

The 2017 United Nations Climate Summit: Women Fighting for System Change and Building the Commons at COP23 in Bonn, Germany

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Abstract: This contribution presents a “commoning ecofeminist analysis” of the actions and perspectives of selected activists within Ende Gelände (Here and No Further), Idle No More, and La Vía Campesina (The Peasant’s Way) who are seeking system change as expressed at the 23rd Conference of Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from 6 to 17 November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. The analysis finds that women’s struggles for the commons, understood as cooperative control over the means of life, fundamentally challenge capitalist relations and affirm transformative alternatives. Given this revolutionary potential it follows that alliances, especially with those Indigenous women and women of colour who are engaged in commoning, are crucial to making the epochal transition from ecocidal fossil capitalism to regenerative solar commoning.

Keywords: gender, commons, climate change, extractivism, fossil fuels, food sovereignty, COP23, Ende Gelände, Idle No More, La Vía Campesina.

Introduction: System change and Ecofeminism at COP23

There has been a marked increase in the recognition that women are at the forefront of actions to bring forward a new epoch (WECAN 2017; Friends of the Earth 2016; Shiva 2016; Thomas-Muller 2016, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance 2015). The central focus of especially Indigenous women, women of colour and many white women—within their

movements—is challenging Big Oil and Big Agribusiness while building the commons. Affirming the commons means affirming social relations that are horizontal, not vertical. These commoning social relations are especially relevant to the defense of territories against enclosures, typically perpetrated by extractive industries (*extractivism*). Commoning is defined here as class struggle for collective control over and “direct access to social wealth, access that is not mediated by competitive market relations” (De Angelis 2003). The commoning political economy stops fossil pollution by relying on renewable energy in all its forms. This is why we talk about solar commoning being both a form of resistance and an alternative to ecocidal fossil capitalism. Specifically, solar commoning refers to a post capitalist epoch that is energized by shared participation in the web of life, of which renewable energy is an integral part.

Caring for Nature, including families by securing food, water, fuel, clean air, medical and other needs, requires direct access to the material commons and to peaceful community relations. Given the division of labour under capitalism, this work is overwhelmingly women’s social responsibility (Waring 1995). According to Federici (2012, 143), “historically and in our time, women more than men depend on access to communal resources, and have been most committed to their defense.” For example, “water is life” was the material and spiritual foundation of the 2016 Standing Rock uprising against the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota, USA, led by Indigenous women.

This review examines selected actions and statements by networked women activists who are defending and building the commons and who brought their campaigns to the 23rd Conference of Parties (COP23) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). From 6 to 18 November 2017, 195 world governments, hosted by Fiji,

met in Bonn, Germany, to determine how to implement the 2015 Paris Climate Accord. In parallel, hundreds of social movements met to oppose business-as-usual and to promote climate justice. The selected actions and statements discussed here arise from activists connected to three social movements: Ende Gelände (Here, and No Further), a German-based, European network that opposes the expansion of coal power; the Idle No More movement that campaigns to defend Indigenous peoples' rights and sovereignty and; La Vía Campesina, (The Peasant's Way), a global movement for food sovereignty and ecological agriculture (*agroecology*). I centralize these movements in order to draw out the gendered, ethnicized class dimensions of activism for system change. Specifically, these networks are chosen because women are prominent in them. Furthermore, these networks address food and energy relations that are core to capitalism and its negation by commoners in resistance. This study treats activism at COP23 as a window into the broader global mobilization for system change that is increasingly becoming an intersecting movement of social movements for the well-being and survival of life on Earth.

The selected Ende Gelände, Idle No More, and La Vía Campesina activists' campaigns are rooted in an historical understanding that capitalists' profitability depends inherently on women's unwaged work and on non-human Nature. Simultaneously and consistently, these campaigners recognize that women are central agents of transformation. These women and their allies' actions to refuse exploitation and defend Nature are revolutionary for two reasons: (i) capitalists' profitability requires the unwaged work of women to produce and reproduce labour power (Mies 1986) and (ii) capitalists require non-human Nature, especially fossil energy, to make profits (Turner 2012). This contribution highlights and explains the reality that specific women and their allies are taking action to refuse human

exploitation and fossil extraction while affirming the commons. Allied women's activism targets capitalists' indispensable commodities: labour power, its food requirements and fossil energy. Hence, this activism is pivotal to ending the capitalist epoch and to building a solar commoning epoch (Giacomini and Turner 2014; Malm 2016). Actions constitute "commoning ecofeminism" if they (i) are taken on the basis of a recognition that the exploitation of women and all Nature is central to capitalism, (ii) stand against that exploitation, and (iii) affirm life-centred alternatives (Giacomini 2016a). Commoning ecofeminist praxis, it is argued, is crucial for expanding system change praxis that fundamentally challenges capitalist social relations. This praxis is a prerequisite for abating and reversing disaster capitalism's core, foundational food-energy-climate crises.

Ende Gelände (Here and No Further): A Globally Coordinated Action to Shut Down Fossil Fuels and Transcend Capitalism

Ende Gelände (German: "Here and No Further") is a joint initiative by German and other European organizations fighting coal and nuclear power. The initiative includes a cross-section of groups from the German climate camps, the Hambacher Forest occupation, and environmental and left political movements. The campaigners call their movement "Here and No Further" because they are creating physical barriers, with their bodies and direct actions, to stop the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, especially coal. In August 2015 Ende Gelände organized a large scale civil disobedience action to shut down the Rhineland's Garzweiler opencast coal mine owned by the huge German energy company, RWE. Again, in May 2016, in coordination with the worldwide "Break Free from Fossil Fuels" coordinated, simultaneous direct action against multiple subsidiaries of fossil energy corporations, Ende Gelände activists initiated a 48 hour blockade of the supply of coal to a

power plant in Lusatia.

Ende Gelände seeks broad system change by means of non-violent direct action to keep fossil fuels in the ground. In contrast to initiatives by Big Green organizations, Ende Gelände works toward a renewable energy society that builds popular, collective control over energy by the 99 percent:

Ende Gelände demands an immediate stop to coal mining and an *[sic]* just transition to a social and ecological society. We want to move to a society based on 100% renewable energy and grassroots democracy. This would involve transforming out [of] an economy into one not based on profit and constant growth, but on respect for the environment and a 'good life' for all. We are fighting for climate justice, that is, solidarity with those who are most severely affected by climate change and an unfair economic system. We take the '1.5 degree target' seriously: for a realistic change to stop global warming, we must leave most of the fossil fuels reserves in the ground. ... Neither the Paris agreement nor the German climate protection plans provide a pathway for phasing out fossil fuels so rapidly. So we are asking for people not to leave the future of our climate up to governments and big business but rather than *[sic]* take responsibility (Ende Gelände 2016).

Fifty kilometers west of the climate summit in Bonn sits the Hambach opencast lignite coal mine, the largest mine in Europe and one of the continent's major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (Watts 2017). The UN climate meetings are chronically marred by contradictions and conflicts of interest. "Corporate capture" reports from the opening days of the Bonn meeting exposed the fact that fossil fuel, nuclear, and agribusiness corporations influence the outcomes of the negotiations in order to profit from the climate crisis and maintain accumulation itself (Corporate Accountability 2017). But again in Bonn as at other UN climate summits, paralysis from above was met by mobilization from below (Bond 2012). On November 5, 2017, the day before the UN summit began, Ende Gelände organized over 4,000 people from dozens of countries across the world to execute civil disobedience that shut down the emblematic coal mine. The action forced the energy company, RWE, to stop the operation of three massive coal excavators and one conveyor belt in the mine (Ende

Gelände 2017). Organizers celebrated, proclaiming, “[f]or one day, the destruction ceased” (Ende Gelände 2017).

The people’s message was clear: we will not wait for the slow pace of negotiations nor for the disasters built into the pro-corporate Paris Agreement, which does not provide the mechanisms for Parties to limit emissions under the already dangerous 1.5 degree Celsius target. Ende Gelände showed the world that there is a growing movement to take collective and autonomous action to protect Earth systems and all life. Ende Gelände acted on the basis of a recognition that the only effective strategy to limit global warming is to stop fossil fuel production at the source. They did so following the lead of women, for the most part, from Indigenous and frontline communities in Nigeria (Turner and Brownhill 2004; Bassey 2016), Ecuador (EJOLT 2013), and other territories where people have been fighting extractivism for generations. Importantly, in shutting down Europe’s largest coal mine in 2017, Ende Gelände built on the world historic nine-month Indigenous standoff in 2016 against Energy Transfer Partner’s Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota. The coal mine shutdown concentrated the new ethos: “Standing Rock is everywhere” (LeBlanc, quoted in Jaffe 2017).

I participated in the November 5, 2017 mine shutdown. In our thousands we drew the line against imminent, deadly chaos. We viewed the Ende Gelände movement as a social force of world historical importance. This is because the movement signals the maturing of an emerging ecofeminist commoning epoch:

First, not only did the action involve massive numbers of people in shutting down one of the largest mines in Europe, but also it was an action joined by movement delegates from across the globe. These 4,000 people went back home, poised to share the experience with their communities and organizations. The momentum to globalize direct blockage of fossil

infrastructure is building. The possibilities for repeat actions are high. Future UN climate summits can expect to see more non-violent civil disobedience to shut down major polluters, at the forefront of which are fossil energy corporations.

Second, this historic local-cum-global direct action expressed solidarity with peoples who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. We know that especially women bear the highest cost of ecological destruction (UN-IANWGE, 2009; WECAN 2017). Organizers of Ende Gelände affirm that “[c]ountries such as Germany must face their historical responsibility in global warming.” This responsibility means that “[p]hasing out coal and all fossil energies cannot be negotiated. This measure is necessary to give those affected by climate change – now and in the future – a chance to live a good life” (Ende Gelände 2017).

Before heading into the coal mine on January 5, 2017, activists rallied to hear the political perspectives of people who are most impacted by extractivism and climate change. Speakers included Indigenous peoples fighting to protect their territories in the USA, Indonesia and the Amazon; activists fighting coal in South Africa, and peasants in La Vía Campesina fighting agribusiness extractivism. The rally coincided with by the Pacific Climate Warriors ceremony 200 kilometers away in Mannheim that drew attention to the threats of the climate crisis to small Island states and territories (Pacific Climate Warriors 2017).

For five years anti-coal militants have been living in treehouses in Hambach forest to prevent expansion of the opencast mine. Indigo is a young woman living full time at the forest occupation. On November 16, 2017, she told Democracy Now that “we will not stop destroying this planet if we don’t overcome capitalism and domination.” Indigo denounced the racism underpinning the false ‘coal provides jobs’ argument used by apologists to justify

the continued extraction of fossil fuels: “for me, it’s actually a racist discussion, because we talk about 20,000 to 30,000 working places in Germany where people might lose their jobs, but we’re also talking about people in the Global South already dying from climate change, and there are thousands of them dying every day. So I don’t want to talk about people losing their jobs because of [an end to] lignite mining.”

Third, this direct action was democratic. Participants were self-organized and highly disciplined. Prior to participating in Ende Gelände, we all committed to following an *action agreement*. We were to “behave in a calm and cool-headed way.” We agreed that “[e]scalation will not be provoked by us. We will not put people in danger. We will block and occupy with our bodies, but we will not destroy or damage any machinery or infrastructure in the process. ... Our action is not directed at RWE workers or the police. The safety of the activists taking part, and of the pit workers, will be our top priority” (Ende Gelände 2016). In a training session we practiced how to

- form an affinity group of trusted allies,
- make decisions based on consensus,
- be “calm and cool-headed,”
- take care of each other,
- strategically evade the police and avoid arrest, and
- deal with challenges that might arise in the event of an arrest or injury.

This discipline came from the participants’ experiences in their home communities. It was also made possible by the relationships built within affinity groups. It provides a foundation for future global action.

The fourth way in which the mine stoppage signaled a growth in commoning is that many within Ende Gelände were guided by queer feminist praxis,ⁱ evident in at least two moments:

One, the four thousand-person action was organized into five sections, called *fingers*, to carry out specific actions. Within these were several blocks. My affinity group joined the *green finger* in what was called the *queer feminist* block. The queer feminist block emerged in response, and as an alternative, to a direct action culture that is aggressive, macho and individualistic. The queer feminists in the green finger emphasized shared power and care for each other's physical and emotional well-being. Rather than the primary objective being to get into the mine oneself at all costs, our primary objective was to get into the mine together through collective decisions and succeeding as a group. This action philosophy is grounded in an understanding that our strength and ability to succeed is not found in our competitive individualism but rather in collective coordination of our diverse experiences, skills and sources of power. This methodology builds the commons. It seeks to build power from the bottom up and affirm horizontal social relations. Our praxis molded the relations that are necessary for a prolonged, non-violent people's war.

Two, it was clear from our slogans and chants that the political objectives of those within the queer feminist block were aimed not only at the fossil corporations but also at capitalism as a whole. Our chants denounced all modes of domination that constitute capitalist relations, especially patriarchy, transphobia, anti-LGBTQI2S,ⁱⁱ racism and xenophobia. Placards and banners read "Refugees Welcome," "Queer we Go," and "Queer Power Cools the Climate." In addition to anti-coal oratory, other political messages spoke of the kind of world we seek: "No borders, no nations, no coal power stations," "We're here, we're queer, the end of coal is near," "We are unstoppable, another world is possible," and the oft-repeated chant "A, anti, anticapitalista." These popular revolutionary cultural expressions came from and were inclusive of those who are most exploited and dominated

by capitalism.

The strength of commoning politics as expressed by global actors at this coal shutdown signaled the emergence and maturing of a new epoch at the intersection and convergence of class struggles for fundamental system change. Signals of an epoch shift were also evident on the streets and in political discussions in Bonn.

Women within Idle No More Challenge Extractivism and Affirm Commoning

Isabella Zizi is a Northern Cheyenne Arikara and Muskogee Creek youth organizer from Idle No More SF Bay in San Francisco, California. On 13 November 2017 at a COP23 side event in Bonn, Zizi provided a concrete and rich summary of what the Indigenous women in her network and their allies are doing to challenge extractivism and build alternatives. Idle No More is a remarkable mobilization of grassroots and frontline communities initiated in Canada-Turtle Island in 2012-13 by Indigenous women, and joined by Indigenous men and allies from amongst settler communities, to defend treaties and Indigenous territories. Many members of Idle No More, including Zizi, have been strengthening international connections to challenge fossil fuels and the colonialism of energy extractivism. Fossil colonialism is core to capitalist accumulation as a whole. These global connections are being built by signatories of the 2015 Indigenous Women of the Americas Protecting Mother Earth Treaty (Indigenous Rising 2015). Non-Indigenous women are supporting the Treaty by political action in defense of Mother Earth (Grassroots Global Justice Alliance 2016).

Zizi explained that the territory where she lives is being destroyed by Chevron's oil refinery. In challenging fossil capital Zizi (2017) reported that,

[T]he Indigenous Women of the Americas Defending Mother Earth Treaty has brought together women from North and South America together to stand up, to

draw that line and say enough is enough. We as women are strongly connected to the Earth, especially us as Indigenous women. We have that connection to stand strong with each other. [As Treaty signatories,] our obligations are two: one is to conduct new moon ceremonies every month to come together with women and allies to pray for renewal: renewal of our own actions within our cities and places where we live. The other obligation is non-violent direct actions outside of the places that are causing harms, whether it is refineries or places where fossil fuels are consumed. We have done divestment movements from the big banks and we were able to divest millions of dollars. We have gone to city council meetings when it comes to [defending] Indigenous rights to practice our religion freely. There is a lot to cover but it is such an honour. They call me a young grandmother, because of the guidance and leadership and knowledge that they were able to pass to me. I pass that on to you all. You all can be that grandmother within yourself, you can pass that on to your children, your great, great, great grandchildren.

Zizi highlighted aspects of value chain activism. This strategy involves the exercise of counterpower at multiple links of the capitalists' value chains—from the wellhead to the “refineries,” to the “places where fossil fuels are consumed,” and to the “big banks” that finance destruction. Direct actions at multiple sites of the capitalists' value chains weaken the capital relation as a whole and provide openings for alternatives to emerge. The 2015 Indigenous Women of the Americas Defending Mother Earth Treaty unites women across multiple sites of corporate profit making. For example, Zizi cited the fossil fuel divestment movement. In March 2017 the city of San Francisco divested \$1.2 billion from companies and banks financing the Dakota Access Pipeline (Telesur 2017). By late 2017 more than \$5 billion had been divested from this pipeline's financiers (Fogarty 2017). Fossil fuel divestment activists, including women within the 2017 Indigenous Women's Divestment Delegations to European banks, are successfully compelling major investors to withdraw financial support from extractive industries (WECAN 2017b).

Indigenous women throughout the Americas are taking simultaneous cross-border direct action to stop Big Oil's operations at multiple points. They have pledged to do so together.

Specifically, the 2015 Indigenous Women's Treaty embraces women from the US, Ecuador, and Canada who are fighting against the expansion of fossil infrastructure. Big Oil's value chain is a template for this resistance. In Bonn, Zizi reported that in Richmond, California, women within Idle No More SF Bay are challenging the expansion of Chevron's giant oil refinery which in 2015 processed 250,000 barrels per day (b/d) (Platts Commodity News 2015). One percent of the crude oil processed in Chevron's refinery comes from the Amazon (Borealis Centre of Environmental and Trade Research, data in Amazon Watch 2016, 7).ⁱⁱⁱ In Ecuador's Amazon and highlands, Indigenous women and allied men have for decades mobilized against oil exploitation. This mobilization has involved direct actions as well as women's marches, for instance, in 2013 from the Amazon to Puyo and onto Quito (Pachamama Alliance 2013; Acción Ecológica 2017). In November 2017 a massive, two-week long march from Puyo to Quito resulted in major victories against extractivism. President Lenin Moreno committed to ending new mining concessions in Indigenous territories and to reinstating an Indigenous bilingual education program (Amazon Watch 2017).

Chevron's Richmond refinery also processes heavy crude oil from Alberta's Athabasca tar sands. In 2016 the Canadian government approved Kinder Morgan's massive Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion and Tanker Project. Big Oil wants this pipeline in order to evacuate ever more barrels of the highly polluting tar sands crude from its landlocked location. Kinder Morgan's proposed pipeline expansion is intended to increase the supply of oil to West Coast refineries by 690 percent, from 100,000 b/d in 2013 to 790,000 b/d by 2040 (NRDC 2015, 4). This supply will feed Chevron's complex in Richmond where Idle No More SF Bay is organizing opposition. As of 2017-18, both the tar sands giga project and

Kinder Morgan's pipeline are facing growing resistance (Larson 2017). In western Canada the Secwepemc Women's Warrior Society and the Tiny House Warriors (2017) have declared that Kinder Morgan will be "refused passage" through their land. They state that "[w]e stand resolutely together against any and all threats to our peoples, our women, our two-spirits, our children, our lands, the wildlife, the salmon, the waterways."

Since 2016 the women signatories to the Indigenous Women of the America's Treaty have been joined by over 140 Indigenous communities who have signed on to the Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion. This Treaty commits signatories "to officially prohibit and to agree to collectively challenge and resist the use of our territories and coasts in connection with the expansion of the production of the Alberta Tar Sands, including the transport of such expanded production, whether by pipeline, rail or tanker" (Treaty Alliance 2017).

These coinciding efforts to stop Big Oil, specifically Chevron, in Richmond, California, in Ecuador, and the Canadian tar sands builds upon earlier global connections forged by fossil capitalists' value chains. Especially notable is the July 2002 eleven-day shutdown by women of Chevron's giant 450,000 b/d oil export terminal in Forcados in the Niger Delta (Turner and Brownhill 2004, 64). This shutdown directly inspired "No War for Oil" nakedness protests by women in California, that went viral worldwide. Demonstrators were opposing the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Women used their naked bodies to spell out in gigantic letters "Peace." Images circulated on emerging social media spaces, igniting more nakedness actions by protestors around the world, including in Argentina and Antarctica (Turner and Brownhill 2004, 71; Baring Witness 2004).

The commitment outlined in the Indigenous Women of the Americas Treaty is part of a

long history of direct action by women and allied men across the world to “keep the oil in the soil” and to elaborate life-centred political economies (Turner and Brownhill 2004, 2006; EJOLT 2013). As Zizi pointed out, women’s connections to the Earth reinforced by their connections arising from the global infrastructure of the oil industry itself constitute immense sources of social power for those who “stand up, to draw that line and say enough is enough” (Zizi 2017; Global Grassroots Justice Alliance 2016). The Treaty Alliance against Tar Sands Expansion supports women’s shutdown campaigns at the point of petroleum extraction and all the way downstream.

I now turn to the final instance of system change activism at COP23 exemplified by La Vía Campesina’s transformative ecofeminist initiatives.

La Vía Campesina’s Fight against Agribusiness and for the Expansion of the Commons

La Vía Campesina is a 200 million strong global movement of peasants, small-and-medium-scale farmers, Indigenous peoples, landless workers, women, youth and gender non-conforming people. The movement has coordinated global actions against agribusiness and promoted alternatives under the rubric of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty involves expanded commoning by way of securing popular democratic control over the food system and promoting ecologically regenerative agriculture. Agroecology foregrounds horizontal social relations. La Vía Campesina defines agroecology as a path toward food sovereignty that is both a method of food production and a political movement against agribusiness enclosures and for the commons. According to La Vía Campesina’s (2015) Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology, “[c]ollective rights and access to the commons are a fundamental pillar of agroecology. We share access to territories that are the home to many different peer groups, and we have sophisticated customary systems for regulating access

and avoiding conflicts that we want to preserve and to strengthen.”

La Vía Campesina insists that climate justice is grounded in food sovereignty and agroecology (Giacomini 2016b). In short, peasant agroecology “feeds the world and cools down the earth” (Vía Campesina 2009, 1). In contrast, agribusiness seeks expanded profits from enclosures of land, seeds, soil and carbon (Vía Campesina 2014) thereby heating up the Earth. In a November 9, 2017 press release La Vía Campesina explained that the peasants’ “proposals for addressing the climate crisis get to the root cause of the problem — corporate control over decision-making and the resulting processes of land and water grabbing, peasant criminalization and human rights abuses in the transnational supply chains used to produce food” (La Vía Campesina 2017a).

On a November 6, 2017 panel in Bonn organized by La Vía Campesina and the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Katia Aviléz-Vásquez from Organization Boricúa for Agroecology in Puerto Rico explained that in the aftermath of the September 2017 hurricanes that rocked the island, there was a marked increase in violence against women. In the face of multiple violations, women came to the fore as central agents in a process of *just transition*:

In Puerto Rico, after the hurricanes of September 2017, the natural forces quickly turned into disastrous social problems created by the men in power. Those most affected were women. In almost every work brigade that was organized to get people resources, the major emergency was getting women to safety because the conditions that were abusive before had become literally life or death. In one instance, in Vieques, we used a big luggage that was brought in with food to help a woman escape an abusive partner. Women bear the brunt of the damage when a disaster happens. But then we also have the biggest role in the recovery. Most of those who are organizing in the work brigades are women. However, the spokespeople and decision makers still tend to be mostly men because the characteristics associated with those who pick up the microphone and stand up are mostly masculine characteristics. We are taught to refuse the feminine. In talking about a just transition in the Caribbean, it is very important to challenge this notion of what we consider to be strong, what we consider to be leadership, and what we

consider to be success. Mother Earth is feminine. The powerful feminine sent us a hurricane to shake us up and remind us that these men need to stop their addiction to oil and fossil fuels (Aviléz-Vásquez in La Vía Campesina 2017b, 4).

According to this perspective, making the transition from climate destroying capitalism to a fundamentally different society means challenging capitalist patriarchy. This means challenging the dominance of men over women and men's "addiction to oil and fossil fuels"—both of which underpin present-day capitalist relations. This view is consistent with La Vía Campesina's analysis recognizes that food sovereignty—establishing collective control over the means of life—involves putting an end to gendered exploitation and violence against women (Desmarais 2015, 157), and that ending gendered violence requires ending agribusiness' commodification (La Vía Campesina Internationale 2012, 23).

Agribusiness separates women from their means of life and devalues women's work in agriculture, a process Maria Mies (1986, 110) calls "housewifeization." This historical process gives rise to hierarchical relations between women and men. Under capitalism men, with few exceptions, are socialized to control women in order to ensure that the products of women's wageless, "invisible" labour are readily available to produce commodities including labour power that are essential to the enhancement of corporations' bottom lines. A growing body of literature shows that environmental disasters reinforce existing inequalities between women and men and increase instances of men's violence against women (Le Masson et al. 2016).

At the November 2017 Bonn event, Aviléz-Vásquez called for a recognition of the power of women and the Earth as a means to end the co-violation of women and of all Nature. Two months after the hurricanes recovery efforts in Puerto Rico were still largely restricted to those that were autonomously organized. The US federal government was providing little to

no support while intensifying exploitation, including through expanding debt peonage (Yulín Cruz 2017). As Aviléz-Vásquez pointed out, in the face of this application of the shock doctrine, Puerto Rican women fought for a just transition and just recovery efforts through autonomous work groups or “brigades.” These brigades are collectively organizing not to rebuild but to transform existing capitalist power relations and institutions into commons. According to Jesús Vásquez of Organization Boricúa, peasants and their allies who practice agroecology and who are organizing through the brigade system are responding to the disaster faster and with more success than are the US government agencies (Vásquez, quoted in La Vía Campesina 2017).

La Vía Campesina (2011) has stated that food sovereignty and peasant agroecology are alternatives to agribusiness and its violence against women—“[o]ur work creates and celebrates life and it is in its own [way] a form of prevention of violence.” Many men within La Vía Campesina recognize the centrality of women to the elaboration of worldwide commoning grounded in food sovereignty.

La Vía Campesina members are indispensable allies of all peoples engaged in the time-sensitive battle for system change. This is because La Vía Campesina is a grassroots movement that prioritizes the perspectives and actions of especially the communities of Indigenous and peasant women who are most exploited and threatened by capitalism. And this is because Indigenous and peasant women possess special powers consisting of territories, knowledge, skills, capacities and cosmovisions linked to the commons that offer essential groundings for elaborating a replacement system. These powers include how to grow and distribute food without fossil fuels or petrochemical feedstocks. Crucially, members of La Vía Campesina are already taking action to defend and extend solar and “soil

not oil” food and energy relations (Shiva 2008), expand biodiversity (ETC Group 2017), and “cool down the earth” (La Vía Campesina 2009, 1).

Conclusion

The above analysis finds that women activists within Ende Gelände, Idle No More and Vía Campesina are mobilizing on the basis of a recognition that capitalism threatens life by destroying or undermining the social relations and ecosystems upon which all life relies. Based on this recognition, specific women are at the forefront of action to fundamentally undermine capitalist relations and elaborate commoning horizontalism. In contrast to this commoning are very different campaigns which seek to incorporate women into existing capitalist social relations, including within the so-called “green” economy involving carbon markets and technology fixes. Commoning, including community-controlled renewable energy and agroecology, addresses the root causes of the life-threatening food-fuel-climate crisis. Commoning is at the root of a new system that overcomes corporate control over Nature and safeguards the whole web of life.

The commoning praxis of the networked women profiled here demonstrates that ecofeminist action and system change are inextricable. A transformation in gendered power is at the core of the struggles for system change. System change requires a fundamental shift in power from the “1 percent,” which monopolizes the means of life, to the “99 percent,” which more and more faces dispossession and death. Capitalists organize Nature, including humanity reduced to labour, within a global racialized and gendered hierarchy of labour power, with racialized and Indigenous women at the bottom. Therefore system change must entail transformative ecofeminist actions that prioritize the interests and initiatives of the

most exploited or threatened women. Far from being de-historicized victims of exploitation, the women and their allies within Ende Gelände, Idle No More, and La Vía Campesina fight back, tightly organized together by corporate value chains and build strength on the basis of the commoning social relations they and earlier generations have created.

The insight that system change and ecofeminism are inseparable calls for strategic action: the expanded formation of alliances between, on the one hand, women at the bottom of the capitalist hierarchy and, on the other hand, other decolonizing social groups to undermine capitalist relations and to promote commoning. Those who acknowledge and stand against the exploitation of women, prioritizing those who are most exploited and threatened under capitalism, challenge and undermine the capital relation as a whole. In contrast, the actions by those who ignore the struggles of women at the bottom of the hierarchy constitute reformism and complicity in ecocide because such actions in fact perpetuate capitalist relations, with women at the bottom paying the price. Alliances with women commoners build on the recognition that such women have the lands, territories, seeds, knowledge, skills, and community networks to “live better without oil” (Shiva 2008, 4). To the extent that these commoning initiatives are strengthened, so too is the potential for deepening and expanding transformative actions that promise to move us away from impending ecocide and closer to a climate-stable and socially just world.

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ⁱ I understand queer feminism to refer to revolutionary feminist praxis that challenges all forms of capitalist domination, including homophobia and transphobia. Queer feminism seeks to create post-capitalist political economies and cultures that are inclusive of peoples of any gender and sexual orientation.

ⁱⁱ LGBTQI2S stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex and Two-Spirit.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chevron has two refineries in California, Richmond and El Segundo. As of 2015, one percent (1,934 b/d) of the Richmond refinery's crude supply and 24 percent (56,463 b/d) of the El Segundo refinery's supply came from the Amazon (Borealis Centre of Environmental and Trade Research, data in Amazon Watch 2016, 7). Even this one percent is drawing resisters into joint action.