating capitalism for example - what is hard is developing the plan to get there. What is lacking in activist circles is real strategic capability ... Strength is overcome with strategy. We don't have to outmuscle our opponent, we have to outthink them ... If there is a secret weapon to defeat colonization, capitalism, industrialization, all that - it's the weapon of strategy ... without it we are taking shots in the dark” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

Strategy means asking ourselves: “Who are the allies we should be working with? What is our capacity? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses? What are the targets? What kind of tactics and strategies do we want to engage in and why” (Int#14).

To work towards a synergizing of movement efforts in ways that are not top-down and not centralized, we need “more people who are strategic minded, that have the ability to develop plans ... a council of strategic thinkers. That's our force multiplier” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). This can help us in building transformative power “as long as everybody is coalesced around a strategic long-term objective” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw). “As activist groups and organizations progress in their development, more decentralization becomes possible. In the end, you don't need a strategic leader - this hierarchy structure, you need it less. What can happen is when people start to

understand the strategic goals, the objectives that you need to get to, each group can take their responsibility in the way they see fit” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

Addressing & overcoming NGO-ization. “One of the problems with NGOs is that it’s not clear what their role is – it’s vague. They need to know their place and let that determine what they do. If an NGO is there to give support for movement building than it should know what that looks like and organize from that place” (Int#32). If people in NGOs can be honest and explicit about the ways they are constrained by their need to reach broad audiences and to secure funding, these constraints could be dealt with. That could help shape the role they play in the movements. If these constraints were made explicit, training could be offered to help mitigate the problems: “Okay, for NGOs there’s going to be these kinds of constraints, these kinds of pressures. Here’s what you can do to keep your vision strong and here’s how you can avoid becoming corrupt” (Int#28).

If NGOs are serious about wanting to help strengthen the movements, they can only do that by actively supporting grassroots groups and communities. To do so, NGOs need to let go of the reins of command. “Strategy should not be funding-reliant. An NGO should not be the one who decides what a strategy is. It can decide what its strategy is, but they shouldn’t be the ones setting strategy for the whole movement” (Int#18). Instead, “community organizers and land defenders should always be calling the [shots strategically]. I think the NGOs’ role in the movement should be giving resources to [community and grassroots organizers]” (Int#18).

“We need to democratize the finances of environmental groups” (Int#19). “When you look at the salaries that especially the executives in the NGO take in, it’s gargantuan, and if you can imagine putting that money towards grassroots direct actions campaigns, for people who are actually willing to fight,” we could transform Canada “if those resources were available to them instead of these high-paid executives” (Int#16).

“I think the paid person in the room should be the person who does the most boring work and supporting trainings, providing the resources. The best of NGO staff, they don’t see themselves as the activists, they see themselves as supporting activists ... Imagine the resources of NGOs being used to set up a resource hub

for community organizers, with a print shop, and child care, etc. NGOs should be doing that. Not strategy” (Int#32).

“In order to find better and more ethical ways of doing things, NGOs need to constantly ask themselves how, what they are doing will impact the most vulnerable people and most impacted communities. And they need to ask how [they] are taking leadership from those folks” (Int#32). “In coalition building, you have to do it the right way which is fore-fronting the voices that are often not heard and not just taking on those people’s arguments but giving people the platform to speak for themselves” (Int#13).

“NGOs were created. We can un-create or remake them to be better” (Int#32). “Canada does not need another NGO, we need something else. We need some other model of organizing” (Int#18).

Addressing and overcoming the lack of financial resources. A clear barrier is the lack of financial resources in the movements and that the money that does exist is generally being held by NGOs. They are too risk-adverse to push for radical systemic change. In relation to this, many people spoke about the need to get funding to the front lines and to other people doing the most transformative work.

One way to do this is through grassroots funding. “I think we can raise some serious grassroots funds. Standing Rock showed that there's a lot of support available ... millions and millions of dollars in donations were sent ... But we need to create these kinds of funds ahead of time, not just in these moments of crisis. Perhaps through monthly donations?” (Int#4). How about an “Adopt an Activist” initiative whereby well-meaning people who are too busy to engage in activism, could fund a grassroots activist to be able to do that work? (S#37). “How to get the money is less important than making sure it is available when people on the frontlines need it” (Int#8).

One way of getting more resources to the frontlines “is straight-up redirecting the resources [that already exist] ... NGOs have big fund-raising power and big ability to coordinate things, good infrastructure and good money and that should be used for grassroots things ... redirecting

funds for land defense ... People lending office space, printing abilities, materials ... these are pretty concrete ways to get NGO resources to where they are most needed” (Int#10).

“NGO budgets are enormous ... With a certain percentage of that money distributed to groups who have nothing, but accomplish a great deal and do miracles with nothing, that could make an enormous difference for the movement” (Int#19). For this to happen, we need to create a situation where it’s no longer socially acceptable for NGOs to pay their executives such high salaries. “We need to create a social cost for doing that. How do we do that effectively? I don’t know, but almost no one is working on it” (Int#16).

There is the need to mobilize the resources available to and held by settlers and to put these resources to the aid of frontline land defenders. “It’s always has been the folks on the frontlines that risk it all, because they don’t have a choice. My work is about getting privileged, liberal, sit-on-their-ass, white people to get to the point of feeling like that they too, don’t have a choice. And if we can find a place where white, privileged people realize that we are in fact in need of liberation, I think there’s a much better chance that the waves of action that are necessary are going to come about” (Int#4). How do we help convert the growing awareness about white settler privilege into action and the mobilization and redistribution of settler resources? Can reconciliation reparations be a way to fund transformative work?

“If Canadians are really into reconciliation ... only 0.02% of the lands in Canada belong to Indigenous people today... So why don't we put a 0.02% tax on every piece of land that's sold in Canada and put this into an Indigenous World Bank and then rebuild our communities, buy back our land, pay for lawyers, things like that. Put the money [that settlers owe for living on stolen Indigenous land] in the Indigenous World Bank. And let’s think about whether that can be expanded to include any of the revenues from resources that are extracted from Indigenous territories. People could apply to the Indigenous World Bank – with requests like ‘I need 10,000 to help defend my people [from this pipeline, or this mine]’ (Int#25 Dene).

There is a need for redistributing resources in Canada in general, as well as within movements. “Strengthening the movement means trying to invert the power dynamic of who has the resources and who needs the resources” (Int#13).

But if the funding structure constrains NGOs from being able to do transformative work as many people have argued, it’s important to think about how to get more financial resources to the frontlines in ways that don’t constrain their freedom or create problematic dynamics within groups and communities. An activist in Quebec told me the story of her grassroots group being allocated a large amount of money and about the huge tensions and problems that resulted from it. “I hope not every group will start getting crazy because they have money ... there is a link between money and getting crazy” (Int#19).

Coordinating our efforts. To overcome the internal barriers of fragmentation and internal tensions that are weakening our efforts, we need to learn to collaborate better across difference. We may “be uncomfortable with each other’s ideas, but it’s better done in coordination than not ... ideally all of the people in the movement would sit down together and disclose what each is doing. We could disagree and push back on each other and think about the diversity of things being done that can play off each other in a good way” (Int#10). “Having strategic times where we all come together to support each other, that’s how we build the mass movements” (Int#11).

At the very least, a starting point for forging mutually-beneficial relations, should be a commitment to avoid publicly denouncing each other. “Can we stop stepping on each other?” (Int#40), “not talk shit about each other” (Int#20). Indeed, some groups have made explicit mutual nonaggression pacts - “That we won’t denounce each other” (Int#26).

But we can aim for more than just non-aggression. “How do we [coordinate efforts] so that they become mutually beneficial to each other? Mutually supportive?” (Int#39). How do we work together to “overcome divisions, build solidarity, and energize people to persevere through a long difficult struggle?” (S#18). Many people spoke about building strategic alliances across various differences: across groups resisting different unwanted projects, across geographic locations, across different legal cases, across different approaches to change, across different end goals. There is so much amazing work going on across the country, with people taking action in

all kinds of ways. How can we link them up and combine all forces into something more transformative?

Collaborating across differences is not easy. “There are going to be things that we wholeheartedly disagree on, so we need to figure out, how do we move forward in a way that allows us to disagree, and still move forward?” (Int#37). If we're going get ourselves out of this crisis, we need to learn how to make decisions and work together. The way to get there is “taking action, doing things, building, trying, screwing up, apologizing, trying again” (Int#28).

One of the downfalls of coordination is that it takes time. It can add layers of bureaucracy. As one person told me, “as someone who sits for 15 hours of meetings every week, I see the limits of [coordination]” (Int#39). Coordination can be cumbersome and hinder movement groups from being nimble and being able to respond quickly to moments as they arise. Coordination can replicate Western, managerial forms and calcify change processes that are inherently messy and emergent.

There are other limits and problems associated with coordination: it is often done in top-down, centralized ways which are problematic and involve imposing strategy on others and using them instrumentally. “[Coordination] tends to be centrally spearheaded and run more or less tightly from the top. I think what we need to do is to figure out how to break out of that mold and find and rediscover or revitalize or invent modalities of action that are self-organizing and self-directed within a clear container and frame. That's the only way we can go exponential” (Int#4). “If we're going to collaborate it needs to be true collaboration which means just and horizontal” (Int#13).

Coordination is also problematic in the sense that “trying to make everyone work together all the time ends up watering your own messages until they are palatable for everybody” (Int#20). Yet another problem with coordination and unity is that it can render us predictable and vulnerable to our opponents. “As long as everybody is coalesced around a strategic objective then it's almost better to have multiple strategic plans to get there because it makes it harder for the opposition to figure out how to pinpoint our vulnerabilities” (Int#38 Mi'kmaw).

If fragmentation in movements is a barrier to change, then forging more coordination and unity within and across movements is called for. This needs to be done in ways that do not replicate power-over relations, nor managerial, bureaucratic processes that hinder autonomy and our ability to respond quickly. What do bottom-up forms of communication, of connectivity, of synergizing the efforts of fractured, siloed movements look like?

Bottom-up coordination means making sure it's not always the same people convening, it means "building trust between groups" (Int#28). Instead of coordination being imposed from on top, it can emerge organically through responsiveness, through active solidarity across groups and movements; looking outwards enough to see and respond when there is support needed elsewhere in the movements. "Know what solidarity is and be prepared to stand in solidarity. Solidarity is the antidote to factionalism, and solidarity means that sometimes you stand in solidarity with people you don't like" (Int#14). "The work we do creating solidarity between social movements [is our best way to build] revolution and new systems of governance" (Int#24).

7.4 Thinking and working across difference to strengthen the movements

Movement ecosystem perspective. The most common kind of answer I got when I asked people how we can overcome the internal barriers we face was about finding new ways to coordinate our efforts, to understand where each of us is best positioned to contribute to the movement, to value the rich diversity that exists, and to use it to build our collective power to make change. Several people referred to this as movement ecosystem perspective. The "idea that movement ecology is really important" (Int#10).

"I look at it as an ecosystem ... different groups with different skills" (Int#40). "There is not one set of strategies and tactics. You can't look at what one group is doing and say 'this is systemic change' ... I don't think you can look at a set of tactics and strategies in isolation from what others are doing" (Int#39). It takes many different groups doing many different things to bring about systems change. All this diversity will become more effective as the relations and communication between diverse groups are forged and strengthened. "Like an octopus with many arms moving in different directions and doing different things ... each arm knows what the other is doing." (Int#39). "We need to map out the relationships. Who knows who? And who is

doing what? How do we actualize those relationships and release the power that is inherent in those relationships such that we effectively make shit happen?” (Int#16).

This movement ecosystem approach can help us see ourselves as part of a greater whole and approach our work in ways that strengthen the whole of the movements rather than merely perpetuating our own specific group, organization or community. This approach prompts us to ask: What are the goals of the movement and where do we fit in? What are our strengths? What are our resources? How can we best serve the overall movement? “Know where your place is and do your part well. Be part of a larger movement context” (Int#32). Can we get to the place where the different groups in the movement, can identity as part of a system? “It's a tough one - putting aside self interest in favour of the greater good” (Int#33).

“There will always be and should be a diversity of approaches in the ecology of the movement” (Int#4). “There are so many different people, doing different things on different issues. It's like bio-diversity, the stronger the diversification is, the stronger the movement. You cannot cut the head of the movement because it's going to grow something, somewhere else” (Int#19). The more diverse we are, the stronger we are. But diversity is not enough. “We’re not coordinated enough” (Int#40).

The diversity that exists within these movements, the end goals, ideology, tactics etc., is our strength but currently it is also a source of tension and division. It is a barrier to change because the diversity is in many ways blocking collaboration and coordination. How do we transform this diversity from being a barrier into becoming our strength?

We start by learning to value our diversity. “People need to see value in each other. It all works together. So how can we work together?” (Int#15).

“We have to approach it with a lot of humility and see it as a team sport. Think of the movement as a hockey team. You can't have one person on the ice the whole game, it doesn't work. Not everyone can play forward. Not everyone can be the goalie. You have your goons, and you have delicate artistes with the puck. You have the grinders who are just going to get in there and tough it out. They have to play different roles” (Int#16).

“We all need to be really humble about what our role is. None of us can win without others. The question becomes - what is the kind of relationality that's going to make us do this better?” (Int#16). Thinking about movements as ecosystems may be a kind of relationality that can help us do better.

Can each group, community and organization in the movement understand where it's constrained and where it's powerful? What does collaboration look like when taking into account each other's constraints and strengths? Clearly, the constraint of grassroots groups is lack of access to resources, but they're unconstrained in terms of what they can say and the tactics they can engage. NGOs, on the other hand, have more access to resources but are constrained about what they can say and what tactics they can use. A movement ecosystem perspective could help nurture a humility that allows each of us to see that ‘my particular group and approach to change is necessary but not sufficient’. It can help us see the whole and identify how “we can do what they can't do, and they can do what we can't. It becomes more of an organic support system, where we're all trying to raise the bar” (Int#31).

“People should look at their aptitudes and gifts” (Int#4) and based on our respective strengths and constraints, determine what strategies make most sense while developing our “strategy within the larger ecosystem” (Int#3). “George Lakey may be responsible for the concept of movement ecology. He explained that in the large ecosystem of change there are reformers, the people who work *in the system* to make change, there are people who are working *in opposition to the system*, and then there are people who are working *outside the system*” (Int#10). There's a role for the healers and for the teachers and for the direct-action organizers ... in a movement ecosystem” (Int#32). “All of those things are valid, and we should just be encouraging other people to do the things they like to do. This pretending *it's one way or the other* is not helping us” (Int#20 Michif Cree).

You need both the

“good cop and bad cop. If you don't talk to people who are in power, they're going to do what the hell they want. You need the good cops who will speak to the people

in power. But you also need people who are out there on the streets saying, ‘This does not make sense!’. There is room for both” (Int#15).

Which groups are best positioned to impact on the system? Where, and how can the various forces work synergistically? “Everyone takes their place in the fight. Each has their specialization. Everyone has their role” (Int#16). “We need movement theory that over-arches and sees where people are at, that there's a role for everyone” (S#27).

“How social change happens is a question of seeing at which times you need which strategies, and who is in the position to best use those strategies? It's never going to be only just one, it's got to be a mix of those strategies ... blockading, marketing campaigns, negotiations, demonstration projects, court cases, pilot projects ... But you need to figure out who else is in the mix and put that whole package together” (Int#33).

The key question is how can we work with this diversity - how can each group, community and organization do its work - without counter-acting or pushing against others in the movements? “How do you make it work so that we're not hindering each other's work?” (Int#15).

There is a need for more coordination between different niches of the movements, more synergizing of the efforts. There is a shared sense that top down coordination doesn't work. What do horizontal or bottom-up linkages look like? The ecosystem metaphor can help us here. Forest ecosystems build health and resilience by sharing information and resources, getting things to where they need to be, to keep the whole of the system strong. How can movements share information and resources more effectively such that everyone's transformative capacity is increased because of the relations we have?

As made clear in the section on Internal Barriers, much of the financial and other resources in the movements are being held by NGOs and this is a problem given that they are too risk-averse to pursue radical change. To overcome this barrier, their resources need to find their way to the movement actors who are best positioned to push for transformative change. “People need to put their resources in things that are working. If you are an organization that has a million

dollars, and you have staff, perhaps you should look at the landscape and consider where that money can go to speed up, strengthen, leverage, and help the overall movement” (Int#28). “What is the ideal role for NGOs in the movement? One thing, straight up, is redirecting resources” (Int#10).

Movement ecosystem does not mean we’re all in “formal coalitions. Coalitions can be awesome, and they can drive you nuts” (Int#33). We don’t need to be formally working together, but we’d be well advised to look to the diversity within the movements we are part of and ask ourselves:

“Where's the energy? Where's the power? What are the different points of leverage? What's the economic leverage? What's the sort of creative energy that can be unleashed? What's the imaginative energy? What's the cultural values that are already there to be leveraged? All those things. Just look at all the resources that are available in the broadest way and then figure out how to make them accessible. And then figure out a plan for creating the relationships that are necessary to put all that together. I think a lot of it just comes down to relationships and common understanding” (Int#16).

Building relationships. Ecosystems, like all systems, are defined by the relationships among components. A movement ecosystem approach means centering relationships. The theme of relationships has emerged as a thread that runs through the previous sections and chapters. When I asked people how we can strengthen our movements, building better relations was by far the most common response. “It is relationships that create change” (Int#37).

Relationships are the basis of building collective power. Movement building is “doing the long, hard work of building relationships with people” (Int#5). “The number one thing that gets people to engage [in movements] are the people connected to them” (Int#11). Working with others well fosters innovation. “The more we work on our relationships the more we arrive at new ways of organizing ourselves” (Int#18). Relationships are also important for building the kind of support needed to facilitate the work we need to be doing to make change. “Capitalism

has weakened community ties. If we can rebuild these relationships, we can better share the risks and share the responsibilities of direct action” (Int#5).

Relationships can bring more people to the movements and can be the antidote to burn-out and keep activists engaged for the long haul. Relationships need to be fostered and cared for. We need “more spaces ... spaces where people can recharge their batteries and be surrounded by love and people” (Int#19).

The kind of relationships that we need to strengthen the movements, are relationships off-line, in person (Int#28). Though much of the collaborating we do currently is online “people communicating directly is the most powerful thing ... When you get people actually in the same place, the kind of communication that happens is very different” (Int#29).

Building regional relationships is key to strengthening our movements, as is strengthening our relationships to place. “Remembering where we belong on the planet ... happens through experience and relationship to place” (Int#33). “Connection to land will help foster better decision making in the future” (Int#37).

For settlers, relationship to land and place needs to be done with care. “You don’t have rights and title. But [you have] responsibilities. If you live here and you accept those responsibilities, change how you walk in this world, and help other people come to that recognition. It’s not about ridding yourself of that tension or absolving yourself of that guilt, it’s about changing how you make decisions, changing how you look at things” (Int#37).

In movements, we work with such a sense of urgency that we often put aside care for ourselves and each other. But this kind of care is needed for building the relationships that are the foundation of collective action. “We’re so productivity-oriented that at times civility goes by the wayside. But we have to take care of each other” (Int#11). “We need to learn how to be better with each other ... It’s important to feel [we] can count on [each other]” (Int#10). “If the movement wants to be strong, it’s got to be about people and people in a place where they can imagine and feel connected and participate” (Int#29).

“We need to open space where we can have those conversations that are often difficult and uncomfortable; the conversations we need to have to push us forward in our understanding of social change, social justice, and what we're fighting for. Collective reflection can be really helpful in creating the conversations that we need to be having in order to be better allies, to work in solidarity with people and reflect on how we're actually going to create the changes that we want to see” (Int#13).

“It’s about trying to operate from our higher selves ... genuinely being mindful when we're in movement spaces ... that I will make mistakes and the person in front of me will make mistakes, but we're here to do the best we can. Remember that people are trying ... tread gently in the collective tango that we're doing. There is no perfection. There’s a lot of trying” (Int#11).

To strengthen our movements, we need to learn to listen better. “It’s listening to understand, to make sure you really understand where a person is coming from” (Int#37). “Non-Indigenous people need to learn to listen and to really listen well” (Int#25 Dene). “That listening feels like the heart of the transformation, of transformative capacity. That's the heart of what makes a good relationship” (S#37).

Undoing domination and forging just relations in movement ecosystems. Talking about inclusion, mutual-support, movement ecosystem and diversity is crucial but may ignore or gloss-over ongoing power imbalances that exist in the movements. To have strong relationships, we need to have just relationships. That means undoing inequality. Even as these movements work to move Canada towards social justice, unequal and unjust relations exist within and across movements. Some have more power than others. “In many NGOs, men are still calling the shots and women do all the work” (TT#3). There remains “power imbalance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. That's a huge barrier. How do you go about being explicit about power imbalances and developing checks and balances that ensure that it is not going to be to the disadvantage of Indigenous peoples when they interact with the settlers?” (Int#34).

We need to take a hard look at who has the resources and who is making the decisions. Strengthening our movements means undoing relations of domination amongst ourselves. We

cannot build strong relations without mutual trust. And we cannot have trust across uneven power. “Hierarchy and domination hurt relations because they hurt trust” (TT#3).

The most powerful relationship-killer and collaboration-blocker in these movements is power imbalance. When the shots are being called by those with more power, the connective tissue of our ecosystem becomes weakened and battered. We need to ask who is accountable to who in the movement ecosystems (Int#16). When white environmental activists replicate racist and sexist tendencies in movement spaces, the potential for building a powerful movement of movements shrinks. When environmental groups engage with Indigenous communities because Indigenous rights are useful to their narrow environmental goals, but then fail to support Indigenous self-determination, our collective power to make change together is greatly diminished. When a coalition of large NGOs strikes a backroom deal with industry or government without the consent of the grassroots groups and directly impacted communities, relationships are destroyed, and the movements’ transformative capacity is weakened. There is a need to undo power inequity in these movements. Without this, the notion of mutually-supportive relations makes no sense, and the vision of a healthy movement ecosystem is off the table.

We need to ask: How does power and privilege shape where we are situated in the movement ecosystem? Diversity is important, but the kind of diversity these conversations are discussing, does not mean inclusivity for those who continue to enact racism, sexism, or any other form of power over others.

The fight against the tar sands expansion and pipeline development in Canada has brought together this diverse movement landscape that includes many groups, organizations, and communities, some who are actively committed to undoing social injustice and some who are not. Some environmental and climate groups and organizations do not concern themselves with issues of racism, colonialism, and other forms of oppression; they focus on ‘environmental goals’ as separate from human relations. I did not interview such people, so their views have not been included in this thesis. Yet they are implicated in these movements. How do we make sense of all this, in thinking through the movement ecosystem? And what does that mean for creating effective, just, and mutually supportive relationships? Does my ‘ecosystem’ include

environmental groups that do not center justice, that refuse to do land acknowledgments²⁵ at the beginning of events, or that still are run predominately by white men?

When I asked one activist if these kinds of narrow environmental groups are part of her movement ecosystem, she offered this:

“It might be useful, in thinking about it like a system, to see that you've got some groups who are working on promoting intersectional analysis and organizing and you have groups who are more focused on individual causes. Perhaps these are both useful. The people who are really focused on specific things can push for specific wins from specific targets. Whereas maybe the role of the people doing the intersectional stuff is to articulate a grander vision of where all the work is pointing to” (Int#15).

This division of labour only works if those focusing on the individual causes do not work in ways counter-productive to work on the wider and deeper issues. In Quebec, recent climate mobilizations have been led by groups such as La Planète s'invite au Parlement that had strategically decided not to center Indigenous rights and leadership. They refused to do land acknowledgements at their marches, because doing so was deemed to be ‘bad communications strategy’ in Quebec, where the average person does not want to be told this is not their land. This has damaged relations between environmental groups and Indigenous activists; important relationships that some environmental justice groups have been working for years to build.

It is not clear how to navigate these huge differences in priorities and approaches in the movements. One possible way to create this alignment is to foster shared principles. A movement for systemic change needs to keep their eye on the root causes. “I don't need everyone to do the exact same things I am doing. But I do need everyone to radicalize where they are at” (Int#32). One activist suggests that if we could get agreement on some shared principles that

²⁵ Note that land acknowledgements are not universally supported by Indigenous peoples. These can lead to tokenism and superficiality (See Hayden King and others on this).

align us all towards addressing the root causes, we can make sure our work is not pushing against others’.

“What would NGO work be like if they always asked themselves these three things in all their strategic planning? 1) How does this impact the most vulnerable people? How does it help ensure their survival pending revolution? 2) How is this helping name the roots of the crisis? 3) How is this working towards the larger vision of changing structures and systems? It's harder to use fucked- up tactics if you ask yourselves those questions. Everything we do can become radical work. It takes away the band aid solutions or false solutions that continue to perpetuate the root causes. It challenges them pretty deeply” (Int#32).

Another activist suggested that if every group and organization in the movements agreed to adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, this would help align our efforts into a common force. The Jemez Principles were drafted in 1996 by forty people of color and European-American representatives “with the intention of hammering out common understandings between participants from different cultures, politics, and organizations” in their work together around anti-globalization (Solis, & Union, 1997, n.p.). The principles include: Be Inclusive, Emphasize Bottom-Up Organizing, Let People Speak for Themselves, Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality, Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves, and Commit to Self-Transformation (Solis, & Union, 1997). The document states that “groups working on similar issues with compatible visions should consciously act in solidarity, mutuality and support each other’s work” (ibid, n.p.). But the question remains about whether the many groups and organizations in these movements in Canada indeed hold ‘compatible visions’.

To get there, we need “more collective work to hold to our space with more intention and reminding each other what the overall goals are” (Int#11). “The lens of justice should be made clear from the beginning” (S#14).

Movements powerful enough to transform Canada will need to be based on just relations amongst ourselves. In turn, forging just relations requires unlearning western notions of power.

Activist movements are notorious for endless debates over the ‘correct ideology’. One person likened this to Game of Thrones.

“Whether its Marxism, Communism, anarchism, libertarian beliefs, whatever it is, they are fighting for the throne. This is based on a Western conception of power. To create real coalitions and healthy relationships, we must eliminate the throne. And then no one can fight for it. [Then] how do we talk about relationships?” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

The problems come down to, among other things, value systems and how people understand nature, power, and just about everything. Many settler activists are looking to Indigenous people to learn about different ways of doing things and different ways of relating. This puts a lot of pressure on Indigenous communities not only to defend their lands but to also teach a bunch of activists and white folk. “There’s more and more interest in other worldviews than the settler worldview that has been dominant for so long and that there’s more and more interest to learn about Indigenous worldviews. However, it needs to be done correctly. It can be done wrong and hurt even more the wounds that are open. It’s like ‘you’re always taking from us, always taking everything that we have’” (TT#2 Anishinaabe). Learning needs to be done in ways that are not appropriative, and that settlers only take what is offered.

Strong relationships require strong boundaries. That means respecting the boundaries between movements and not just collapsing all the different movements currently active in Canada into one “movement ecosystem”. There are important differences between the Indigenous land defense movement and the environmental movement for example and respecting the boundaries between these movements is critical for building just relations. What could coalitions look like that are really respectful of the boundaries that exists?

“We need to be working together but we need to be working together in ways that reverse the existing power dynamics in our organizing” (Int#13). This means settlers taking responsibility to transform colonial relations. A lot of people are still not willing to do that (Int#7 Kanien’kehá:ka; Int#20 Michif Cree). “Developing better relationships between settlers and Indigenous people means “settlers have to do their research and have to come and find us, and

then hopefully through that research, they'll understand humility ... and listening" (Int#25 Dene). Settlers need to be "walking with care and real caution ... and humility. Understand settler colonialism and use your power to privilege Indigenous nations" (Int#20 Michif Cree).

Building just relations and undoing systems of domination within and beyond our movements is absolutely central to decarbonizing and decolonizing Canada. "It's by having those relationships and having those dialogues that people are going to be able to improve both things. I don't know if I see that happening, I see it being possible. But there's also a lot of financial and structural incentives that are counter to those relationships having any effect" (Int#16). Indeed, I was at a conference last year, when during her Key Note address, pedagogical and critical race theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings was asked what to do about fragmented movements and how to create a more unified force for change. She said that "we're not losing because we're not unified. We're losing because the other side is playing chess. We're playing checkers". This message has stayed with me as a constant reminder that, as with all the other approaches to change, focusing on relationships and movement cohesion is necessary, but on its own, insufficient.

Climate change as catalyst for creating the transformative force we need. "Time is running out fast. Climate change is going to bring so much pressure everywhere ... There is more pressure to be successful in our fight" (Int#9 Kanien'kehá:ka). "This is a massive intersecting crisis, it relates to all the issues and there are a bunch of ways to contribute" (Int#28 Anishinaabe). "There are many solutions, and the beauty of it all is that it's such an urgent issue that no one action is enough, and all actions are necessary, and so whatever people can bring to this movement ... we need everybody" (Int#23).

The way climate change is playing out - who is being impacted, who is taking action and who is resisting climate action – all this "is teaching us about power; about who has the power in society" (Int#39), and as such, is helping the environmental movement "getting out of that box of Environmentalism and engage in a bigger social imagination" (Int#33). Through increasing awareness of the links between climate impacts, extractivism, and the ongoing violation of Indigenous rights and resistance "there is a real opportunity to rethink how our society is structured, especially colonial structures" (Int#29).

“Now there's a crack in the Western thinking of dominance. Their monopoly on truth is starting to be seen as an illusion. The climate crisis offers a pressure that forces Western society to think about self-preservation and it is one that sees Western society as the cause of the threat. When people start to understand that, they can start to shed some of this racism and might be willing to move towards an Indigenous model. How intense does the climate crisis have to get before people are ready to give up power, before they are willing to abandon the benefits that racism has given them? What point does it have to get to? Does all of BC have to be on fire before we say, ‘maybe we should change the ways we live?’. Climate crises might put them in the position where they no longer have the choice” (Int#38 Mi’kmaw).

“I believe there will come moments in which centralized systems of power will be rendered ineffective, at least temporarily, and there will be opportunities to see more decentralized democratic control, for communities and for energy systems. People living in their own communities, making decisions for their own communities” (Int#20 Michif Cree). “Communities [will] reshape the power, reshape the context of control, according to their own cultures and values, according to their own practices” (Int#21).

In order to build new systems, as the old ones collapse or are dismantled, we will need to be better at working together, making decisions together, choosing kindness and sharing, over competition and greed. Right now, in our movements, we have the opportunity to practice the skills of relating, of collaborating, and of fairly sharing power and resources. “Being really good allies, that's the only thing that matters” (Int#33). “We need to unleash the full creativity of everything. To find the things that are going to get us there, we have to support each other on a basic human level. That's how we're going to get ourselves out of the current mess” (Int#16).

Chapter 8 – Conclusion: Towards a relational theory of change and relational practices of movement building.

“My natural inclination was to see relationships, to seek the threads that connect the world, to join instead of divide” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.42).

“What seems to cascade across the accounts is a rendering of collectivity itself as a theory of change” (Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.137).

8.1 Summing up

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 brought together different theorists to present the crises, explain my methods, and introduce theories of change. In chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, the voices of the activists and land defenders who I interviewed and surveyed took center stage. This final chapter presents my own best thinking on what it will take to meaningfully transform Canada.

Sometime during the winter of 2017-18, while reading on Indigenous theories of change and reading through and coding the interview transcripts, the theme of *relationships as central to transformation* hit me hard. I began to see it everywhere – in the literature, in the interviews, and in conversations in my activist communities. I’ve been thinking, talking with others, and reading deeply on it since. That one key moment transformed this doctoral project and my approach to activism. This chapter concludes the thesis by sharing what I have come to understand so far about how building better relationships - across ideas, across strategies, among people, and between humans and the rest of life on earth - will be one important key to transforming our systems towards justice and ecological viability.

But first, a quick recap of the insight which has been gleaned in each of the 7 chapters: Chapter 1 laid bare the existential crisis we are facing as the climate changes. It argued that as the ecological crisis intensifies, social inequality is also growing, and that these are not separate phenomena. In Canada, instead of transforming our economies away from fossil fuels, industry and government are pushing to expand the tar sands through pipeline development. This ongoing commitment to dirty oil is driving the climate crisis and is violating Indigenous peoples’ land and rights, exacerbating already massive inequality and environmental racism in Canada. I

argued that the twin tasks of decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada are pressing and inextricable. These fights need to be waged together and the environmental/climate justice and Indigenous land defense movements are doing that.

In Chapter 2, I defended my methodological approach of *thinking with movements*, arguing that knowledge and theory generated in social movements is particularly important to understanding how change happens and how we can transform Canada. I also made the case that conventional approaches to social movement research, especially when conducted by settler researchers *on* movements and Indigenous communities, is both ethically problematic and not particularly useful. I describe my approach, as an activist-scholar working from within movements, to doing research that is relevant to movements and hopefully useful in generating change.

Chapter 3 summarized a lengthy literature review on theories of change from across 6 diverse bodies of academic literature and into 8 Key Lessons for activists: To change the system, we need to understand the system and we need to think in systems; Power is key to change; There are many kinds of change and it is helpful to know exactly what kind of change you are working to bring about. There are multiple stages of change processes and different stages call for different strategies and agents; Social movements make change through collective action, but collective action is not so easy; There are many approaches to making change and different approaches can work together to build transformative power. It's important to think about why change does not happen; and finally, Relationships are at the heart of social change. Several important themes emerged across these key lessons, largely around the need to think and act more holistically, in ways that account for and include much more than our current modes of activism and understandings of change.

Chapter 4 shared the findings from the many conversations I have conducted with the social movements, focusing on how these people understand the crisis, their causes and how they envision the worlds they are working to bring about. Where mainstream discourses in Canada about climate change and inequality focus on the surface layer of the problems - the symptoms of the crises - people in these movements are digging down much more deeply, uncovering the root causes. They are seeing that climate change and inequality are both driven by colonial capitalism, which is undergirded by western worldviews that promote domination of people over

nature and of people over people. These systems have bred systemic disconnection from land and from each other, cutting us off from the communities, tools, and knowledges we need to get ourselves out of this mess. Their visions of the world they want conjure up a future of flourishing networks of decentralized, self-determining communities, powered by renewable energy, and learning from the land. This is a future where a hard process of decolonizing relations renders us all much more capable of living and making decisions together – decisions that benefit all beings. This future depends on a fundamental restructuring of our systems and a massive redistribution of wealth, power, and land.

Chapter 5 dug into the theories of change held by the activists and land defenders that I spoke with. Though their TOCs are diverse and even conflicting at times, I compiled the insight into a collective TOC which emphasizes that transformation happens through a convergence of *1) The Context, 2) How We Understand and What We Value, 3) How We Take Action, and 4) How We Relate*. We need to be attentive to context and timing, as events and crises change what is possible. We need to help shift understanding and values and engage through personal transformation, education, changing the story, and systemic analysis. We must do all this in ways that amplify the voices of those most impacted and follow Indigenous leadership. This attention to context, understandings, and values is vitally important but not sufficient. It's important that we take action, and it's important how that is done. We build power through collective action and then direct this people-power to influence policy change and election outcomes. We direct it to confront and dismantle power. We use this people-power for innovating, promoting, and living the solution and alternatives – becoming the world we want. This is all absolutely critical for transforming Canada. However, if groups and individuals go about doing things in isolation and in ways that are in conflict, making each other's goals harder to achieve, our efforts are rendered less transformative. So how we relate is central. We need to coordinate efforts, sharing resources and information in order to strengthen the overall force for change we can build together. To do this, we need to build strong relations of solidarity within and across movements. But this won't happen if relations of domination, the legacies of colonialism, racism, classism, and sexism that we carry with us into movement spaces, continue to shape the ways we organize. We must unlearn relations of domination.

Chapters 6 turned to the questions of what is working and what is not working in the movements and explores the many significant barriers to change that activists and land defenders are facing – barriers both internal and external to the movement. Identified external barriers include a general lack of public will and the economic system that incentivizes social and ecological destruction and allows and nurtures corporate interests to drive public decision. This creates all kinds of vested interests in the political and legal systems to maintain the status quo. Criminalization of activists and land defenders disincentivizes the direct action needed to force change. The state and its many layers of bureaucracy make dismantling the unjust systems an arduous task at best. Mainstream focus on false solutions and the lack widespread availability of real alternatives, lead to fear of job losses. These all work together to obstruct our paths to a decarbonized and decolonized Canada.

The more internal barriers to change that were identified include the ways that the movements are fractured, fragmented, and rife with internal tensions. The trends towards NGO-ization and hierarchal, centralized organizing-structures also obstruct our paths to transformation, as does insular, endlessly-critical activist cultures, and the significant problem of activists burning out. There is also a lack of financial resources available to fund the kind of radical work that needs to be done. Running through all these internal barriers lies people's privilege and bias towards self-interest as well as the ways we replicate oppressive relations in movement spaces.

Bringing all barriers into one lens paints a demoralizing portrait of what we're up against. But people spoke of these many barriers as daunting but not insurmountable. Chapter 7 presents the heartening work of pulling together many people's thinking, dreaming, and strategizing on how to confront and overcome all these many barriers and how to strengthen the transformative power of these movements.

To overcome the internal barriers, we need more self-education, training, and better strategizing. We need to experiment with finding new ways to bring funds to the radical work being done. We need to be making the internal issues we face more explicit and addressing them head-on. Many provided ideas on how to restructure movements to address the problems associated with NGO-ization problems. The central theme that emerged in response to this query about overcoming internal barriers was about learning to work better across difference, finding

ways to coordinate our efforts more, and to get the information and resources to where they need to be. Confronting our relational tensions and internal barriers to change will require a serious redistribution of power and resources within our movements.

To overcome the external barriers and build the counter force to colonial capitalism and the vested interest of those in power, we need much bigger movements. To do this, we need to adopt a movement-building approach to activism, we need organizing and mobilizing structures that are conducive to building massive movements, we need to widen conceptions and build new narratives of what activism and activists look like, we need to learn to talk to the people who don't already agree with us, make our activist space pleasant and welcoming places to be and we need to focus on building strong alliances between movements. A key dimension of building bigger movements will be changing the story about what is at stake and what is needed. Increasing climate impacts are helping us do this. Finally, helping provide viable alternatives will inspire people to join us as they begin to disentangle themselves from the destructive, exploitative systems and start to see that so much more is possible. There is this profound need to reach more people, to reach out more widely to communities. We need to find ways to connect with them and communicate ours visions of radical change in ways which resonate with many, many more people. We need to mainstream visions of radical transformation.

To overcome all these daunting barriers, we need *much bigger, much stronger*, and more cohesive movements. To generate these, we need to be working across difference more effectively – across the differences and conflicts within our movements and across the real differences between ourselves and the people we seek to mobilize. The second half of chapter 7 explored several ways to nurture our capacity to work across difference. We can work together to develop a movement ecosystem approach, conceptualizing how many different, and even seemingly conflicting groups and approaches can work together and combine forces. Whatever frameworks we adopt, underneath it all is learning to center relationships, care for each other, and build *just, mutually-beneficial* relations with each other and with the land. Though this is not easy work, climate change may be the catalyst, the force multiplier, that forces us to decolonize our relations, within and beyond our movements.

The movements' relational tensions identified as significant barriers to change in Chapter 6 are not unique to these specific movements. This tendency in movements is "a public secret" as in "widely known but difficult to talk about" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.23). These tensions "exist across the broader left, where sectarianism has been a disastrous and weakening force" (Dixon, 2014, p.233). These tendencies hinder wide and strong collaboration as well as inhibiting our ability to envision strategies and futures together. "The intellectual fencing has constrained the progressive imagination for so long it's lying twisted on the ground" (Klein, 2017, p.263). We are letting "structural and ideological particularities create deep splits ... rendering much of our work useless" (Brown, 2017, p.62). "The structures of our organizations, campaigns, and coalitions don't support the kind of experimentation, coordination and collaboration we need" (Brown, 2017, p.176). We need

"more developed ways of avoiding rigidity in theory and practice. Left political currents, despite their best intentions, are a treasure trove of ideological dogmas, idealized models, fetishized practices, and sectarian conflicts ... We need to cultivate fresh thinking that begins not with rigid formulas but rather with hard questions grounded in the dynamic, complicated circumstances in which we struggle" (Dixon, 2014, p.222).

Capitalism, colonialism, and heteropatriarchy have damaged our relationships with each other and with the earth. These damaged relationships hinder our ability to think across difference and forge powerful alliances strong enough to radically transform our world, from one of destruction of people and planet to one of healing, justice, and mutual flourishing. We need to learn and practice new ways of relating. In this closing chapter, I am thinking hard about what relational theories of change and relational approaches to movement building would look like. I bring the insights emerging from this research project into dialogue with academic and activist writing on relationality.

8.2 Relationality as counter-force to reductionist, binary, and dualistic worldviews that divide

"Transformation is not accomplished by tentative wading at the edge" (Kimmerer, 2013, p.89).

“We still are taking baby steps around the edge of something. How do we get to the core/heart of this change?” (S#37).

I have come to see that underlying the interpersonal tensions and ongoing debates in the movements is the tendency in Western thought and culture to reduce the world into rigid compartments, dividing rich complexity into simple binaries of this/that, me/you, us/them good/bad, etc. (Plumwood, 2002; Escobar, 2017). It’s not just that we break the world into *binaries*, we create *dualisms*, whereby one half of a binary is superior to the other. Our simple categories are organized hierarchically - men over women, humans over nature, white people over people of colour, rich people over poor, colonizer over colonized. Difference between non-hierarchical pairs is not necessarily a problem. It’s when these are hierarchical classifications of difference, that the problem begins (Plumwood, 2002; Escobar, 2017). Hierarchized binaries undergird systems of domination such as racism, sexism, colonialism, and destruction of nature by humans (Plumwood, 2002; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Dualisms justify the mistreatment of the ‘other’. These dualisms have not only lead to the social and ecological crises we face but also serve to constrain human responses to these crises (Moore, 2014; Head, 2016). Indeed “ ... our sense of social hierarchy as natural, undermines our ability to create movements for social change that do not replicate the structures of domination we seek to eradicate” (Smith, 2017, p.153).

Binaries, dualisms, hierarchy, and oppression. Cartesian, reductionist, dualist thinking is based on an ontology that understands life and all phenomena as made up of self-constituting individual entities (Escobar, 2017). This reductionistic way of seeing “assumes the pre-existence of distinct entities whose respective essences are not seen as fundamentally dependant on their relations to other entities – they exist in and of themselves ... independent objects interacting” (Escobar, 2017, p.100-101). Across this world of independent individuals, dualism constructs “devalued and sharply demarcated sphere[s] of otherness” (Plumwood, 2002, p.41). “Dualism ... is an alienated form of differentiation, in which power construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm” (Plumwood, 2002, p.42). Dualism is the “ontology of disconnection and oppression” (Escobar, 2017, p.65).

Eco-feminists, intersectional feminists, Indigenous thinkers, and Nature itself have helped problematize dualism within western thinking, helping expose how “dualisms of male/female,

mental/manual (mind/body), civilised/primitive, human/nature correspond directly to and naturalise gender, class, race and nature oppressions respectively” (Plumwood, 2002, p.42). Importantly, dualisms are not merely arbitrary groupings of ideas; they are at the service of domination and accumulation (Plumwood, 2002, p.42), including settler colonialism. Dene Scholar Glen Coulthard sees settler colonialism as power “structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of *hierarchical social relations* that continue to facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous people of their lands and self-determining authority” (Coulthard, 2014, p.6-7, emphasis added).

Dualisms are at the base of the kind of reasoning and decision-making that has brought us to this moment of intensifying ecological crises and growing social inequality. The “binaries of Eurocentrism, racism and sexism, Nature/Society [are] directly implicated in the modern world’s colossal violence, inequality, and oppression” (Moore, 2016, p.2).

The worldviews that drive the current crises are not likely to help us confront and solve them (Moore, 2016). “Efforts to transcend capitalism in any egalitarian and broadly sustainable fashions will be stymied so long as the radical political imagination is captive by capitalism’s either/or organization of reality” (Moore, 2016, p.3). Thinking from within the dualisms that are inherent to capitalism constrains our ability to develop adequate anti-systemic strategy (ibid).

To escape dualisms and the ways they structure relations of power, we need to replace it with non-hierarchical ways of navigating difference (Plumwood, 2002). Undoing dualism requires a “recognition of a complex, interacting pattern of both continuity and difference” (Plumwood, 2002, p.67).

We turn to relationality, intersectional feminism, Indigenous ontologies, and to Nature itself to seek out anti-dualist remedies (Plumwood, 2002) and to “unsettle dualisms” (Escobar, 2017, p.96). Then, I explore how these non-dualist approaches apply to social movements and social change.

Relationality. One answer to dualism and ontologies of disconnection is relationality (Escobar, 2017, p.100). Relational ontologies understand things and beings *as* relations; individual things do not exist prior to the relations that constitute them (Escobar, 2017). In contrast to a world made of independent individuals, relational worldviews see ‘individuals’ as

interacting, interdependent and “*mutually constituted*, that is, viewing things as existing at all only due to their dependence on other things” (Sharma, 2015, quoted in Escobar, 2017, p.101). “[N]othing pre-exists the relations that constitute it. Life is interrelation and interdependence through and through, always and from the beginning” (Escobar, 2017, p.101). Or as Thomas Berry put it “Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects” (1987, p.107-108).

Intersectional feminism. Relationality is central to intersectional feminist thought (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

“The either/or binary thinking that has been so central to Eurocentric social thought is less relevant for intersectionality. Instead intersectional projects look at the relationships among seemingly different phenomena ... strive to go beyond oppositional thinking carried out by Eurocentric binaries and attempt to forge a complex and interactive understanding of the relationships between history, social organization, and forms of consciousness, both personal and collective – in short, relational thinking” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.195).

Rather than either/or binary thinking, intersectionality embraces a both/and frame, helping us to see social phenomena and various axes of oppression as interrelated and co-constructed, exposing the “relationships between systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and citizenship status” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.195). This perspective expands intellectual and political potential (Collins & Bilge, 2016), helping to find common ground across what may seem from more reductionist perspectives as disparate, unrelated social struggles and movements (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.195).

Indigenous relational ontologies. Many Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies are deeply relational, understanding all beings - humans and non-humans, living and non-living – as related, as kin, as profoundly interdependent (Kimmerer, 2013; Simpson, 2017; Atleo, 2011). Through the process of Grounded Normativity, relationship with land is the basis of knowing how to live (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017). Although it is crucial not to homogenize Indigenous ways of knowing - as there are many diverse cultures and peoples represented when we say ‘Indigenous’ - it is clear that Indigenous ontologies have much to teach non-Indigenous people about relationality. As Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

writes: “My Ancestors didn’t accumulate capital, they accumulated networks of meaningful, deep, fluid, intimate collective and individual relationships of trust. In times of hardship, we did not rely to any great degree, on accumulated capital or individualism but on the strength of our relationships with others” (2017, p.77).

Writing about her Nation, Betasamosake Simpson describes this ontology as

“is web of connection to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos, and our neighbouring Indigenous nations ... an ecology of intimacy. It is an ecology of relationships in the absence of coercion, hierarchy, or authoritarian power ... It is relationships based on deep reciprocity, respect, non-interference, self-determination, and freedom” (Simpson, 2017, p. 8).

Across Canada and around the world, based on close ties with, and fierce love for people and land, Indigenous communities are resisting destructive development. They are “defending relational territories and worlds against the ravages of large-scale extractivist operations” (Escobar, 2017, p.67). Indigenous relational ontologies that center reciprocity and respect offer alternatives, and indeed the counter-force and antidote to extractivist worldviews (Kimmerer, 2013; Simpson, 2017; Klein, 2014). Indigenous sovereignty is enacted through relationality rather than domination (Simpson, 2012). “The economic alternatives these movements are proposing and building, are mapping ways of living within planetary boundaries, ones based on intricate reciprocal relationships rather than brute extraction” (Klein, 2014, p.451). “The alternative to extractivism is deep reciprocity. It’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility, and it’s local” (Simpson, 2017, p.75). What is needed is for many more people to cultivate worldviews “embedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy” (Klein, 2014, p.462).

“It’s understandable that we associate these ideas today with an indigenous worldview; it is primarily such cultures that have kept this alternative way of seeing the world alive in the face of the bulldozers of colonialism and corporate globalization. Like seed savers safeguarding the biodiversity of the global seed stock, other ways of relating to the natural world and one another have been safeguarded by many Indigenous cultures” (Klein, 2014, p.443).

Learning from nature about relationships. Nature itself has much to teach us about relationships. As David Haskell writes in his book *The Songs of Trees*, “life is a network ... We are part of a community of life, composed of relationships with others ... To listen to trees, nature’s great connectors, is therefore to learn how to inhabit the relations that give life its source, substance, and beauty” (Haskell, 2017, p.vii).

Nothing I have read during my PhD years has helped me understand relationality as clearly and deeply as Robin Wall Kimmerer’s book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. She writes of how a Pecan tree grove teaches us that “there are no soloists ... the trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. What we see is the power of unity. What happens to one, happens to all. We can starve together or feast together. All flourishing is mutual” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.15). Through fungal networks underground, trees in a forest are connected to each other. “These fungal networks appear to redistribute the wealth of carbohydrates from tree to tree ... They weave a web of reciprocity, of giving and taking. Through unity, survival. All flourishing is mutual” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.20). Lichens too are made of relations of mutualistic symbiosis, a partnership in which both members benefit from their association (Kimmerer, 2013). “When conditions are harsh and life is tenuous, it takes a team sworn to reciprocity to keep life going forward. In a world of scarcity, interconnection and mutual aid become critical for survival. So say the lichens” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.272).

All flourishing is mutual. What would change if this phrase became a central guiding principle in our movements? What would it look like if we knew that our power and survival lie in our relations and our mutual aid? How can we learn from the natural world around us about how to best collaborate, about how to shape change? (Brown, 2017). How can we “be movements like flocks of birds” with “underground power like whispering mushrooms...” (Brown, 2017, p.23).

Political activation of relationality (a.k.a. solidarity). Blaser, de la Cadena, and Escobar (2014) write about the *political activation of relationality* (Escobar, 2017, p.95). They see Indigenous movements in defense of territories and difference as examples of this political activation of relationality. I am interested in what this activation could look like in the social movements I am part of.

Capitalism needs us to bicker amongst ourselves and fracture our efforts, it seeks to divide and conquer. Solidarity, if we take it to be shorthand for the political activation of relationality, is a commitment to mutual flourishing. It is how we reject and release capitalism's grip on our relationships and lives. Cahill & Cerecer offer a powerful "Crazy Glue Theory of Change". They write, "our commitment begins with a commitment to each other ... a crazy glue theory of needing each other and having each other's backs ... love like social change is collectively produced, evolves, requires guidance, and daily reminders that we know how to love like we know how to dismantle oppressive conditions through our shared participation in the world" (Cahill & Cerecer in Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.135-136).

Solidarity as relational power. Power is relationship. Or as Collins & Bilge put it "power is better conceptualized as a relationship, than as a static entity ... Power constitutes a relationship" (Collins and Bilge, p.28). Temper et al. describe power as relational. They write that transformative power is built through social connections and networks and through breaking down the walls that separate struggles, seeing the links between issues and by building stronger alliances (Temper et al., 2018). What I am pointing out here is that there is much promise in our (as of yet untapped) capacity to build power through our relationships – within and across movements, and between activists and the wider population.

Through political activation of relationality, through active solidarity, we begin to figure out power without domination (Brown, 2017). It is by transforming power-over to power-with, that we may be able to generate a force strong enough to tear down the barriers we face.

In the movements I am part of, we talk about Intersectionality and we raise up Indigenous ways of knowing, but in many ways we are still relating to each other and understanding change in binary, hierarchical ways. The legacy of western, reductionist thought is one of the forces driving divisions, tensions, and our difficulties in thinking and working across difference. I argue that we need a more relational, holistic way of understanding change and working together and I will try to illustrate what that could look like. In section 8.3, I apply relationality and holism to our approaches to activism and in section 8.4 I apply it to the ways we relate to each other within and across movements. In section 8.5 I make the case for *critical holism*, arguing that the work

of undoing binaries and including more diversity of people and approaches in our visions of transformation must not ignore power imbalance; I am emphasizing relationality as key to transformation, but it's a relationality committed to radical equality and reciprocity that will be the means for decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada.

8.3 Getting past dualized approaches to change – thinking and working across difference

“When we think about change, we think about change within the constraints of what we already know” (Kai Barrow, quoted in Dixon, 2014, p.220).

“We think there's a lot to be said for bringing things together in unforeseen ways that might intensify their aliveness and dynamism” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.27).

I have noticed, through these interviews, surveys, and through my involvement with social movements, that there is a pervasive tendency to assume that our preferred approach to change is *the* most effective, dare I say the superior, way of doing activism. “There is a practice of narrowing down, identifying one path forward, one strategy, one way, one agenda, one leader, one set of values etc., reducing the wild and wonderful world into one thing that we can grasp, handle, hold onto, advance” (brown, 2017, p.155-56).

Those who tend towards confrontational, direct action tactics argue that that is what is needed. Those who engage in electoral politics emphasize that that is the only way we'll make the changes that are needed. This tendency is completely understandable – of course we engage in the ways we think are most effective. But I suspect that underlying this dynamic are over-simplified, reductionist, binary ways of understanding change, which divide up the movements along many lines. These dividing lines include: reform vs. radical, inside the system vs. outside the system, top-down vs. bottom up, resistance vs. solutions, confrontation vs. collaboration, individual lifestyle change vs. collective action. Although these divisions point to some important questions we must ask ourselves, I believe that many of them constitute false dichotomies. These dualized conceptions of change may be constraining our willingness to collaborate across difference and are likely constraining our ability to develop adequately complex approaches to dealing with complex problems. These ways of understanding change reinforce conceptual and relational silos and divide and weaken our movement efforts. We value

diversity in theory, for sure, but in day-to-day organizing, we tend to want to work with people who share our political analysis, theory of change, and preferred tactics. Though we're all attached to our idea of what constitutes effective social change,

“No single organization mode, type of organization, or strategic model works across all circumstances. Treating any practice, structure, or approach as infallible is thus a dead end; it shuts down our abilities to think and act innovatively”
(Dixon, 2014, p.228).

Though not all approaches to change are created equal, we could generate more power in our movements if we get past these dualized notions and instead think about how we can work across these differences in ways that are generative.

“We cannot afford to divide ourselves along these lines, and we must cease to participate in a culture of activism which tries to place final judgments on the importance, effectiveness, or ‘radicalness’ of our diverse forms of work. We need each other. We need each other’s differences. We need the many different things that each of us has to offer. This is about relentless humility: we do not know how to make the changes that we need to make, and we will only discover the paths together” (Miller, 2012, p.18).

Below I make the case for generative difference, and then follow up with explaining how I envision this working in our movements.

Thinking and taking action across difference. The kind of “working across difference” that I envision “is less about adding up movements as if they could be unified, and more about illustrating the productiveness of their difference; like combining different tones and rhythms to see how they resonate” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.34). It’s not just bringing together different kinds of people, who don’t usually work together – although that is part of it. It’s also about bringing together, merging, cross-pollinating different strategies and tactics that usually happen in isolation from each other. And seeing what happens.

The Zapatistas articulated the concept of the pluriverse, *a world where many worlds fit* (Escobar, 2017). I am thinking about movements where many approaches to change fit, “weav[ing] together our strengths” (brown, 2017, p.66). Borrowing from Collins and Bilge who

say this about Intersectionality, I want to see how we can work in ways in which our “heterogeneity [is] not as a weakness but rather ... a source of tremendous potential” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.204).

Ecology and permaculture theory speak of ‘edge effect’ whereby there is more diversity and richness where two or more ecosystems meet. I think this is true in social systems too. Though “we naturally gravitate to those who are like us and with whom we can have more or less fruitful conversations ... the most useful work takes place on the margins, in networks with those who are not quite like us” (Cox, 2017, p.612). Another way to put this is that “possibilities light up at the intersections” (brown, 2017, p.175). adrienne maree brown, a women's rights activist and black feminist from the US reflects that “my best work happened during my most difficult collaborations, because there are actual differences that are converging and creating more space, ways forward that serve more than one worldview (brown, 2017, p.159). Working at these edges can be powerful, but they are not easy. “We often reject that chaotic, fertile reality too soon, as if we can’t tolerate the scale of our own collective brilliance” (brown, 2017, p.156). I am interested in this capacity for collective brilliance that can emerge when we step outside our dichotomous notions of change.

What this could look like. Chapters 3 and 5, both offered the insight that change happens through a convergence of many forces and factors and that different approaches to change can be brought together to build power. Different phases of a fight call for different strategies and different actors. Chapter 7 made clear that diversity can be a strength if we can align around some common goals and principles. I seek to apply all that important insight here, in envisioning how the false dichotomies and lines of division can be reconciled as we learn to work at the edges and across different strategies.

Resistance & Solutions. To my mind, the most exciting strategic intersection, or edge, is where resistance and solutions meet. Generally, the people working on the solutions and building the alternatives and those enacting resistance to the destructive systems are working separately. Over the last few years in Canada, there has been a new and powerful strategy for transformation emerging in Indigenous communities, opposing ongoing oil and gas development; they are building solutions in the pathway of the problem. From the Healing Lodge and permaculture

gardens at the [Unist'ot'en camp](https://unistoten.camp/)²⁶ in BC, to the [Treaty Truck House at the Mi'kmaq protest camp against Alton Gas in Nova Scotia](https://ejatlas.org/conflict/alton-gas-canada)²⁷, to the [Tiny House Warriors fighting the Trans Mountain pipeline](http://tinyhousewarriors.com/)²⁸ in Secwepemc territory, to the [Watch House on Burnaby Mountain](https://protecttheinlet.ca/structure/)²⁹, Indigenous people are building low-carbon, beautiful, culturally-grounded alternatives and placing these alternatives strategically to block the way of proposed oil and gas projects being pushed into their territories. These alternatives are offering inspiration by making clear that there are other ways to build economies. At the same time, they are enacting Indigenous sovereignty and lifeways. This new strategy of placing the alternatives in the pathway of the problem has been changing what environmental justice organizing and protest looks like in Canada.

I can imagine much more of this. I envision permaculture and urban agriculture practitioners at the frontlines, working with environmental activists and land defenders develop what I am calling 'Direct Action Solutions', whereby at demonstrations and protests, instead of just standing there with placards listening to speeches and yelling slogans, we have a 3 hour work party where people plant seeds, plant trees, install solar panels, guerrilla garden, skill-share, or glean from unpicked fruit trees, and then march through the streets, with placards and slogans, distributing food to folks who need it; learning the solutions to capitalism while we gather in the streets to protest the things we don't want.

Intersectional Solutions. Often the solutions and alternative to capitalism are being innovated and practiced on small scales, away from urban centers, and in cultural niches. To scale these up and render them more powerfully transformative, I imagine these niche solution practitioners showing up, but this time on the frontlines, to do their work in the service of those most impacted. I see us constructing ecovillages at pipeline blockades. I imagine permaculture-inspired water treatment systems - like the [Living Machine](https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/living_machine.pdf)³⁰ - being installed on First Nation reserves that haven't had clean drinking water in generations. Think of radical mycologists

²⁶ <https://unistoten.camp/>

²⁷ <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/alton-gas-canada>

²⁸ <http://tinyhousewarriors.com/>

²⁹ <https://protecttheinlet.ca/structure/>

³⁰ https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/living_machine.pdf

practicing myco-remediation, using mushrooms to clean or transform toxic soil, in communities of colour dealing with the alarmingly high levels of toxic pollution from environmental racism, such as Aamjiwnaang, Ontario or Shelbourne, Nova Scotia. I see engaging high school students to help provide the labour necessary to do this kind of ecological remediation on a big scale and to train a new generation in how to build just and sustainable systems. These kinds of solutions and alternatives can be refined and scaled up to the point where they can become sources of revenue for the local community.

Many of the solutions or alternatives that are being enacted currently in Canada address only one problem, or one dimension of a problem. For example, solar energy systems being installed help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from household energy use. But do they create local employment? Do they help reduce poverty and racism? How can solutions be designed to have many co-benefits, addressing many social and ecological issues simultaneously. Intersectional analysis and intersectional organizing are practiced, but what about designing and implementing ‘intersectional solutions’?

I hope I am making clear what I mean by *taking action across difference*. The forms of activism that are generally done in isolation from each other can be brought together in powerful ways. We can apply the same kind of hybrid strategic approach to the debates across radical and reformist change.

Non-Reform Reforms. Reformist change refers to “initiatives that are dealing only with the symptoms of the problem”. Radical change, on the other hand, (radical from the Latin noun ‘radix’ meaning ‘roots’) digs the roots of a problem, seeking deeper, systemic change (Temper, et al., 2018). The debate between reformist and radical approaches to change is one of the more enduring and heated debates in movements. This on-going debate is a source of tension that blocks collaboration within and across different movements. Indeed, “what looks like victory to a reformist can easily appear as betrayal to a more radical mindset” (Green, 2016, p.231). “That is one of the greatest tensions when we sit and talk with white allies ... tensions arise when we talk about the question of reform or revolution ... anti pipeline activism can be very reformist ... Some people would be happy with the Liberals and Conservatives as long as they change their policies on pipelines, right? It’s an extremely reformist goal” (Int#38). Indeed, stopping one pipeline in one place does not change the colonial capitalist system.

Where reform tactics, such as petitions and awareness raising, may be genuinely useful in the early stages of a campaign, as the situations escalates, more radical tactics such as civil disobedience become more appropriate. In other words, what we think of as reformist approaches and radical approaches to change can co-exist and be mutually reinforcing, if coordinated in an overarching strategy, whereby different actors take the lead at different phases.

A promising conceptual tool for thinking past the radical-reform debate is what is referred to as *non-reform reforms* (see Walia, 2013; Bond, 2008; Gorz, 1964). The idea here is that one can design reformist strategies so that they help create the conditions for more radical change to happen further down the road. “The challenge is creating a radical vision of change that is far reaching but also identifying steps along the way are achievable and head us in the right direction without being merely incremental” (S#26).

Duncan Green, author of *How Change Happens*, sees in these tensions a more fundamental dilemma: “expediency versus long-term transformation. Does signing off on limited reforms legitimize the current distribution of power, forestalling deeper change?” (Green, 2016, p.231). How do we design reformist strategies so that they are steps in a revolutionary strategy? One of the people I interviewed asked: “are there ways you can work with people who are working within the system in reformist ways to choose strategies that slowly weaken the current system and make room for a different system?” (Int#15).

What could some non-reformist reforms toward decolonizing and decarbonizing Canada look like? Carbon taxes are regularly criticized for being reformist strategies for change, incapable of bringing about the kind of change possible, and even counter-productive. But let’s envision what a non-reformist reform carbon tax could look like - imagine the carbon tax revenue put into a fund to install community-owned and -operated solar energy systems on First Nations reserves or to help pay to implement other alternatives that address climate, poverty, racism, and more. It’s a bit of a stretch to imagine a federal government agreeing to this type of program. But perhaps it’s possible with some bureaucrats on the inside pushing for it, doing feasibility studies and initiating pilot projects, while the climate movement pushed politicians to pass the legislation. This illustrates that transcending the ‘change from the inside vs. change from the outside’ dichotomy, too, can be generative in opening up new ways to build power to push

for change. Though bureaucrats and activists may not seek out collaboration with each other naturally, "... interesting things happen when unusual suspects join forces" (Green, 2016, p.228).

Innovating new forms of activism. I am not claiming to know what strategies, or combination of strategies would definitely be transformative, but I am calling for an approach to thinking about activism that is less constrained, more open to trying new things, and more willing to work with others who do activism differently. At this point, "there is no reasonable response but for us to experiment ... shifting from the skeptical world of 'no' to the open and creative world of "let's give it a try" (Miller, 2012, p.13), developing "fresh, non-dogmatic thinking and practice" (Dixon, 2014, p.233). As we embark on trying thing new forms of activism and collaborating across difference,

"people will take different paths and have different priorities. Movements and forms of life will diverge and sometimes come into conflict. There is no trump card that can be used to dictate a path to others; not the state, not morality, and not strategic imperatives of unity or movement building. Encountering difference might lead to new capacities, strong bonds, and new forms of struggle. Or it might be more ambivalent and difficult, mixing distance and closeness. Or it might mean being told to fuck off" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.31).

To devise and deploy these innovative hybrid strategies that undo the false dichotomies that have kept us siloed, we'll actually need to work with people we're not used to working with, we'll need to get better at working across different forms of activism, as well as at relating across difference. This means transcending perhaps the most pervasive dualism of them all: *us vs. them*.

8.4 Getting past us vs. them – relating across difference

"Without shifting our focus to repairing our relationships, our movements will rot from the inside out" (Dixon, 2018, n.p.)

Chapter 6 described how the movements are not always pleasant places to be. They are rife with interpersonal tensions. This is not specific to these particular movements. Other movement thinkers, such as Montgomery & bergman in their book *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times*, observe that the ways activists relate to each other in radical

movements currently acts as a barrier to achieving the transformative change we seek (2017). As brown sees it, “we are so steeped in critique (2017, p.112) ... we have been growing otherness, borders, separateness” (brown, 2017, p.33). “We are socialized to see what is wrong, missing, off to tear down the ideas of others and lift up our own” (brown, 2017, p.5). This kind of “rigid radicalism ... makes us hostile to difference, complexity, and nuance” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.20).

In-group/out-group bias. I suspect that these dynamics are rooted in part in what cognitive psychologists call in-group/out-group bias. This is one way of understanding the dualist tendency to divide up social spaces into us and them. In the book *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them*, Joshua Green argues that our brains and moral instincts evolved in hunter-gatherer societies whereby our survival depended on our capacity to cooperate with our ‘in-group’ in order to defend against potentially threatening ‘out-groups’. We have the tendency to split the world into people within our in-group and those who are not. We do so in multiple, shifting, and somewhat arbitrary ways (Green, 2014). “We all simultaneously occupy a variety of in-groups and therefore, out-groups” (Choudhury, 2015, p.86). We tend to be more generous, tolerant, and self-sacrificing with people we perceive as in our in-group (Choudhury, 2015). “When dealing with those we perceive as “not us” thinking frequently takes a backseat to feeling” (Choudhury, 2015, p.36). Green argues that these cognitive tendencies leave us vastly ill-equipped for current global problems that require co-operation across broad social divisions (Greene, 2014).

This in-group/out-group bias leads to “othering” which refers to “any action by which an individual or group becomes mentally classified in somebody’s mind as ‘not one of us’”. “Rather than always remembering that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects, it’s sometimes easier to dismiss them as being in some way less human, and less worthy of respect and dignity, than we are” (There are No Others, 2011, n.p.). I see this cognitive bias reflected in the tensions in the movements. We ‘other’ those who don’t share our political analysis, or whose tactics are too reformist, or too confrontational. As we cultivate in-groups in our movements and dismiss some as ‘others’, we reduce the relational power we could be building through wide collaboration.

To forge strong movements, we need to be better at overcoming this bias and cultivating “soil that is fertile for relationship building” (brown, 2017, p.39), humbling ourselves to value others and other kinds of contributions (brown, 2017). Creating more space for other approaches to change and other kinds of people ... “means we can do, be, and create whatever we want to see, knowing that ours is one effort in the midst of many, and the multitude is where our power lies” (brown, 2017, p.116). To center relationality in our movements and to build power through solidarity, we need “to listen to each other across all real and perceived divides” (brown, 2017, p.113). Compassion and empathy are essential in developing relational skills and developing more care and respect for ‘the other’ (Choudhury, 2015).

When the divisions are about power. All that being said, it’s often much more complicated than simply identifying cognitive bias as divisive. Often the relational tensions and indeed the tendencies to ‘other’ are shaped by racism, sexism, classism, and other relations of domination. The ways our brains are wired to see the world in terms of us and them, “is compounded through the processes of being socialized and by ... power dynamics between groups” (Choudhury, 2015, p 8). “We are born with the bias hardware, while society provides us with the software” (Choudhury, 2015, p.63). “People coming into movements bring with them contradictions. Alongside liberatory aspirations we carry destructive views and behaviours that we learn by living in society” (Dixon, 2014, p.226). Activists can fall “back into modeling the oppressive tendencies against which we claim to be pushing. Some of those tendencies are seeking to assert one right way or one right strategy” (brown, 2017, p.8). In-group/out-group bias, dualistic thinking, and systems of domination (racism, sexism, classism, etc.) all work in concert to hinder movement efforts towards systems transformation in Canada, by blocking wide movement collaboration. All these need to be addressed.

“Radical empathy is required for change ... [it] is more than alliances, more than coalitions ... Radical empathy politics means that injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere” (Kelley, in Tuck & Yang, 2013, p.94). Radical transformation hinges on “our ability to extend empathy ... creating the possibility of true solidarity across social divisions created by gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexual identity” (MacKay, 2018, p.198).

Strong relationships cannot exist in unequal power. Trust cannot exist where some wield power over others. Only among equals can solidarity flourish. Equality in social movements is

not just about how we perceive and treat each other and who takes up more space or has more influence. It's also about material reality; who has the resources to determine the strategy, to implement it, to shape the narrative. A relational approach to movements means a redistribution of power, resources, and position within the movements. This means NGOs (and other groups and people currently wielding more power than others) relinquishing power and developing a real understanding that they do not have all the answers or even access to the best strategies. Indeed, there are "material, structural, and affective schisms we must tend to in order to win" (Walia, 2019).

8.5 Critical holism – centering justice in our relations

"We can disagree and still love each other, unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist" - Robert Jones Jr.

In this discussion I have been arguing that for our movements to be as powerful and transformative as they can be, we need to be better at *thinking across difference* (different strategies and approaches to change) and better at *relating across difference* (undoing in-group/out-group bias, power-over, and other sources of relational tensions). I have argued that underlying our challenges to think and relate across difference, is Western reductionist worldview of binaries and dualism, and that relationality is the antidote. All this is important, and it evokes a call for holism that makes room for a wider diversity of people and seeks to include and combine more approaches to change. This vision of relationality as the key to building a stronger *whole*, evokes a call for unity, for wide inclusion. But given the ongoing systems of oppression that exist within our movements and lives, it's not uncritical unity and it's not unconditional inclusion I am suggesting. I am not proposing a kind of unity that ignores differences in power and privilege and pretends we're all the same. I am not advocating for building relationships with people who are racist, sexism, homophobic, transphobic, or in any other way continue to replicate relations of domination. I am calling for a *critical holism*, whereby we build way more, and way stronger relationships, based on rich diversity, among people who share a commitment to actively undo all forms of oppression, in themselves, their communities, and societies. This will involve asking "when to be open and vulnerable and when to draw the lines in the sand and fight? Who to trust, and how? When are relationships worth

fighting for, and when do they need to be abandoned?” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.42). Knowing how to draw these lines, by having boundaries and respecting boundaries is key to strong and just relationships (brown, 2017). “Defining and developing ‘just relationships’ will be a process that won’t happen overnight. It must include clarity about decision-making, sharing strategies, and resource distribution” (brown, 2017, p.226).

Perhaps by letting go of the endless squabbles over tactics and the endless co-critique over the not-so-important stuff, we can make more room to foster the connections with the people and the movements with which we can exponentially build our relational power. The task is to

“connect but not collapse ... this means that though we can and must look for points of unity and commonality across very different experiences and issues, everything cannot be blended into an indecipherable mush of lowest-common-denominator platitudes. The integrity of individual movements, the specificities of community experiences, must be reflected and protected, even as we come together in an attempt to weave a unified vision” (Klein, 2017, p.243).

Decolonizing relationships as the heart of change. Colonization is a relationship based on domination. To understand settler-colonialism as a relationship instead of a historical event is to allow us to see it as impermanent and to see decolonization as a radical shift in relationships (Fortier, 2017). Decolonization is a “dramatic re-imagining of relationships with land, people, and the state” (Walia, 2012, p.248). It is a “process whereby we intend the conditions we want to live and intend the social relations we wish to have. It is a process that forces us to reconnect with each other and the Earth” (Walia, 2012, p.251). The transformative relationships require not simply acknowledging the colonial power structures that govern our interactions within settler colonial states, but fundamentally changing the ways we relate to the world” (Fortier, 2017, p.90).

For these relational ways of being to flourish, we need to work together to disrupt “capitalist, colonial, heteropatriarchal structures, and many other institutions based on the Western notions of sovereignty and domination” (Simpson, paraphrased in Fortier, 2017, p.80). Settlers seeking to develop just relationships with Indigenous people must understand that solidarity in this context means “fighting against the colonization of Indigenous lands and

peoples and fighting against the assimilation of Indigenous world-views and ways of life” (Walia, 2012, p.241). This unsettling process for settlers needs to include seeing and undoing the ways that ideas based in domination “seep into our practices, relationships, and aspirations” (Fortier, 2017, p.76). One common way that these do creep in is through appropriating, through settlers taking from Indigenous people what wasn’t offered. Though settlers need to forge just, reciprocal, and respectful relationships with land, with each other and with Indigenous people, we cannot do that by taking Indigenous ontologies, relationalities, or practices as our own.

“While our indigenous stories are rich in wisdom, and we need to hear them, I do not advocate for their wholesale appropriation. As the world changes, an immigrant culture must write its own new stories of relationship to place ... but tempered by the wisdom of those who were old on this land long before we came” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.345).

Accountability is also critical for decolonizing relationships between settlers and Indigenous people. The way to do this is through mutual struggle (Fortier, 2017, p.55). Settlers must fight alongside Indigenous peoples in dismantling colonial capitalism. We do this in part by “making change in our own systems and among other settlers, taking our cue from Indigenous action and direction ... Relationship creates accountability and responsibility for sustained supportive action. This does not mean requiring Indigenous energies for creating relationship with settlers” (Irlbacher-Fox, 2012, n.p.).

“[S]ettler society must ... choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships to the land and Indigenous Nations and join in building a sustainable future based upon mutual recognition, justice, and respect” (Simpson, 2008, p.14).

8.6 Final thoughts

“The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world”- Paul Farmer

“We either get there together or we don’t get there at all” (Starlight, 2016, n.p.).

“We are in a moment of tremendous crisis and possibility” (Dixon, 2014, p.2). Climate change is the “furthest reaching crisis ... and one that puts humanity on a firm and unyielding

deadline” (Klein, 2014, p.459). “The current political order is in crisis, which presents us with an enormous political opportunity” (Smucker, 2017, p.252). But winning will certainly take the convergence of diverse constituencies on a scale previously unknown (Klein, 2014, p.459). We need “neither One Agreed Programme nor Fragmented Resistance” ... we need a movement of movements (Cox, 2017, p.628).

Climate change “could become a galvanizing force for humanity, leaving us not just safer from extreme weather, but with societies safer and fairer in all kinds of other ways as well (Klein, 2014, p.7). Climate change is causing “us to take a look at ourselves and re-evaluate our relationship with each other, our communities, and the land” (ICA, 2018, n.p.), putting heavy pressure on us to build different way of living together on earth. “We are realizing that we must become the system we need – no government, political party, or corporation is going to care for us, so we have to remember how to care for each other” (brown, 2017, p.113).

This vision is possible, but by no means a given; “climate change can be a catalyst for a range of very different and far less desirable forms of social, political, and economic transformation” (Klein, 2014, p.8). Climate change could be a catalyst for a better world, but that really depends, in no small part, on our ability to come together and building the kind the kind of relationalities that could generate and sustain powerful, diverse, and massive movements.

To change the system, we need movements that function as a system. “We are only as strong as our connections with others” (Miller, 2012, p.15). To forge flourishing movement ecosystems, we need to tend to our relationships, based on equality and reciprocity. As Montgomery & bergman see it, “the most widespread, long-lasting, and fierce struggles are animated by strong relationships of love, care and trust” (2017, p.31).

“With so much destruction in motion, this might all sound naïve to some readers; why speak of thriving and love when there are so many massive, urgent problems that need to be confronted? To write about the potential of trust and care, at this time in history, could seem like grasping optimistically at straws as the world burns. But durable bonds and new complicities are not a reprieve or an escape; they are the very means of undoing Empire” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.24-25).

Though much of European thought has sought to subdue life through rigid dualisms and classifications, there have been some Western philosophers who theorized against the grain. Baruch Spinoza was one of these. He “conceptualized a world in which everything is interconnected and in process” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.28). Taking inspiration that Spinoza and other western thinkers did it, settlers can work to develop relational thinking without appropriating Indigenous ontologies.

Spinoza’s approach to relationality focused on processes “through which people become more alive, more capable, and more powerful together” (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p.29). I hope that by raising up the concepts of *relationality*, *reciprocity*, and *critical holism* in this closing chapter, I can contribute to movements continuing to become *more powerful together*, as we build the “*enduring power that arises from mutualism*” (Kimmerer, 2013, p.275).

That is how we can get from where we are - to where we need to be.

8.7 Reflections on the limitations of this research project

As one does during 5 years spent on one research project, I have learned a lot. Some of the insight I have gained - through the research, writing this thesis, defending it, and receiving feedback - has made me keenly aware of what I could have and indeed should have done to make this project and the findings coming from it stronger. In hindsight I am seeing clearly the limitations of what I did and how I did it. But of course, one cannot go back and start again. I can only acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of what I have done and design my next projects accordingly.

One thing I would do differently next time is to explore ways of conducting the data analysis in collaborative ways, with the activists and land defenders who I interviewed and surveyed. By conducting the analysis alone as one individual, I wielded power to shape the findings through my own existing understandings which are constrained by my own biases, interests, and limited comprehension. As discussed in chapter 3, this is a critique of grounded theory, that theory never just ‘emerges’ from the data but is shaped by the disproportional influence of the researcher’s often unacknowledged biases and interests. Doing the data analysis in a more collaborative way could have helped mitigate this.

Additionally, I would have sought to navigate the research ethics process differently so that interviewee names could have been included if that is what the interviewee preferred. As it was done, no names were used and as such people’s valuable insight and theories included in this thesis, are associated with my name, and not their own. Though the ethics process was conducted as it was to protect people, many of the people I interviewed would have been happy to have their names associated with their words. As such a case by case approach to confidentiality would have been better.

Another thing I would do differently is to find a way, when reporting on what I heard in the conversations, to make clear which movements the different interlocutors are involved in; I would find a way to respect the boundaries between movements when weaving together different quotes and views on any specific topic. The way I have presented the activists’ and land defenders’ view in this thesis collapsed people’s views into one conversation as if we’re all talking about the same thing when we say ‘change’ or all part of the same big unified movement. We’re not. As I pointed out in chapter 3, one of the many critiques research about social

movements is the Eurocentric tendency to assume that diverse movements share a unified perspective, where in actuality there are no ‘universal aspirations’ shared (Eschle, 2001). My approach of bringing together all the different answers I got to any given question like different pieces of one big puzzle gives a misleading sense of unity and shared framing. I now see that this approach reflects what Radha D’Souza (2009) describes as “omnibus political terminology that can accommodate a range of concepts and meanings, often contradictory, and philosophically and theoretically incompatible” which are used “in the name of inclusiveness and broad-based unity” (p.25). Though she is referring to wording choices, I think my approach to reporting on the conversations has made a similar move to subsume important differences and conflicting ideas in inclusive, omnibus concepts, analysis, and framings. This is problematic for many reasons one of which is that, as D’Souza puts it “conceptually ambiguous language prevents concept formation and the development of analytical tools that are so essential for structural social change” (2009, p.26, emphasis in the original).

Like all concepts, the ideas shared with me were “inherited historically and developed through engagement within socio-temporal-spatial contexts” (D’Souza, 2009, p.26). By ignoring the different movement (and other) contexts from which different views were offered to me, by severing the ideas from their history and context I was playing into what D’Souza calls the politics of inclusion, which seeks to include everyone in some “supposedly neutral democratic space” and in doing so “disarms politics from building real unity and real alliances for structural changes based on programmatic goals” (2009, p.26, emphasis in the original).

I did this with the activist quotes, and I also did this with the ways in which I incorporated scholarly literature about social change. I wove together bits and pieces of insights and theories of change from across different bodies of literatures and disciplines, without explaining what the insights and theories are based on, without attending to the different disciplinary assumptions and epistemological grounds on which they are based, and without attending to the very real ways some of the theories may be in conflict with each other. Books could be written about the conflicting epistemological and ontological underpinning between systems science and historical materialism. Both speak of ‘systems’ but are not remotely referring to the same thing. I included theories of change from both without any treatment of the tensions - creative or otherwise - between them. Likewise, a whole works could be written (and

much been written, see Barker & Pickerill, 2012; Lewis, 2017) about the ways anarchist visions of autonomy are in direct conflict with Indigenous struggles for decolonization. But I spent one sentence in chapter 4 on this fundamental conflict of interests that are very much alive in the movements I am part of.

This lack of deeper engagement with the contexts, the differences, the tensions; the shying away from exploring the ways in which the many perspective I have included may not actually fit neatly together like pieces of a puzzle, I have inadvertently weakened the theoretical utility to activists and land defenders as well as compromising the overall conceptual clarity of my work. Perhaps one of the reasons I approached the work like this is my determined hope that deep down, underlying all the debates and tensions, we all share common interests and that we can indeed find ways to theorize and take action together in ways that are mutually beneficial. And though this idealist contention may be founded, in this work it is an underlying assumption, not a well-developed, substantiated argument.

But the more immediate reason for my lack of deeper engagement with context, difference, and tensions is that, as I made clear in the Introduction chapter, I was intentionally working towards generating insight borne from breadth, not depth. I reached out very widely, bringing in many people's voices, from various movements, and many scholars insights, from many fields and disciplines, asking many different questions, and drawing on various methodological approaches and different data gathering methods. It was ambitious and experimental, and though I do still feel strongly that there are some ways that this approach was generative and illuminating in real ways, over all the approach's significant weakness is in the lack of intellectual rigor it allowed within the timeframe I had. Had I focused in on one movement, or even one organization, or asked fewer questions, or tried out fewer methodological approaches or sources of data, I would have been able to get a stronger handle and a deeper mastery on the theories and concepts that are raised.

As it stands, trying to do too much has rendered by engagement with some methods, concepts, and theories too superficial. I did not have time and space to read adequately on things important to the project. For example, I did not read up on debates around the use of PAR method, or about different theories of knowledge creation. I cover too much, too shallowly without adequate depth of critical interrogation.

Another limitation to this is that I see now that it is the work of a person educated in environmental studies grappling, at times unsuccessfully, with incorporating critical social theory that I have no education in. I bring in concepts of power, of social justice, of decolonization, of anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalist struggles - just barely scraping the surface of these. My discussions of these are based on some reading for the literature review and learnings from movement conversations. In my university education in environmental studies and ecological economics, I have never taken a course in sociology or history, I have never taken a course that taught Marxist theory, nor intersectional feminism. I knew these concepts needed to be in this thesis but my lack of real engagement with critical social theory and with scholarship about social movements and struggles in other global and historical contexts has weakened the work.

I lay all this out here not to claim this work a failure, but to present another layer of what I have learned in this doctoral process; what I have learned about how ‘findings’ are generated and what makes them strong. All these aforementioned weaknesses set for me a challenge which I take up currently, as I begin my post-doctoral work. The challenge is to develop an approach to wide-reaching, radically transdisciplinary, synthetic work in ways that allow the time and focus for drilling down and fine-grained analysis and conceptual development conducive to rigorous and deep understanding, such that I can generate strong findings for informing powerful social change work.

An aspect of the work which I have receive critical feedback about is the ways I have treated activist quotes. I have received the feedback that I should have engaged critically with what people shared with me. It has been pointed out that I even misrepresent the intention movement scholars such as Choudry and Dixon and others as advocating for the raising up of activist theories uncritically, as if understandings forged in social change work somehow do not need to be assessed critically; as if they are truthful and insightful merely by virtue of being generated in movement spaces. Where I did not mean any such misrepresentation, I did indeed decide to not be critical about what people told me in the interviews and surveys.

I present, in chapters 4-7, the full range of views offered on any given theme. I do not pick and choose them, nor do I critically engage in whether I think any give view, opinion, or theory is right or not.

I approached the activists and land defender offerings in this way for a variety of reasons, the primary of which is that I have no idea on what I would base such assessment of the ‘rightness’. Secondly, in going into the interviews and asking these busy, passionate people to share their ideas with me, I presented the project as a process of thinking together, and made clear that I would not be studying their views. I told them that I would be bringing all the views together so that we could work to answer the research questions together. I felt that this was an important commitment to respectful relationship building and for relinquishing power as a scholar to be the one to decide whose views were more insightful, more valuable, more ‘true’ than others. Instead I sought to let the critical rigour come through the ways different views and theories challenged and pushed back on each other, pointing to elements missing from others’ offerings, letting the reader learn from the interacting, converging, and diverging voices, not from my assessment of what was said.

Though I stand by this approach, I do acknowledge there are problems associated with having approached activist theories and perspectives uncritically. As one thesis examiner pointed to, this approach risks romanticizing activist knowledge, by implying that if an activist said it, it must be a valid point, there is a risk of promoting ‘intellectual populism’. It can be argued that all ideas need to be tested, not just taken at face-value. If the goal is to create knowledge that is useful to movements, to generating social change, one needs to consider the risks of including views that are wrong, inaccurate as these could lead people to ineffective or counter-productive strategies and actually undermine the whole point of the research project.

In my view, this risk is mitigated by the rigour inherent in thinking together with so many people. Yes, there is a chance that some of the views presented are not equally useful and insightful, both among the many scholarly theories I included and among the many activist and land defenders I interviewed and surveyed. But by bringing so many diverse views from such diverse sources, the chances of generating findings that lead readers and activists to ineffective activism is arguably much less likely than a thesis that engages with only one or two theories and theorists.

In the end, as I acknowledge the limitation and weaknesses of this research and I also feel very proud of what it did accomplish. This thesis brought together the voices and views of over 80 people across Canada who are working hard everyday to address the urgent crises we face. It

provides a valuable snapshot of the ongoing conversations, debates, theorizing, and strategizing happening within and across these various movement communities. I offer this snap shot back to the movements in hopes that it is useful for strengthening our work together.

The work's original conceptual contributions include the discussions on movements as diverse ecosystems, and on critical holism, direct-action solutions, and intersectional solutions. Theoretical contributions include the 8 Key lessons about how change happens which was generated by the literature review and the ways that dualistic, binary theories of change hinder collaborations in social movements. Methodological contributions include my unconventional approach to literature review which reached across very different bodies of literature, based on criteria of relevance to activists. Methodological contributions also include experimenting with methods of collaborative theorizing as well as writing with others' words.

But perhaps what I am most proud of - and offer as an example to young scholars concerned with social change at this critical moment in human history - I convened and analysed these conversations, and wrote this thesis all the while planning marches, speaking at divestment rallies, fundraising for frontline Indigenous communities, giving workshops to new climate activists about social justice and solidarity, organizing panel discussions with land defenders and water protectors, and pushing the environmental movement in Quebec to address the internal racism that exists. A success of this project is that I managed to do research that was relevant to my activism, and every week of the last 5 years, I did activism too.

9. Appendix

Appendix 1. Table of codes for all sources of data

Every time I included a quote from an interview, survey, thinktank session, or event transcription, I provided a code (eg. Int#21) to indicate which person, and which source of data the quote came from. This table provides in the information about the interviewee, survey respondent etc. associated with each code. The table is colour coded to distinguish the different sources of data. The yellow section is for the interviews, the orange section is thinktank sessions, surveys are in the green section and public events are in the blue section.

Codes	Date	Involvement	Gender	Settler, Indigenous, or Person of Colour (POC)	Capacity (Ind: Speaking as Individual, Rep: Representing organization)	Province
Int#1	5/19/2017	Community/Grassroots	M	POC	Ind	BC
Int#2	5/23/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Ind	BC
Int#3	5/26/2017	Organisation	F	Settler	Rep	BC
Int#4	5/29/2017	Community/Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	VT
Int#5	6/1/2017	Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#6	6/2/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#7	6/5/2017	Community/Grassroots	M	Indigenous	Ind	QC
Int#8	6/6/2017	Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	QC, ONT
Int#9	6/7/2017	Community	M	Indigenous	Ind	QC
Int#10	6/7/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#11	6/7/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#12	6/9/2017	Organisation	F	Indigenous	Ind	ONT
Int#13	6/11/2017	Grassroots	F	POC	Ind	QC
Int#14	6/12/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	BC

Int#15	6/12/2017	Organization/Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#16	6/12/2017	Organisation/Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#17	6/1/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#18	6/15/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#19	6/20/2017	Organization/Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#20	6/22/2017	Grassroots	F	Indigenous	Ind	ONT
Int#21	6/22/2017	Grassroots	M	POC	Ind	QC
Int#22	6/23/2017	Grassroots/Community	F	Indigenous	Rep	NB
Int#23	6/26/2017	Grassroots/Student	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#24	6/26/2017	Grassroots/Organisation	M	POC	Ind	QC
Int#25	6/28/2017	Grassroots	F	Indigenous	Ind	QC
Int#26	6/28/2017	Organisation	M	Settler	Ind	SK
Int#27	7/6/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#28	7/10/2017	Organisation/Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	ONT
Int#29	7/11/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Rep	BC
Int#30	7/13/2017	Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#31	7/17/2017	Organization	F	Settler	Rep	BC
Int#32	8/7/2017	Organisation/Grassroots	F	POC	Ind	BC
Int#33	8/10/2017	Organization	F	Settler	Ind	BC
Int#34	8/11/2017	Community/Scholar	M	Indigenous	Ind	BC
Int#35	8/18/2017	Organization	M	POC	Rep	BC
Int#36	8/19/2017	Grassroots/Scholar	F	Settler	Ind	ONT
Int#37	8/19/2017	Organization/Community	F	Settler	Rep	BC
Int#38	8/28/2017	Community/Grassroots	M	Indigenous	Ind	BC
Int#39	10/3/2017	Organization/Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
Int#40	2/20/2017	Grassroots	M	POC	Ind	QC
TT#1	10/18,2017	varied	varied	varied	Rep	QC
TT#2	9/28/2017	varied	varied	varied	Ind	QC
TT#3	6/28/2018	Organization/Grassroots	F	Settler	Ind	QC
S#1	2/6/2017	Community/Grassroots	M	Settler	Ind	ONT

S#3	2/6/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Rep	ONT
S#4	2/6/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Ind	MAN
S#5	2/6/2017	Grassroots	?	?		BC
S#6	2/7/2017	Organization	?	?	Rep	ONT
S#7	2/7/2017	Community/Grassroots	?	?	Rep	ONT
S#8	2/7/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Rep	ONT
S#9	2/7/2017	Grassroots	F	Settler	Rep	QC
S#10	2/9/2017	Union	?	?	Rep	?
S#11	2/12/2017	Community	F	Settler	Rep	?
S#12	2/16/2017	Grassroots	M	POC	Rep	ONT
S#13	3/8/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Rep	ONT
S#14	3/8/2017	Organization	?	?	Rep	ONT
S#15	3/9/2017	Organization	?	?	Rep	CAN
S#16	3/26/2017	Grassroots	M	Settler	Rep	QC
S#17	3/28/2017	Grassroots/Scholar	F	Settler	Ind	US
S#18	3/31/2017	Organization	M	Settler	Rep	BC
S#19	4/3/2017	Community/Organization	F	Indigenous	Rep	ONT
S#20	4/4/2017	Grassroots	M	?	Rep	?
S#21	4/10/2017	Organization	F	Settler	Rep	ONT
S#22	4/26/2017	Organization	M	POC	Rep	ALB
S#23	4/26/2017	Organization	F	Indigenous	Rep	CAN
S#24	4/28/2017	Community/Organization	M	Settler	Rep	BC
S#25	5/3/2017	Organization	?	?	Rep	INT
S#26	5/3/2017	Funder	F	Settler	Ind	CAN
S#27	5/9/2017	Community	M	Settler	Ind	?
S#28	5/11/2017	Business	F	Settler	Rep	?
S#29	5/19/2017	Student Union	M	Settler	Rep	QC
S#30	5/23/2017	Grassroots	F	POC	Rep	ONT
S#31	5/26/2017	Student Union	M	Settler	Rep	QC
S#32	5/29/2017	Organization	F	?	Rep	ONT

S#33	5/31/2017	Political Party	M	Settler	Ind	QC
S#34	6/5/2017	Grassroots/Arts	M	Settler	Rep	QC
S#35	6/15/2017	Community	M	Indigenous	Ind	QC
S#36	6/15/2017	Organization	F	?	Rep	CAN
S#37	6/15/2017	Organization	?	?	Ind	CAN
E#2	8/16/2016	World Social Forum	M	Indigenous	Rep	Int.
E#3	8/17/2016	World Social Forum	F	Indigenous	Ind	CAN
E#9	4/17/2017	NDP/Leap Event	M	Settler	Rep	ONT
E#10	2/15/2018	Courage to Leap Event	M, F	Settler, POC	Rep	ONT
E#12	3/21/2017	Sacred Fire Network Event	M	Indigenous	Ind	BC
E#14 E#15	3/22/2017	Sacred Fire Network Event	M	POC	Ind	BC
E#16	5/25/2017	Decolonizing Divestment Webinar	M	Indigenous	Rep	Man
E#17	6/18/2017	Unsettling Canada 150 Webinar	M,F,M	Indigenous	Ind	Var.
E#18 E#19	1/03/2018	Violence Against the Land is Violence Against Women Webinar	F	Indigenous	Rep	BC, AB
E#21	11/28/2015	Corridors of Resistance Film	M	Indigenous	Ind	BC

Appendix 2. Scholarly discussions on Climate Justice

Similar to the ways that our theories of change can remain in the realm the unspoken and uninterrogated assumptions, so can notions of *justice* in discourses about climate change. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive overview of theories of justice in relation to the uneven burdens of and responsibilities for climate change, given that I've repeatedly evoked concepts of *climate justice* in this thesis, some work is needed to flesh out what I mean by justice.

Philosophers and other scholars grappling with the ethics of climate change

Many activists and scholars alike acknowledge that underlying climate change as a scientific, technological, and social problem, it is fundamentally an ethical issue (Gardner, 2004). Climate justice is used and defined in different ways, but primarily is mobilized to contest the unequal impacts of climate change, both geographically and socially (Featherstone, 2013). Climate change is exacerbating existing social inequalities, including class, gender and race-based inequalities within and across national contexts.

The core idea evoked by the concept of climate justice is that climate change, with the spatial and temporal disconnect between emissions and impacts are leading to those people least responsible for causing the problem being the ones bearing the largest burden of the impacts (Gardiner, 2006). Gardiner identifies three of the most problematic characteristics of the problem as 1) the dispersion of causes and effects, 2) fragmentation of agency, and 3) institutional inadequacy (2006). These three characteristics exist on both the spatial and temporal scales and combine to make for "The Perfect Moral Storm" (Gardiner, 2006).

A core ethical question is how is to allocate the costs and benefits of greenhouse gas emissions and abatement (Gardiner, 2004). In response to this there is agreement amongst philosophers that developed countries should take the lead role in paying the costs of mitigating climate change, while the less developed countries should be able to increase emissions for the foreseeable future (Gardiner, 2004). Though there is agreement on this, there are notable differences amongst philosophers as to how to justify this claim, the form it takes, and to what extent this is the case. Much of these disagreements hinge on whether the claim is backward or forward looking. The backward argument invokes historical principles of justice that require that

one clean up one's own mess. This implies that the industrialized countries need to bear the costs imposed by the impacts of their past emissions (Gardiner, 2004). The forward-looking argument focuses instead on the Earth's capacity to absorb GHGs as a common resource and claims that, given its limited capacity, a question of justice arises in how this capacity should be allocated (ibid). Gardiner explains that the two approaches are distinct but compatible (ibid).

Henry Shue develops a "Framework for International Justice" by delineating 4 kinds of questions: 1) what is the fair allocation of the costs of preventing the global warming that is still preventable; 2) what is the fair allocation of the costs of coping with the social consequences of global warming that will not in fact be avoided; 3) what background allocation of wealth would allow international bargaining about issues like questions (1) and (2) be a fair process; and lastly 4) what is the fair allocation of emissions of greenhouse gases? (Shue, 2010). He then describes two bases for answering these questions. One is based on the fault-based principal known as 'polluter pays' and the other is a no-fault principal based on 'payment according to ability to pay' (ibid). He advocates for a combination of the two kinds of answers, depending on which question.

Hayward frames the problem as a matter of rights or responsibilities: "Concerns about the situation of the worst off globally have led to calls for recognition of a human right to some baseline amount of emissions per capita in order to secure subsistence. However, given the reasons to support a human right to an adequate environment, it would be a mistake to recognize any human right to pollute" (Hayward, 2007, p.1). He argues that this problem can be overcome by creating "a single framework of justice, the proposal here is that this broader framework be developed by reference to the idea of 'ecological space'" (Hayward, 2007, p.1). Schuppert, on the other hand, critiques current existing policy instruments (cap-and-trade schemes, carbon emission taxes, and personal ecological space quotas) and their supporting philosophical principles as highly problematic in terms of intergenerational justice and suggests that existing proposals for the distribution of emission rights and climate change-related costs need to be supported by a more substantial account of intergenerational justice (Schuppert, 2011).

Another key point of ethics of climate change is distinguishing between subsistence emissions and luxury emissions and states, with many arguing that it is not fair to ask some people to do without basic necessities of life so that other people can maintain luxurious

lifestyles (Shue, 2010). Although the current climate regime seems to recognize the need for distributive justice between the rich and poor countries, it is not doing so enough to 'upset the underlying forces and abiding structures of global inequality' (Okereke, 2010, p.462). This brings up the concept of 'procedural fairness' by pointing to the unequal negotiating power at the international climate change negotiations (Shue, 2010). This inequality in wealth and the increased decision-making power that wealth brings underlies much of the challenges that climate ethicists are grappling with. Okereke contributes to the conversation by pointing out that while discussions on climate justice have become more common within the international negotiations, much work needs to be done regarding how to design policies that reconcile moral ideals and power politics (2010).

Most current economic approaches to climate policy either are not concerned with, or blatantly disregard matters of fair distribution and the justice dimension of unequal climate vulnerability, impacts, and responsibility. There are some economic initiatives that do take this inequality into account and seek to address it. For example, the 'polluter pays' principal, funding clean development in developing countries, and paying compensation for climate damages. That said, there is much criticism of current market-based economic approaches to climate policy as further exacerbating existing inequalities. Paavola and Adger explore the implicit 'theories of justice' that underlie current economic approaches to climate policy. They state that welfare economics is an approach to justice which considers welfare or utility as the supreme consequence on which judgments of justice can be based (2002). They further point out that there are various other rules of justice within welfare economics. One example is the Pareto test which 'justifies only those changes to status quo that do not harm anybody and benefit at least one individual' and another is the potential compensation test which identifies as fair distributions as ones which maximize social welfare, even if some individuals are actually worse off (Paavola & Adger, 2002). Rawlsian theory of justice also offers guidance so as to improve the lot of the worst off (Paavola & Adger, 2002). Paavola and Adger claim that none of these is adequate.

Roberts presents the idea of 'ecologically unequal exchange' as a way to understand climate injustice and points to researchers who have documented that energy and materials disproportionately flow from the Global South to the Global North (2009). He proposes that

“since the extraction of resources and energy is one of the most damaging stages of the chain of commodity production, a logical next step is the mounting cry from developing countries that they are owed an ‘ecological debt’ by the North” (Roberts, 2009, p.385).

Conceptions of justice that underlie discourses of climate justice

Underlying all these debates, discussions, and claims are conceptions of what is just. As such, to further unpack what is meant by climate justice, it is helpful to turn directly to theories of justice.

Justice is about how individual people are treated. Issues of justice arise in circumstances in which “people can advance claims – to freedom, opportunities, resources, and so forth – that are potentially conflicting, and we appeal to justice to resolve such conflicts by determining what each person is properly entitled to” (Miller, 2017, n.p.). Justice is often a matter of how individuals are treated but it can also be about treatment of groups of people, like when the state is allocating resources between different groups of citizens (Miller, 2017). There are several characteristics of justice that distinguish it from other virtues, including that it is something that is demanded and given its obligatory nature and that justice generally goes hand-in-hand with enforceability (Miller, 2017, n.p.).

Miller explains that conceptions of justice can be categorized in terms of four distinctions: [Conservative/Ideal Justice](#); Corrective/Distributive Justice; Procedural/Substantive Justice; and Comparative/Non-Comparative Justice (2017). The conservative versus ideal distinction refers to whether a matter of justice involves respecting people’s rights under existing law, moral rules, or social conventions or whether justice “gives us reason to change laws, practices and conventions quite radically, thereby creating new entitlements and expectations” (Miller, 2017, n.p.).

Corrective versus distributive justice refers to the distinction between justice as a principle for distributing goods of various kinds to people, and justice as “principle that applies when one person wrongly interferes with another’s legitimate holdings” (Miller, 2017, n.p.).

A third distinction, procedural/substantive justice, is drawn between the justice of the procedures that are or can be used to determine how benefits and burdens of various kinds are

allocated to people. This is a distinct matter from how just a final allocation may be (Miller, 2017).

John Rawls contrasted three kinds of procedural justice: *perfect procedural justice*, whereby if a procedure is followed a just outcome is guaranteed, *imperfect procedural justice*, whereby following a procedure is likely, but not certain, to produce a just result, and *pure procedural justice*, “where there is no independent way to assess the outcome – if we call it just, it is only on the grounds that it has come about by following the relevant procedure” (Miller, 2017, n.p., also see Rawls 1971).

Theories of justice can also be categorised according to whether they are comparative, non-comparative, or neither. Considerations of comparative justice arise when in order to determine what is due to one person, one needs to look at what others can also claim. As Miller describes it, “to determine how large a slice of pie is rightfully John’s, we have to know how many others have a claim to the pie, and also what the principle for sharing it should be – equality, or something else” (Miller, 2017, n.p.). Principles requiring the equal distribution of some kind of benefit – are plainly comparative in form, whereas ‘sufficiency’ principles are non-comparative, requiring that each person should have ‘enough’ of something (Miller, 2017).

The difference principle, the second part of the second principle of John Rawls’s theory of justice, cannot easily be classified either as comparative or non-comparative (Miller, 2017). The first principle requires that all citizens are granted equal basic liberties. The first part of the second principle requires equal opportunity. The difference principle holds that inequalities in the distribution of these goods are justified only if they benefit those least well-off (Miller, 2017). The difference principle requires that social and economic inequalities be arranged to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971).

Some philosophers have critiqued Rawls’s theory of justice for disregarding the principle that people with greater talents deserve greater rewards than others. This principle of desert implies that a social system ought to “reward talent rather than to respond to the essential moral features of citizens” (Miller, 2017, n.p.). Rawls responds that people do not deserve their talent nor the character that allows them to develop it, given that they have willed neither and that because citizens are equal in their moral features, they have an equal claim to the benefits from

the system of cooperation. In addition, Rawls argues that people “have a variety of moral, religious, and philosophical views about what constitutes desert and so could not agree on what to reward” (Miller, 2017, n.p.).

Nancy Fraser’s contributes one more important distinction: between affirmative vs. transformative approaches to distributive justice. She argues that injustices may be resolved either affirmatively or transformatively. To illustrate this distinction, where affirmative redistributive approaches seeks to address existing income inequality by facilitating transfer of material resources to marginalized groups through the welfare state, these efforts tend to leave intact the conditions and systems such as the capitalism, racism, and sexism, which generated the income inequality. In contrast, transformative redistributive remedies seek to tackle the origins and root causes of economic inequality. This could include “redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures” (Fraser, 1995, p.73).

Implications of conceptions of justice for climate policy

Different theories of justice have very different implications for climate policy and other mitigation and adaptation initiatives. Klinsky and Dowlatabadi argue that all climate change policies are built on assumptions about the appropriate form of distributive justice and that even policies that do not explicitly consider justice have distributive justice implications (Klinsky and Dowlatabadi, 2009).

DeBillon (2019) engages explicitly with differing conceptions of justice and their implications for supply-side constraints on fossil fuel production. DeBillon articulates four theories of justice to help develop criteria by which prioritize cuts among fossil fuel producers (2019). **Utilitarian** conceptions of justice call for the reductions in emissions in ways whereby economic benefits of a ‘just’ transition is maximized for all stakeholders. Based on this theory of justice, the first to implement cuts should be the countries which produce the most fossil fuels, the most carbon-intensive fuels and/or the costliest fossil fuels. **Distributive** theories of justice, on the other hand, call for cuts based on *affordability*, whereby countries with high income and low fossil fuels revenue dependence should be the ones to make cuts first, and *developmental efficiency*, whereby those with the poorest development record from fossil fuel wealth).

Restorative, or reparative concepts of justice instead call for criterion based on *past production*. Those countries who have benefitted from the largest historical per capita production should be the ones to prioritize in terms of cutting fossil fuel production. And finally, **rehabilitative** conceptions of justice would be based on *willingness*, whereby the countries with the strongest public support and governmental willingness for cuts in future production should be the ones to act first (DeBillon, 2019).

According to Klinsky and Dowlatabadi, despite all the different conceptions of justice and all the different ways that can be used to inform climate policy and action, there is remarkable convergence among philosophers who work on climate change (e.g. Shue, Singer, Ott) regarding the acceptable range of divisions of costs and benefits (2009). Within this literature, several important principles emerge for defining climate justice: causal responsibility, preferential treatment based on need, equal entitlements, equal burdens, and procedural justice (Klinsky and Dowlatabadi, 2009).

The contested terrain of conceptualizing and defining climate justice

Through the above discussion I have sought to show the many ways to get at definitions of climate justice through existing theories of justice and the many ways of categorizing these. But it's important to acknowledge at this point that the term climate justice is a contested terrain (Hulme 2009). There are many and varied definitions of climate justice and the diversity of conceptions is due to "the wide range of possible approaches to justice itself, as well as the complexity of climate change and the breadth of movements arrayed in response" (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p.364). According to Schlosberg & Collins, climate justice has at least three broad conceptualizations and these three broad conceptualizations emanate from very different social locations. There are ideal theories from the academic community, perspectives on policy coming from fairly elite NGOs, and then there are the perspective on climate justice forged in grassroots movements (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014).

The term climate justice was coined by activists protesting the failed negotiations at the Copenhagen UNFCCC COP meeting in 2009 (Foran et al., 2013). Climate justice emerged in reaction to the failure of the 'from above', as "failure is the only way to summarize sixteen years

of talk by United Nations negotiators from national states influenced by fossil-fuel-dependent capital, neoliberal multilateral agencies, and the big Environmental NGOs” (Bond, 2011).

Climate justice can be understood through a series of demands that have progressively been elaborated by social movements in various declarations including the 2002 Bali Principles, Climate Justice Now! declarations in 2007 and 2008, KlimaForum’s declaration during Copenhagen, and Cochabamba Declaration of 2010. These demands make explicit links between climate change and unequal relations of power, globally and locally, and about and how these intersect with relations of class, race, gender, generation, Indigenous rights, and socio-nature (Chatterton et al., 2013). It foregrounds the uneven and persistent patterns of eco-imperialism and ‘ecological debt’ as a result of the historical legacy of uneven use of fossil fuels and exploitation of raw materials, offshoring, and export of waste (Chatterton et al., 2013).

The movement generated climate justice principles include: democratic accountability and participation, addressing the root causes of climate change, as well as “leaving fossil fuels in the ground; reasserting peoples’ and community control over production; re-localising food production; massively reducing over-consumption, particularly in the global North; respecting Indigenous and forest people’s rights; and recognizing the ecological and climate debt owed to the people’s in the global South by the societies of the global North necessitating the making of reparations” (Chatterton et al., 2013, p.606). These also include the demands that “developed countries radically reduce and absorb their emissions; assume the costs and technology transfer needs of developing countries and responsibility for climate refugees; eliminate their restrictive immigration policies, offering migrants a decent life with full human rights guarantees in their countries; and construct an adaptation fund to assess the impacts and costs of climate change in developing countries and provide a mechanism for compensation” (Chatterton et al., 2013, p.607). This articulation is currently accepted by a broad diversity of climate justice movements around the world (Chatterton et al., 2013).

All discussions, definitions, and attempts to operationalize the concept of climate justice may be useful, whether this work is done by activists, frontline communities, NGOs, or scholars in the academy. **But, to be clear, when I refer to climate justice in this thesis, I am referring to these principles, forged in social movements, outlined in the above paragraphs.** It is these

definitions and principles of climate justice, forged democratically in movement spaces, that shape and frame what I am meaning to invoke. I raise up the conceptions from social movements over those from NGOs, policy makers, and philosophers for several reasons.

1) Procedural justice, democratic process, and thinking together

Procedural justice is a big part of climate justice. Procedurally just approaches to climate action will be those which are decided on through processes that meaningfully include and forefront people most impacted by the changing climate. Climate policy based on conceptions and theories forged in elite institutions like large NGOs and universities are more likely to be disconnected from, and therefore not useful or even counterproductive to those on the ground living the injustices of a changing climate. What is considered ‘climate just’ must be determined by people bearing the injustice, otherwise the process is unjust and strategies and policies devised are less likely to be effective.

As my research approach has illustrated, I believe strongly that strategies that address complex problems such as climate change and the ways it intersects with social, political, and economic inequalities are best devised by many, diverse minds, including those actively engaged in struggle to resist injustice and build better worlds. And therefore, it is conceptions, definitions, and principles of climate justice forged through democratic processes, in social movement spaces, involving many diverse people including those directly impacted, that I evoke when I use the term climate justice.

2) Likelihood to be taken up for taking real action on climate change

It is not clear to me what the mechanism is whereby philosopher’s conceptions of justice are informed by or benefit people facing climate impacts, nor even how it informs policy and other strategies for taking action on climate change. Nor am I aware of any process by which philosophers are accountable to people on the frontlines of the climate crisis nor to activists on the ground. This disconnect between philosophical work and lived experience has two major problems: one is that the disconnection between the conceptions of justice and the people living with the injustice render the concepts less likely to serve the people most impacted, and secondly if it is not formulated in conversation with those actually taking action for climate justice it is less likely to be taken up, operationalized and of use to actual efforts for climate justice. There

may be mechanisms for philosophers to inform climate policy, but that said, climate policy from the top-down has been stalled for decades, subject to resistance from wealthy, high polluting countries and the corporate interests, while movements from the bottom-up are picking up the slack, actively finding ways to hold power accountable for this inaction (Bond, 2012). And therefore, it is conceptions, definitions, and principles of climate justice forged in social movement spaces in conversation with those taking action and those directly impacted, that I evoke when I use the term climate justice.

3) Coherence with the epistemological conviction of this research project

Throughout my research process, from developing research question and developing methodology, I have centered and raised up the intellectual work of social movements. Much of chapter 2 explains and defends this approach and this commitment. To base my definition of climate justice, a concept central to this work, on the theories and conceptions of justice from philosophers would be inconsistent within my approach. That said, I acknowledge and appreciate all the powerful work of philosophers and other scholars within the academy and the rich insight provided by Western philosophical traditions as to the many dimensions and complexities of justice. And there is also important work to be done drafting and passing climate policy and legislation. But these need to be done in ways that are deeply informed and accountable to the people most impacted.

Appendix 3. Extensive notes for literature review on theories of change

Chapter 3 reports on the conclusions I drew from a lengthy literature review on theories of change. Here I provide the lengthy, original draft version for reference for anyone seeking more information, more background and the context from which the conclusions in chapter 3 were reached. ****Please note that this was a draft, or perhaps a formalized version of the notes I took while reading, never meant to be a final product****. I add it here in the interest of transparency; to show the raw material from which I constructed the 8 Key Lessons for Activists which chapter 3 presents.

Most of the literature review and the writing of this draft was conducted by myself, but I Ayendri Riddell co-authored the review of the historical materialism and Intersectional Feminism literature.

In the first stage of analysis and writing the literature review (which culminated in this draft presented here), I wrote a section describing what I'd gathered from each body of literature. Each of the sections concludes with a textbox containing Key Lessons for Activists. In the second stage of analysis and writing (which culminated in Chapter 3) I brought together contents of the Key Lessons in the concluding textboxes, exploring thematic convergences and divergences and synthesized them a final series of 8 Key Lessons.

1. Sociology and Social Movement Studies

Sociologists, and social theorists that predate the discipline, have provided much useful theorization about the process of social change. In this section we provide a brief overview of insights about change that have come from sociological investigation, and then focus in more closely on Social Movement Theory, a sub-field of sociology, focusing on how social change is brought about through the collective action of social movements.

In the mid twentieth century sociologists were primarily concerned not with how change happens, but how stability happens. Since then, sociologists have become more interested in change (Krznaric, 2007). In the book *Theories of Social Change* (1970), Richard Applebaum reviews the three dominant sociological 'schools' of thought on social change. These are evolutionary theory, equilibrium/functionalist theory and conflict theory. Sociologists in the

19th century inspired by Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution applied it to social change. According to this, society moves in a specific, unilinear direction, moving through increased complexity and 'progress', all headed for the same eventual destiny (Applebaum, 1970). Problematically these theories undergirded and reflected racist assumptions that the theorist's cultures were more advanced than those of other or earlier societies. Functionalist sociologists such as Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), argue that society in its natural state is stable and balanced, that society naturally works to maintain a state of equilibrium. Disruptive actions of movements, such as strikes, threaten social order (Applebaum, 1970). Unlike functionalists and their emphasis on stability, conflict theorists (like Marx) see conflict as necessary and beneficial to remedy social inequality and exploitation (Applebaum, 1970). These shifts in sociological theory about change had major implications on the ways social movements were theorized. "Yesterday's threats to social order became today's victims of oppression, as movements seeking liberation and autonomy were increasingly seen as legitimate and sometimes heroic challenges to repression and control" (Buechler, 2011, p.3).

Culture, worldviews, power and change agency In Krznaric's literature review on *Theories of Change*, he identified several particular contributions that sociology has made to understanding social change. These include understandings of how culture, worldviews, power, and the change agency of social actors influence change processes. Sociologists have long been interested in culture as a source of change (Krznaric, 2007). For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, liberation theology was identified as a major cultural-religious force for social change in Latin America and sociological interest of culture in social change is re-emerging in the last decade in response to the growth of fundamentalist movements (Krznaric, 2007).

Karl Mannheim and Pierre Bourdieu investigated the role of worldviews in social change (Krznaric, 2007). Worldview helps shape and constrain social action. This focus "shifts analysis away from traditional thinking about 'cause and effect' or 'actors and structures' by placing social action in a deeper framework of meaning" (Krznaric, 2007, p.12-13). From this perspective, worldview change can lead to social change. Worldviews change through new experiences, through new conversations and empathetic relationship with less familiar social groups, and through changes in education systems (Krznaric, 2007, p.14).

Within sociology there are varying theories about power and its relationship to social change. One common conception of power is that it is something “that can be used by actors or institutions to instigate or prevent change” (Krznaric, 2007, p.13). Others conceive of power as something that can be ‘seized’ or ‘wielded’ and some, such as Foucault see “power in relational terms, as a network or flow between institutions or individuals” (ibid). Power has been theorised to have various dimensions, some more direct than other. Each dimension of power has implications for how change happens. Power is used directly through force to bring about change, or more indirectly through propaganda or education systems to change people’s preferences, opinions or worldviews (Krznaric, 2007, p.14).

Another significant sociological contribution to theorizing about social change is in its investigations of change agency of non-state actors in contesting for power to bring about (or prevent) changes. Civil society includes social movements and organisations such as professional associations, independent media, and non-government organisations (NGOs), which “serve as intermediaries between the private and public spheres” (Krznaric, 2007, p. 12). For civil-society theorists, the extent to which a society can change partly depends on the ‘strength’ of “its civil society which in turn is determined in part by the degree of unity among various social actors, the quality of leadership, the clarity of objectives, etc. (Krznaric, 2007).

Social Movement Theory. Social movements have received particular attention for their role in social change, especially since the 1960s, as an increase in social movements activity at that time (such as the civil rights and feminist movements) made clear movements’ ability to impact legislation and policy as well as norms and values (Buechler, 2011). With this came a corresponding increase of research on social movements (Snow & Soule, 2008).

In the 2011 book, *Understanding social movements: Theories from the classical era to the present*, Steven Buechler provides sociological history of social movement theory. He begins with classical social theorists, many of who predate social movement theory and even the discipline of sociology, but whose ideas continue to influence understandings of social movements. To Buechler, Karl Marx (1818-1883) offers a clear starting point as his analysis of capitalism led him to develop a his influential theory of working class mobilization for change. We will go in to more detail about Marx in Section 4, so we begin instead with Weber.

Where as Marx was hopeful about the forces towards revolutionary transformation, Weber (1864-1920), one of the founding fathers of sociology “articulated classic German pessimism about the rigidity of social order, the futility of revolutionary challenges, and the inevitability of rationalization and bureaucratization” (Buechler, 2011, p.25). Buechler offers several key lessons from applying Weberian social theory to social movements. These include:

- Cultural beliefs and values are central to social action, in who participates in social movement and why (p.37).
- “When authority is weak because its legitimation is undermined, the social space for social movements increases and they are more likely to emerge and flourish” (p.37) .
- Movements are social orders that often involve the ‘legitimate domination’ of leaders over followers. The ways that these forms of authority play out can be in tension with the social changes that movements may be seeking. This raises questions about “how movements with differing forms of legitimacy organize, mobilize, strategize and succeed or fail” (p.37).
- If, as Weber argued, society is moving towards the iron cage of bureaucracy, “it is highly likely that the same logic will paralyse social movements organized along those lines. There is a an inherent tension in bureaucratically organized social movements: where “bureaucracies are all about routinization and often lapse into empty ritualism....social movements seek change and transformation” (p.38). As such, Weber’s analysis serves as a warning to bureaucratically organized social movements.

Other scholars have further explored this “seemingly inevitable tension between bureaucratic and democratic forms of movement organization” (Buechler, 2011, p.39). Where Gamson (1990) showed that bureaucratically organized movements, with centralized power, tended to be more successful than their counterparts, Piven and Cloward (1979), on the other hand argued that “effective protest emerges from popular disruption and mass action rather than from organized movements”. Their series of case studies show “a familiar pattern in which disruptive and often effective protest gives rise to movement organization that in turn create incentives for their leaders to tame protest and seek accommodation with established authorities....and that once organization appears, effective protest dies” (Buechler, 2011, p.39) Lipset et al. on the other hand, argued that the trap of bureaucratization is not inevitable (1956).

They found that a “combination of bottom up, local autonomy, dense interactions, democratic culture, and multiple leadership factions can maintain union democracy” (Buechler, 2011, p.39).

Early sociologist Emile Durkheim (1859-1917) was interested in the process of social integration and his work opened up a category of theories about how movements emerge when social integration deteriorates. “Where as Marx was optimistic about the prospects for change thru collective action, and Weber expressed resignation over inevitable cycles of change and ossification, Durkheim saw collective behaviour as yet another symptom of underlying tensions and problems of social integration” (Buechler, 2011, p.49). He identified two forms of solidarity that tie social groups together – mechanical and organic solidarity. In applying this to movements, it is theorized that movements bound together through ‘mechanical solidarity’ derive their cohesion from the homogeneity of their members and similarity of beliefs. Such movements are likely be highly intolerant of internal dissent and disagreement (Buechler, 2011, p.49). This can lead to movement fragmentation, especially when the ideological purity of beliefs is central to the movement. Movements integrated through ‘organic solidarity’ on the other hand, are bound together through the heterogeneity of their members and the interdependence derived from these differences and varying roles played. These kinds of movements are “less threatened by diversity of opinion in their ranks because their solidarity derives more from their interdependence than their belief system” (Buechler, 2011, p.49). Such movements tend to be more stable and better able to mobilize on a large scale, but are less able to “inspire the passion and even fanaticism that drives movements based on ideological purity” (p.50).

Durkheim’s legacy for social movement theory includes his work on religion which emphasized rituals as important social processes, helping generate shared meaning and feelings of solidarity and helping nurture visions for alternatives to the status quo. Rituals also help sustain the commitment and motivation of its members (Burchler, 2011, p.51). He also wrote extensively on the concept of ‘Collective effervescence’, the shared feeling created in protests and marches and he posited this emotional energy (rather than rational cognition) as the fuel for this social mobilization processes (Buechler, 2011, p.52).

According to Buechler, Durkheim’s work “opened the door to theorizing that too readily saw collective action as irrational, apolitical, deviant, extremist and dangerous” (2011, p.53) and such theories can problematically serve to legitimize unjust and unsustainable status quos. That

said, his work helps understand the relationships between breakdown of social integration, emergence of collective action, and social change. Scholars since Durkheim have further investigated these relationships. For example, Smelser (1962) argued that strains, tensions, and ambiguities in social order can trigger collective action, “where as the breakdown of social control (in tandem with other factors) all but ensures its ultimate eruption” (Buechler, 2011, p.54). Snow et al. (1998) showed that events which undermine people’s general taken for granted understandings of social reality create a disruption that fosters participation in collective action, especially when people have strong ties within social groups (Buechler, 2011, p.54). Piven and Cloward (1979) showed that social structure and the “rhythms and routines of daily life normally preclude the rise of mass defiance and popular protest” (Buechler, 2011, p.54) and that it is in periods of disruption and instability, when social control is weakened enough such that people become available to participate in collective action. This can lead to collective achievement of social change, but may not be long lived as social control and routine re-establish themselves and serve to demobilize people.

Much of the sociological theorizing about social change and social movements post-1920 was happening in the Chicago Schools which dominated sociology for decades. Much of the work at that time cast collective action in a negative light, using terms such as “strain” and “breakdown” as negative, problematic conditions to be prevented, avoided, to be fixed (Buechler, 2011, p.104). These breakdown theorists forged viewpoints that discussed social control in a positive terms and framed social protest and collective action as negative (Useem 1998). I refrain from summarizing the theory that emerged from this period, as it seems unlikely to offer insight useful to the social movements for whom this is being written. I move on to the paradigms that have come to dominate scholarly understandings of social movements since the 1960s.

In his 2016 book “A World To Win”, sociologist William K. Carroll overviews the two over-arching paradigms social movement studies since the 1970s which we call Pragmatic-reformist and Epochal-interpretivist. According to this formulation, “pragmatic-reformist approaches focus on *how* movements emerge and pursue collective action, whereas epochal-interpretivist approaches focus on *why* specific forms of activism have appeared in late modernity” (Carroll, 2016, p.11).

Pragmatic-reformist. As a welcome contrast to earlier schools of thought that saw collective action as irrational, more recent approaches see collective action as rational, and validates collective action within the “dynamics of contention” (McAdam et al., 2001). The main approach in this paradigm, known as Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), offers ways of understanding movement activity in *pragmatic terms*. It attends to “mechanism, not substance” (Eyerman & Jaymison, 1991, p.39) focusing on understanding the mobilization structures, political opportunities, and framing processes that help social movements bring about social change (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald, 1996).

RMT sees movement mobilization as a process by which resources (e.g. labour, land, facilities, money, skills) needed for collective action are brought together for collective use by movements working towards their social goals (Buechler, 2011). It is the pooling of resources that allows aggrieved individuals to become contending group collectively working towards a shared goal (Tilly, 1978). Pooling of resources requires *social organization*, which RMT theorists understand in two senses: One being the organization of pre-existing social networks and collective identities and the second being social organization which *results* from mobilization. It is in forming mobilization structures, or organizations, to collectively management shared resources, that allows movements to remain in a state of mobilization, distinguishing them from a one-off campaign (Diani, 2003). When moments of protest wane, as they do over the course of “cycles of contention” (Tarrow, 2011), the forms of social organization provide *abeyance structures*, conserving the capacity to remobilize (Carroll, 2016). Mobilization is a crucial, but for social change to be brought about, social movements also need the *opportunity to act*. Windows of political opportunity (Tarrow, 2011) are certain moments when the state is more ‘receptive or vulnerable’ to movements’ collective action (McAdam et al., 1988). Movements also shape the opportunity structures that open to them (Tarrow, 2011). Along with shifting moments of opportunity, what RMT theorists refer to as the *repertoire of collective action* available to movements also change over time. For example, over time, the strike as the primary form of collective action has morphed into varying forms, such as “political pressure, sabotage, demonstrations, and occupations of work places” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.14).

Along with seizing moment of opportunity and shifting forms of contention, the ways that movements frame problems and solutions and how they justify the need for change is crucial to their ability to make change. Snow and Benford (1992) define “*collective action frames* as emergent action-oriented sets of meanings and beliefs that inspire and legitimate social movement campaigns and activities” (paraphrased in Carrol, 2016, p.15). Through collective action framings, movements identify injustices, attributing responsibility for the injustices and express visions of alternatives (Snow & Benford, 1992; Tarrow, 2011). In order to mobilize the broader public, movement organizations engage in a process of “frame alignment” (Snow et al., 1986) whereby they work to align their messaging with the values, concerns and understandings of the communities they wish to mobilize. “Without this resonance, few members of constituencies are likely to participate” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.15).

Epochal-interpretive. As we’ve seen, scholars of the Pragmatic-reform paradigm provide helpful insight about the ways that movements can share resources efficiently and construct resonant framings in order to more effectively bring about change. Scholars in the what Carroll calls the Epochal-interpretive paradigm - mostly consisting of what’s commonly referred to as New Social Movement (NSM) studies - on the other hand, focus on understanding *why certain forms of activism appear*. They are particularly attentive to the large-scale societal changes and the cultural, political and economic contexts from which collective action of movements emerges. As Buechler puts it, the central claim of NSM theory is that “different social formations foster distinct types of movements” (2011, p.172).

Where RMT theorists think in terms of “common interests”, NSM theorist instead think in terms of “collective identities” (Cohen, 1985). “NSMs are viewed as instances of cultural and political praxis through which new identities are formed, new ways of life are tested and new forms of community are prefigured, within a context of epochal change in late or postmodernity” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.18). Alain Touraine (1971), first coined the term “new social movement,” viewed social movements as actors within “a system of social forces competing for control of a cultural field” (p.30), which is the focal point of historicity— of society’s capacity “to act on itself” (p.3).

In a clean break from Marxist views of material production being the center of social life, NSM scholar Melucci argued that social changes had moved “production of signs and social

relations” to the center (1989, p.45). He theorized that power was no longer concentrated in a wealthy class but was now dispersed through bureaucratic networks and increasingly coming to reside in symbolic codes and forms of regulation. As such he saw the new social movements emerging as not so much working to contest political power but shifting more “towards a non-political terrain: the need for self-realization in everyday life” (1989, p. 23). NSMs construct collective identity while creating of new cultural practices. “In challenging dominant codes, in constructing new identities such as the “out” gay or the independent woman, NSMs opened public spaces free from control or repression, wherein questions surrounding ecology, gender, sexuality and so on are rendered visible and collective” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.19).

Melucci (1989, p.75-76) identified 3 ways that NSMs work towards creating change through symbolic challenge. Buechler describes the three ways thusly: “Through prophesy, movements announce that alternative forms of rationality are possible. Through paradox, dominant codes are exaggerated to the point where their underlying irrationality becomes evident. Through representation, movements separate form and content to reveal the contradictions in prevailing systemic logic” (2011, p.170).

Many postmodern NSM approaches included in this paradigm draw upon the work of Michel Foucault who conceived of power as web-like, as in lacking any “point of origin, agent or predominant directionality” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.22). Though very influential, this view of power serves as challenging basis for informing social movement strategy for making change. Michael Wapner (1989) questioned Foucault’s thought as viable basis for envision strategies for social change, pointing out that the omnipresence of power means that “there is no target against which to organize or direct energy” (Wapner, 1989, p.108).

Without the common target to organize around, the focus of social movements, according to NSM theorists, moved to focusing on direct action and prefigurative praxis rather than demanding concessions from the state (Carroll&Sarker, 2016). Strategies of what political philosopher and sociologist Richard Day called the ‘newest social movements’ include impeding institutions through blockades, creating temporary autonomous zones and practicing “structural renewal”—rendering the system redundant by withdrawing energy from its structures (2005, p.124). Day’s work is a call movements politics that can respond to diverse needs and identities and looks to radical activist projects that prefiguratively practice “non-universalizing, non-

hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments” (2005, p.9). The theory of change implied here is that through movement practices that create, in the here and now, the world we want to see, that change can happen.

Chris Dixon argues instead that contemporary radical activism is not just about this exit from the dominant order that Day describes. He writes “most of us are much more ambitious: we value prefigurative politics and we want a transformed world” (Dixon, 2014, p.283). In order to bring about such transformative change, Dixon argues that the anti-authoritarian movements he is part of need to forge connections with anti-oppression mass struggles (p.104). Without a clear enemy to rally around, and with new and with such diverse collective identities implicated, it becomes unclear as to how different movements can come together to constitute a transformative force. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s bring insight about the relationships between the formation of identity and the formation of coalitions. “In a world of multiple social struggles in which identities have become unfixed, there are no necessary linkages between struggles; any “unity” across struggles must be practically constructed through discursive chains of equivalence, which they term ‘hegemonic articulation’” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.20). They see “radical politics as an ever-shifting process of coalition formation that underplays the possibility of a coherent, counter-hegemonic alternative to the dominant order” (Epstein, 1990, quoted in Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.51).

Carroll and Sarker see NSM theories as inadequate given the deepening global crises and names the “urgent need to develop a coherent and radical alternative, beyond episodic resistance and local, fragmented prefiguration” (2016, p.24). Carroll argues that these two paradigms alone do not offer adequate guidance for movements working to bring about radical change. He posits that “within the epochal-interpretive paradigm there is a tendency to see and even to celebrate contemporary struggles as partial, fragmented, as localized” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.131; also see Patton, 1988). This approach sees movements working “to subvert the hegemonic discourses that sustain subordination, to challenge the codes” but fails to conceptualize “a revolutionary project of liberation from systemic oppression” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.26)

Carroll and Sarker note, as did Gunderson (2015) before them, that both the pragmatic-reformist and epochal-interpretive paradigms “presume not just the permanence of capitalism as a social system, but also the impossibility of the popular classes ever exercising political power”

(2016, p.248). These different perspectives converge in ignoring the possibility of structural transformation in favour of a conceptualization of activism framed as “single-issue reforms or the politics of everyday life, episodic resistance and local prefiguration” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.26). What is lost to these bodies of theorizing is the possibilities for broader, deeper change as globalized, neoliberal capitalism descends into organic crisis (Carroll 2016, p.26, citing Carroll, 2010; McNally, 2011a; Cremin, 2015). Carroll, Dixon and others argue that what is needed is to bring the critique of capitalism (in the form of historical materialism) back into both SM theorizing and to movement praxis. With this in mind, we bring Historical Materialism and its insight for understanding social movements and social change in our next section: Critical Social Science: Political Economy, Historical Materialism and Intersectional Feminism. But first a summary of what Sociology, Classical Social Theorists and Social Movement Theory offer as insight about how change happens.

Key Lessons for Activists - *from Sociology and Social Movement Theory*

Culture matters. Cultural beliefs and values are central to social action, and plays a key role in who participates in social movement and why (see Weber, 1905, Kznaric, 2007, p.15).

Worldviews matter. Worldviews shape or guide human actions, limiting the scope of possible actions. Worldviews change through new experiences, empathetic relationship with other social groups and through long-term changes in education systems (See Mannheim, 1997 or Bourdieu, 1990).

Emotions matter. Emotional energy, built during demonstrations and protests and other collective actions serve as important fuel for this social mobilization processes (Buechler, 2011, p.52). Collective rituals can serve to amplify and transform intense emotional states into a force for change (Collins, 2001). They also “help nurture beliefs about and visions for alternatives to the status quo. These benefits of ritual can increase the success of movements though helping sustain the commitment and motivation of its members” (Buechler, 2011, p.51, see also Durkheim, 1965)

Different forms of Agency. Social movements are a main form through which collectives of people join forces to push for change (Snow and Soule, 2008). However, other forms of social organization can influence change processes in their own ways. For example, the overall strength of civil society is

important in determining change outcomes and depends on unity among various social organisations, the quality of leadership, the clarity of objectives, or other factors (Krznaric, 2007). Effective change agency requires that activists conduct analyses of convergent and divergent interests of all the actors involved (Carroll & Sarker, 2016). Ask who will benefit from the change you seek? Who will be harmed?

Timing Matters. At the macro scale, different times in history call for and facilitate different forms of collective change agency, reshaping “both the terrain on which movements move and the human beings who take up these struggles” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.25). On the micro scale, social movements need not just successful mobilization, but the political opportunity to act (Tarrow, 2011). “Movements move in a dialectical relationship with *opportunity structures*, and success or failure in one conjuncture leads on to a new conjuncture that can open up new opportunities and threats. Activists need to be mindful of these changes as they come into view” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16). At certain opportune moments the state is more ‘receptive or vulnerable’ to movements’ collective action (McAdam et al., 1988). Change becomes more possible when powers that be are weak or experiencing crises of legitimation (Weber), when events disrupt people’s taken for granted understanding of social reality (Snow et al., 1998, Buechler, 2011) or when periods of disruption and instability that social controls are weakened enough such that people become available to participate in collective action (Piven & Cloward, 1979). This can lead to social change, but may not be long lived as social control and routine re-establish themselves and serve to demobilize people (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

Identity & Coalition Formation Social movements invent and amplify emerging identities, fostering new solidarities and challenging the structures and practices of contemporary society (Magnusson & Walker, 1988). Through identity formation and articulation, unity across struggles can be constructed, helping form coalitions that make possible “a coherent, counter-hegemonic alternative to the dominant order” (Epstein, 1990, p.51).

Framing Matters Framing is crucial to how social movements mobilize to bring about change. “Effective movements develop collective-action Frames that call attention to injustice and its socio-political sources, point toward alternatives and resonate strongly with broad publics. Movement outreach strategies need to maintain a democratic dialogue, so that frames, as they develop over time, enable an alignment between the movement and its social base (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.1; see also Snow & Benford, 1992; Tarrow, 2011).

Power is key There are many ways to understand power (direct, indirect). Power is a key dynamic shaping who can bring about change and who can't and what sort of agency and influence different actors have access to. Different forms of and dimension of power have differing implications for how change happens. For example, where a centralized conception of power creates clear targets for change strategies, "a decentred conception of power as pervasive and ever-changing renders the idea of coordinated, strategic opposition problematic (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.22). Movements themselves are social orders that can involve power inequalities that have implications for movement effectiveness.

Organizing is necessary but beware of bureaucracy Weber's analysis on the tendency of social organizations to move towards greater bureaucratization and routinization serves as important warning to social movements. If, as he argued, society is moving towards the iron cage of bureaucracy, "it is highly likely that the same logic will paralyse social movements organized along those lines" (Buechler, 2011, p.34; see also Weber, 1978). This tendency, though strong, but may not be inevitable (Lipset et al., 1956). A combination of bottom up, local autonomy, dense interactions, democratic culture, and multiple leadership factions can maintain democratic organization (Lipset et al., 1956, Buechler, 2011). That said, the danger remains that hierarchical, complex organization in social movements can render them ineffective in bringing about change. As Piven and Cloward argued "effective protest emerges from popular disruption and mass action rather than from organized movements... that once organization appears, effective protest dies" (Piven & Cloward 1979; Buechler, 2011, p.39)

Solidarity is important, but what kind? Durkheim's identified two forms of solidarity which bind together social movements. Groups held together by 'mechanical solidarity' derive their cohesion from the homogeneity of their members and similarity of beliefs. Such movements are likely be highly intolerant of internal dissent and disagreement and lead to fragmentation (Buechler, 2011, p.49). Movements that are integrated through what he called 'organic solidarity' on the other hand, are bound together through the heterogeneity of their members and the interdependence derived from these differentiated roles. These kinds of movements are "less threatened by diversity of opinion in their ranks because their solidarity derives more from their interdependence than their belief system" (Buechler, 2011, p.49). Such movements tend to be more stable and better able to mobilize on a large scale, but are less able to "inspire the passion....that drives movements..." (Buechler, 2011, p.50).

How we pool and organize our resources is crucial For social movements to bring about change, they need to mobilize, which means “bringing under collective control resources of various kinds, including most importantly human labour: the willingness of people to commit their own time to the movement. Mobilization requires social organization including both pre-existing networks and emergent networks and mobilizing structures, which enable collective action to be sustained over time” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.16). Collective action is *costly* and as such requires decisions on how to allocate resources. “Effective movements create a configuration of alliances and reciprocal relations of mutual aid (facilitation), thereby lowering costs of collective action. In some contexts low-cost mobilization of great numbers can be effective (e.g. clicktivism), but there are limits to this. Since states, corporations and other centres of power may respond to threats to their power by attempting to raise the costs of mobilization and collective action, movements need to develop strategies for dealing with such repression.” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.16)

Change can happen through symbolic, not just material challenge Melucci (1989) identified 3 ways that social movements can work towards creating change through symbolic challenge. Buechler describes the three ways thusly: “Through prophesy, movements announce that alternative forms of rationality are possible. Through paradox, dominant codes are exaggerated to the point where their underlying irrationality becomes evident. Through representation, movements separate form and content to reveal the contradictions in prevailing systemic logic” (quoted in Buechler, 2011, p.170).

Prefiguring Change Some social movements constitute what Richard Day calls “radical activist projects” who practice “non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments” (Day, 2005, p.9), focusing on direct action rather than demanding concessions from the state. They aim to render the system redundant by withdrawing energy from its structures (2005, p.124). In this way, movements can be “carriers of democratization....not only in the claims they make but in their prefigurative practices. If the goal is a deeply democratic society, movements need to prefigure this goal by adopting thoroughgoing democratic organization ... by creating spaces where we can live in the kinds of worlds we want to live in, here and now” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.25, also see Day, 2007).

Prefiguration and symbolic challenge are necessary but insufficient. Chris Dixon argues that contemporary radical activism is not just about this exit from the dominant order. He writes “most of us are much more ambitious: we value prefigurative politics and we want a transformed world— the only

real exit from the existing one” (Dixon, 2014, p.283). In order to bring about such transformative change, Dixon argues that ...movements need to develop deeper analysis about “what capitalism is and how we should go about fighting it” (Dixon, 2014, p.69), and actively forge connections with anti-oppression mass struggles (Dixon, 2014, p.104). These movements should also embrace intentional, durable organization, and ...move beyond “purist principles and direct-action tactics” and work towards more effective strategy aimed at actual transformation (Dixon, 2014, p.111-12).

2. Critical Social Science: Political Economy, Historical Materialism and Intersectional Feminism

While we initially planned to consider political economy and intersectional feminism as separate bodies of literature for the purpose of understanding their theories of systemic change, our research revealed that there is considerable overlap between them. In particular, many anti-colonial, anti-racist and/or feminist scholars draw from, build on and critique theories of political economy, and intersectional theory increasingly recognizes and addresses the deep interconnections between economic relationships and race, class and gender. How these theorists address issues of political economy plays a key role in what they view as key strategies for transformation of oppressive systems. There is a tension between the anti-racist, feminist and anti-colonial scholars who believe the working class is the vehicle through which systemic change can occur, drawing from Marxism, and those on the post-modern spectrum who focus on change at the individual and cultural level, and reject the idea of mobilizing around class consciousness as essentialist or reductionist. There are also particular Indigenous anti-colonial analyses which recentre the importance of land – and the relationship between sovereign Indigenous nations and the land – and not only workers, in anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggles for systemic change.

In order to identify and understand theories of systemic change, it is necessary to understand what “systems” are being critiqued and challenged with the goal of transforming them. In the context of political economy, the capitalist economic system, along with its recent manifestation in neoliberalism, plays a central role in thinking around systemic change. When it comes to an intersectional approach to political economy, we must consider the interaction between the capitalist system and other root causes of oppression - colonialism, white supremacy, and cis-hetero-patriarchy, for example.

Political Economy and Historical Materialism Since many scholars in the political economy field - particularly those advocating theories of systemic change - draw from or reference Marx (1818-1883) and Marxism, we begin by discussing his work, and particularly Volume 1 of *Capital* (Marx, 1976). *Capital* was a critique of classical political economy, and a critique of capitalism. His analysis and critique of capitalism led to a robust model of working class mobilizations against capitalists and capitalism and offered a type of praxis in which “theory and analysis guided political action towards individual emancipation and social transformation” (Ibid). Marx saw capitalism as a profoundly alienating form of social organization which brings wealth to a few through the exploitation of many (Marx, 1964). He saw industrialized production and the factory as offering endless grievances that would fuel resistance by the working class. “Marx’s dissection of capitalist dynamics provides a logically compelling account of how such conflicting interests generate collective action” (Buechler, 2011, p.15). His is a structural theory of how social movements bring about change in that it is the social structure of capitalist society that creates an inevitable instability and conflict of interests between social classes which drives working class protest which he saw as leading to revolution.

Understanding social change through Marxist thought offers several key insights. From Marx’s critique of the capitalist system of production in Volume 1 of *Capital*, we learn how it is built of commodities, which are a manifestation of the labour time necessary to produce them. From this alone, we can see that de-commodification of that which has been commodified is a key strategy of transforming away from the capitalist system. As another example, given how owners exploit their workers by reaping surplus value from their labour, we see that workers

taking over the means of production (for example, through factory takeovers) is a key strategy for systemic change in that it addresses the exploitation inherent in the capitalist system.

Another key insight about social change that one can draw on from Marxist analysis is the instability inherent in capitalist systems. Capitalism is fundamentally unstable because of both capitalist competition and worker resistance. Streeck (2016) in *How will Capitalism End?* notes that capitalism “has always been an improbable social formation, full of conflicts and contradictions, therefore permanently unstable and in flux” (p.3). Due to the inherent instability of capitalist societies, theories of capitalism were always “theories of crisis”. The ways that different theorists expected the crises that would end capitalism vary. Marx envisioned crises of overproduction or underconsumption, or by a tendency of the rate of profit to fall, Keynes predicted saturation of needs and markets, Polanyi expected rising resistance to further commodification of life and society, and Luxemburg framed the crisis as the exhaustion of new land and new labour available (Streeck, 2016). Theories about the crises inherent in capitalism abound.

In his *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, Harvey (2014) lays out these contradictions and crises inherent in capitalism so that “oppositional and anti-capitalist movements will be better positioned to take advantage of, rather than be surprised and stymied by, the way the contradictions move around and deepen...in the course of crisis formation and resolution” (2014, p.14). He points out the tendency for movements to take a piecemeal approach, addressing one contradiction at a time, rendering them ineffective in bringing about the social change they seek. “There is a crying need for some more catalytic conception to ground and animate political action” (Harvey, 2014, p.266-67).

These many contradictions promote inequality and instability and economic crises. These contradictions serve as grievances as well as opportunities for collective action” (Harvey, 2014). For Marx that the most significant collective action of social movements will take the form of economically driven class struggle. How class identity forms and lead to class struggle in another key insight that Marx offers about social change. This process involves

“recognizing that capitalism is a class-divided society, identifying one’s position accurately, recognizing one’s class interests, and finally being willing

to fight on behalf of one's class interests. The ultimate expression of class consciousness is revolution which requires mass mobilizing and political organization including trade unions, political parties, social movements, or community organizations. Marx contended that revolutions is most likely when economic crises converged with growing class consciousness" (Buechler, 2011, p.18).

Important to note, history has not corroborated his theory of change. Buechler points out that ironically, "it was the capitalist class that followed his blueprint for class formation much more faithfully than the working class" (2011, p.18). By way of explanation of why workers revolution has not happened in the way Marx predicted, Buechler offers that "[c]apitalists are a relatively small and homogenous groups with a tremendous stake in preserving the system that provides their benefits. A high degree of class formation should come as no surprise in these circumstances. Workers on the other hand, are large and heterogeneous group with varying stakes in the system who encounter powerful individualist ideologies that cut against the grain of class solidarity" (2011, p.19)

Lenin (1902-1988), an avid student of Marxist theory, saw that Marx's prediction of class formation wasn't unfolding as expected and adapted Marx's theory of revolution in hopes of bringing about change quicker. Frustrated with this Russian working class's lack of revolutionary mobilization, he proposed the substitution thesis (Buechler, 2011) Instead the working class as the agents of revolutionary change, Lenin proposed instead a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries as the main agents of change. This small, tight knit group would do for workers what they were unable to do for themselves: igniting a more basic structural transformation from capitalism to socialism. Lenin then sketched out a decision-making process for this vanguard party known as democratic centralism whereby decision-making became centralized in the vanguard party and away from actual working-class people. This amendment to Marxist approach to revolutionary organizing was fateful and according to Buechler reflects tension and debates and questions that contemporary social movements continue to struggle with such as "who defines those interests if not those people themselves? On what basis can theory and analysis of intellectuals be privileged over the everyday perceptions of ordinary people?

Under what circumstances do some -often elite of some sort- proceed to act on behalf of others? (2011, p.20)

Marx's legacy is a whole body of literature known as Historical Materialism (HM) which Carroll argues holds much needed insight to inform current social movements and social movement theorizing. HM positions contemporary movements within the context of capitalism as a way of life, a mode of production (Carroll&Sarker, 2016). These include the "institutional arrangements and alliances that stabilize the dominant regime, as well as the networks of alliances ...among dissenting movements—the relations of ruling and the relations of struggle" (Kinsman, 2006, p.136). HM helps provide understanding not just about how the system functions but about how the "alliances which underpin it work and how they can come to be taken apart and in understanding how we can form the kinds of alliances that are capable of bringing about the change we want" (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p.181). From this perspective we see "social movements from above and below" engage in struggles over how society changes or doesn't (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p.96). In neoliberal globalization we have been witnessing "a very effective movement from above, in conjunction with the relatively weak and ineffective forms of organization and solidarityin movements from below" (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.28). Perhaps the central insight HM offers to social movements as we seek effective strategies is "that exploitation and oppression are underpinned by powerfully organized forces who will resist all serious attempts at structural change and who will, in some form, need to be taken on and defeated" (Barker et al., 2013, p.20).

David Harvey argues that "the divide-and-rule politics of ruling-class elites must be confronted with alliance politics on the left" (Harvey, 2005, p.203). Harvey (2012) sees cities are an important point of intervention for anti-capitalist movements, who can, by taking back power and control of cities from the agendas of investors and developers, bring about an urban revolution, employing "right to the city" as a "mobilizing slogan for anti-capitalist struggle" (p. 136). Drawing from history, Harvey identifies three lessons for this "urban revolution": (1) work-based strategies, such as strikes or factory take-overs, are much more likely to be successful "when there is strong and vibrant support from popular forces assembled at the surrounding neighbourhood or community level" (p.138); (2) the concept of work must be broadened far beyond narrow understandings of industrial labour to be inclusive of all forms of

labour (p. 139); and (3) “struggles against the recuperation and realization of surplus value from workers in their living spaces have to be given equal status to struggles at the various points of production in the city” (p.140). By uniting to take back control of the city from the forces of capitalism, the people of the city can subvert the capitalist agenda and transform the city into an equitable and livable place. In our view, Harvey is advocating a theory of systemic change by taking a localized approach to intervening to transform capitalism.

Another contribution of HM is world-system theory, a macro-scale approach to understanding systemic inequality and social change. It emphasizes the world-system, as opposed to nation states, as the primary unit of social analysis (Wallerstein, 2004). It helps bring the analysis of colonialism and imperialism to the understanding of the forces driving injustice and it raises up the role of anti-systemic movements as key force to resisting the system-induced injustices (Arrighi et al., 1989). It's important for movements to understand that global structures often define the context within which social conflicts and social movements act. This "World-system" is comprised of inter-regional and transnational division of labor, which separates the countries into core, semi-periphery, and periphery countries (Wallerstein, 2004). Core countries are economically affluent, relatively stable and politically dominant and have economies based on higher skill, capital-intensive production, and the rest of the world has is compelled to focus on low-skill, labor-intensive production and extraction of raw materials (Wallerstein, 2004). This dynamic continually reinforces the dominance of the core countries. The powerful position of core countries are based on colonial and neo-colonial relations with periphery countries. In settler states like Canada this dynamic plays out internally via relations with the “colony within” (Watkins, 1977). The insight world systems theory offers social movements include 1) in the search for non-capitalist alternatives these may be strongest outside core zones of the world-system (Martin, 2008), 2) Indigenous resistance is inherently anti-systemic, “as it instantiates the right to live in ways not favoured by capitalism” (Hall & Fenelon, 2005, p.206) and 3) that social movements need to “develop and to focus attention on cross-sector organizing and transnational alliance building” (Smith & Wiest, 2012, p.10).

In the 70s and 80s Jurgen Habermas contributed to historical materialism through his analysis of the relationship between capitalism and colonization. He saw colonialism as the process by which the ‘system’ of capitalism (with its hierarchical state) penetrates and takes over

the lifeworld, progressively diminishing that which “vitalizes meaningful human existence and ultimately offers the basis for a democratic way of life” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.36). Through the colonization of the lifeworld, the system-rationality of commodification and bureaucratic regulation has come to dominate both the “private sphere of everyday life and the public sphere of political debate and opinion-formation” (ibid). Habermas’s vision for change is the emancipation through lifeworld decolonization, which he understood as “the expansion of democratic social control over markets and bureaucracies through extended public spheres (Ray, 1993, p.viii). He saw this expansion as being brought about through a process of ongoing dialogue and deliberation by self-reflexive subjects he called communicative rationality (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.37). To him, change comes about not just through people developing the technical capacities of changing the physical world, like the forces of production, but through the “development of cognitive-moral capacities within which reasoned agreement *as a way of life* can flourish” (Benhabib, 1990, p.346). Habermas’s theory of change involves critical social movements taking on both defensive and offensive work - defending the life world from further colonization by the system while also working to “conquer new territory for equality, justice and communicative rationality” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.38).

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), Italian Marxist, also added considerable insight to Historical Materialism’s understanding of social change as he too struggled to understand why workers revolutions were not emerging in Europe as Marxist theory predicted. His answer pointed to the cultural realm of ideas and beliefs. His influential concept of hegemony refers to the domination of society by the ruling class through the manipulation of culture - through shaping the common understandings, values, and beliefs. In this way the imposed, ruling-class worldview becomes validated, normalized, and internalized by society in general and serving to justifies the status quo as natural and inevitable instead of as social constructs meant to benefit the ruling class. In modern capitalist democracies “formal freedoms and electoral rights exist alongside the class inequalities of the bourgeois state; therefore relations of domination need to be sustained with the consent of the dominated” (Carroll & Ratner, 1994, p.5). The hegemonic bloc that governs can be seen as a movement-from above (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.40). As far as the interests of capital come to be culturally “common sense”, hegemonic control comes to do what direct coercion could never do: “it mystifies power relations and public issues; it

encourages a sense of fatalism and passivity toward political action” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.41). Hegemonic power prevents people from being able to clearly see, let alone act upon, their class interests.

Overcoming this significant barrier to social change requires deliberate, counter hegemonic strategies and ideas. Counter-hegemony is the work of critiquing and dismantling hegemonic power. It is the confrontation with or opposition to existing status quo and its legitimacy. Neo-Gramscian theorist Nicola Pratt (2004) describes counter-hegemony as "a creation of an alternative hegemony on the terrain of civil society in preparation for political change" (p.333) and Theodore H. Cohn sees counterhegemony as “an alternative ethical view of society that poses a challenge to the dominant bourgeois-led view” (2004, p.131).

A key insight that the concept of hegemony brings is the immense scale of counterforce that is required to oppose and dismantle hegemonic power. This serves as a goal-post that most social movements fall short of. As Cox and Nilsen note, movements often manifest as defensive, local struggles around certain issues, sometimes referred to as militant particularisms (2014). Although these may become connected across specific sites into broader campaigns, such campaigns often fail to target “generative mechanisms inherent to a social totality,” which are at the root of injustice and ecological maladies (2014, p.82). Carroll and Sarker’s research on social movements in Canada shows that for the most part attempts to go beyond militant particularisms and to propose counter-hegemonic projects “have not gained traction” (2016, p.45). If opposition remains fragmented and episodic...there is not much likelihood of an alternative, counter-hegemony powerful enough to bring about social transformation (Carroll&Sarker, 2016). Cox and Nilsen contend that if activists can connect localized struggles, and “engage in a critical interrogation of the structures the engender the problems they seek to address” (2014, p.82) they then stand a chance of developing counter hegemonic power for transformation. Other tips from scholars for movements seeking to build counterhegemony include: creating and maintaining a sense of the oppositional, of the “us” in contrast to the “them” (Fiske, 1989); and developing forms of leadership that help the broader public “express, deepen and strengthen their self-engagement for socio-political transformation” (Thomas, 2013, p.26). Carroll & Ratner found that activists that participate in various movements tend to have more holistic political views, fostering the “recognition of commonalities that cut across different movements so that activists

from diverse constituencies are better able to grasp the interconnectedness of resistance struggles” (Carroll & Ratner, 2010, p.11). This suggests that movements that encourage participation in multiple struggles can help build counter hegemonic power in this way.

Feminist economic geographers J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) offer important work on thinking passed capitalism. Their work implies a theory of change that focuses on creating the new, rather than on opposing the old. They call for a *politics of collective action*, made up of the growing ‘seeds’ of collaborative, placed-based, economic experimentations that when linked can construct new economies (p.xxxvi). Through such experimental projects, post-capitalism can be “engaged in the here and now, in any place or context”. These community experiments bring about anti-capitalist social change “by enhancing well-being, instituting different (class) relations of surplus appropriation and distribution, promoting community and environmental sustainability, recognizing and building on economic interdependence and adopting an ethic of care for the other” (p.xxxvii). According to Gibson-Graham, this kind of change work centers *Imagination* (expansive vision of what is possible), *Self-Change* (changing the self is a path towards changing the world, and that transforming one’s environment is a mode of transforming the self) and *Collective Decision-Making* (experimental projects pivot on ethical decisions people in communities make together) as critical processes (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxxvi).

Perhaps most powerfully their postcapitalist feminist imaginary offers a vision of

“global transformation through the accretion and interaction of small changes in place.....Bolstered by an imagined connection - with the movements of movements, with people in every local setting and circumstance ... Perhaps this is one way that (counter)hegemony is enacted” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.196)

Aligned closely with Gibson-Graham’s theory of change, scholars and practitioners of Solidarity Economy such as Ethan Miller emphasize that ‘the economy’ is a social construction. He points out that there are no ‘economic laws’, and as such there is nothing inevitable about capitalist economic relations. “We make our economies, and therefore we can make them differently” (Miller, 2012, p.12). The solidarity economy movement works to build alternative practices, institutions and policies, “while other social movements have a greater focus on resistance and building power to achieve demands for social and economic justice. These are two

ends of a spectrum, groups in between practice a mixture of both, but the important thing is to see the spectrum as one movement that needs to be united in order to achieve justice and transformation” (Allard & Davidson, 2008, p.20-21). For these and other anti-capitalist thinkers engaging with the Solidarity Economy movement, social transformation does not hinge on revolution, nor does it wait for capitalism to ‘hit the fan’. “We can begin here and now, in our communities and regions, connected with others around the world, to construct and strengthen institutions and relationships of economic solidarity” (Miller, 2008, p.26).

Miller emphasizes that to bring about transformation away from capitalism, we need to link the various forms of transformative work that exist. He refers to these as: defense, offense, creation, and healing (Miller, 2012, p.18).

“We must connect the work of *defending* our lives and communities from colonization and injustice, the work of actively *opposing* oppression in all forms, the work of *healing together* from trauma and hurt, and the work of *imagining and building alternative* ways to live together and meet our needs as integral parts of a holistic movement for transformation. We cannot afford to divide ourselves along these lines, and we must cease to participate in a culture of activism which tries to place final judgments on the importance, effectiveness, or “radicalness” of our diverse forms of work. We need each other. We need each other’s differences” (Miller, 2012, p.18, emphasis added).

Historical Materialism offers important insight for social movements seeking to become more powerful in their efforts for transformation. That said, like all particular lenses, it is limited. For example, Buechler (2011) notes that Marxism receives ample critique for: 1) being overly structural, mechanistic, deterministic, reductionist, economistic; 2) for privileging one groups (workers) and one tactic/strategy/goal (revolution) for resolving grievances; 3) for its implication that any other conflict is at best a diversion from the most fundamental divide in capitalist society and that 4) as a theory of social movements, this is clearly too limited, problematic and even anachronistic (2011, p.22). Criticisms of Habermas include his lack of attention to transnational dimensions with his focus being too narrowly on the nation states of Europe and North America (Ray, 1993) and Nancy Fraser for one (2013) argues that Habermas neglects the persistence of gendered power in both lifeworld and system.

Although the insight offered by scholars within the Historical Materialism tradition is clearly valuable, and arguably necessary, but insufficient. There is a clear need to bring in analysis of other forms of struggle other than class struggle. For this we turn to Decolonial scholarship and Intersectional Feminism to more fully inform our understandings of social change

Decolonial Political Thought. In Canada, the struggles of Indigenous peoples—whose land, lives and livelihoods were stolen in the process of creating capitalist Canada—are at the cutting edge of critical movement praxis today, and some scholarship in this field, while being distinctly Indigenous, engages productively with historical materialism, bringing in analysis of the powerfully destructive intersection of colonialism and capitalism. Glen Coulthard has recently delineated the dual basis for “the particular form of domination” he calls the settler-colonial relationship (2014, p.6), combining Marx’s analysis of colonization as primitive accumulation with Frantz Fanon’s analysis of subjection in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). Coulthard sees this relationship as “structured into a relatively secure and sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority” (2014, p.7)

Taiaiake Alfred has observed that under postmodern imperial conditions, “oppression has become increasingly invisible,” constituted no longer by military occupations and land theft but in a “confluence of politics, economics, psychology and culture” (2009b, p.30). Central to the new regime is “an ideology of accumulation [that], even if it’s collective rather than individual, plays right into the consumptive commercial mentality shaped by state corporatism that has so damaged both the earth and human relationships around the globe” (Alfred, 1999, p.114)

Coulthard (2014) centers land, not just labour, in his analysis of capitalist colonialism. He argues that settler colonialism is “a form of structured dispossession” with the primary motive of access to territory (2014, p.7). Coulthard points to Marx’s chapters in *Capital* on his theory of “primitive accumulation”, which “links the totalizing power of capital with that of colonialism” (ibid). Coulthard makes the argument that we should shift our analytical frame to the “colonial relation” rather than simply relations of capital and labour, in order to avoid the risk that “practices of settler-state dispossession” could be “justified under otherwise egalitarian principles and espoused with so-called ‘progressive’ political agendas in mind” (2014, p.11). This makes the key point that any theory of systemic change around capitalism (in Canada and in any settler state)

must come at this issue through an anti-colonial framework. Coulthard cautions against advocating for

“a blanket ‘return of the commons’ as a redistributive counterstrategy to the neoliberal state’s new round of enclosures” because “in liberal settler states such as Canada, the ‘commons’ not only belong to someone - the First Peoples of the land - they also deeply inform and sustain Indigenous modes of thought and behaviour that harbour profound insights into the maintenance of relationships between human beings and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity, nonexploitation and respectful coexistence” (2014, p.12).

Any anti-capitalist strategy simply cannot ignore the centrality of land to Indigenous people to who the land belongs. Further, ignoring the role of colonialism would actually risk losing out on “principles and vision for a sustainable and just world” (Coulthard, 2014, p.12). Anti-capitalist organizers, from an anti-colonial frame, have to understand that it is not only people who are exploitable (through their labour) but land itself is exploitable. Coulthard further argues for an intersectional approach to decolonization, saying any strategy for decolonization must “directly confront more than mere economic relations; it has to account for the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behaviour, structures, and relationships” (2014, p.14). Coulthard wrote that “for Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die”; but for the latter to occur, those opposing colonialism must construct Indigenous alternatives within broader relations of solidarity with movements struggling against the imposed effects of globalized capitalism (Coulthard, 2014).

Intersectional Feminism Intersectionality is an analytical and strategic tool developed by women of colour in social movements in the 60s and 70s and developed further by black feminist scholars in the 90s (Collins & Bilge, 2016). It analyses the ways class, race, and gender (and other systems of domination) relate and intersect, as well as how to forge links between these oft-disparate movements. Collins & Bilge write that:

“Intersectionality ... complicates class-only explanations for economic inequality” (p.15)...”and gives people better access to the complexity of the world and

themselves.....When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.2).

Zillah Eisenstein (2014) argues in *Feminist Wire* article: "Capital is intersectional. It always intersects with the bodies that produce the labour. Therefore, the accumulation of wealth is embedded in the racialized and engendered structures that enhance it" (quoted in Collins and Bilge, 2016, p.16). A more broad and inclusive approach to labour exposes how class-based oppression is mediated through racism. Walia (2018) makes the case that migrant workers are particularly impacted by capitalist labour exploitation and that those seeking to transform capitalism must advocate for the rights of *all* workers, including migrant workers, lift the wage floor for all workers, and ensure status for all workers in Canada. Drawing on the work of Cedric Robinson and Stuart Hall, Walia contends that issues of race and capitalism cannot be considered separately (2018).

Yamahtta-Taylor (2016) discusses the relationship between racism and capitalism and the role of Black-led movements in working towards systemic change. She references Martin Luther King, who wrote that Black struggle "reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced" (p.194), and identified "racism, materialism and militarism" as the root causes of the crises confronting the US (p.195). Yamahtta-Taylor writes that by the end of the 1960s, socialism had become popular again as "a legitimate alternative to the evil triplets King worried about" (2016, p.197) and there was "widespread understanding that the capitalist economy was responsible for Black hardship" (p. 199). Malcom X articulated this, calling capitalism a "rotten system" of exploitation, and stating "You can't have capitalism without racism" (quoted in Yamahtta-Taylor, 2016, p.197). The Black Panther Party, an "unabashedly revolutionary socialist organization", included in its demands an end "to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black community", an end to police brutality and murder of black people, and "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace" (p.199).

With this historical backdrop in mind, Yamahtta-Taylor talks about current challenges in building the type of anti-capitalist, revolutionary movement that existed in the past. She argues

that “most revolutionary socialists would agree that the most significant challenge to the development of class consciousness in the US is racism and without a struggle against racism, there is no hope for fundamentally changing this country” (Yahmatta-Taylor, 2016, p.201). She then analyzes what she calls the “political economy of racism”, arguing that racism is a product of capitalism, and it is important to locate “the dynamic relationship between class exploitation and racial oppression in the functioning of American capitalism” (p.206). Drawing from Marx, Yahmatta-Taylor argues that capitalism has used racism to divide and rule, blunting the class consciousness of everyone (2016).

Yahmatta-Taylor is interested in how racist ideas and consciousness can change. As she notes, the “achievement of consciousness is the difference between the working class being a class in itself as opposed to a class for itself. It affects whether or not workers are in a position to fundamentally alter their reality through collective action” (2016, p.215). She argues that solidarity between all workers based on their common experience of exploitation and oppression under the capitalist system creates an opportunity for “united struggle to better the conditions of all”, and is “crucial to worker’s ability to resist the constant degradation of their living standards” (Yahmatta-Taylor, 2016, p.215). Crucially, solidarity “is only possible through relentless struggle to win white workers to antiracism” (ibid). This then, an analysis informed by Marxism and a deep understanding and analysis of racism, is an articulation of a theory of change: we must build class consciousness and solidarity between all workers, which requires white workers to come to understand how racism plays a central role in greatly elevating the oppression and exploitation suffered by people of colour.

Feminist economists and other scholars bring important insight about how capitalism rests on the backs of the women whose unpaid labour in the reproduction of life and labour is exploited, but unacknowledged, in the process of capital accumulation (see for example, Waring, 1988; Nelson, 1995). Intersectionality was first developed within the Black feminist tradition bring in the crucial insight of the many ways that Black women’s experiences of women’s oppression differ from those of white women (Smith, 2017). The Combahee River Collective, an example of this left-wing Black feminism (as Smith calls it) in the 1960s and 70s, identified themselves as Marxists with the important qualifier that a “socialist revolution” had to be a feminist and anti-racist movement in order to guarantee their liberation, and specifically noted

that while they were “in essential agreement with Marx’s theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women” (Combahee River Collective Statement, 1977).

Smith argues, and this is a key point for theories of change, that the most important lesson to be learned from the Combahee River Collective is that “when we build the next mass movement for women’s liberation...it must be based not on the needs of the least oppressed, but rather on the needs of those who are the *most oppressed*” (2017, n.p.). Importantly, Smith then makes a key claim regarding how to end oppression and exploitation, which is through the working class. Smith argues: “Workers not only have the power to shut down the system, but also to replace it with a socialist society, based on collective ownership of the means of production. Although other groups in society suffer oppression, only the working class possesses this collective power” (2017, n.p.).

Collins and Bilge explain that though people often, when referring to intersectionality refer to race, sex, and class as the three primary forms of oppressions, there are many others that exists, are important and need to be considered as they are “enmeshed in the process of social justice and injustice” (2016, p.38). These other forms of oppression include: age, disability, gender identity, sexual preference, mental health, geographical (dis)location, rurality, colonialism/imperialism, Indigeneity, ethnicity, citizenship and the environment Collins & Blige, 2016). In her recent work, Andrea Smith explores the intersections between colonialism, white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. She writes that for colonizers to colonize peoples whose societies aren’t based on hierarchy, colonizers must render hierarchy normal and they do so through instituting patriarchy which rests on a binary view of gender whereby only two genders exist, and one dominates the other. It is in this way that she understands the colonial world order to depend on heteronormativity (Smith, 2016).

Intersectionality thinking holds much promise for linking movements in ways that build counter-power capable of radical social transformation. But, understandably, Intersectionality is a diverse field of thought which hold its own disagreements and theoretical tensions. There are two main axes on which Intersectional thinking differs.

One axis is the increasingly familiar division between those scholars who focus on the material and structural dimensions of oppression (such as Marxist Feminists) and those who focus more on identity and cultural dimensions (such as postmodern scholars). Sharon Smith (2017) notes the because “Marxism and postmodernism are often antithetical, their specific uses of the concept of intersectionality” (n.p.) can be contrary. While Marxism “explains all forms of oppression as rooted in class society, postmodernist theories reject this as “essentialist” and “reductionist” (n.p.). Smith then critiques postmodernism as being too individualistic in its approach, “rejecting the strategy of collective struggle” against oppression “to instead focus on individual and cultural relations as centers of struggle” (n.p.). Addressing the issue of identity politics, Smith says there is a major distinction between individual and social identity, and postmodernism’s focus on individual identity politics has undermined collective struggle. In contrast, the Combahee River Collective used identity politics to describe the “*group identity* of Black women” and to refer to “Black women’s collective invisibility within predominantly white, middle-class feminism at the time” (Smith, 2017, n.p.). Thus, Smith offers a critique of postmodernism as failing to allow for the necessary collective action to achieve systemic change, and advocates for an intersectional Marxism and the power of workers collectively to transform the system. Yamahtta-Taylor (2016), mentioned above, responds to a critique by author Tim Wise, who argues that advocating for class-based struggle is reductionist and undermines efforts against racism and other forms of oppression. Tim Wise here would fall into the postmodernist camp in terms of focusing on individual identity politics versus collective identity politics. Certainly, a fundamental difference exists between postmodern theories of change - through individual consciousness raising and cultural shifts - and an Intersectional Marxist approach, which views class consciousness as essential to collective workers’ action to overthrow capitalism and end the exploitation and oppression inherent in the capitalist system.

The other main axis around which Intersectional theory and practice diverges is around the question of whether particular forms of oppression are more foundational than others. As pointed out above, where Marxism “explains all forms of oppression as rooted in class society”, others argue that productive intersectional organizing requires that no one struggle or dimension be elevated above the others (Klein, 2017). And others view colonization is foundational to oppressions based on class and race and gender (Fortier, 2017). There are many ways to

understand the relationships between the many unjust relations that prevail, but the diverse body of Intersectional scholarship offers fairly consistent theories of change.

The TOCs emerging, implicitly or explicitly, from Intersectionality scholarship, share the common implication that we need complex strategies that take in to account and resist the many forms of inequality and domination simultaneously. It is these more complicated strategies that can really transform the political and economic status quo (Smith, 2016). Collins and Bilge argue that to create such powerful, intersectional strategies, clear analysis of power relations is required and that the “power relations are to be analysed both via their intersections, for example of racism and sexism, as well as across *domains of power*” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 27). They outline four distinctive yet interconnected dimensions or domains of the organization of power: 1) *Interpersonal* (how people relate to each other, how is advantaged and who is disadvantaged in social interactions); 2) *Disciplinary* (which rules apply to who and how those rules are implemented); 3) *Cultural* (ideas shape how we understand what is fair and what is not and provide justifications for inequality); and 4) *Structural* – how intersecting power relations of class, gender, race and nations shape institutions and organizations (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.9)

Another important aspect of Intersectional TOCs is that just social change requires developing coalitions, and other relationships across social divisions. “Both in terms of understanding the relationships between various forms of oppression, and understanding power as relations, as in terms of building actual relationships between people, *relationality* is a core idea to intersectionality” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.27). They explain relationality like this:

“Relational thinking rejects *either/or* binary thinking, for example, opposing theory to practice, scholarship to activism, or blacks to whites. Instead, relationality embraces a *both/and* frame. The focus on relationality shifts from analysing what distinguishes entities, for example, the differences between race and gender, to examining their interconnections. This shift in perspective opens up intellectual and political possibilities (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.28).

To form coalitions, we need strong relationships based on equality and mutual aid. Yet oppressive relations abound in and across social movements. These dynamics

block, harm and sever inter- and intra- movement relationships. A focus on relationality can help create movements striving for intersectional coalitions forge practices that are less likely replicate oppressive relations in our movements. Andrea Smith envisions alliances build not just on a sense of shared victimization, but built on a deep understanding in the ways we are complicit in the victimization of others. "...we would check our aspirations against the aspirations of other communities to ensure that our model of liberation does not become a model of oppression for others" (Smith, 2016, n.p.). She writes that this requires vigilance in reflecting about how we internalize and replicate oppressive logics in our organizing practices (Smith, 2016).

A final and crucial point to bring to this discussion on ToCs emerging from Intersectional analysis is the very pressing issue of ecological destruction and the fraught human-earth relationship. Though many, if not most, of scholars of Intersectionality focus on the systems of oppression between people, there is some scholarship that explicitly bring the ecological and climate crises into Intersectional analysis (see for example Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). However, outside of Intersectionality, there are several bodies of critical scholarship that focus explicitly on the links between environmental destruction and social domination. These bring in their own insight about social change.

Feminist Ecological Economists draw the important links between capitalism's exploitation of women's unpaid labour and its exploitation of nature, and promote the re-centering, internalization or at least accounting for of these economic 'externalities'. Perkins emphasizes the importance of "communal and social processes, respect for diverse ways of knowing and valuing things, and methodological pluralism" for bringing about change (Perkins, 2009, p.9). Moore (2016) builds on the insights of feminist ecological economists in his argument that capitalism's dependence on the labour of the working class is in turn completely dependant on the reproductive work of both women and nature. He argues that to bring about change that addresses the inseparable social and ecological crises faced, what is needed is radically different ways of understanding life on earth, ones that transcend the Cartesian legacy of seeing humanity and nature as separate (Moore, 2016).

Overcoming dualistic thinking is also the key to Eco-Feminist Val Plumwoods's vision. In the chapter *Dualisms: the logic of colonisation* (2002) she draws the links between racist,

sexist, and colonial relations through the logic of domination which is justified by dualistic views of the world based on constructions of “devalued and sharply demarcated sphere[s] of otherness” (p.41). This hierarchization of difference works to normalize oppressions based on gender, class, race and nature as natural (p.43). To her, change towards relations of justice and non-domination requires moving passed western worldviews based on dualism. Her work points towards strategies for overcoming dualised identity through non-hierarchical conceptions of difference, and offers methods of escaping dualistic traps (for these, see Plumwood, 2002, p.59-68) .

Social Ecologists identify the roots of the ecological crisis in relations of hierarchy and domination between humans which capitalism exacerbates Bookchin writes that:

“The notion that man must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of man by man... This centuries-long tendency finds its most exacerbating development in modern capitalism. Owing to its inherently competitive nature, bourgeois society not only pits humans against each other, it also pits the mass of humanity against the natural world....The plundering of the human spirit by the market place is paralleled by the plundering of the earth by capital” (Bookchin, 2004, p. 24-5).

Social Ecology approaches to change involve the development of new ethical frameworks to be translated into action in order to reharmonize relationships. They look to nature as the source of the ethical framework, with nature’s principals including “no hierarchy”, “unity in diversity”, and “constant change” (Tokar, 2018). Advocating for a “libertarian municipalism” to begin to build local community relations and structures based on such principals, Social Ecologists also call for a revolutionary vision capable of unifying the fragmented (single issue) social justice and ecological movements (Tokar, 2018). Radical change, according to Social Ecologists, requires that a unified movement work at three levels: 1) develop critical praxis and self education; 2) be oppositional and resist; and 3) create alternatives (Tokar, 2018).

Here again we see that there are diverse and divergent ways of understanding the ways various forms of oppression are linked. Where Bookchin sees human destruction of nature as

rooted in human domination of humans, Plumwood identifies the domination of people over nature as a core dualism on which social forms of domination are built. And again, we see theories of change that range from focus on shifting identities and worldviews to ones that focus more the material realm of building community structures and economic alternatives or policies.

In the spirit of non-binary thinking, we can conclude that all perspectives offer important perspectives. The conclusion we can draw is that that in order to bring about radical transformation, we need to understand the ways that various crises, struggles, and various forms of oppression intersect, and through this build links between movements, building our transformative power. And we need a wide spectrum of complex strategies that change hearts, minds and as well as create new structures and systems while resisting and opposing the unjust relations which define colonial capitalism.

Key Lessons for Activists - from Critical Social Science: Political Economy, Historical Materialism and Intersectional Feminism

Power and Interests According to Marx, capitalist society creates an inevitable conflict of interests between social classes and motivates working class protest. This conflict of interests builds polarization between classes as well as solidarity within them (Buechler, p.11). The many contradictions inherent within capitalism promote inequality and instability and economic crises, all of which serve as grievances and opportunities for collective action (Harvey, 2014). Movements looking to ‘take down’ capitalism are well advised to understand the various contradictions inherent in capitalism that create instability and crises and develop strategies that can take advantage of the multiple crises as they emerge (Harvey, 2014).

“Marx contended that revolution is most likely when economic crises converge with growing class consciousness” (Buechler, 2011, p.18). However, organized forces that will resist transformative change and so movements *from below* must, if they are to be effective, address and ultimately defeat the sedimented power of movements *from above*” (Carroll, 2016, p.48, emphasis mine). World Systems Analysis exposes that these dynamics of inequality exist on the macro scale as well, where by ‘core’ nations become wealthy and powerful through their exploitation of nationals on the ‘periphery’ (Wallerstein, 2004). This view helps bring the analysis of colonialism and imperialism to the

understanding of the forces driving injustice (Arrighi et al., 1989). An anti-colonial framework is crucial for anti-capitalist analysis and strategy. Decolonization is a crucial to principles and vision for a sustainable and just world (Coulthard, 2014). From an anti-colonial frame, we see, it is not only people who are exploitable (through their labour) but land itself is exploitable. Class-based exploitation intersects not only with colonialism, but with racism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other systems of domination (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

The way power works Bringing about social change that fundamentally alters the power relations in society require a deep and nuanced understanding about the nature and functions of power. Habermas, in his concept of *lifeworld colonization*, pointed out the ways that unjust systems and rationalities come to penetrate and take over not only the public sphere of political debate and opinion-formation, but also private sphere of everyday life (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, see also Habermas, 1987, 1989). Gramsci provided the very useful concept of *hegemonic power* which refers to the domination of society by the ruling class through the manipulation of culture - through shaping the common understandings, values, and beliefs. This serves render the status quo as seeming “natural and inevitable instead of as social constructs meant to benefit the ruling class” (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.41, see also Gramsci, 1971, 2000). Intersectional feminism builds understanding of power by distinguishing *4 domains by which power functions: Interpersonal, Disciplinary, Cultural, and Structural* (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.9).

Radical Transformation requires counter-hegemony Many critical scholars argue that radical systemic change requires that movements build counter-hegemonic power. This involves critiquing and dismantling hegemonic power which means confronting and opposing the existing status quo and its legitimacy. It is also the creation of alternative understandings of society that “pose a challenge to the dominant bourgeois-led view” and the creation of alternative structures that prefigure a socially just and ecologically healthy world (Carroll & Sarker, 2016, p.48, also see Gramsci, 1977). Movements can create the conditions under which a new social hegemony can emerge through three kinds of tasks: building community, meeting needs, and mobilizing and engaging in collective action (Carroll & Ratner, 2001). Social movements can create counter-hegemonic force through forms of leadership that “help the masses to express, deepen and strengthen their self-engagement for socio-political transformation” (Thomas, 2013, p.26).

Building counter-hegemonic force requires overcoming the divisions and fragmentations of the left, created by divide-and-rule politics of the elite and forging strong alliance politics of the left

(Harvey, 2005). Despite this need for alliance, currently in Canada opposition are fragmented and episodic, rendering them unlikely to build an alternative, counter-hegemony powerful enough to bring about social transformation (Carroll&Sarker, 2016). To overcome this, we need to understand how struggles are connected.

To build a counter-hegemony, we need Intersectional organizing Given the ways that capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and heteropatriarchy intersect in creating a social system of injustice, developing a strong counter force to these systems of domination requires understanding the intersections and developing alliances and change strategies accordingly (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Activists need to develop strategies that begin with the question “how can... forces for emancipation be strengthened through widening and deepening relations of solidarity across differences?” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p. 47). Intersectional analysis and organizing is the promise of movement of movements capable of creating a counter-hegemonic, transformative force.

We need strategies that dis-alienate, that reconnect, that undo dualism Anti-capitalist scholars point out that capitalism creates alienation, for example between worker and the products of labour. As such Critical movements move against the various forms of alienation. They work to “transforming alienated work into creative agency with in democratized relations of production” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.48). With the understanding that capital serves as the “great mediator” critical movements need to move towards “eliminating the mediation that divides humanity against itself” (ibid). Decommodification in general and democratization of the work pace are key strategies for dis-alienation. Intersectional analysis helps us see what we have in common with others, helping overcome divisions within the left, and to connect our struggles. Where dualistic worldviews have ideologically undergirded systems of domination, non-dualistic worldviews are required to understand the problems and strategize change (see Plumwood, 2002; Moore, 2015). Many scholars promote relational ontologies as crucial to this. “Relationality shifts from analysing what distinguishes entities,...to examining their interconnections. This shift in perspective opens up intellectual and political possibilities” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.28).

We need both defensive and offensive strategies Habermas saw social movements as playing a dual role of social change, of both defense and offence. He understood the role of social movements as both defending the lifeworld from further encroachment as well as working to “conquer new territory for equality, justice and communicative rationality” (Carroll&Sarker, 2016, p.38). Contemporary critical

scholars also see the need for this dual strategy. The them social transformation means both opposing the systems of domination and destruction, as well as creating just and ecologically viable alternative forms of livelihoods and relations (see Gibson-Graham, 2006; Miller, 2012; Allard & Davidson, 2008). Miller (2012) builds on this and argues that transformative movements will require 1) the work of *defending* our lives and communities from colonization and injustice, 2) the work of *actively opposing* oppression in all forms, 3) the work of *healing together* from trauma and hurt, and 4) the work of *imagining and building alternative ways* to live together and meet our needs.

How we organize matters In the spirit of decolonizing our lifeworlds from the logics of commodification, accumulation and hierarchy and reclaiming and democratizing our relations and communities, how we organize within our movements is important. Lenin's legacy in anti-capitalist thought begs deep reflection on forms of leadership and hierarchy within movements, warning us to defend against non-democratic tendencies in movement organizing (Buechler, 2011). Intersectionality offers analytical tools to help us analyse whether our social change practices risk replicating oppressive dynamics and to check our aspirations against the aspirations of other communities" to help us develop accountability to "ensure that our model of liberation does not become the model of oppression for others" (Smith, 2016, p.3).

Although this above discussion of the intersections between race, gender and class broaden and deepen this accumulating understanding of how change happens, given that this dissertation is about decolonial transformation in Canada a closer look is needed at the dynamics of colonialism, neo-colonial relations, and the scholarship and transformative agency of Indigenous peoples. The next section is devoted to overviewing Indigenous theories of change.

3. Indigenous Scholarship

Not just another theory of change Western academic theories of social movements and of social change can be (and are) critiqued as inadequate or incapable of understanding and supporting Indigenous theories and practices of change. Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson argues that "stories of Indigenous resistance have been obscured by western theory and that "western theoretical constructions of "resistance", "mobilization", and "social movements"

perpetuate and maintain dynamics of oppression through what is and what is not considered” (2011, p.15). Simpson goes on to name social movement theory (SMT) as being “for the most part inadequate in explaining the forces that generate and propel Indigenous resistance and resurgence because it is rooted in western knowledge and western worldview, ignoring Indigenous political culture and theory” (Simpson, 2011, p.16).

According to Simpson, SMT has ignored fundamental differences between Indigenous contestation and non-Indigenous social movements. One key difference is the historical context of Indigenous resistance. She writes: “Indigenous Peoples whose lands are occupied by the Canadian state are currently engaged in the longest running resistance movement in Canadian history” (Simpson, 2008, p.13). Since colonization began, “people throughout the Americas have been engaged in an almost constant struggle for the reclamation, revitalization, and restoration of lands, treaties, political traditions, and responsibilities” (Simpson & Lander, 2010, p.2). This resistance is the reason Indigenous peoples “have survived as Indigenous peoples as we enter the 21st century” (Simpson, 2008, p.13). Unlike other social movements written about in SMT, Indigenous “struggles are anything but new” (Simpson & Lander, 2010, p.2).

SMS and other western theory of movements and change have disregarded important differences between the political organization, governance and political cultures of Canada and those of Indigenous Nations (Simpson, 2011, p.15). They have also failed to account for the massive extent of Indigenous contestation. Given the all-encompassing nature of colonialism, for Indigenous people, simple every day activity can be political acts for Indigenous people (Ladner, 2008). Ladner writes that “The reason the movement is, and has always been, so extensive is quite simple: Indigenous people typically perceive themselves as being in constant battle with the government over their right to live as Indigenous people in their homelands (Ladner, 2008). So while “Indigenous political movements contest the very foundation of the Canadian state, most theories of group politics and social movements take the state for granted” (Simpson, citing Ladner 2008, p.16).

Throughout its long history, sovereignty and self-determination have been the “primary foundation of Indigenous politics and mobilization” (Ladner, 2008). Goals have included economic and resource rights, territorial rights and relationship to land, social wellbeing. But consistently the framing of these goals has been based on and defined by the overarching goals

of nationhood and decolonization (Ladner, 2008). As such, understandings of Indigenous struggles needs to be based on solid understanding of the reality of settler colonialism. A related distinctive aspect of Indigenous movements is they face extremely high levels of “opposition from those invested in the status quo, including states, transnational capital, and many non-indigenous people who benefit from settler colonialism” (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.176).

It is important to bring these crucial points to the heart of any attempt to understand Indigenous approaches to change. The inability for western theory to adequately do so points to the need for Indigenous change agency to be approached through *Indigenous theory* rather than through *non-Indigenous ones*. Ladner writes: “It is important for settler cultures to approach Indigenous contestation from the perspective of Indigenous peoples themselves, seeking to understand Indigenous perspectives and traditions on their own terms rather than strictly in terms of the dominant Euro-Canadian legal and political categories” (Ladner, 2008). Simpson makes clear that the starting points of Indigenous theoretical frameworks are distinct from those of western theories (Simpson, 2011p. 40). For instance, Indigenous frameworks hold “the spiritual world alive and influencing; colonialism is contested; and storytelling, or “narrative imagination” is a tool to vision other existences outside of the current one” (Simpson, 2011, p.40).

Yellowknives Dene scholar Glenn Coulthard reflects on his and other Indigenous scholars’ engagement with non-Indigenous theoretical frameworks and agrees with Simpson that while some critical western theories “still have much to offer our analysis of contemporary settler colonialism, they are fundamentally limited in their ability to provide insight into what a culturally grounded alternative to colonialism might look like for indigenous nations” (Coulthard, 2014, p.148). He quotes Simpson:

“While theoretically, we have debated whether Audre Lourde’s ‘the master’s tools can dismantle the master’s house...I am not so concerned about how we dismantle the master’s house, that is, which set of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or own houses” (Simpson, quoted in Coulthard, 2014, p.148).

This discussion of the distinction between the dismantling and the rebuilding point directly to the heart of Indigenous dual focus of theories of change – *Resistance and Resurgence*.

Resistance and Resurgence Indigenous scholarship focuses on two main dimensions to decolonial change that Indigenous communities are actively engaged in - resistance and resurgence. Coburn and Atleo understand it like this: “if Indigenous *resistance* challenges colonial-capitalist relations....Indigenous resurgence renews Indigenous relationships, practices and worldviews with the land, water and other Indigenous peoples” (2016, p.178). They go on to state that “analytically, resurgence encompasses resistance” and that the distinction between resistance and resurgence is “a matter of emphasis and interpretation rather than sharply exclusive analytical categories” (Coburn and Atleo, 2016, p.179). Indigenous Resurgence, as both a movement and body of scholarship, is premised on a firm rejection of mainstream, reformist approaches to dealing with “Indigenous issues in Canada”, specifically, the “politics of recognition” and the reconciliation approach touted by the Trudeau Liberal government.

Rejecting the politics of recognition Coulthard makes clear that “state sanctioned forms of recognition, such as self-government and band council social programming, have served to “at best, prop up a corrupt social safety net, or worse, fundamentally change who we are as Indigenous Peoples” (2008, p.200). These approaches are fundamentally flawed in that they do not address the sources of the problems they seek to remedy. “Large scale statist solutions like self-government and land claims are not so much lies as they are irrelevant to the root of the problem” (Alfred, 2005, p.31). “The liberal recognition paradigm.... may, at best, alter some of the worst effects of colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination, it does nothing to address their generative structures – the racist economy and a colonial state” (Coulthard in Simpson, 2008, p.194). Rights based approaches are also inherently flawed in that “colonial powers will recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous Peoples only insofar as this recognition does not obstruct the imperatives of state and capital” (Coulthard, 2008, p.196).

Taiaiaike Alfred writes that “conventional and acceptable approaches to change are getting us nowhere” (2005, p.20). Experience has shown that “change cannot be made from within colonial structure” (Alfred, 2005, p.24). Trying to make change through the legal systems leads to “entrenchment in the state systems” and seeking social wellbeing through the economic development approach leads to the joining in the” consumerist culture of mainstream capitalist society” (Alfred, 2005, p.23). He adds that “these surface reforms....self-government and economic development are being offered precisely because they are useless to us in the struggle

to survive as Peoples and so are no threat to the Settlers and, specifically, the interests of the people, who control the Settler state. This is the assimilation's end-game" (Alfred, 2005, p.20).

These scholars advocate for the turning away from these state-sanctioned, reformist strategies and instead seek radical approaches, ones that address the roots causes of the problems faced, while looking to the diverse Indigenous cultures for pathways to decolonial wellbeing. Simpson writes "I think the epic nature of settler colonialism requires radical responses".... "Radical requires us to name dispossession as the meta-dominating force in our relationship to the Canadian state, and settler colonialism as the system that maintains the expansive dispossession" (2017, p.48). Radical Resurgence raises up "actions that engage in a generative refusal of any aspect of state control, so they don't just refuse, they also embody an Indigenous alternative" (Simpson, 2017, p.35). Simpson explains: "I am not interested in inclusion. I am not interested in reconciling. I'm interested in unapologetic place-based Nationhoods using Indigenous practices and operating in an ethical and principled way from an intact land base. This is the base from which we can develop a "new relationship" with the Canadian state" (2017, p.50-51).

Resistance Indigenous resistance has been going on since contact and is documented in work such as Gord Hill's "500 years of Resistance" (2010). This has included many full out rebellions as well as alliances across Indigenous Nations forged to be able to negotiate more powerfully with the colonial state. Indigenous resistance often manifests at what Indigenous scholar John Burrows calls flashpoint events which have included blockades, occupations, and even armed conflict. These acts of resistance have included a long list including the Oka Crisis, Burnt Church, Gustafsen Lake, Caledonia and many more (Russell, 2010). Currently Indigenous people are resisting the development of pipelines and mines and other extractive projects on their territories. In a recent short film about the Secwepemc resistance to Kinder Morgan pipeline, Indigenous land defenders opposing Kinder Morgan evoke the inter- generational fight against the Canadian state in expressing that "we were raised for this fight" (Guy, 2017, n.p.). Resistance has been necessary for the survival of Indigenous nations under settler colonialism.

Resurgence The key insight of the work of Indigenous scholars Alfred, Simpson and Coulthard is that resistance, while necessary is not sufficient. Taiaiake Alfred, whose early work on resurgence influenced the current generation of Indigenous scholars wrote that "[m]any of my

own generation of scholars and activists hold on to ways of thinking and acting that are wrapped up in old theories of revolution. Those theories center on convincing the settler society to change their ways and restructure their society, through the use of persuasion or force” (Alfred, 2008, p. 11). He asks, “what if settlers never choose to change their ways” (ibid). Resurgence “refocuses our work from trying to transform the colonial outside in to a flourishing of the Indigenous inside” (Simpson, 2011, p.17). Drawing on Fanon who urged those struggling against colonialism to turn away from the colonial state and “find in their own decolonial praxis the source of their liberation”, Coulthard discerns and advocates an Indigenous resurgence,... directed not toward recognition by the state but “toward our own on-the-ground struggles of freedom” (Coulthard 2014b, p.48). Rather than pathways for change that are contingent on changes in settler society, resurgence calls for a “turning inward to focus on resurgence of an authentic Indigenous existence and recapturing the physical, political, and psychic spaces of freedom” for Indigenous people....resurgence is about “indigeneity coming back to life again” (Alfred, 2008, p.11).

This approach to change informs strategies that Indigenous Peoples can use “to disentangle themselves from the oppressive control of occupying state governments (Simpson, 2008, p.15). “Transforming ourselves, our communities and our nations is ultimately the first step in transforming our relationship with the state” (Simpson, 2011, p.17). Resurgence is at the same time “a lens, critical analysis, a set of theoretical understandings, and an organizing and mobilizing platform.” It has the “potential to wonderfully transform Indigenous life on Turtle Island” (Simpson, 2017, p.49).

Bringing resistance and resurgence strategies together, Coulthard (2014) outlines five theses to guide strategies of change towards Indigenous freedom and decolonization - (1) the necessity of direct action - “temporarily blocking access to Indigenous territories with the aim of impeding the exploitation of Indigenous peoples’ land and resources”, or reoccupation of Indigenous land in an effort to disrupt or block “access by state and capital for sustained periods of time” (p.168); (2) rebuilding Indigenous nations - Coulthard refers to forms of “Indigenous political-economic alternative to the intensification of capitalism on and within our territories” (p.171) - in some cases, this may mean reinvigorating a mix of subsistence-based activities with more contemporary economic ventures; Indigenous cooperatives or worker-managed enterprises

(p.171-172). These could “pose a real threat to the accumulation of capital on Indigenous lands” (p.172). Strategies (3) must address dispossession and Indigenous sovereignty in the city; (4) gender justice and decolonization; and (5) find ways to move beyond the nation-state.

Here we see that the focus of change is not just in attaining specific goals, but also attends closely to *how* change is brought about. Alfred warns that “how you fight will determine who you will become when the battle is over” (2005, p.23) and Simpson emphasizes “again and again it matters to me how change is achieved” (2017, p.226). For these scholars the strategies used need to be deeply informed by and grounded in diverse Indigenous ways of knowing and being that have “already produced sustainable, beautiful, principled societies” (Simpson, 2017, p.49).

Simpson writes that “our Knowledge Holders teach us of a radically different way of relating to the land and of being in this world” and as such Indigenous Knowledge systems provide the lifeblood of resurgence (2008, p.84). Hayden King reminds us that while resurgence and resistance should be based in Indigenous knowledge, it is important that this is grounded in “particular, rather than nebulous, ‘pan-indigenous’ places (2015, p.37). Indigenous scholars emphasize the diversity as well as the fluid nature of Indigenous worldviews and practices (King, 2015, p. 39). Indigenous knowledge, often associated with tradition, is based in long standing relationship with place, but it is not static. Kelly Aguirre states that Indigenous resurgence is not about mechanical reproduction of past traditions and observes instead that tradition involves “both continuity and motion; it does not imply invariance but adaptation” (2015, p.40).

Land and Grounded Normativity Within the dynamism and diversity that is Indigenous knowledge, a common theme that runs through is Land. Coulthard writes that “Indigenous struggles against capitalist imperialism are best understood as struggles oriented around the question of land—struggles not only for land but also deeply informed by what the *land as a mode of reciprocal relationship*...ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way (Coulthard 2014, p. 60, emphasis mine). “Now, then and forever” Alfred states clearly, “the fight is for the land” (Alfred, 2008, p.10).

The ways that Indigenous theories and approaches to change are deeply informed by relationships with land is central to discussion about Indigenous theories of change. Coulthard

offers the concept of Grounded Normativity to describe how relationship with land informs theory and action. In this way, “theory is generated from the ground up” (Simpson, 2017, p.23). Simpson writes that “the fuel for our radical resurgence must come from within our own nation-based grounded normativities because we these are the intelligence systems that hold the potential, the theory in practice, for making ethical, sustainable Indigenous worlds” (2017, p.25). She writes that in trying to sever Indigenous peoples’ connection to land, “Colonialism has strangled our grounded normativity” (Simpson, 2017, p.24). Reconnecting to the land-based knowledge, through resurgence, is the mechanism for their continuance as Indigenous Peoples (Simpson, 2017, p.25). Simpson explains grounded normativity, or Nishnaabeg intelligence as a “series of interconnected and overlapping algorithms – stories, ceremonies and the land itself are procedures for solving the problems of life” (Simpson, 2017, p.23). Indeed, along with land, stories, prophesy, and ceremony hold central places within many Indigenous approaches to change.

Stories and envisioning change “Indigenous people have long enough collective memories to recall a time when our worlds were organized on different principals and could be again” (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.193). These collective memories/visions for a better world are held in stories and as such stories are a central tool for resurgence. Simpson writes that “My Creation Story tells me another world is possible and that I have the tools to vision it and bring it into reality. I can’t think of a more transformative narrative” (2011, p.42). She explain that the “shame that is rooted in the humiliation that colonialism has heaped on our peoples for hundreds of years” has generated a kind of cognitive imperialism (Simpson, 2011, p. 14). “I began to realize that shame can only take hold when we are disconnected from the stories of resistance within our own families and communities.....I became interested in finding these stories of resistance and telling them so that our next generation would know” (Simpson, 2011, p.14). “Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism” (Simpson, 2011, p.33).

Kelly Aguirre writes about the difficult but important “process of relearning our stories, internalizing them, as well as challenging and dislodging those that have been imposed on us” (2015, p. 184). She explains that “storytelling is not empty repetition but a relational practice – it is where we come alive as people. Resurgence is about reorientation to living from within our

own stories once again (Aguirre, 2015, p.203). Hayden King argues that beginning to interpret and understand Indigenous stories is an important “way of beginning to reimagine healthy relationships among Indigenous peoples – and perhaps if they are willing to listen, with non-Indigenous people” (in Coburn, 2015, p.37)

Stories are a way to center Indigeneity in bringing about change. Simpson writes: “If we want to create a different future, we need to live a different present, so that the present can fully marinate, influence, and create different futurities. If we want to live a different present, we have to center Indigeneity and allow it to change us” (Simpson, 2017, p.20). Stories can help reinvigorate “a particular way of living. A way of living that was full of community. A way of living that considered, in a deep profound way, relationality” (Simpson, 2017, p.22). In the book *Principles of Tsawalk*, Nuuchahnulth scholar E. Richard Atleo promotes the use of Indigenous stories such as Son of Raven as theory to guide action towards solving today’s global crises (2011).

A Relational Ontology of Change A key way that Indigenous theories of change are distinct from non-Indigenous theories of change is in the way they center relationality. Grounded in deeply relational worldviews, these present relational theories of change. Relationships are evoked in many ways including in discussions of love of and connection with land and each other, in emphasizing relations of reciprocity and responsibility and on the work of restoring and maintaining balance.

Colonization through dispossession has worked to transform “Indigenous relationships with the land and waters into exploitative colonial-capitalist social relationships” (King, 2016 p.34). This is a process of purposeful “sundering [of] relationships of diverse Indigenous Nations with each other and with the natural world” (Coburn, 2015, p.24). Alfred writes that

“the problem that we have inherited in this generation is our disconnection from what it means to be Indigenous. This problem has been framed in complicated ways, but, really, what is colonization if not the separation of our people from the land, the severance of bonds of trust and love that held our people together so tightly in the not-so-distant past, and the abandonment of our spiritual connection to the natural world?” (Alfred, 2008, p.9-10).

Decolonization is then, a process of rebuilding these relations with land and other peoples. This is the basis of both resistance and resurgence. Kelly Aguirre describes acts of resistance as acts of love. She describes the fight to oppose fracking in the Mikmaq territory in Elsipogtog:

“Indigenous women held up their drums – their beating hearts – against the guns of the colonizer, in defense of their lands, their peoples, their families. In doing so, these women affirmed their survival, their courage and determination to honour their relationships with their ancestors, each other, and the natural world. This gesture, dramatically challenging the actions of the naked might of the colonial state acting at the behest of global capital, is another instance of politically enacting love” (Aguirre, 2015, p.45)

Simpson explains that “the intense love of land, of family, and of our nations that have always been the spine of indigenous resistance” (Simpson, 2017, p.9). This love stands in stark contrast with the “delusions, greeds, and hatreds that lie at the center of colonial culture” (Alfred, 2005, p.35). Alfred argues that “survival demands that we act on the love we have for this land and our people. This is the counter-imperative to empire. Our power is a courageous love. Our fight is to recognize, to expose, and ultimately to overcome the corrupt, colonized identities and irrational fears that have been bred into us” (Alfred, 2005, p.36). “Fighting for our survival in the twenty-first century is less about defeating the aggression of an external enemy than it is about finding new ways to love the land, and new ways to love ourselves and our people” (Alfred, 2008, p.10).

Re-establishing these healthy relationships is a major aim of many of Indigenous resistance and resurgence movements (Coburn, 2015, p.25). The relationships that these Indigenous scholars hold as central to enacting decolonial change are characterized by reciprocity and responsibility. Alex Wilson, emphasizes that “We, each of us, have responsibilities for healing relationships with all our relations in the human, natural and spirit worlds. This means justice is not conceived in the mainstream, colonial language of autonomous liberal individual (or human) rights. Instead justice appears as a matter of fulfilling responsibilities towards all relations (Wilson paraphrased in Coburn, 2015, p.44). According to Coburn: “resurgence is about relational responsibilities toward all living things and the Earth”

(2015, p. 33) and she quotes Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel as saying that Indigenous resurgence “at its core” is about “spiritual and relational responsibilities that are continuously renewed” (Corntassel, quoted in Coburn, 2015, p.33). “It is our responsibility to fight for justice, just as our Ancestors did” (Simpson, 2010, p.18).

These approaches to change emerge not just from the struggle against colonization, but are deeply embedded in many Indigenous worldviews and cultural identities. In *Principles of Tsawalk* (2012), E. Richard Atleo discusses that Nuu-chah-nulth worldview sees “creation filled with mutually interdependent life forms that require mutually acceptable protocols in order to maintain balance and harmony” (p. 37)... “all of reality is considered to be a universe of relationships” (p.46). He sees the global crisis as relational disharmony (p.37) and purposeful struggle as necessary for restoring balance and harmony (p. 36).

Indeed, political process itself is generated through maintaining relationships with other human and non-human nations. Simpson describes how “for Nishnaabeg people, mobilization and dissent have always been a corner stone of our political systems. Collective mobilization and mass movement throughout our territory was required to maintain our treaty and diplomatic relationships with animal nations and with our neighbouring Indigenous nations....Dissent, vision, commitment and action were pillars of our political process” (Simpson, 2010, p.16).

These relational theories of change have implications for non-Indigenous people as well. As Coulthard puts it “...our cultures have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist” (Coulthard, 2008, p.201)

Cosmologies of Change Other dimensions of Indigenous cosmologies inform Indigenous theories and approaches to change. For instance, transformation is central to Indigenous understandings of the world. Leroy Little Bear (quoting Witherspoon, 1977, p. 48) states that Indigenous philosophy sees the “world as in motion, that all things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration, and that the essence of life and being is movement” (Alfred, 2005, p.9).

Simpson signals emergence as a key insight in how change happens. She writes that “our interventions into colonialism must be consistent with the core values of continuous rebirth,

motion, presence and emergence. Emergence becomes of vital importance here, because within Nishnaabeg thinking around mobilization, small things are important and can be major influences over time” (Simpson, 2011, p.144). Elsewhere she describes emergence thusly: “every act of resistance and resurgence, even ones that are small and seemingly insignificant, ... holds at its core transformative energy that has the ability to influence well beyond the immediate impacts of the original act” (Simpson, 2010, p.16). Alfred speaks of re-emergence. He sees Indigenous movements guided by “Wasase, the new warriors path” as creating the force to alter “the balance of political and economic power to recreate social and physical space for freedom to re-emerge” (2005, p.19).

Dreams can bring information and instigate transformative action, and again responsibility is evoked. “Once one has received an important dream, he or she has the responsibility to act on the vision” (Simpson, 2011, p.146). “In terms of resurgence, vision alone isn’t enough. Vision must be coupled with intent: intent for transformation, intent for re-creation, intent for resurgence” (Simpson, 2011, p.147). The spirit realm is also implicated. “Many Elders believe that the success of these acts of resistance depends upon not only our intent and action, but also on directly asking the spiritual realm for assistance” (Simpson, 2011, p.17). Alfred emphasizes the need for Indigenous movements for change to be grounded in spirit.

“Onkwehonwe are awakening to the need to move from a materialist orientation of our politics and social reality towards a restored spiritual foundation, channeling that spiritual strength and the unity it creates, into a power that can effect political and economic relations. A true revolution is spiritual at its core; every single one of the world’s materialist revolutions has failed to produce conditions of life that are markedly different from those which it opposed” (Alfred, 2005, p.22).

Simpson brings emergence, action, spirit, and transformation together in this quote:

“The Nishnaabeg knowledge system has always encouraged its learners to look inside themselves as individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations, and to engage in a process of restoring and maintaining balance in the cosmos.

The belief is that by changing oneself, you change reality, and by committing to a process of decolonization and Indigenizing, a collective transformation can occur. Aided by beings in the spiritual realm, our political processes shift as we decolonize our traditions, our knowledge, and begin to live our traditions as a collective. As we begin to act as strong, healthy, independent Indigenous Nations, a new political reality emerges, and a new people emerges who are equipped with the tools and strategies in the war against our territorial losses and colonial attempts to disengage us politically” (Simpson, 2008, p.75).

Constellations of resistance and resurgence The relationships among diverse, place based manifestation of Indigenous resistance and resurgence are important to these Indigenous scholars. Alfred roots his theory of change in his conceptualization of an “Indigenous peoples’ movement” which hold the “potential to initiate a more coordinated and widespread actions, to reorganize communities....”(Alfred, 2005, p.22). Simpson describes offers her most recent book “As We Always Have” (2017) as a manifesto for creating networks of reciprocal resurgent movements. She envisions these networks of movements as “constellations of co-resistance” and “constellations of radical resurgent organizing” (2017, p.218). Through these reciprocal relations she sees the promise for radical change. She writes: “When the constellations work in international relationship to other constellations....movements are built, particularly if constellations of co-resistance create mechanisms for communication, strategic movements, accountability to each other, and shared decision-making practices” (Simpson, 2017, p.218).

Intersectionality In thinking about how movements relate to each other, Simpson and Coulthard also emphasize the power in aligning with other radical anti-oppressive movements. Simpson writes of the need for Indigenous movements to oppose not only “dispossession and settler colonialism” but also “the violence of capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-Blackness that maintains them” (Simpson, 2017, p.10). Coulthard argues also for an intersectional approach, saying any strategy for decolonization must “directly confront more than mere economic relations; it has to account for the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behaviour, structures, and relationships” (2014, p.14). Simpson also draws the links between Indigenous resurgence

and climate change. She argues that “it is crucial that the Radical Resurgence Project to take on global capitalism and its link to global warming, which is a direct threat to indigenous presence and our visions of the future” (Simpson, 2017, p.70). There is much strength in the coming together of diverse movements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous movements. It can be argued that achieving justice and sustainability in Canada will require this. As Coburn and Atleo point out, “the Nuu-chah-nulth principal of hishookish tsa’walk (“everything is one”) is a reminder that coordination with neighbours is inevitably required to achieve relations that are at once peaceful and just in an interconnected world” (Coburn & Atleo, 2016, p.180).

Respecting the boundaries between Indigenous and Settler/non-Indigenous theories and movements. A crucial difference between Indigenous theories of change and non-Indigenous theories of change is that, given how deeply grounded Indigenous theories are in contexts, ontologies and epistemologies specific to Indigenous nations, they can not just be abstracted and applied to any context. They are approaches to change that are culturally grounded and specific to the struggles of Indigenous peoples in settler colonial contexts. Not only are they not abstractable and applicable to any change context, but effort to build respectful, just, relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers demands that settlers do not appropriate Indigenous knowledge and practices. Indigenous approaches to change can however be learned about, respected and honoured. Settlers can actively support these Indigenous approaches to change and reflect on how settlers’ own theories and practices of change can be designed to support and work synergistically with Indigenous ones.

Collaboration between Indigenous and settler movements is needed, but these relationships must be predicated on mutual respect and reciprocity and Indigenous knowledge and theories can not be appropriated. So, on what bases can we forge alliances? How to we forge alliances while respecting the boundaries between movements? Kelly Aguirre helps shed some light here. She points out that though resurgence is a turning inwards, it also inevitable involves resisting the “ongoing engines of dispossession. Confrontation with the corporate state is inevitable and necessary, and it’s here that alignments with Settler and non-Indigenous movements arise” (Aguirre, 2015, p.202). Where the work of resurgence does not implicate non-Indigenous people and movements in any way, resistance is where Indigenous and non-Indigenous movements can and do converge. Aguirre offers a distinction between transformation

and transfiguration, which is helpful for understanding the differences between Indigenous and settler change agency and decolonial practice. Transformation implies a remaking of the very nature of something whereas Transfiguration implies instead, a revelation of its existing nature. She writes that “Indigenous resurgence is about the *transfigurative* potential in diverse, already existent though repressed lifeways of Indigenous peoples. Settler society requires radical *transformation* or metamorphosis – revolution – to support the structural and material context of decolonization and sustain a decolonial form of relationality with Indigenous peoples” (Aguirre, 2015, p, 202).

Indigenous and non-Indigenous movements can work together in the resisting of settler-colonial capitalist foundations of Canada. Where the movements diverge is that while Indigenous peoples transfigure and forge their cultural resurgence, settler transformation means dismantling the unjust colonial structures and relations which we’re complicit in and benefit from and working to build new decolonial structures and relations. This provides some insight in to how to respect the boundaries between movements as well as see where convergences can be appropriate and helpful. “Indigenous resurgence and Settler revolution both will provide the context for a true mutual-flourishing with our shared mother” (Aguirre, 2015, p.202)

Another important starting point for forging just relations (and theory that can guide and reflect such relations) is for non-Indigenous scholars and activists to understand the limits to our ability to think through and develop solutions from within western thought. Alfred writes that

“Indigenous scholars that are culturally rooted and connected to their communities are doing what Euroamerican scholars simply cannot do for us; they are showing us forms of thought and pathways of action that are beyond the boundaries of colonial mentality. Settlers have very serious difficulties thinking thoughts that are outside foundational premises of their imperial cultural backgrounds. Very few of them can overcome the ingrained patterns of authority and dominance that are the heritage of empire and colonialism. So, we have to do it for them. And for us” (Alfred, 2008, p.10).

Where the settler ability to imagine radically just relations and pathways to get there is limited, Indigenous peoples offer important ontologies, epistemologies and theories of change.

“If non-indigenous readers are capable of listening, they will learn from these shared words, and they will discover that while we are envisioning a new relationship between Onkwehonwe and the land, we are at the same time offering a decolonized alternative to the Settler society by inviting them to share our vision of respect and peaceful co-existence (Alfred, 2005, p.35).

While Indigenous peoples have a lot to offer “everyone in terms of functional alternatives to the liberal Capitalist State order”, “the epistemic shift of resurgence is to declare indigenous theory/practices not be judged by what they can contribute to other struggles...” (Aguirre, 2016, p.202). From these important starting points, we can begin to work towards respectful, reciprocal relationships across movements and to, as Simpson puts it, “create networks of reciprocal resurgent movements with other humans and non-humans radically imagining their ways out of domination, who are not afraid to let these imaginings destroy the pillars of settler colonialism” (2017, p.10)

With all this insight, theory and praxis in mind we can think about change in ways that actively help movements in Canada work synergistically. In this way we can seek to be the change envisioned in the Anishinaabe 8th fire prophecy. “After seven generations of colonization and its devastating consequences, the people will begin to wake up and revive traditions” (Denis, 2015, p.37).

“This resurgent work of these new people, the Oshkimaadiziig, determines the outcome of the Eighth Fire, an eternal fire to be lit by all humans. It is an everlasting fire of peace, but its existence depends upon our actions and our choices today. In order for the Eighth Fire to be lit, settler society must also choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations, and to join with is in building a sustainable future based upon mutual recognition, justice, and respect” (Simpson, 2008, p.14).

In ways together and in ways apart, we work “to find new ways of living that restore the balance to social relations and the ecosystems on which we depend (Denis, 2015, p.37).

Indigenous approaches to change are grounded in and need to be understood through Indigenous theories and frameworks. “It is important... to approach Indigenous contestation from the perspective of Indigenous peoples themselves, seeking to understand Indigenous perspectives and traditions on their own terms rather than strictly in terms of the dominant Euro-Canadian legal and political categories” (Ladner, 2008).

Indigenous theories of change are diverse and dynamic

Hayden King reminds us that while resurgence and resistance should be based in Indigenous knowledge, it is important that this is grounded in “particular, rather than nebulous, ‘pan-indigenous’ places (King, in Coburn p.37). Indigenous scholars emphasize the diversity as well as the fluid nature of Indigenous worldviews and practices (King, in Coburn, p.39).

Indigenous movements are distinct from non-Indigenous movements “Indigenous Peoples whose lands are occupied by the Canadian state are currently engaged in the longest running resistance movement in Canadian history” (Simpson, 2008, p. 13). “Indigenous political movements contest the very foundation of the Canadian state, most theories of group politics and social movements take the state for granted” (Simpson, citing Ladner 2008, p.16). Throughout its long history, sovereignty and self-determination have been the “primary foundation of Indigenous politics and mobilization” (Ladner, 2008).

Decolonial goals require targeting the root causes Working to transform “colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination” requires that we “address their generative structures – the racist economy and a colonial state” (Coulthard in Simpson, 2008, p.194). “[L]iberal pluralism of state-based efforts at recognition that serve to mediate and accommodate Indigenous claims through the Canadian state itself” are incapable of transforming settler-colonialism (Walia, 2015, Coulthard, 2014). “...change cannot be made from within colonial structure” (Alfred, 2005, p.24).

Resistance and Resurgence are both required “How you fight will determine who you will become when the battle is over” (Alfred, 2005, p.23) and “again and again it matters...how change is achieved” (Simpson, 2017, p.226). Decolonial change requires “actions that engage in a generative refusal of any aspect of state control, so they don’t just refuse, they also embody an Indigenous alternative” (Simpson, 2017, p.35). Rather than pathways for change that are contingent on changes in settler

society, resurgence calls for a “turning inward to focus on resurgence of an authentic Indigenous existence and recapturing the physical, political, and psychic spaces of freedom” for Indigenous people...resurgence is about “indigeneity coming back to life again” (Alfred, 2008, p.11).

Land is central Coulthard writes that “Indigenous struggles against capitalist imperialism are best understood as struggles oriented around the question of land—struggles not only for land but also *deeply informed by what the land as a mode of reciprocal relationship...ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way* (Coulthard, 2014, p.60, emphasis mine). Relationship with land, provides crucial guidance about the goals and strategies for change. This is Grounded Normativity (Coulthard, 2014). Stories, ceremonies and the land itself are procedures for solving the problems of life” (Simpson, 2017, p.23). which offers solving the problems of life” (Simpson, 2017, p.23).

Indigenous cosmologies and practices of vision, story, dream and prophesy inform understandings of change

Indigenous philosophy sees the “world as in motion, that all things are constantly undergoing processes of transformation, deformation, and restoration, and that the essence of life and being is movement” (Alfred, 2005, p.9). “[S]mall things are important and can be major influences over time” (Simpson, 2011, p.144).

Collective memories/visions for a better world are held in stories and as such stories are a central tool for resurgence. “Storytelling then becomes a lens through which we can envision our way out of cognitive imperialism” (Simpson, 2011, p.33).

Relationships are at the heart of making change

Decolonization is a process of (re)building reciprocal relationships with land and other peoples. This is the basis of both resistance and resurgence. “Survival demands that we act on the love we have for ... land and our people. This is the counter-imperative to empire. Our power is a courageous love.” (Alfred, 2005, p.36).

Indigenous “cultures have much to teach the Western world about the establishment of relationships within and between peoples and the natural world that are profoundly non-imperialist” (Coulthard, in Simpson, 2008, p.201).

Building links between Indigenous and non-indigenous movements is important, but how these relationships are built are key

Coulthard argues also for an intersectional approach, saying any strategy for decolonization must “directly confront more than mere economic relations; it has to account for the multifarious ways in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power interact with one another to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behaviour, structures, and relationships” (2014, p.14). Intersectional organizing across difference movements requires the forging of just relations and we are well advised to center relationships in social change efforts and work to build respectful, reciprocal relationships. In this way we can learn from each other and work to strengthen each other’s effects for change without appropriating. While working towards shared goals in intersectional organizing, we must also respect the boundaries between movements. Know where to align with other movements and when to go at it on your own.

As previously pointed out, it is important for non-Indigenous people to forge their own transformational theory and practice of change which learn from and support, *but do not appropriate* Indigenous knowledge. A key lesson from section 5 is the focus on relationality in understanding change processes. In western scholarship, systems theory more than other bodies of literature is particularly attentive to relationality, with a focus on the dynamic interactions between components in social and/or ecological systems. We turn next to Systems Thinking & Social-Ecological Systems Transformation Theory to glean what western scholarship on relationality can teach us about how change happens.

4. Systems Thinking & Social-Ecological Systems Transformation Theory

Given the emphasis climate justice activists give to “Change the System, Not the Climate, bringing in theories of change that are explicitly about “changing the system” are of particular relevance. In this section we look to literature on Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Transformations, Complexity Science (see Costanza et al., 1993; Kauffman, 1993; Holland, 1995; Levin, 1999a) and more broadly to General Systems Theory (see von Bertalanffy, 1968). SES Transformations studies provides a framework from which to think about intentional large-scale changes towards sustainability. Other studies of change focus only on social factors or only

ecological factors, SES scholars approach it from a lens of linked systems that do not separate the human and earth systems (Moore et al., 2014). This kind of study can inform and assess systems interventions that have co-benefit for humans and non-human systems alike.

To systems thinkers, the world is understood as a system of systems. An important starting question is: what is a system? A system is a grouping of things – people, organisms, cells, communities – interconnected in such a way that patterns of behaviour are produced through time (Meadows, 2008). These interconnected elements are organized in ways whereby something is achieved (Green, 2016). An important function of almost all systems is to maintain itself and ensure its own perpetuation. Systems' purposes are not necessarily those intended by any single actor in a system. In fact, one of the most frustrating aspects of systems is that the purpose of subunits may add up to an overall behaviour that no one wants (Meadows, 2008). Systems thinkers emphasize that understanding of systems comes from the examination of how the different elements of a system relate to each other and operate together, and not from the examination of the components in isolation. These relationships determine how a system responds. A system may be affected by outside forces, but the way the system responds to the outside forces is characteristic of itself (Meadows, 2008).

Systems share particular characteristics. Donella Meadows (2008) explains some of these characteristics common to systems as follows:

- Systems are more than the sum of its parts;
- A system's function or purpose, is often the most important determinant of the system's behaviour;
- Systems can be nested in other systems;
- Many of the relationships between components in a system operate through the flow of information;
- The dynamics of a systems shift through variations of stocks and flows of information and resources;
- These variations of stocks and flows are influenced strongly by feedback loops, which are another key characteristic of systems.=

“A feedback loop is a closed chain of causal connections from a stock, through a set of decisions or rules or physical laws or actions that are dependant on a level of the stock, and back again through a flow to change the stock (Meadows, 2008, p.187). Feedback loops can be reinforcing (positive) or balancing (negative). Balancing feedback are sources of stability and sources of resistance to change. Reinforcing feedback loops are self-enhancing, and can lead to exponential growth or to runaway behaviour over time. “Complex, unpredictable behaviour of systems often comes about due to the relative strength of feedback loops as they change (Meadows, 2008). Complex systems, have characteristics that more simple systems don’t have, such as non-linearity and uncertainty, containing multiple scales and emergence, or self-organization (Berkes et al., 2008).

Understanding these aforementioned characteristics as being inherent to the social and ecological systems we seek to change can help empower activists with the skills to “Dance with systems” (Green, 2016). In looking at the relationship between the structure and the behaviour in systems, we begin to understand how a system works, what makes it produce poor results, what locks certain behaviours in place, and how to shift them to better behaviour patterns. It gives us the ability to identify root causes of problems and see new opportunities (Meadows, 2008). It can help us steward the systems we are part of in way that function in ways that are more beneficial for all. The rest of this section will focus on particular frameworks for thinking about and guiding change efforts that have been offered by systems thinkers.

The Adaptive Cycle A key insight about change that comes from Systems Thinking is the idea that systems are dynamic and change in cyclical patters. This is expressed as the Adaptive Cycle which describes how ecosystems go through regular cycles of organization, collapse, and renewal (Berkes et al., 2008). Indeed, “the bewildering, entrancing, unpredictable nature of nature and people, the richness, diversity and changeability of life come from that evolutionary dance generated by cycles of growth, collapse, reorganization, renewal and re-establishment” (Berkes et al., 2008, p.xv).

Initially introduced by Holling (1986) the Adaptive Cycle which consists of an infinity loop powered by two drivers: 1) the degree to which potential (e.g. nutrients, capital) in the system is either stored or released and 2) the degree to which the system is homogenous or

heterogeneous in certain features, in other words, its connectedness. These drivers frame the four phases of the adaptive cycle: exploitation, conservation, release, and reorganization.

For example, in the early part of a forest's growth phase,

“the number of species and of individual plants and animals increases quickly, as organisms arrive to exploit all available ecological niches. The forest's components become more linked to one another, enhancing the ecosystem's 'connectedness and multiplying the ways the ways the forest regulates itself and maintains its stability. However, the forest's very connectedness and efficiency eventually reduce its capacity to cope with severe outside shocks, paving the way for collapse and eventual regeneration” (Green, 2016, p.12).

Although this model was initially created based on an understanding of the dynamics of resilient ecosystems, it also functions to illuminate the dynamics of resilient social systems and the role of innovation in this dynamic:

- creative destruction when old ideas and structures collapse;
- exploration, when new ideas, processes, and structures are developed;
- launch when successful innovations are supported by investment of new capital;
- institutionalization, when an innovation becomes an established part of day to day life (Berkes, 2008)

The “back loop” of the adaptive cycle (between release and organization) is a phase of turbulent change in which new things can emerge. Such novelty can feed adaptation and build resilience of the broader system, or it can *trigger a transformation* of the broader system, pushing it into a new configuration or dynamics, new structures, and a to novel version of the “front loop” (Gunderson and Holling, 2002; Walker et al., 2004; Folke et al., 2010; Westley et al., 2013). Activists “adapt their analysis and strategy according to the stage that their political surroundings most closely resemble: growth, maturity, lock-in but fragile, or collapsing” (Green, 2016, p.13).

Adaptation vs Transformation. Systems thinkers distinguish between two kinds of change in social-ecological systems: *adaptation and transformation*. Adaptation refers to adjustments within a system, in response to external shocks, disturbances and other changes,

which allow the system to maintain its overall structure and dynamics, and to continue to function as before. In adaptations, changes happen that *do not* alter the overall system (Olsson et al., 2014). Transformation on the other hand refers to a deeper kind of change that fundamentally alters the system, its relationships and its functioning (ibid). Transformations “recombine existing elements of a system in fundamentally novel ways” (Moore et al., 2014, p.2). And transformations in social-ecological systems necessarily involve “shifts that fundamentally alter human and environmental interactions...” (Olsson et al, 2014, p.1) and can be further defined as a change in which “at least one core element in each of the social and ecological parts of the system across multiple scales is altered... recognizing that feedback mechanisms between those elements will also change” (Moore et al., 2014, p.6). Though SES transformations can be deliberate or not (Moore et al., 2014), SES scholarship offers guidance to help change agents bring about transformations that are deliberate...and driven by an understanding that “the current ecological, social or economic conditions become untenable or undesirable” (Moore et al., 2015, p.3).

The key elements in *social* systems that can be expected to change during a transformation are the following: “norms, values, and beliefs; rules and practices, such as laws, procedures, and customs; and the distribution and flow of power, authority, and resources” (Moore, et al., 2014, p.2). “Sustainability transformations require radical, systemic shifts in values and beliefs, patterns of social behavior, and multilevel governance and management regimes” (Olsson et al, 2014., p.1). The key elements of *ecological* systems that are changed are natural capital and ecosystem services as they constitute “critical points of linkage between the social and ecological, and thus, if deliberate social transformations can be expected to alter a linked ecological system, it is these elements that are likely to be changed” (Moore et al., 2014, p.2).

Although adaptation and transformation are distinct change processes, they do interact in important ways. For example, adaptation at one scale might require transformations at another scale, and building resilience at certain scales can reduce resilience at others. These kinds of dynamics are a central insight of Panarchy theory, which focuses on change processes across scales (Gunderson & Holling, 2002).

Panarchy Panarchy theorists see systems within other systems and adaptive cycles within other adaptive cycles. Given that all systems are nested within larger systems, no system can be understood or managed by focusing on it at one particular scale. “All systems (and SESs especially) exist and function at multiple scales of space, time and social organization, and the interactions across scales are fundamentally important in determining the dynamics of the system at any particular focal scale.” (Gunderson & Holling 2003).

Panarchy theory emphasizes that building transformative capacity in a system requires experimentation and innovation and ways to coordinate and combine these across scales at critical times. This is also in line with the findings of scholars in transition management (e.g., Grin et al., 2010; Loorbach, 2010) who argue that the ability to create space for and coordinate collaborative experiments that contribute to system innovation is of crucial importance in releasing lock-ins and enabling shifts to new trajectories (Olsson et al., 2014). Panarchy theory puts a strong emphasis on the thresholds and tipping points involved in such shifts and attends to with the role of crisis or disturbances in triggering and driving transformations (Olsson et al., 2014).

Transition scholar Derk Loorbach adapts the ‘panarchy’ model to applying specifically to intentional transformations of social systems towards sustainability. Loorbach points out that transformations of the past have involved “creative destruction in which resistance to dominant social norms and practices seems to have been as important as the power and promise of new possibilities” (2014, p.15). “Only through continuous dialectic processes of choice and resistance does society change...” (Loorbach, 2014, p.16). He sees conflict as inherent in social change. “In the end, there will be more structural change one way or the other as the more fundamental socio-economic drivers will continue to create the context for disruptive social change, but the incumbent regime will seek to prolong its existence as long as possible” (Loorbach, 2014, p.9). His model looks to ways to manage the descent of the old at the same time and the ascent of the new, in order to minimize disruptions and suffering. He sees governing bodies as needing to play a role in this transition management. He calls for new forms of governance that “simultaneously help to build up alternatives as well as dismantle undesirable regimes” (Loorbach, 2014, p.58).

Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) Transformation Studies Transformative change is emergent and context specific, which makes each transformation unique. Nevertheless, SES

scholars have identified some general patterns of how sustainability transformations unfold (Olsson et al., 2014). Olsson et al have outlined three main phases of transformations in social-ecological systems: (1) preparing for transformation, (2) navigating the transition, and (3) building the resilience of the new direction (Olsson et al., 2014). Moore et al. (2014) built on to this framework by outlining the important sub-processes involved. Figure 3 combines both frameworks. And below I briefly describe each.

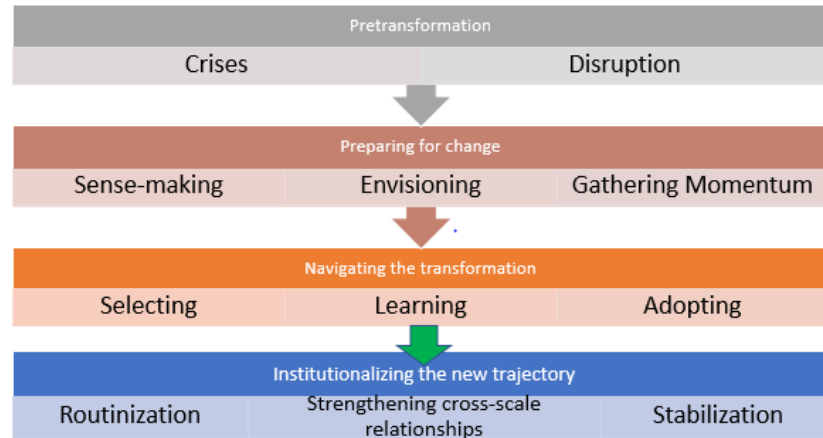


Figure - Stages and sub-processes of SES transformation

Pretransformations Transformations of SESs begin with triggers, such perturbations or crises that help open up opportunities for change (Moore et al., 2014). These can be brought on intentionally, or unintentionally by social (eg. civil unrest, election cycles) or ecological forces (eg. changes in resource availability, disruptive weather events) (Moore et al., 2014). In deliberate transformations, it is likely that actors will be trying to intentionally disrupt the status quo. Although social movement theorists see the acts of resistance as the crux of the whole movement or as transformation itself, SES scholars understand intentional disruption, and activist resistance, rather, as creating the conditions that allow for transformation (Moore, 2014). Disruption makes opportunities for intentional change more visible or transparent to agents within the system (Dorado, 2005; Moore, 2014). During times of disruption or crisis uncertainty and unpredictability is elevated, control is weak and confused. At these times space is also created for reorganization and innovation (Berkes et al., 2008). It is therefore also a phase in which change agents have the best chance of influencing events (Berkes et al., 2008).

To help ensure that the opportunities thus opened up can lead to transformation, well developed, innovative alternatives must be available. This can help the system “tip” (Westley, 2011). The work that activists do in “Preparing for change” increases the chances of having alternatives ready to implement and people already mobilized when crisis opens up opportunity. And it seems that this work needs to be done prior to the crisis.

Preparing for change The second phase of transformation is referred to as “Preparing for Change” and it involves the sub-processes of sense making, envisioning and gathering momentum. Sense-making happens as people work to make sense of the current situation, by analyzing which parts or dynamics of the systems most needs changing (Moore et al, 2014). Through this people “construct meaningful explanations for situations” they want to change (Gioia 1986, p.61). Such a process is necessary when the need for change is clear “but the “how” or “what” to change is not” (Moore et al., 2014). This can also involve mobilizing others around a new idea or practice that addresses the issue. Along with this work of making sense of what needs to change and why, envisioning work helps foster the idea that a different order of things is possible, and through envisioning alternative pathways. In an SES, the process may involve imagining how a fundamental change in human-environment relations could manifest (Moore et al., 2014).

The next step is to gather momentum to move the system in the desired direction. This is usually done by convening a coalition of supporters. Building support networks can be especially important, however Moore et al. emphasize that “different network structures will be important in different phases of the transformation process, and therefore, individuals will need to utilize different skill sets to mobilize the resources from within those network structures at various points in the transformation process” (Moore et al., 2014, p.5).

During this phase ‘experimenting in niches’ is also important. These experimentations help discern which imagined scenarios hold the most promise. This can actively help groups make strategic decisions. In turn, this demands that arenas for experimentation and innovation to be testing exist. These “protected” spaces of innovation allow for new types of social-ecological dynamics to emerge (Cumming et al., 2013). Macro level institutions can create the opportunities for niches to develop, or the niches may self-organize out of grass-roots efforts and, later, transform the institutions (Moore et al., 2014). In other words, institutions can help create niches

and grassroots efforts can transform institutions. “Eventually, experiments that are successful within niches can provide innovations that may be scaled up and out in subsequent phases” (Moore et al., 2014, p.5).

Navigating the transition This next stage involves three sub-processes: selecting, learning, and adopting. Given that there maybe multiple scenarios and pathways possible at this point “navigating toward the transition will require that the networks and social movements that have been generating momentum and support for change will need to go through a process of selecting the ideas or practices that were previously tested in a niche and that will come to dominate post-transformation” (Moore, 2014, p. 5; see also Smith & Stirling 2010). Social innovation research cautions that this phase is often skipped, and consequently, resources, including financial, social, and intellectual capital, are spread too thin. (Moore et al., 2012; Tjornbo & Westley, 2012). Learning is crucial in this stage because learning helps to inform the selection process and helps groups make decisions. Adoption involves “the widespread uptake of a novel idea into the mainstream” (Moore et al., 2014, p.5). Often, the adoption period is also referred to as “diffusion” or “scaling out” (Moore et al., 2012). At this point, it is important for actors should evaluate the ecological and social outcomes at different scales and assess the related feedbacks before adopting a new idea or practice (Moore et al., 2014).

Institutionalizing the new trajectory The final sub-processes are routinization, strengthening cross-scale relationships, and stabilization. These achieve the institutionalization of the new system configuration and dynamics whereby new dominant feedbacks become established and strengthened. It is important to note that the transformation that has occurred may not entirely be determined by the agency of actors but also, or instead by emergent properties of the complex system. As such the work of this phase is strengthening positive feedbacks of the new trajectory and creating resilience, while “simultaneously maintaining adaptive and transformative capacity to respond to unanticipated perturbations in the future” (Moore et al., 2014, p.6).

Routinization means that the new ideas and/or new practices become standard (Bartunek et al. 2007). This can require funds, personnel, changes to laws and organizational structures (Moore et al., 2012). These help the new changes outlast the informal networks and activists who worked to envision and innovate in the first two phases (Moore et al., 2012). Indeed,

routinization required different kind of leadership, with different skill sets, and are likely to come from different agents than the people who were involved in the earlier phases (Moore et al., 2014).

Cross-scale relationships should be strengthened during the transformation process. Indeed, this phase is marked by efforts to scale up new approaches or practices (Moore et al., 2014, p.6). Scaling up refers to moving change across multiple scales. This can mean for example having a community pilot project be taken up on the municipal or regional scale. Scaling up can requires a different type of innovation that was originally created in a niche, so that it works at different scales (Moore et al., 2014).

Stabilization occurs when the new trajectory has reached a new stable state. But active resistance from powerful actors at different scales is likely (Avelino & Rotmans 2009; Moore & Tjornbo, 2012). Another challenge in this final stage is unintended outcomes and unpredicted perturbations. As such Moore et al. encourage “anyone exerting agency in this phase continues to push for small ‘wins’ in achieving a more sustainable trajectory and resists attempts by others to keep redefining or reverting from the potential transformation” (2014, p.6).

One of the key lessons coming out of this analysis of sub-processes is the understanding different forms of agency and network structures will be important in different phases of the transformation process, and therefore, individuals and groups will need to utilize different skill sets to bring together the resources from within their movements at various points in the transformation process (Moore & Westley 2011; Moore et al., 2014).

Meadows’s Leverage Points or “Places to Intervene in a System” Recent reflection within the field of sustainability science, has identified that humanity’s continued trajectory of unsustainable development is due, in part, to the “failure of sustainability science to engage with the root causes of unsustainability” (Abson et al., 2017, p. 30) Abson et al. call on sustainability scholars to engage root causes which can help inform interventions in our systems that are more likely to alter our current trajectories. They argue that many current sustainability interventions “target highly tangible, but essentially weak, leverage points (i.e. using interventions that are easy, but have limited potential for transformational change) and that there is an urgent need to

focus on less obvious but potentially far more powerful areas of intervention” (Abson et al., 2017, p. 30). This call for more effective interventions is based on the work of Donella Meadows, an influential systems thinker who first presented the concept of ‘leverage points’ place to intervene in and alter complex systems. These are “places within a complex system (a corporation, an economy, a living body, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything” (Meadows, 1997, p.1). This is the kind of thinking we need considering the large scale transformations needed in a very short amount of time.

Meadow’s Leverage point or “Places to Intervene in a System” (1997) include:

9. Numbers (subsidies, taxes, standards).
8. Material stocks and flows.
7. Regulating negative feedback loops.
6. Driving positive feedback loops.
5. Information flows.
4. The rules of the system (incentives, punishment, constraints).
3. The power of self-organization.
2. The goals of the system.
1. The mindset or paradigm out of which the goals, rules, feedback structure arise

All nine “leverage points” are important places to affect change. The ones at the tops of the list (Numbers, Material Stocks and Flows etc.) are easier to alter, but have less powerful impact (Meadows, 1997). The leverage points further down the list (Goals of a System, Paradigm) have huge transformative impact, but as levers, are much harder to pull (Meadows, 1997). The ‘goals of a system’ and ‘mindset/paradigm’ are the two most powerful places to intervene in a system. The goal of a system - such as economic growth for one example - stems from a mindset or paradigm of systems which Meadows describes it as “the shared idea in the minds of society, the great unstated assumptions—unstated because unnecessary to state; everyone knows them—constitute that society's deepest set of beliefs about how the world works” (1997, p.11). Beddoe et al. define worldviews as “our perceptions of how the world

works and what is possible, encompassing the relationship between society and the rest of nature, as well as what is desirable (the goals we pursue). Our worldview is unstated, deeply felt, and unquestioned. These unconscious assumptions about how the world works provide the boundary conditions within which institutions and technologies are designed to function” (2009, p.2484). This paradigms and worldviews also include what a social system deems as fair and equitable (Meadows, 1997).

Meadows’ leverage points offer a framework for understanding the relative impacts and relative ease of various approaches and targets of change. Her work helps operationalize systems thinking into a framework for strategic decision-making that can meaningfully target root causes, rather than mere symptoms of problematic systems structures and behaviours.

Macy’s Three Dimensions of the Great Turning Joanna Macy, another systems thinker (and Eco-feminist Buddhist), also emphasizes the need for deep change - change in worldviews, values and understandings of our relationship with the earth. She calls her framework *The Three Dimensions of the Great Turning* (Macy, 2012). She argues that there are three main approaches to bringing about systems change: Holding Actions, Life-sustaining systems and practices, and Shift in Consciousness. Each is necessary, but insufficient on its own. They are mutually reinforcing (Macy, 2012).

Holding Actions “aim to hold back and slow down the damage being caused by the political economy of Business as Usual” (Macy, 2009, p.94). The goal is to defend what is left of our natural systems and our social fabric. Tactics include blockades, boycotts, legal proceedings, protests. These are crucial but “vital as protest is, relying on it as a sole avenue of change can leave us battle weary or disillusioned” (Macy, 2009, p.94). Along with resisting and stopping the destruction being done, we need to create and live and promote alternatives, solutions, new systems.

Life-sustaining Systems and Practices involves a rethinking of the way human societies are organized and function and how they provide for human needs. This work is the “creative redesign of the structures and systems that make up our society”(Macy, 2009, p.96). This can include green building, alternative energy systems, cooperative forms of ownership, new forms of governance, permaculture and agroecology, alternative transportation, ethical financial

systems, skill shares and community teach-ins. However, on their own, these are not enough. “These new structures won’t take root and survive without deeply ingrained values to sustain them” and this a shift in consciousness is needed too (Macy, 2009, p.96).

Shift in consciousness is the third dimension of Macy’s framework. Though it may seem esoteric to many activists and scientists alike, this kind of change arises from “shifts taking place in our hearts, our minds, and our views of reality” (Macy, 2009, p.96). Changing the deeply held stories we tell ourselves and each other about what’s wrong, about what’s possible, about what’s important inspires as to act. These new stories “gives fuel to our courage and determination. By refreshing our sense of belonging in the world, we widen the web of relationships that nourishes us and protects us from burnout” (Macy, 2009, p.96).

Many activists and other agents of change tends to gravitate towards one of these approaches to over others. This is fine, but three important points can be made here; 1) People and social change groups focusing on one approach should acknowledge the importance of the other two approaches, as also ‘necessary but insufficient’; 2) Communication and collaboration across the three approaches can help leverage change efforts; and 3) Change initiatives that do all three at the same time may be particularly effective.

Systems thinking and SES transformations literature has much to offer activists. This body of literature provides terminology and frameworks for thinking about what a system is and how a systems functions. It also offers guidance on how to go about intervening in a system most effectively and to how to best intervene at different stages in of a system transformation.

Key Lessons for Activists - from Systems Theory and Social-Ecological Systems Transformation

Understand complexity Complex systems, have characteristics such as non-linearity, uncertainty, and emergence, or self-organization (Berkes et al., 2008). Linear models and theories of change that look like “if A, then B” are inadequate for making change in complex systems. Make friends with complexity and uncertainty: Evoke disturbance; Learn from crises; Expect the unexpected; Create opportunity for movement self-organization (Green, 2017).

Systems are made of relationships Pay attention, not just to the components of a system, but rather to the relationships between the components, and to the functioning of the system as a whole. Ask yourself: what is the overall behavior of the system and how can changing the relationships between component parts change the overall behavior of the systems? Pay attention to the flows of information and resources and the ways they may be creating balancing and reinforcing feedbacks. Feedback have huge impact on how change is propelled or constrained.

All systems are part of wider systems. This means we need to think and intervene at various scales - local, regional, national, international. And we need to think about how different scales interact with each other (see Gunderson & Holling, 2003).

There are different kinds of change. Know the difference between adaptive and transformational change. Adaptation is making adjustments in order to maintain the current systems, whereas transformation is change that alters the overall composition and behavior of the system (Olsson et al., 2014).

Natural systems change cyclically. Ecosystems move through cycles of growth, collapse, reorganization, renewal and re-establishment (Berkes et al., 2008). Social change can follow similar patterns. Transformation of a system may be more possible at certain phases than others. Crisis or disturbances can trigger and drive transformations (Olsson et al., 2014).

Transformations involve various phases Different phases of transformations require different approaches to activism (Olsson et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2014). Phases of transformation include: (1) preparing for transformation, (2) navigating the transition, and (3) building the resilience of the new direction (Olsson et al., 2014). Each of these involves important sub-phases. Ask which people or groups are best equipped and positioned to do the work necessary at each phase of systems transformation (eg. direct action group take the lead during disruption phase, NGO policy analysts take lead during the institutionalization phase?).

Transformation requires dismantling the old as well as creating the new. There is need to navigate through phases of disruption, intentional dismantling and or unintentional collapse of the old systems, ideas and structures as well as the creating and diffusion of new systems, ideas and structures (see

Loorbach, 2014). Ideally we can work to manage the descent of the old at the same time and the ascent of the new, in order to minimize disruptions and suffering.

There are several important dimensions of making change These include resistance, creating solutions, and changing hearts and minds. These are all necessary but insufficient on their own (Macy, 2009). People and social change groups focusing on one approach should acknowledge the importance of the other two approaches. Communication and collaboration across the three approaches can help leverage change efforts and change initiatives that do all three at the same time may be particularly effective.

There are many places to intervene in a system. Some leverage points are easy to ‘pull’ but have little impact, while others are hard to ‘pull’ but have large impacts (See Meadows, 1997). These range from worldviews to laws to flows of materials. When formulating change strategies, think about leverage points. Think about the root causes and high leverage points—like worldviews and goals of a systems.

Avoid myopic thinking, try to see the big picture. Changing a system requires a wide view, often best gained through collaborative thinking and learning processes.

Social-ecological systems literature, while offering important insight about systemic change, have been critiqued for not addressing power and for being apolitical in their theories. As overviewed in Temper et al., 2018, there are active calls to incorporate power and politics in transformations research (see also Olsson et al. 2014; Shove & Walker, 2007); and to address societal justice as central to transformations (Patterson et al., 2018). Temper et al. (2018) also point out that apart from some limited work (e.g. Geels. 2006; Scoones et al., 2015), this far sustainability science literature has not paid enough attention to the role that social movements and resistance play in transformation. These weaknesses can be compensated for by bringing SES transformations literature into dialogue with critical social science, social movements theory and Indigenous scholarship (which do center power, justice, and movements in their thinking of change), as this literature review does, the findings of which will be overviewed in the

conclusion (see chapter 3). But first, we quickly point to some promising new approaches that combine systems thinking with critical social science.

4. Promising New Synthetic Approaches to Understanding Change

In our effort to seek out theoretical, scholarly bases of understandings of change that can inform movements' transformative strategies, we also look to new frameworks that bring together many or all of the literatures presented in this review. Included below are key insights about systems change from Duncan Green's power and systems approach, Kevin MacKay's Radical Transformation, and Temper et al.'s Radical Transformations to Sustainability framework

Green's Power and Systems Approach (PSA) Duncan Green, an Oxfam's leading Strategic Advisor, recently put out a book called *How Change Happens* (2016). In it, he proposes what he calls the "power and systems approach" (PSA) that brings together power analysis with systems thinking. He emphasizes that "in order to generate social change, we first need to understand how *power* is distributed and can be re-distributed between and within social groups" (Green, 2016, p.xii) and we then need to understand these struggles for power within the context of "*complex systems* that are continuously changing in unpredictable ways, affecting and being affected by diverse factors..." (ibid). His book is an important contribution because rather than focusing on one school of thought or approach to change (radical and reformists, from the inside the system or from the outside), he works to understand how diverse approaches work together to making change.

Green first main argument is that *systems thinking changes everything* about how we approach social change. The complexity of human systems renders our linear planning approaches and ways of working ineffective. Complexity requires that activists be 'reflectivists'. Though it goes against our sense of urgency as activists, he argues that we need to "look before we leap", and take time to understand the system we want to change and its dynamics. Reflectivism requires us to "map, observe and listen to the system to identify the spaces where change is already happening and try to encourage and nurture them" (Green, 2016, p.20). Part of the listening involves the need to seek fast and ongoing feedback mechanisms so that we know what is working and not working.

Green makes the point that crisis and shocks provide windows of opportunities, which he calls *critical junctures* when to decisionmakers, “the status quo suddenly appears to be less worth defending”(p.17) and when activists’ “long term work of creating constituencies for change, transforming attitudes and norms, and so on can suddenly come to fruition” (Green, 2016, p.18). Though these critical junctures are crucial in change processes, “NGOs are not always so nimble in stopping and seizing such opportunities” (Green, 2016, p.18).

Green PSA theory of change also urges activists to pay attention to ‘Positive deviance’. This means that for any given problem, there will be someone or some community somewhere that has come up with a solution (Green, 2016, p.24). He argues that we must seek these out and understand what conditions or ideas made these solutions more easily implementable in these contexts. This kind of analysis of ‘positive deviance’ can provide crucial insight for strategizing.

Systems thinking is attentive to feedback loops that shape the dynamics and behaviour of both social and ecological systems. Positive feedback loops in economies, when unchecked by regulation or trade unions, lead to the powerful and rich using their clout to get more rich and powerful. This is one key place where system analysis links to power analysis, the other half of his PSA approach.

His second main argument is that *power lies at the heart of change*. He writes that “[p]ower is everywhere and it is multifaceted” (Green, 2016, p.31) and that power plays a “central role in both stasis and change” (Green, 2016, p.36). He cites Lukes’ 3 dimensions of power framework (Lukes, 1974), which includes *Visible power* (the world of politics and authority, policed by laws, violence and money) and *hidden power* (what goes on behind the scenes: the lobbyists, the corporate chequebooks, the old boys networks). Hidden power also includes “the shared view of what those in power consider sensible or reasonable in public debate” (p.29). *Invisible power* ‘causes the relatively powerless to internalize and accept their condition’ (p.30).

He offers another framework for understanding power, this time citing Rowlands (1997), emphasizing the importance of knowing the difference between: Power within (personal self-confidence and a sense of rights and entitlement); Power with (collective power, through

organization, solidarity and joint action); Power to (meaning effective choice, the capability to decide actions and carry them out); and Power over (the power of hierarchy and domination).

These understandings of power can help change agents conduct a Power Analysis is, asking the questions of who are the actors involved and what kind of power do they wield? (Green, 2016, p.8). Power analysis tells us “who holds what kind of power related to a matter, and what might influence them to change” (Green, 2016, p.38). This includes an understanding of the kinds of power, we as individuals and activist groups, hold and where we are most likely to exert influence. This kind of analysis can help us create better strategies.

“Power analysis should stimulate ideas for strategies for engaging with the main institutions that drive or block change. It should dissolve the monoliths of ‘the state’ or ‘big business’ or the ‘international system’ into turbulent networks full of potential allies as well as opponents. A power analysis should also help us understand how those allies and opponents perceive the change, and why change doesn’t happen – the forces of inertia and paradigm maintenance” (Green, 2016, p.243).

Green argues that we need to think hard about why and how change does not happen. Analysing power in a given situation that a group seeks to change provides important insight the forces that resist change. He writes “[s]ystems, whether in thought, politics, or economy, can be remarkable resistant to change”. To understand this inertia, he offers that a combination of *institutions* (management systems and corporate culture), *ideas* (conceptions and prejudices of decision makers) and *interests* (what do people stand to gain or lose materially or socially from the change sought?) often underlie this resistance to change (Green, 2016, p.41-42).

Based on his Power and Systems Approach, he offers several key questions that activists should ask themselves. The first is “*What kind of change are we talking about?*” It is helpful to begin by asking where the change we are seeking fits on a 2X2 chart, which locates change processes according to the institutions in question (on a scale of formal to informal) and the locus of that change sought (ranging from individual to systemic) (Sandler et al., 2016). “Change processes will flow between the different quadrants, and activists’ attention may move from one to another...By reminding us to look at change from all four quadrants, the framework stresses

the need for work to happen at all levels ...and it helps activist map out who else is working on a given issue and identify the gaps in the collective effort” (Green, 2016, p.241). He emphasizes that “[s]ooner or later a successful change effort must come to grips with the social norms and deep structure issues of the bottom left quadrant” (Sandler et al., 2016).

The second key question he urges us to ask is: *What kind of approach might make sense for this change?* This helps you think through your strategies in relation to a specific change context. He offers a framework (originally from Adaptive Management workshop, NESTA, Nov, 2015), again in a two by two chart, but this time helps you think through what kinds of strategies make sense depending on a) how confident you are on interventions and b) how stable to context is.

Green’s PSA approach combines insight about the dynamics of complex systems with critical lens on power and helpfully brings into one perspective insight from two of the sections in this chapter.

Kevin Mckay’s Radical Transformation In the 2017 book *Radical Transformation: Oligarchy, Collapse, and the Crisis of Civilization*, social scientist Kevin Mackay offers an elaborate explanation of the converging crises currently being faced, focusing on the oligarchy as the defining (yet often over-looked) root cause of both environmental and social injustice and offers an insightful pathway for radical transformation. He writes that “[i]f we want a truly sustainable and equitable human civilization, then we have no choice but to directly confront the nexus of control that drives our current system of ecological destruction and human misery. *We have to take power back....*” (MacKay, 2017, p.27, emphasis original). His theory of change is grounded in Gramsci’s writing on hegemony and counter hegemony.

He argues that clear understanding of the crises and their causes is crucial for transforming them. He describes *5 patterns of interaction* characterizing the ‘system of civilization’. These are: 1) Dissociation – globalized production and distribution systems are such that individuals and institutions are disconnected from our effects (across time and space) on each other and on the earth. This disconnection leads to us being less able to make ethical and rational decisions; 2) Complexity – the huge number of interrelationships involved in our

complex natural and social systems makes it very hard to predict how any given change in the system will impact the whole; 3) Stratification – huge inequality in wealth creates mas misery, political instability and conflict; 4) Overshoot – the economic practise of industrial capitalism is dangerously exceeding ecological limits; 5) Oligarchy – “Political decision-making systems worldwide are controlled by a numerically small, wealthy elite. This serves to lock in patterns of conflict, oppression, and ecological destruction. The insular culture of elites makes it difficult for them to understand the impact of their choices on less powerful groups and on the biosphere” (Mackay, 2017, p.132).

He names the “institutionalized inequalities in wealth and power are the causes of social dysfunction and possible global collapse” he calls this the Death System, which is “driven by the interests of the oligarchic class” (Mackay, 2017, p.174). He goes on to make clear that “oligarchy is...a system of relations, not a discrete group of people with essential characteristic. In my analysis it is the relations of domination themselves, rather than the individual agents who enact them, that are the locus of systemic dysfunction” (p.174). Oligarchic control not only is driving the crisis, but acts as a huge barrier to the change movements work for.

He writes that “only a process of radical transformation can pull us through the current age of crisis and create possibility for and ecologically viable and humane future” (Mackay, 2017, p.132). He offers a clear and detailed vision of what such a future social organization would look like and then argues that to get there it is going to take a counter-hegemonic movement of movements.

Building on Gramsci, he writes that “As power in hegemonic states is based on perceived legitimacy, then a counter-hegemonic movement of movements must work to delegitimize the rule of elites, while simultaneously building the legitimacy and transformative capacity of the movement” (Mackay, 2017. p.205). A problem here is that because the government provides important social services, many people are “rationally averse” to destroying the current social order.

“To overcome this reluctance, we have to believe that the movement seeking to overthrow the oligarchic power structure is more legitimate and a better guardian of moral community than the oligarchs. This means that movement

activists have to take people's intelligence seriously and speak their language, address their concerns, and make programs of change understandable to those who will ultimately carry them out" (Mackay, 2017, p.205).

A significant challenge he sees facing such a counter-hegemonic movement would be the need to balance radical analysis and goals, with creating and maintaining movement legitimacy to a wide audience and participants, and a strategy of successful, yet gradual reform" (Mackay, 2017, p.208).

He provides a framework of 4 strategic areas, arguing that *Resistance, Education, Solidarity-building, and Alternatives-building* are all required for bringing about radical change. He writes that "ultimately, there are three factors that will determine the success or failure of a counter-hegemonic power to transform civilization": context (objective facts about the crises), consciousness (awareness and mass concern about the crises), and movement (an organized, broad based radical movement for democratic socialism and ecological sustainability) (Mackay, 2017, p.216).

Temper et al.'s Radical Transformation Studies One very promising approach to theorizing and studying transformations is offered by Temper et al., in their 2018 paper *A perspective on radical transformations to sustainability: resistances, movements and alternatives*. They offer a framework that 1) centers the roles that grassroots social movements play, 2) is based, is committed to developing theory with people most impacted by the status quo, 3) have power at the heart of their analysis, and 4) are focused on systemic change that incorporates both social and ecological dimensions. As such it incorporates most of the criteria we used in bringing together the theories of change in this chapter.

Emphasizing the role of environmental conflict, resistance and the crucial role of social movements, specifically environmental justice (EJ) movements as important agents of transformation, this paper offers a "conceptual framework for understanding transformations through a power analysis that aims to confront and subvert hegemonic power relations; that is, multi-dimensional and intersectional; balancing ecological concerns with social, economic, cultural and democratic spheres; and is multi-scalar, and mindful of impacts across place and

space” (Temper et al., 2018, p.1). Their work seeks to help develop better understanding of transformation processes but also to actively support movements in bringing change.

They helpfully distinguish between various forms of change. ‘Transitions’ are change processes managed in a relatively orderly fashion, through existing structure guided by dominant forms of knowledge, often emphasize technological innovation and working towards some known but vague end point. Transformations on the other hand, involve “more diverse, emergent and unruly political alignments, more about social innovations, challenging incumbent structures, subject to incommensurable knowledges and pursuing contending (even unknown) ends” (Stirling, 2015, p. 54, quoted in Temper 2018, p.2). Transformational change itself can be understood as taking various forms, including technocentric, marketized, state-led and citizen-led (Scoones et al., 2015). Temper et al. point out that citizen (and movement)-led transformations are undertheorized in literature on sustainability transformations and contend that “[g]iven that social movements by definition aim towards social transformation of the current system and that EJ movements are specifically committed to social mobilization to bring about more sustainable and equitable futures, the lack of attention to their role as transformative agents in the change process represents a significant gap in our understanding of transformation” (Temper et al., 2018, p.3)

They point out that “While there is broad acknowledgment, a transformation to sustainability requires a radical shift.....there is less consensus about what the “radical” in radical transformations means (Temper et al., 2018, p.5). Citing Pugh (2009), they point out that radical is derived from the Latin ‘radix’ which means ‘roots’. They write that “a radical transformation not only digs the Roots of a problem, but also engages with turning it over by creating new societal meanings and practices” (Temper et al., 2018, p.2). Presumably because they share common root causes, radical transformation inherently calls for addressing social justice and power inequities as well as environmental issues (Temper et al., 2018).

To shed further light on the differences between radical and non-radical change, they look to Nancy Fraser’s distinction between affirmative vs. transformative change (Fraser, 1995).

Affirmative approaches seek, for example, to reduce income inequality through transfer of material resources to marginalized groups (e.g. welfare state). “However, these remedies tend to leave intact the conditions, such as the capitalist mode of production, that were responsible for generating income inequality in the first place” (Temper et al., 2018, p.5). Transformative approaches, on the other hand, target the root causes of inequality, for example through “redistributing income, reorganizing the division of labour, subjecting investment to democratic decision-making, or transforming other basic economic structures” (Fraser 1995, p.73, cited in Temper et al., 2018, p.5).

An overarching way to talk about these different kinds of change is in terms of reform versus radical change. Initiatives that address only with the symptoms of a problem can be considered reformist, distinguishing them from initiatives and movements that “are confronting the basic structural reasons for unsustainability, inequity and injustice, such as capitalism, patriarchy, state centrism, or other inequities in power.... We call these transformative or radical alternatives” (Temper, 2018, p.6)

Their theory of change names ecological conflict as a crucial first step of radical transformation. Conflicts involve communities and/or movements collectively questioning and resisting the status-quo. Temper et al use the concept of “cognitive liberation” (McAdams, 2010), to describe the required move from hopelessness in the face of oppression and destruction to a shared willingness and readiness to challenge them. They emphasize a *conflict transformations approach* to thinking through how conflicts can lead to transformation, rather than compromise or negotiation approaches which leads to maintenance of the status quo. Conflicts, “by unearthing and making injustices visible, conflicts become catalysts for social change” (Temper et al., 2018, p.7; see also Dukes, 1996; Lederach, 1995).

They refer to Monedero’s (2009) theory of change, to situate this first step in a broader process of transformation. His theory outlines these 5 key stages of change: *doler* (hurting), *saber* (knowing), *querer* (desiring), *(poder)* empowering, *hacer* (doing) and he argues that “hurting, and being able to critically locate and analyze the causes and the sources of this pain, and acknowledging the possibility to confront and change it, is the first essential step in social transformation (Temper et al., 2018, p.7)

An important contribution of this framework to understanding transformative change is in their conceptual work linking the processes of resisting the status quo with the development of alternatives to it. They borrow Gibson-Graham's definition of alternatives as follows:

“Alternatives can be understood as practices, performances, systems, structures, policies, processes, technologies, and concepts/frameworks, practiced or proposed/ propagated by any collective or individual, communities, social enterprises, etc. that usurp, challenge the capitalist mainstream and that reflect a diversity of exchange relations, social networks, forms of collective action and human experiences in different places and regions” (Temper et al. 2018, p.12; see Gibson-Graham, 2006).

They cite Paul Robbins' concept of the “hatchet and seed” approach (Robbins, 2004) which involves a dual task of deconstructing the old systems, relations and ideas and creating the new. They write “by linking conflicts and alternatives, we can better understand the interconnections between these various ways of impacting on power and how movements move from defensive to pro-active actions” (Temper et al., 2018, p.14)

Power This framework emphasizes the need for strategies to be based in a nuanced understanding of power. “A radical perspective on transformation calls for an explicit engagement with the issue of power...It is precisely by impacting on hegemonic power structures that [change can happen]” (Temper et al., 2018, p.8). Temper et al, like Green and others mentioned in previous sections, distinguish between various forms of power. They discuss power as domination being wielded in 3 forms:

- *visible (or institutional or structural);*
 - “manifested through decision-making bodies (institutions) where issues of public interest, such as legal frameworks, regulations and public policies, are decided (e.g. parliaments, legislative assemblies, formal advisory bodies). This is the public space where different actors display their strategies to assert their rights and interest. Visible power is also manifested through economic frameworks that

shape economic activities and productive systems in society” (Temper et al, 2018, p. 8)

- *hidden power (people and networks or relational or associative power)* (see Foucault, 1971 and Long and Van Der Ploeg, 1989);
 - “...power is exercised in a “hidden” way by incumbent powers attempting to maintain their privileged position in society, by creating barriers to participation, excluding issues from the public agenda or controlling political decisions “behind the scene”. In other words, the power of domination is exercised also by people and power networks (Long and Van Der Ploeg 1989), which are organized to ensure that their interests and worldviews prevail over those of others” (Temper et al., 2018, p.9)
- *And invisible power (or cultural or discursive)* (see Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1980, Foucault, 1971, Galtung 1990)
 - power also “works in an ‘invisible’ way through discursive practices, narratives, worldviews, knowledge, behaviours and thoughts that are assimilated by society as true without public questioning (Foucault, 1971). This invisible, capillary, subtle form of power often takes the shape in practice of cultural violence, through the imposition of value and belief systems that exclude or violate the physical, moral or cultural integrity of certain social groups by underestimating their own value and belief systems. Here, people may see certain forms of domination over them as “natural” or immutable, and, therefore, remain unquestioned. In this way, invisible power and hidden power often act together, one controlling the world of ideas and the other controlling the world of decisions.” (Temper et al., 2018, p.8)

The main thrust of the treatment of power in their framework is that to create radical transformation, agents of change must “generate strategies to impact on these three areas in which power is concentrated: (a) institutions, legal and economic frameworks, (b) on people and

their networks, and (c) in discourses, narratives and ways of seeing the world” (Temper et al., 2018, p. 9). We need to know “how and when to impact on each one of the types of hegemonic power” (ibid). They provide interesting insight about how the EJ movements the authors are each involved with do so.

Dimensions/spheres of transformation Efforts for social change that focus on confronting one dimension of injustice/ unsustainability can make worse other forms or dimensions of injustice/unsustainability. In an effort to develop a framework for thinking about transformations that do not risk such trade-offs, Temper et al. outline 5 dimensions, or spheres, that need to be considered. These are *Ecological integrity and resilience*, *Social well-being and justice*, *Direct and delegated democracy*, *Economic democracy*, *Cultural diversity and knowledge democracy*. They are “inter-related, interlocking dimensions/spheres, seen as an integrated whole” (Temper et al., 2018, p.11). These 5 dimensions can help activists and scholars answer questions such as “What changes or what is transformed as a result of the strategies used by EJ movements? How just and sustainable are these transformations?” (Ibid)

Scales Their framework, leaning on systems thinking, also emphasizes the need to think across three kinds of scales: *spatial scales*, *temporal scales* and *human/societal scales*. They argue the need to think about the ways change efforts and outcomes can move through these 3 scales. While the first two scales are fairly self-explanatory, the third refers to the idea that transformations happen at the level of the individual human (e.g. shift in worldviews), the level of social movements, communities (e.g. stronger social ties, new strategies) or societal levels (e.g. new institutions or governance structures) and that there are important interrelations between these. These considerations of scale can help activists and scholars understand more scalar dynamics more clearly and strategize accordingly about key questions such as:

“how do transformations at one scale impact others across scales? How do processes of transformation, the building of alternatives and the stitching together of new forms of governance/production/being diffuse and translate across space? Finally, can we consider something transformative if change is confined to the

very local or small scale (even down to the family unit or to individual experience), or must transformation entail an increasing sphere of influence?” (Temper et al., 2018, p.12).

An interesting insight in their discussion of spatial scale is their distinguishing between scaling up and scaling out:

“The emphasis is on out-scaling alternative initiatives, rather than upscaling them. In the latter, a single initiative attempts to become bigger and bigger, often leading to the replication of bureaucratic, top-down structures that defeat the principles of democracy that the initiative may have started with, whereas in the former, different actors and organisations and communities learn from each other, absorb the key principles and processes, and attempt transformations in their own areas and sectors mindful of local/sectoral particularities” (Temper et al., 2018, p.13).

Overall, their Radical Transformations framework contributes important insight that can help scholars understand change processes more clearly and importantly, help movements navigate change more effectively. It also provides conceptual language to help scholars and movement actors work together towards shared transformative goals. Given that this framework meets most of the criteria laid out at the beginning of this chapter, we’ve given it extra attention.

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