

# PROPAGATE POLLINATE PRACTICE

CURRICULUM TOOLS FOR A  
JUST TRANSITION





## **Order**

Overview of Pollinate Propagate Practice

Cutting the Strands of the Web of Life

Eco Means Home

Body-Earth Metaphor

Understanding the Lag Effect

Tipping Points

Control Mythologies

The Work of Love and the Love of Work:  
Resilience-Based Organizing as a Path Forward

Relationship to Place

Tales of Just Transitions:  
A Narrative Tool For Our Visions & Stories

# Overview of Propagate Pollinate Practice

## ***Propagate, Pollinate, Practice:*** **Curriculum Tools for a Just Transition**

### **Overview**

*Propagate, Pollinate, Practice: Curriculum Tools for a Just Transition* was primarily assembled to assist people that have attended a Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Strategy Retreat, which typically take place at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center in the San Francisco Bay Area. Strategy retreats are MG's signature program. They last 3-5 days and essentially focus on understanding the ecological crisis, and how to address the crisis by creating local economies that work for both people and the planet. Retreat alum have experienced many of the activities in this curriculum packet and we hope it serves as a resource that helps them organize their community in a way that builds power to meet their collective needs together. **We imagine retreat alum can use these curriculum tools for personal development around the issues and to facilitate workshops for others.**

Secondarily this packet was assembled for people that don't have a deep experience with Movement Generation through our retreats, events, partnerships or workshops. We hope the tools we offer can help you explore the contours of the ecological crisis in a solutions-oriented way for your own personal development. If you haven't participated directly with us we respectfully ask that you refrain from hosting workshops or events using the curriculum to teach others. **There are sophisticated points and strategies that can be confusing and easily misrepresented, especially if you haven't attended an MG strategy event.** So please use it as a personal learning tool for you and others.

You can learn more about Movement Generation, our analysis and strategies by subscribing to our monthly e-newsletter (sign up on our website [movementgeneration.org](http://movementgeneration.org) or text the word "movegen" to 22828 and you can sign up on your mobile device). We will send out dates and information for webinars, workshops, speaking engagements, and special

events. We'll be inviting you to take a deeper dive with us on topics like the Just Transition Strategy Framework, Worker Power for Ecological Justice, Black Liberation and Ecology, Non-Extractive Finance, and Cooperative Loan Funds.

Thanks for downloading *Propagate*, *Pollinate*, *Practice*. After you use the tools, please fill out this survey to help us continue to improve our efforts. <https://goo.gl/forms/JAF2dBCAS9f8z0bR2> we'd love to hear from you.

For questions/comments please email [mgtools@movementgeneration.org](mailto:mgtools@movementgeneration.org)



[Like us on Facebook](#)



[Follow us on Instagram](#)

[www.facebook.com/movementgeneration](http://www.facebook.com/movementgeneration)

[www.instagram.com/movementgeneration](http://www.instagram.com/movementgeneration)

### **Suggested ways to organize an agenda**

This packet was designed to allow users to create diverse training agendas of various lengths, levels of political analysis, and that use various pedagogies for a range of audiences. It includes relatively short 'stand alone' pieces that can either be inserted into staff or member meetings, or complement other training topics users may be offering. Alternatively, you can also create full-day agendas by combining multiple curriculum pieces to form a single workshop.

While we encourage you to be creative with the contents of this packet (and we look forward to learning about your innovations!) there is a basic logic to the order in which these topics are introduced. To that end, here are a couple of recommendations about how to form an agenda when using the curriculum tools.

#### **1) A few things to consider**

As mentioned above, some of the content in this packet is complex and participants deserve enough time to grapple with it, apply their own life experience in order to make it more real, and space to

discuss and integrate the information. Even when content is very accessible, holding the concepts around ecology in a political context can take more time for some people than for others. We suggest you create spacious agendas that meet your participants where they're at in their political development. For example, young people will learn much more with the interactive pieces, while an all-adult or academic audience can pack in more information in a less interactive way. (We encourage the interactive pieces for everyone, though, because it's human nature to learn by directly engaging with something :)

MG recognizes that part of the work of a Just Transition requires decolonizing education- including how learning happens in social movement spaces. We strongly recommend that workshops:

- Be designed in ways that actively confront ableism and promote access.
- Center and draw from the lived experiences and wisdom of participants.
- Include multiple modalities of learning - reading, video, conversation, somatic practice, shared work, etc. - and actively work to address access for people with learning disabilities and/or without access to formal or "higher" education.
- Integrate art, music, spirit, storytelling, food and other elements that embody the Just Transition principle "If it isn't soulful, it isn't strategic."
- Take place, in part and where possible, with access to outdoor space that allows participants to observe ecological principles in action and reflect on their relationship to land.
- Invite participants into a practice of self-governance of the space (e.g. collectively caring for the space, etc.) as part of the workshop.
- Be led by facilitators appropriate to the content (e.g. prioritizing facilitation by Black, Indigenous, POC, women and gender-oppressed peoples, etc)"

## **2) Study before you facilitate!**

It is our collective practice to be versed on the advanced version of any topic before we facilitate an introductory level curriculum. Participants often ask questions that require information and understanding beyond the curriculum contents in order to be answered well. We strongly recommend that you visit the Movement Generation website and look at the Eco-Justice 101 slideshow, as well as read the Just Transition Zine before offering these trainings. This is NOT so that you include the specific contents of these pieces into the trainings found in the curriculum, but rather so that you have a depth of familiarity with our analysis that allows you to know when a participant is “on” or “off” when they express their understanding of the information.

## **3) Always use *Eco Means Home***

Our focus as MG, and of this curriculum, is ecology. Almost everything in the packet refers to ecology, ecological justice, and/or economy. It is critical to understand the reorientation to economy and ecology, and the definition of ecological justice, that we introduce in the *Eco Means Home* curriculum. This will make it possible for everyone to understand the nuances of the analysis and strategies that are shared in the rest of the curriculum packet.

*Cutting the Strands of the Web of Life* is another piece that makes sense to introduce early on, depending on your audience and the goals of your training. The interconnectedness of everything on the planet is one of the foundations of MG’s analysis, and therefore starting off with this common understanding will support participants in viewing political content through an ecological lens.

#### 4) Day-long and multi-day agendas

If you are preparing to offer a deep dive into Ecological Justice with your staff or community members and will have one or more days to work with the curriculum tools, feel free to experiment with the order of the trainings. The order of the topics in the Table of Contents is a mild suggestion of a flow that would allow participants to build off of concepts that get progressively complex and/or rely more and more on the foundational concepts, such as *Eco Means Home* or *Cutting the Strands of the Web of Life*. That said, you know your people and we hope you find the best combination and order for these trainings to suit your folks and your goals!

#### Resources and Citations

Please note that we have placed resources and citations for each of the workshops in the respective curriculum, where appropriate. For curricula that have data, we have offered some resources for updates, which we try to do periodically for our trainings, but will likely not be regularly updating versions of this curriculum. Instead, we encourage users to do so. These resources, we hope, will also be helpful for continued learning.

#### Gratitude and Acknowledgements

First and foremost Movement Generation thanks the many generations of ancestors and freedom fighters passed-on who have led the way for our work with their dreams, prayers, sacrifices, labor and love. We are grateful to the the land that carries us everyday on the path towards ecological justice & collective liberation. For the completion of *Propagate, Pollinate Practice*, MG would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the many communities with whom we have explored, experimented and refined our analysis, frames, strategies and curriculum. There are too many to name here. Also, thank you to the MG Collective family for their emergent wisdom and collective energy that is shared through this curriculum. Special thanks to our friend Sammie Wills for designing the cover art for *Propagate, Pollinate, Practice*.

## “Crediting” Movement Generation for *Propagate, Pollinate, Practice*

We do not believe in the enclosure and ownership of ideas and reject the notion of “Intellectual Property.” Instead, we offer these resources freely through the *Creative Commons -Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike* agreement.



What this means is that you are free to use and share our curriculum; and remix, transform and build upon our curriculum so long as you commit to non-commercial use (you may not make money off of this work); provide appropriate attribution to Movement Generation and any other formations you draw upon; and share your modifications with us and the broader community under the same conditions (as commons). You also may not add further restrictions, even on things you’ve added or changed.

We ask that you respect these guidelines if you would like to use our curriculum tools and resources.

With that said, please use them!

We are putting them out in this way for the larger movement community, and we hope that the curriculum tools are useful. We consider our curriculum to be a complement to our workshops, retreats and trainings. You will find these resources most useful if you have already participated in our trainings or have experience with Ecological Justice as a framework and practice.

We understand that innovations and insights emerge from the communities who engage with this curriculum, and that process will make it stronger and more diverse; so we ask that you please share directly with us any insights, innovations, modifications or feedback on the curriculum. Please contact us at [mgtools@movementgeneration.org](mailto:mgtools@movementgeneration.org).

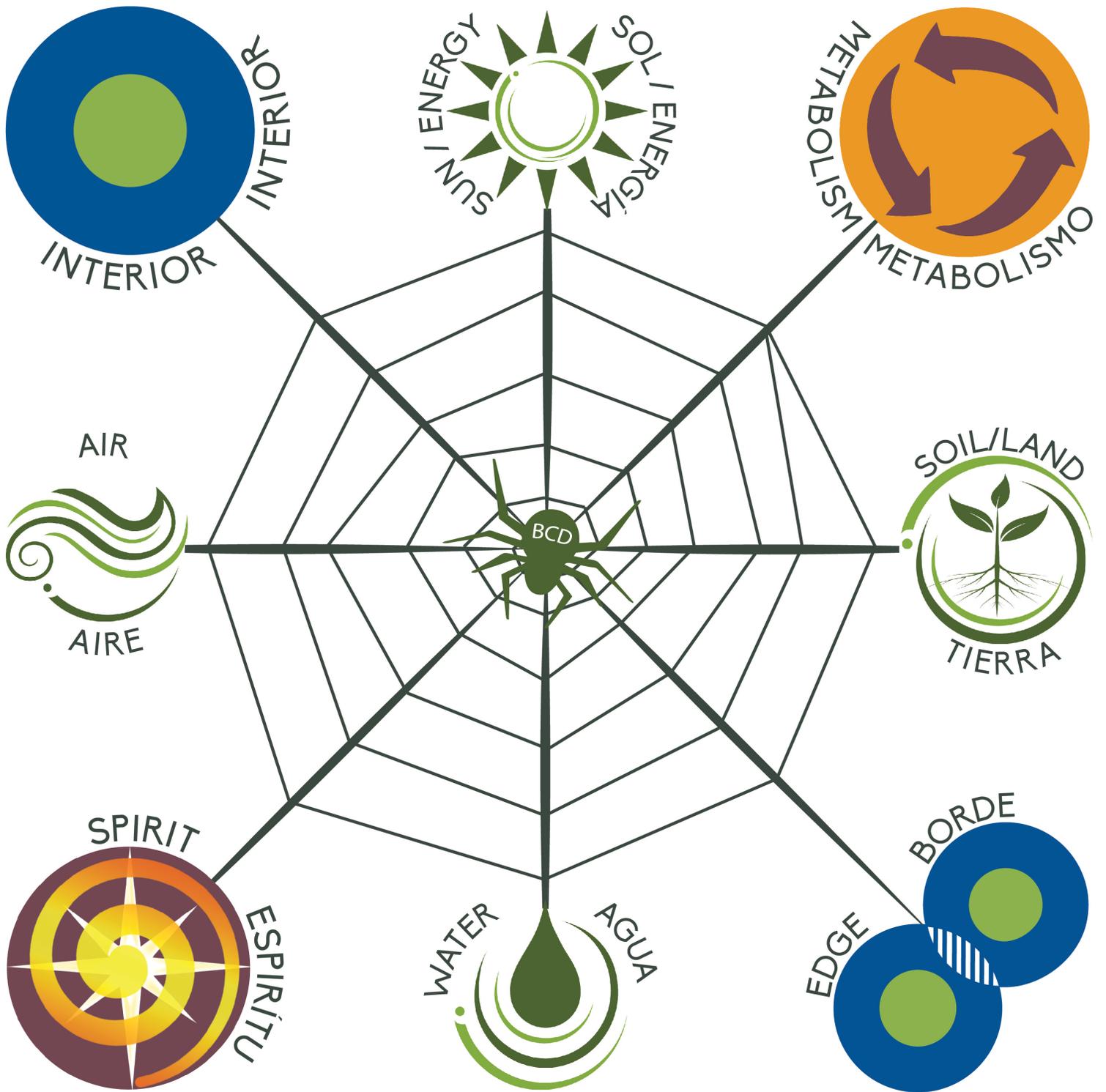
**Land, Love, and Liberation!**

## **MG Staff and Planning Committee Members**

Staff: Brooke Anderson, Carla Pérez, Deseree Fontenot, Ellen Choy, Gopal Dayaneni, Layel Camargo, Josh Healey, Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan, Mateo Nube, and Quinton Sankofa.

PC members: Cinthya Muñoz Ramos, Doria Robinson, Dave Henson, and Sara Mersha

# Cutting the Strands of the Web of Life



# Cutting the Strands of the Web of Life

---

**What Is It?** A visual, interactive activity to illustrate the global threats to the web of life.

---

**Why Do it?**

- To explain what the web of life is (the support systems for all life on earth), and how we are all dependent on the health of the web of life.
  - To demonstrate the role of living beings (the spider) to maintain and repair the web of life.
  - To experience the impact of the ecological crisis on the web of life in a visual and visceral way.
- 

**Time:** 30 minutes – 45 minutes

---

**Materials needed:**

- Ball of yarn or other inexpensive string
  - 1 or 2 pairs of scissors
  - Use the Web of Life handout with the 8 radial strands to make 8 cards – one for each radial strand of the web.
- 

**Directions:**

1. Have participants form a circle.
2. Choose a volunteer, and ask that volunteer to stay outside of the circle for the beginning part.
3. Ask participants:  
*Have you ever heard of the term “web of life”?*
4. Share:  
*The Web of Life consists all of the systems that allow life on earth to survive. This includes the elements of the natural world – the sun, the water, the air and the soil, or land. Some also believe that Spirit, or spiritual beings / gods / energies, are also an important part of the Web of Life that makes life on earth possible.*
5. Choose 8 people to be radial strands and one person to be the spider. (It is fun to choose the spider secretly before the activity begins). Pass the Web of Life Element cards to the 8 radial strands and choose one of them to start the circle. Give that person the string. Ask them to read the card  
*We are going to illustrate that Web of Life.*

out loud, then to pass the ball of string to another card radial strand person, etc. When all cards are read, have the yarn keep going around until everybody is holding it.

6. When all the cards have been read ask the last radial strand person to pass the string to another person in the circle that is not to their immediate left or right, calling out their name first. Whoever they pass to should hold on to the part of the string that reaches them, then pass the ball on to someone else while holding on to their piece of the string. Create a web of string by continuing to have participants pass the ball around, until everyone has is holding part of the web.

7. Explain:  
*This web we've created will represent that web of life that keeps life on earth alive.*

*And like any other real life spider web, our web will have a spider. And [Name of Volunteer] will be our spider.*

*In an actual spider web, the spider not only benefits from and depends on the web to eat and live, but the web also depends on the spider. The spider upkeep and maintains the health of the web. In the web of life, the 'spider' is life itself. Living beings – from humans to plants to microorganisms – are the very things that help upkeep and maintain earth and its support systems. Without the spider taking care of its web, the web would be destroyed. Similarly, Without living beings and the things they do to*

*tend to the earth, the earth's systems would no longer function in its current balanced state.*

8. Ask everyone to lift the web up to just above their heads. And ask the volunteer to head under the web to the middle of the circle.
9. Have participants cheer or snap fingers to welcome the spider to the web.
10. Pick up your scissors and explain:  
The web of life overtime has found its balance. But today, there are significant threats to the web. For example, the Amazon rain forest in South America is being clear cut everyday in order to access the minerals in the land and the timber from the trees. Slashing at the rain forests – which are like the lungs of the earth – is like cutting at the strands of the web of life.
11. Make a cut in a random place inside the web.
12. Ask participants:  
*In a spider's web, what happens when a strand is broken? (Answer: the spider feels the break, moves along the web, and repairs the break)*
13. Have the 'spider' (the volunteer in the middle) go to the broken piece in the yarn, and repair (tie back together) the yarn.
14. Explain:  
*This is what living beings do when there are threats to the web of life – we use natural processes to repair the damage done.*

*But what happens if those threats come at a faster rate?*



15. Next, using the scissors, move around the circle, continuously cutting various parts of the web created by the yarn. Start at a pace slow enough that spider is able to keep up for the first couple of cuts. Get increasingly faster to a point where the spider can't keep up any longer. With each cut, name a different threat to the web of life. See appendix below for some examples of threats you can name. Try to mix it up between global threats and local threats. This has been most effective when the local threats are examples that are very familiar to the participants of the group. Have the 'spider' try their best to move and repair the cuts as you go.

It helps to have the other participants cheering for the spider.

If you have a co-facilitator, you can both do the cutting of the strands, taking turns to cut and name a threat.

16. Once the web is clearly destroyed, and the spider is clearly having a hard time keeping up, stop cutting.

17. Process with participants:  
*What just happened?*

18. If it would draw more out from the participants, ask:  
*How did you feel in your body as you saw the strands getting cut, and the spider trying to repair the web?*

19. Ask the 'spider':  
*How was your experience trying to repair the web of life?*

20. Explain:  
*Right now, we are slashing at the web of life with all of these threats that you heard, and more. Our current economy, driven by profit and not care for people or the planet, is literally destroying our ability to keep life on earth alive. Just like our spider, earth and its living beings are not able to respond to all of the threats fast enough to maintain the web of life.*

*We have to transition out of the current economy, and put a stop to these threats. We have to take the scissors away. We must support the spider and the web of life by transitioning into an economy that regenerates the balance of systems on earth, and that protects our people and the planet. Did it occur to the person with the yarn to create more Web by throwing the ball? We can contribute to the rebuilding of the Web of Life by engaging in work that restores the Earth's ecosystems.*



**APPENDIX: SAMPLE THREATS**

<b>GLOBAL THREATS</b>	<b>LOCAL THREATS</b>
Rising global temperatures causing rising sea levels and unpredictable weather patterns	Polluting facility in an urban center, blocks from where people live (can specifically name: incinerator, oil refinery, landfill, power plant, etc)
Alberta Tar Sands development – destroying native land and livelihoods for dirty oil	Polluting and not caring for local water resources (e.g. paving over local streams, dirty dumping in rivers, fracking pollution in farm water)
Mining development in third world countries (can name specific mining operations)	Mining in local regions (name specific places and companies)
Catastrophic forest fires caused by severe drought and erosion.	Extreme freezing temperatures during the Winter, or extreme heat during the Summer.
Industrial agriculture depleting massive amounts of soil nutrients and displacing people from their land.	Gentrification of a neighborhood or city (name specific places or development projects)
Extinction of whole species and languages.	Paving over public parks or farms

**FACILITATOR NOTES:**

- Have left over yarn. The last person to get the ball has the option to throw the ball if realize they can use it to build more web.  
**Lesson:** we need to *increase* our ecological footprint at this time, rather than lessen it. Our actions can build ecological and social resiliency and help repair Earth’s systems.
- Someone may try to take the scissors away from you so you stop cutting the Web – this is good! If someone does so, acknowledge it and ask the participant to explain their thinking.  
**Lesson:** we can and must intervene in the destruction of Mother Earth.
- Notice that spider can rebuild web without attaching the same strings that were originally together, but rather by tying random strings together.  
**Lesson:** Change towards the end of thriving human communities and healthy ecosystems may not take the forms we are accustomed to, or as we think they will. We can and will develop new forms.

# Biological and Cultural Diversity: Repairing and Depending On the Web of Life

---

## KEY STRANDS OF THE WEB OF LIFE:



*AIR*



*WATER*



*LAND/SOIL*



*ENERGY*



*INTERIOR* (repository of diversity)



*EDGE* (change space, where contrasting environments meet in an ecosystem)



*METABOLISM* (the systems, cycles and relationships between them that regulate planetary life support)



*SPIRIT* (the always mysterious and unknowable whole that holds all together - we are part of that whole, but we cannot see or know it all)

The sum of all biological and cultural diversity is supported by a web of different systems and processes, like the anchoring (or radial) strands of a spider's web. The web is full of connections, and everything is dependent on everything else for the web's structure to be maintained. There are also certain key strands that keep the web attached and that are central to keeping the web from collapsing.

The spider sits in the center of the web, and can feel movement or changes anywhere in the web. If a strand is impacted or breaks, the spider goes and repairs it because if there is no web, there is no food, and if there is no food, there is no life. She is Biological and Cultural Diversity. She is all life, from the microbial to the bipedal, and the evolved inter-relationships of life. She is seed, soil and story. Her tools for maintaining her web are symbiosis and co-evolution (interdependence), zero waste, and dynamic tension (which is the process of balancing limits).

For the purposes of this metaphor we are going to say there are **8 key strands**: Air, Water, Land/Soil, Energy, Interior, Edge, Metabolism, and Spirit.

**Air:** Our atmosphere is a delicate blend of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and other elements; balanced over billions of years in relationship to soil, water, sun and life.

**Water:** Every drop of water is essentially every drop of water there has been (since long before humans first emerged) and is every drop of water there ever will be. Water does, however, constantly change from salt water, to fresh water, to vapor and solid through the complex dance with sun, soil, air and life. This is called the hydrologic cycle. Disruption of the hydrologic cycle is compromising our access to fresh water, and leading to the acidification of the oceans. This, in turn, leads to the disruption of the climactic cycle. Independently, the

disruption of the climate cycle - through the release of billions of years of stored sun's energy via burning fossil fuels - is disrupting the hydrologic cycle.

**Soil:** Composed of 45% minerals, 25% water, 25% air, and 5% organic matter (both living and dead), soil only covers 30% of the planet and is constantly transformed through the relationship between air, sun, water and life. Soil stores water and carbon; nurtures life and for most human communities defines place – and home.

**Energy:** Every single bit of energy on this planet originated from the sun, whether it is food you eat to power your body, or excess carbon stored as fossil energy a mile below the surface unleashed to drive industrial production.

**Edge:** Edge is where different environments meet in an ecosystem, blending together (ecotone). In this space two or more biotic communities meet, creating unique diversity- a key change space for evolution.

**Interior:** Interior is the stable area of a biotic community- the safe space, if you will. The interior of an ecosystem tends to have more stable relationships.

**Metabolism:** The systems, cycles and relationships between them that manage the interdependent relationships. These are the planetary life support systems, such as the climate cycle, the hydrologic cycle, the tides, the seasons, symbiosis, evolution, decomposition, etc. Some of the systems and cycles are short, repeating, observable; some, such as evolution, are long, and unpredictable.

**Spirit:** Spirit is the mystery of the whole. The term we use to capture the reality that, from within the system, we cannot see it or know it all. There are irreducible, emergent properties that we are not aware of. All traditional, evolved cultures hold some reverence for the mystery of the whole.

---

Some of these strands are obviously very important to communities and are a key site of political struggles – for instance water. Some, like edge space, are crucial to nature and ecology, but are less obviously important to us on the day-to-day, because our relationship to it is obscured, mediated and, in fact, unhealthy. **We have our priorities, but nature also has its priorities.** Whether or not these have been key to our agendas, all of these strands anchor the web and keep it together.

What humans offer to biological diversity is “evolved knowledge of place.” Culture and cosmology, or worldview, is the container of how well we navigate the relationships to a place. Traditional evolved knowledge is by its vary nature complex, incomplete and ever changing. Human communities are always part of an ecosystem – a “Basin of Relations.” Human communities require biological diversity. Rapid erosion of biological diversity simultaneously leads to and is caused by the erosion of cultural diversity; and these two facts compromises our collective survival.

The colonial logic, by the vary fact that it is derived from an intentional displacement from home, has a disruptive effect on place (just as an invasive, non-resident species, which has no

coevolved relationships in a place can decimate a stable ecosystem, changing it forever). Without any authentic, evolved relationship to place, a forest is simply lumber waiting to be cut and milled, and people are simply labor waiting to be exploited. The colonial mind has evolved a twisted wisdom of ultimate reductionism – atomization and individualism.

**What happens when you cut a strand of the web?** It depends which strand. If you cut in the middle, you are generally still stable. Ruptures to the web are to be expected, and the spider (the combined skill of bio-cultural diversity, with complex relationships and knowledge) can easily repair and restore the web. But as you continue cutting strings there is a cumulative effect and the web becomes less stable. **It might feel slow, but as you keep cutting strings you get closer and closer to collapse, and some strings have a bigger impact than others.** The more you cut, the closer you get to collapse. Resource intensive, globalized industrial production, with its linear materials flow (wasting nature and people), is cutting strands left and right.

Can you repair strings? Yes. Can you fix one piece by moving around strands? No. Since it's a web you can't fix an energy problem by creating a water problem or a metabolism problem. In fact, the only way to repair and restore the web, is to ensure that the spider can survive and thrive, enabling it to continue to be nourished so it can spin more web. If the web becomes so compromised that the spider cannot eat, the spider can not play the critical role of helping maintain the web. We are starving the spider through rapid erosion of the web. What that starvation looks like is the astronomical and rapid collapse in biological and cultural diversity. We are losing species and stories. We are eroding land and language. The more simple an ecosystem becomes (i.e. the less diversity) the less resilient it is in the face of disruptive change.

Certain strands can be considered commons: Land, Water, Energy, Air. **They are of shared importance for all of us and for nature's processes.** What does that imply for how they should be maintained and controlled? Fights to control land, water, and energy sources drove conquest and colonization going back thousands of years. **In today's world, these commons are most often held by the few as commodities, although the conquests go on.** We have been seeing a new wave of energy and water wars, over recent decades as these resources have become compromised for people (much less nature). Now air and life itself is even being commodified under carbon pricing, forest markets, and, of course, labor exploitation. **In the context of this web, to be commodified is to be systematically taken out of relationship to the other strands of this web, and to be placed into the chains of The Market.** This is the battle between the web of life and the chain of the market.

The web of life is all of what we've got to work with – the biological and cultural diversity that currently exists – all of the living world. This living web has strands that are connected – but the exploitative, oppressive system that we live in, in addition to creating all kinds of social destruction, is snipping away at the strings and we are getting close to collapse. We can fix the web, and we can best fix it by remembering that it's a web that is unraveling, and not a pie that we divide differently, or a bug in a computer program that needs a fix. Any workable solution needs to holistically integrate these strands under the control of communities who live in reverence of the whole (with Spirit), who see themselves reflected through the cycles of the day, seasons, etc (metabolism), who learn through experience and struggle (edge), who hold each other in community (interior). This web is us and all of nature, which we might not always see, but we still always depend on.

# Eco Means Home

## ECO MEANS HOME

### DESCRIPTION

The conceptual framework for “Eco means home” was introduced to Movement Generation by the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center many years ago. We’re grateful for their contributions to our analysis. This workshop focuses on redefining our understanding of “economy”, and how we understand the relationship between economy and ecology and how we define ecological justice according to this new understanding. In this workshop we introduce key foundational terms and language for communities that are striving to move a unified vision and strategy for ecological justice, climate justice and a Just Transition towards local, living, loving economies that provide all the resources needed for the people and Earth of that Place to thrive with dignity.

### WORKSHOP GOALS

- To establish a shared understanding of the true meaning of economy, ecology and ecological justice
- To support frontline base-building organizations and other movement groups in imagining what regenerative place-based economies can look like in their communities

### MATERIALS INCLUDED

- Eco Means Home paper point visuals
- Eco definitions

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Blank butcher paper
- Markers
- Masking tape

### AGENDA

Time: 1 hour

Time	Item	Description	Materials
15 min	Opening & Introductions	Introduce workshop and participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Markers for scribing</li> <li>• Butcher paper with 2 columns that say “Home” and “Economy”.</li> </ul>
30 min	Eco Means Home	Understanding Ecology & Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eco=Home paper point materials</li> <li>• Eco Definitions</li> </ul>
15 min	Closing	What everyone is taking away	

## **Opening & Introductions**

**15 MIN**

- 🗣️ Begin by introducing yourself as Facilitator(s). Provide an introduction to the space, physical location and/or host organization.

[If the facilitator(s) are not from the host community-based organization, let someone from the host organization introduce the organization and the space, if applicable]

- 🗣️ Introduce the training topic: today we'll talk about our understanding of 'economy', the way our economy affects the conditions of our communities, a vision of how things could be better, and strategies that can help us get there.

[Tailor to your specific community context]

- 🗣️ Let's have all of our participants introduce themselves so we know who is in the room, and get ourselves ready for the rest of our conversation today. Invite everyone to share:

- Name + where you live
- One word when you think of home

- 👋 Post the butcher paper with "Home" and "Economy" with only the "Home" column visible to participants. As people offer their thoughts about home, scribe their responses on the butcher paper under "Home".

- 🗣️ Briefly summarize and synthesize the one-word answers about 'Home'.



## ECO = HOME

30 MIN

- 🗣️ Ask participants: What have you been taught about **Economy** in your life? In school and from your childhood. What's included in your idea of Economy?
- 👉 Switch the butcher paper so that the "Economy" column is visible and the "Home" column is hidden. Take several responses popcorn style and scribe them on them under "Economy".
- 🗣️ Briefly summarize and synthesize people's responses about their notion of "Economy".
- 🗣️ Part of the fundamental problem with the **paradigm of today's economy** is that we've gotten really far away from what an economy is actually meant to do. If we look into the root language and meaning of the word "economy" there is insight there that can help us get on track with **remaking economy towards a just and livable future**.
- 🗣️ I will need 4 people to help me read some definitions as they come up. These people will not need to come up to the stage.
- 👉 Hand out the 4 Eco definitions to 4 volunteers in the audience.
- 🗣️ 'Eco' comes from the Greek word 'oikos' which means Home. So **Eco means Home**.
- 👉 Place the Home graphic in the center of the front part of the space. Briefly go over what is shown on the graphic. The graphic includes a house under the sun.



- 🗣️ The word 'system' means 'together', or 'related/relationship'. When we combine the word 'Eco' with the word 'system', we have Ecosystem, or the **system of Home**.
- Ask** the person in the audience with the definition of 'Ecosystem' to read it aloud for everyone.

### **ECO SYSTEM** ("home" + "system of relationships")

Ecosystem means all the relationships in a home - from microorganisms, plants, animals and people to water, soil and air. An Ecosystem includes the terrain and the climate. An Ecosystem is not simply a catalogue of all the things that exist in a place; it more importantly references the complex of relationships. An ecosystem can be as small as a drop of rain or as large as the whole planet. It all depends on where you draw the boundaries of home.

- 👉 Place the *people*, *leaf* and *hummingbird* graphics around the Home. Briefly review the

graphics as reiterations of the verbal definition.



- 💡 The word 'logy' means 'knowledge of'. So when we combine the word 'Eco' with the word 'logy' we get 'ecology', or the **knowledge of Home**.

**Ask** the person in the audience with the definition of 'Ecology' to read it aloud for everyone.

**ECO LOGY** ("home" + "knowledge")

Ecology means knowing, reading and understanding home – and by definition, the relationships of home.

👉 Place the *water drop* and *tree* graphics above the house. Briefly review the graphics as reiterations of the verbal definition.



- 💡 The word 'nomy' means 'management of'. So when we combine the word 'Eco' with the work 'nomy' we get 'economy', or the **management of Home**.

**Ask** the person in the audience with the definition of 'Economy' to read it aloud for everyone.

**ECO NOMY** ("home" + "management")

Economy means management of home. How we organize our relationships in a place, ideally, to take care of the place and each other.

👉 Ask participants for examples of things that we need to manage as a society in order for our physical and social needs to be met. Have a butcher paper or white board on the side to write anything that we don't have symbols for.

Replace the *water drop* and *tree* graphics with the *faucet* and *hands holding the tree* graphics. Ask the audience to identify these new symbols. They represent management of these resources.



As they come up, place the *health, education, exchange/commerce, food, relationships, communication, transportation, waste, spirituality* and any other graphics on the wall.

- ☞ So, it turns out that economy does not mean money or currency or financial markets or merely a calculation of monetary wealth accumulated from exchanging currency for material goods and services. Those activities are tools of *certain* economies. Managing our Home involves many, many other kinds of activity.

☞ Uncover the butcher paper with the brainstorm around “Home” and “Economy”. Refer back to both lists in order to make the point: management of home is very different than the narrow set of financial activities that we are lead to believe makes an ‘economy’.

- ☞ **Despite the form of economy, all economic activity has consequences.** The economic activity of peoples who have developed long relationships with the ecosystems they are a part of have tended towards **balance**. This traditional evolved knowledge of place is held in language, food, culture and story.  
Other human communities have mismanaged home, and have created **ecological consequences** that are *destructive* to a sustainable relationship with the web of life.

- ☞ Destructive economies, practiced on a small scale, can be sustained by the Earth/Web of Life. Historically, it has been typical that when a people outstrips their resource base they move on or die off. A paper cut or scrape to the Earth that she can recover relatively easily from.

- ☞ **But, when you globalize the economy, then you globalize the ecosystem. And you globalize the consequences of mismanaging Home.** The dominant forces controlling the human and natural resources of the world have applied a one-size-needs-to-fits-all economic model to people and places everywhere, and now the Earth has a full on flu, with fever, chills, the runs and everything else.

There are other ways to live, and we are about to get deep into the elements of a healthy, regenerative economy. But what we want to strive for it Ecological Justice.

**Ask** the person in the audience with the definition of ‘Ecological Justice’ to read it aloud for everyone.

#### **ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE** (“home” + “justice”)

Ecological Justice is the state of balance between human communities and healthy ecosystems based on thriving, mutually beneficial relationships and participatory self-governance.

- ☞ Change is going to happen. We will experience either **Collapse** or **Intentional Transition**. And because we cannot avoid some changes that are coming, it is our job to make justice central in an intentional transition that we help lead.

It is our job to create new econom*ies* that actually manage Home in a respectful, healthy & regenerative way.

## **CLOSING      15 MIN**

- 🗣️ Invite everyone to stand and gather in a large circle. Depending on the intimacy and familiarity of the group, you may also want to invite participants to hold hands.
- 🗣️ Let everyone know that we will do a **'go around'** and ask everyone to share a word or short phrase that expresses either something new that they learned, or the most valuable thing they are taking away from this workshop.
- 🗣️ When everyone has had an opportunity to express themselves, thank everyone for their time and energy!



# ECO=HOME DEFINITIONS

## **ECO SYSTEM** (“home” + “system of relationships”)

Ecosystem means all the relationships in a home - from microorganisms, plants, animals and people to water, soil and air. An Ecosystem includes the terrain and the climate. An Ecosystem is not simply a catalogue of all the things that exist in a place; it more importantly references the complex of relationships.

An ecosystem can be as small as a drop of rain or as large as the whole planet. It all depends on where you draw the boundaries of home.

## **ECO LOGY** (“home” + “knowledge”)

Ecology means knowing, reading and understanding home – and by definition, the relationships of home.

## **ECO NOMY** (“home” + “management”)

Economy means management of home.

How we organize our relationships in a place, ideally, to take care of the place and each other.

## **ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE** (“home” + “justice”)

Ecological Justice is the state of balance between human communities and healthy ecosystems based on thriving, mutually beneficial relationships and participatory self-governance.

# Body-Earth Metaphor

# Body-Earth Metaphor

**What Is It?** A roleplay activity that uses the human body as a metaphor for the Earth and the ecological crisis. The exercise also helps explain how global warming happens and how to connect carbon loading in the atmosphere to economic activity.

## Why Do it?

- To explain how the human body is a really good model for Earth. Just like Earth, your body is a living system made up of interdependent living systems.
- To show how human economic activity impacts Earth's systems.
- To demonstrate the extent of ecological destruction from:
  - Deforestation
  - Toxics, plastics and pollution
  - Damning of rivers
  - Energy extraction and consumption for electricity, fuel
  - War and Militarism
  - Land use changes (industrial agriculture)
  - Biodiversity loss
- To explain the science of Green House Gasses and Global Warming by drawing on the metaphor of a "planetary fever."

**Time:** 30 - 45 minutes (up to an hour, depending on depth and debrief)

## Materials needed:

- Articles of clothing: Jacket, hoodie, puffy, hat, scarf, gloves, etc. You will need many layers.
- Additional props to represent different impacts or the slide presentation (pptx) to play in the background.

## Directions/Script:

### *Prep-work:*

1. In advance of the session (even the evening before), secretly select a participant to be a "planted" volunteer for the exercise. Explain to them that you are going to be doing an activity in which they will present themselves as an unknowing volunteer in front of the group to act as "planet Earth." Explain to them that they will be doing physical activity and that it may be hard, and that you will be

“putting pressure” on them to work harder. Make sure they understand what they are getting into and that you have their consent. Also make sure they understand to “play it up,” and, if needed, establish a “safe word” or “signal” that they can give you if they are really feeling over-exerted. *It is essential to have the consent of the participant before they volunteer, and it is also important for the exercise that the other participants do not know that the volunteer knows what they are getting into.*

*Beginning the Exercise:*

2. Start the activity by calling for a volunteer. Though several people may raise their hands, call on the person you have designated, unbeknownst to the other participants.
3. “You, my friend, are going to be the Earth. And in reality – that is a pretty accurate metaphor. Your body is a really good model of the Earth. The Earth is mostly water (and salt water at that) and so is your body. Your body is a living system made up of interdependent living systems, and so is the Earth. When you look at the body – you see one living thing. When you look at the Earth (say from space) you see one object. But when you zoom in, you realize that you are crawling with living things that you can’t really see when you look at the whole body – or the whole Earth – but none-the-less, you can’t live without. Did you know that there are 10 times more “microbial” cells than human cells on your body? We are a world of microorganisms, just as the planet is teeming with life. And that life is essential to who we are. Without our microbial gut culture or the bacteria on our skin, we would not survive.”
4. Show the image of the Sun (or use a Sun prop). This is the Sun. Ask the volunteer: So, how are you feeling right now? You comfortable? If you were standing up here naked, besides being a bit self-conscious, how would you feel? *Prompt them towards, “I’d be cold.”* You, just like The Earth, have a pretty good sense of what “comfortable” feels like. You figured that out; you learned how to put on the right layers to be comfortable given the weather and the seasons. So, if you are the Earth, then the clothes you are wearing can be thought of as the atmosphere – the just right mix of nitrogen, oxygen, argon, carbon dioxide and water vapor to keep life happy<sup>1</sup>. Over billions of years, the Earth managed to get the right balance to trap exactly the right amount of heat using carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gasses.”
5. Now have the person start doing some jumping jacks or other relatively mild physical activity. Check in with them. How are you doing? How are you feeling? Keep increasing the physical activity, and each time relate it to one of the

---

<sup>1</sup> 78.09% [nitrogen](#), 20.95% [oxygen](#), 0.93% [argon](#), 0.039% [carbon dioxide](#), and small amounts of other gases. Air also contains a variable amount of [water vapor](#), on average around 1%.

causes of ecological erosion presented in the slides and/or using the notes below to relate each destructive activity to an impact on Earth's systems and the metaphor of the body (Circulatory System, Skeletal System, Digestive System, Respiratory System). Each time increase the activity and increase the layers of clothing, adding one for each impact. You are increasing the amount of physical activity with each impact and simultaneously wrapping the person up in more heat-trapping layers.

6. *Note: As you are doing this activity, you will notice the audience usually goes from entertained to feeling mild concern to feeling uncomfortable. By adding the layers and presenting the images, you represent the industrial economy, so you should keep pushing the volunteer who should be playing it up based on your initial conversation. If you notice folks getting slightly uncomfortable, ask the audience to suggest exercises. See if you can engage them in participating in increasing the pressure. This will be helpful during the debrief at the end.*
7. At some point, when the volunteer seems pretty tired and hot, ask them, "Would you like some water?" But don't give it to them. "Sorry – you see every drop of water on Earth is every drop of water there is on Earth. The water on Earth is just moving around from the Oceans to the atmosphere back down as rain – just cycling through the system.
8. After they are exhausted – let them stop. "How are you feeling? How is your breathing? How are your muscles?" You can again point out that the forests are the lungs of the planet, for example. Point out the sweating or ask folks what they notice. Eventually someone will point out that the person is sweating. Ask, "Why are they sweating?" Keep prompting until folks get to the answer, "To cool down the body."
9. "That's right – they are sweating to cool down the body. The body is moving water around to cool itself down, and that is what Mother Earth is doing as well. She's melting arctic ice and glaciers; she's creating super-storms and typhoons; she's raising the seas; she's moving water around the body of the planet to cool down, just like your body does when you have a fever." *Note: there is also a "science" to these phenomenon – such as thermal expansion leading to sea-level rise.*
10. "Climate Disruption is a large-scale consequence of simultaneously disrupting multiple system. We are giving the planet a fever because all that ecological erosion both adds carbon to the atmosphere and destroys the resilience of living systems (like the forests and rivers) to naturally mitigate the impacts. And a planetary fever (global warming) is just like when you have a fever. If you have a 1 degree fever, you are bumming it, but probably might still go to work or just pop a pill. If you have a 2-3degree fever, you are staying home in bed. You probably have someone come look after you. If you have a 4-5degree fever, you



are very sick and someone needs to really attend to you – you are losing precious water quickly and need relief. If you have a 6-7 degree fever you need to be rushed to the hospital, because systems failure – death - is around the corner. This is exactly true for the planet. 2 degrees doesn't sound like a lot if you think *weather*, but it is HUGE if you think *climate*. 2 degrees represent a fundamental shift in planetary systems – from what seasons look like to what species survive.

As your systems are working harder and harder they are trying to help each other manage the whole of the body.”

11. In the debrief, ask folks how they felt watching the person working so hard. Draw out their experience. Point out that, while people feel uncomfortable, folks actually are able to just sit and watch the suffering. Nobody got up to stop the activity. *Acknowledge that there is a power dynamic as a facilitator and that folks trust you, so it isn't surprising.* This is also a good metaphor for how we often know and even see the suffering and impacts of crisis, such as climate disruption or war, but that doesn't necessarily mean we will act. Finally, make sure everyone knows that the volunteer was in on the whole thing.
12. Make sure people understand the science of global warming – that carbon and water vapor trap heat and we need that to make conditions perfect for life as we know it, but as we force the planet out of balance, then more carbon gets trapped and less carbon gets sunk in the soil, oceans, etc. So it isn't just about burning fossil fuels, it is also about damming rivers, deforestation, pollution, plastics, and most importantly, biodiversity loss through habitat destruction.

.....

**Facilitator notes:**

*As you are going through the exercise, showing images or explaining the different impacts, continue to elaborate on the Body Metaphor.*

**The Respiratory System:** Biodiverse, intact forests are the lungs of the planet, particularly Tropical Forests, such as the Amazon. They breath in Carbon Dioxide and breath out Oxygen. They breathe for the planet, just as our lungs do for us.

Deforestation is like carving out the lungs of the planet. Whether it is the Amazon for cattle grazing and human settlement or the Boreal Forests for Tar Sands crude.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/02/130206131050.htm>

**The Circulatory System:** Rivers and oceans are the circulatory system of the planet (like our veins, arteries and capillaries). The tide, like the heart-beat, bathes the planet twice every day in the tide. Like the blood, water moves nutrients around the planet

and provides the foundation for all life. Water is life. Damning of rivers is like clogging the arteries.

More than 50,000 large dams now choke about two-thirds of the world's largest rivers. The consequences of this massive engineering program have been devastating. Large dams have wiped out species; flooded huge areas of wetlands, forests, and farmlands; displaced tens of millions of people, and affected close to half a billion people living downstream. Large dams hold back not just water but silts and nutrients that replenish farmlands and build protective wetlands and beaches. Dams change the very *riverness* of our waterways, in ways we can't always see but that the earth can certainly feel.

**The Digestive System:** The nutrient cycles of the planet – cycling energy into a usable form and excreting biological waste that can be assimilated back into the system by life. But industrial toxics, synthetic chemicals, plastics, and other waste clog up the system, just like junk food. When we dump plastic – a material that takes millions of years to make because it begins as oil – into the ocean and we see birds, fish and mammals choking on it, we shouldn't be surprised; we have taken something from the geologic cycle and thrown it into the digestive cycle.

**The Skeletal System:** The geological structures that ecosystems hang on, such as mountains and valleys. Just like the bones of the body, that the muscles and organs depend on for structure. Mining is like breaking the bones of the planet that the living systems depend on – mountain top removal, for example, destroys watersheds. We are breaking down all the systems, they are all connected. And as everything breaks down, we become an unwelcome host to the living things on the planet who are also a core part of the system.

Further Notes:

The Earth system is the sum of our planet's interacting geo-physical, chemical, and biological processes. It includes the land, the oceans, the atmosphere and the frozen poles. It takes in the grand natural cycles through which vital elements like carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and sulphur circulate around the planet; the movement of water between sea, sky, rivers and ice; the imperceptibly slow events deep beneath our feet that create and destroy continents and oceans.

Living things are part of the system too. For example, ocean plankton absorb carbon dioxide from the air to make their shells; after death their bodies sink to the seabed, where that carbon is locked up for millennia in layers of sediment that are slowly compressed to make limestone. *Adapted From National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*

Humans are no exception. We aren't an outside force disturbing the natural order of things – we're an integral part of the Earth system ourselves. But as our industrial

economies have grown, the impact of our actions has increased too; we're now among the main causes of environmental change.

The composition of the **atmosphere** creates the climate we experience on earth. Water Cycle – How water (H<sub>2</sub>O) moves through the system.

Carbon Cycle – How carbon moves through the system.

Life Cycle – How living things move throughout the system, from birth through death and returning to the system as energy.

As water vapor around coastal forests condenses, it lowers area air pressure. This process is stronger over the forest than over the ocean, thus creating a wind which pushes the evaporated moisture inland. This process repeats itself as moisture is recycled, creating low pressure areas and thus winds moving the moisture further inland. How much moisture/water are we actually talking about? Well according to the article, "the Amazon rainforest...releases 20 trillion liters of moisture each day."

Rivers act as the planet's circulatory system. Like our body's circulation system, the planetary one doesn't work very well when it's clogged. If a river's flow is its heartbeat, then we humans are the heart disease. We've blocked most major rivers with dams, bled them dry with water diversions, and given up all too many once-great rivers for dead once we've used them up.

"More than 50,000 large dams now choke about two-thirds of the world's largest rivers. The consequences of this massive engineering program have been devastating. Large dams have wiped out species; flooded huge areas of wetlands, forests, and farmlands; displaced tens of millions of people, and affected close to half a billion people living downstream. Large dams hold back not just water but silts and nutrients that replenish farmlands and build protective wetlands and beaches. Dams change the very *riverness* of our waterways, in ways we can't always see but that the earth can certainly feel." – *from International Rivers*

Other Systems You Could Include:

**Nervous** – bio-cultural diversity helps regulate the earth system – it moves messages throughout the system, and reacts to stimulus.

**Reproductive** - Endocrine – bio-chemical balance – toxics, which are endocrine disruptors – get into all the other systems. The "chemistry of the planet" is like the reproductive system.

**Immune** – when we mess with the system – when something is wrong, the immune system kicks in – causes us to have a fever, to sweat, to rid ourselves of the problem. This is really the emergent properties of all the Earth's systems responding to change.



The human body contains over 10 times more microbial cells than human cells, although the entire microbiome only weighs about 200 grams

# Understanding the Lag Effect



# Understanding the Lag Effect

---

**What Is It?** An exercise that visually depicts how greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels today has severe consequences for climate disruption down the road. The decisions we make today have serious consequences for the future.

---

## Why Do it?

- To demonstrate visually and viscerally the exponential growth of fossil fuel production & consumption over the last century.
  - To connect it to the concept of “lag effect,” meaning that the emissions from burning most fossil fuels takes 40-50 years to impact global atmospheric temperature (warming).
  - To give a clear sense of the scale of the ongoing ecological crisis and, in particular, time as a dimension of scale in the crisis.
- 

**Time:** 30 minutes – 45 minutes

---

## Materials needed:

- A long rope (50-100 feet)
  - Volunteers to hold the rope
  - Half sheets of paper that represent 1890, 1910, 1930, 1950, 1970, 1990, 2010, 2030
- 

## Directions/Script:

1. This workshop is designed to make the teaching points mentioned above separately. The first part of the activity—the rope activity—demonstrates the sheer magnitude of expanding fossil fuel consumption over time. The second part – explaining lag effect—is revealed at the end and creates a second ‘aha’ moment.
2. Gather the group. Start by explaining the basics of climate and ecology.  
*Note: Usually, this activity is combined with “Body Metaphor,” “Tipping Points,” “Self-Reinforcing Feedbacks” and/or other activities that lay the foundation for understanding climate disruption and how it works. You may not need the following introduction.*

Suggested script:

*A greenhouse is a great way to grow things in a cold environment. We build them to trap heat so that life can grow, even if it is too cold to grow things outside. Outerspace is cold. The earth is surrounded by gases (greenhouse gases) that make the planet perfect for life as we know it. But we are pumping more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than is good for us – going from a cozy greenhouse to an excessive hothouse. This is happening right now and fast.*

3. *Tell the participants: Close your eyes and imagine what the world was like in 1890s. You can pick a specific place (where you grew up, your ancestral homeland, etc.) or think about a country or the entire world. Read these guide questions (and add your own):*
  - *How were people living?*
  - *What was happening in the world?*
  - *How did people get around?*
  - *Where did folks get their food?*
  - *How did they make their homes?*
  - *What work did people do?*

Now, imagine the changes taking place as you move through time in your mind to the present. What was it like through the early 1900s, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80's, 90's, 2000's, up through to today. How were things changing, like transportation, food, energy, etc?

**Optional:** You can have folks share a few insights from their visioning. This should surface that there has been a ton of industrial global development in

all over the planet, more war, more freeways, more cars, more plastic, etc. People may bring up enslavement, farming, factories, etc.

4. Take out the big rope and read this script:

*This rope represents a fossil-fuel timeline.*

*Since we first started extracting oil at a large scale, around 1890, we've basically been doubling our production and consumption of fossil fuels (oil, coal and natural gas) globally about every 20 years.*

*There has been some fluctuation between each 20 year period, but an accurate approximate average is that we've doubled fossil fuel extraction & consumption globally about every 20 years, when you look at the long arc.*

5. Ask for 3 volunteers, to start. Ask person 1 to hold one end of the rope. Explain:

*Let's visually represent what this means. This end of the rope represents the year 1890.*

Give that person the rope and the 1890 card. Each addition person will get the next 20-year card.

Pick another person to hold the rope about 3 - 6 inches from the end (*note: the more space you have the closer to 6" you can go – doubling grows fast*).

Explain:

*And where they are holding the rope represents 1910. The length of the rope between 1890-1910 represents the amount of fossil fuel production and consumption between those years.*

6. Next, using the remaining rope, fold it over from 1910 to 1890 twice to show double the previous length in rope (about 6 - 12 more inches) and have someone hold the rope there. Explain:

***And this new point is the year 1930. And as you see, the amount between 1910-1930 is double the amount between 1890-1910.***

7. Then fold double from 1930 to 1910 all over again, and have another person hold the new point. Explain:

***And this is 1950.***

Keep doing this doubling of the rope, until you reach today, or the length gets too cumbersome or reaches far out of the room. Along the way, throw in questions such as:

- *What was going on in the world then?*
- *How were people living? How were they getting around?*
- *What had changed since we started?*

8. Keep going until 2010 or even 2030 (projecting a “business as usual” doubling). You can ask folks to imagine where we’re at today on the timeline.

Pause & let participants in the room react. Usually, this is a big Aha moment and folks will be reacting out loud and collectively—it’s important to let them have this moment together.

To close this teaching point out, after a minute or so, ask someone who is reacting what is coming up for them. Or make a summary comment such as “That’s a lot of fossil fuel extracted in just the last 20 years, let alone all this

time! And what happens with the carbon released from burning fossil fuels? It’s sent into the atmosphere adding to the greenhouse effect.”

9. Now we move to the second teaching point—the lag effect.

10. Read script:

***Here’s the thing: The planet is a massive system made of mostly water (oceans). Just like it takes a lot longer to see the effects of the heat turned up on a big pot of water than a small pot, it takes a very long time - actually 40-50 years- to feel the warming impacts of GHG emissions on the planet. This delay is called the lag effect.***

***Today, (show images of current day Delhi & Las Vegas) in addition to the immediate impacts of degraded ecosystems, erosion of bio-cultural diversity, pollution, war, and colonialism, we are also experiencing the warming impacts – extreme weather, loss of the arctic and glaciers, drought) of the extraction of fossil fuels from up to the 70s (show images of those places from the 70s). And all of the fossil fuels we’ve extracted from the 1970s through today is yet to have an atmospheric warming impact on our climate system. That is still coming. If we were to shut-down all fossil fuel infrastructure and stop all extraction and consumption today, we would still be facing more climate disruption, due to the lag-effect.***

*This gives you a real sense of the scale and pace of the ecological crisis.*

*We are already feeling extreme impacts of our past exploitation of fossil fuels (which is small in comparison to what we've done in the last 40 years) – from rising sea levels to extreme weather patterns created by the climate crisis. As we continue to exploit the tar sands, or continue to pursue mountain top removal or deep*

*water drilling, we are only setting up our children and grandchildren to live in a scary future.*

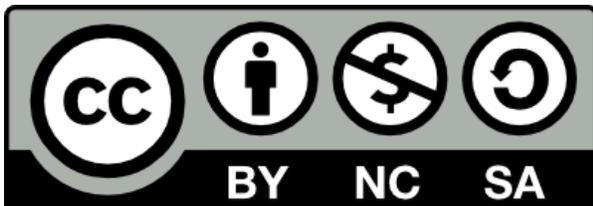
**NOTE:** This exercise often leaves participants very disturbed. Be prepared to hold space for emotional processing. Most people have never considered time as a dimension of scale in the climate crisis. Be sure to not leave participants feeling disempowered. The notes below should help.

---

### Facilitator notes:

- A double every 20 years comes from only 7% growth per year. But because growth is exponential, it gets bigger faster than we can imagine.
- The reason the planet takes several decades to respond to increased CO<sub>2</sub> is the thermal inertia of the oceans. Consider a saucepan of water placed on a gas stove. Although the flame has a temperature measured in hundreds of degrees C, the water takes a few minutes to reach boiling point. This simple analogy explains climate lag. The mass of the oceans is around 500 times that of the atmosphere. The time that it takes to warm up is measured in decades. Because of the difficulty in quantifying the rate at which the warm upper layers of the ocean mix with the cooler deeper waters, there is significant variation in estimates of climate lag. A paper by James Hansen and others estimates the time required for 60% of global warming to take place in response to increased emissions to be in the range of 25 to 50 years.  
<https://www.skepticalscience.com/Climate-Change-The-40-Year-Delay-Between-Cause-and-Effect.html>
- You can find useful images of the greenhouse effect [here](#) (or by doing a google image search for greenhouse effect).
- Note that not all fossil fuel consumption is for energy. This doubling includes fossil fuel exploitation for plastics and other petro-chemicals, some of which come from byproducts from fossil fuel refining processes, and some of which (about 15% for the US alone) come from crude oil. The growth of plastics is a huge contributor to the growth of fossil fuel production and consumption. AND the growth of plastics has other impacts on the biosphere that also reinforce climate disruption (i.e. biodiversity loss, incineration, ocean pollution).

- 1970's is the key point to highlight lag effect – we are feeling the impacts of that time, now.
- It is important to note that there is *not* a one-to-one relationship between the burning of fossil fuels and carbon in the atmosphere. Planetary systems have natural carbon sinks that absorb excess carbon – soil, oceans, forests, etc. However, as those carbon sinks get over taxed and, more importantly, eroded, the capacity of planetary systems to mitigate the impact of atmospheric carbon loading is compromised (i.e. through deforestation). It is also important to note that there are reinforcing feedbacks that also impact warming – and that *global warming* is not the same thing as *climate change*. As the atmospheric temperature warms, the climate is disrupted, and climate regimes change. That's why climate change can result in extreme cold, even though the atmospheric temperature is rising.
- It is also important to note that we can restore natural carbon sinks to a substantial degree by building soil, stopping erosion, protecting forests, returning control of land and labor to communities and phasing out fossil fuel production & consumption, plastics, concrete, etc.
- Sources for the data: <https://ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels#have-we-reached-peak-oil>; <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=34&t=6>



What this means is that you are free to use and share our curriculum; and remix, transform and build upon our curriculum *so long as you commit to non-commercial use* (you may not make money off of this work); *provide appropriate attribution to Movement Generation and any other formations you draw upon; and share your modifications with us and the broader community under the same conditions (as commons)*. You also may not add further restrictions, even on things you've added or changed.

Please share directly with us any insights, innovations, modifications or feedback on the curriculum. Please contact us at [mgtools@movementgeneration.org](mailto:mgtools@movementgeneration.org).

# Tipping Points



# Tipping Points

**What Is It?** An exercise to visually explain the ecological concept of “Tipping Points” in systems, and how that informs movement strategy, scale of governance and relationships of power.

## Why Do it?

- A simple and engaging way to explain climate tipping points and ecosystems tipping points
- To give a sense of the scale of the ongoing ecological crisis.
- A simple way to illustrate and explore relationships of power

**Time:** 30 minutes (including time for discussion)

## Materials needed:

- 1 clear plastic cup filled half way with coffee beans, black beans, popcorn kernels, dahl, etc. (any food beans)
- 1 clear plastic cup filled half way with water
- Table
- Chair

## Directions/Script:

1. Gather the group. Have your cup of water and cup of beans on the table. The cup of water is for a bit later, so place it separate from the beans.

Suggested script:

We’re going to do an activity to explain tipping points. What is a tipping point? (Allow audience to answer. If someone doesn’t say it make sure you do say ‘A tipping point is the point where a system will keep changing until it finds a new state of balance, even if the pressure forcing the change is removed.’)

2. Place your cup of BEANS on the table where everyone can see it

Script: This cup of beans represents an eco-system. Eco systems can be big or small. They help create and sustain life on Earth. A rainforest is a type of eco-

system for example. As you can see this system (represented by the cup of beans) is at a stable/balanced state.

If I add pressure by pushing the system it begins to change (push top of cup with finger but not too much-you don't want it to spill. You might have to brace the front of the cup at first with your finger-You want to show that you can apply pressure and as long as you don't push too hard or too far and if you stop pushing/remove your finger the system will return to its original stable place.) – Push the cup onto its edge and let it return to stable a couple times to make the point.

- *Now, ask the group “How far can I push without spilling the beans?”*
- *Say, “I’m going to push and y’all tell me when to stop. Remember I don’t want to spill the beans”*
- *Push a few with the audience’s help and let it come back to stable. Encourage them to let you push more each time. “Come on I can push further than that.” Encourage them to find the edge of how far you can push it.*
- *This will result in pushing the cup until the beans spill on the table. Ask the group “What happened? If they don’t say it be sure to make the simple point. “I pushed too far. I pushed the cup past its tipping point.”*
- *Explain: When you push a system past its tipping point it will continue to change until it finds a new way to be/exist – a new state of balance- EVEN if you stop pushing it. Point out that once the cup past the tipping point, taking away the finger didn't change anything. It has fundamentally changed from a cup of beans to a mess. (pick up the beans and put the cup away)*

### 3. Explain Planetary Tipping Points in Climate Science

- When thinking about climate disruption, it is important to note that concept of tipping points can play out on a planetary scale There are many tipping points and about 9 or 10 primary global climate tipping points (see notes below). Each of these has a degree of sensitivity and a degree of certainty. Any of them (and any of them in combination) could force the planetary systems into a new “climate regime,” which means conditions will fundamentally change for life on the planet. This is something that is constantly changing, based on new information and assessments.
- *NOTE: There are facilitator notes below on the major tipping points. Please familiarize yourself with them and be sure you both understand them and can explain them in plain language that your audience will understand. Also, we often use slides/images to visualize the tipping points. You don't have to explain every single one, but you should use some examples. A strong example that folks usually get is Amazon Rainforest Erosion (deforestation, burning, etc.).*

NOW – return to the exercise.

4. With your cup of WATER on the table, set the chair out in the front of the room

- Ask for a volunteer and have that person sit in the chair. Have the person put their hand out over their lap (palm side up). Place the cup of water balanced in their hand as if it was a table.
- Explain that you want to find the tipping point of this system. “I’m going to push as far as I can without spilling the water. Just like we did with the beans. Only this time I’m going to let you (the volunteer) tell me when to stop pushing.”
- Push the cup and the volunteer will likely tell you to stop almost immediately. Encourage the volunteer to let you push further. Do this a couple of times without spilling the water (you’re showing that the person who has to live with the consequences of pushing the system too far will likely be conservative with how far they allow the system to be disturbed).
- Thank the volunteer. Take the cup of water from them and put it away. You are now done with it.
- Ask the group, “Do you all think I could have pushed the cup of water further before it would have fallen? (they say YES!).
- Ask the volunteer, “Why didn’t you let me push further?” (They will likely say because I didn’t want to get wet)
- Ask the group, “What is happening? Why does this matter?” – Likely, someone will note that if you have to live with the consequences, you are more careful.

5. Debrief/Discuss:

- Just like these cups, ecosystems have tipping points. You can push, apply pressure, make changes to a system and once you stop doing that the system can recover. But if you push too far the system will continue to change until it finds a new stable state – a new ecological regime.
- Also, this activity is to highlight that when decision makers don’t have to live with the consequences of their actions, they will be fine pushing the system past its tipping point (like what happened with the beans).
- However, when the decision maker has to live with the consequences of their actions they will not be likely to push the system past its tipping point (like what happened with the cup of water).
- Your location in the system determines how you understand a tipping point. If you are a climate scientist looking at planetary tipping points, you imagine the tipping point as losing 50% of the Amazon sending the earth system into runaway climate change. But if you are an Indigenous community in the Amazon, the first bulldozer knocking down the first tree to put in the first road for the first exploratory oil well could mean the end of your way of life – for you – the tipping point is much sooner. This is why people who have to live with the consequences of changes to the ecosystems that they are a part of should be in control of those decisions.

- This is why it is both materially and strategically necessary to DEVOLVE POWER, RESOURCES and GOVERNANCE down to the community level (the most local level possible for what it is we are trying to govern). From an ecological standpoint, the ability to have a reflexive, responsive, reciprocal relationship to place – the ability to engage in an action reflection cycle – depends on how you experience the consequences of your actions. That is why reorganizing economy and governance at the ecosystems, “ecological” scale (knowledge of home) is essential.
  - Tipping points don’t just happen in “ecological systems,” we see them in social systems (which are a kind of ecological system) as well. Discuss various social tipping points such as gentrification, pot legalization, or cultural/social shifts. Where have we seen positive social movement tipping points?
- .....

### Facilitator notes:

#### Climate Change tipping points:

*Please note that the data on tipping points is often changing as new data emerges. Feel free to update the data before using the curriculum.*

#### The most immediate and most worrisome threats<sup>1</sup>

- **Disappearance of Arctic Summer Sea Ice** – As the Arctic warms, [sea ice melts](#) and exposes dark ocean waters that reflect sunlight much less efficiently. This decreased reflectivity causes a reinforcement of Arctic warming, meaning that the transition to a sea-ice free state can occur on the rapid scale of a few decades. Some scientists have suggested that we have already passed this tipping point, predicting that Arctic summers will be ice-free before mid-century.
- **Melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet** – The Arctic warming feedback described above may one day render [Greenland ice-free](#). Research predicts that the tipping point for complete melt can occur at a global temperature rise of less than two degrees Celsius – a threshold that may be surpassed by the end of this century. While the full transition to an ice-free Greenland will take at least a few hundred years, its impacts include global sea level rise of up to 20 feet.
- **Disintegration of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet** – The bottom of this ice sheet lies beneath sea level, allowing warming ocean waters to slowly [eat away at the ice](#). There is evidence that this tipping point has already been surpassed – possibly as early as 2014. Like the Greenland Ice Sheet, full collapse would require multiple centuries, but it could result in sea level rise of up to 16 feet.

---

<sup>1</sup> The following information comes from a 2017 Blog by EDF using National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Data. <http://blogs.edf.org/climate411/2017/11/01/everything-you-need-to-know-about-climate-tipping-points/>

- **Collapse of Coral Reefs** – Healthy corals maintain a symbiotic relationship with the algae that provide their primary food source. As oceans warm and become more acidic, these algae are expelled from the corals in an often fatal process called coral bleaching. Research predicts that most of our remaining coral systems [will collapse](#) even before a global temperature rise of two degrees Celsius.

### Tipping points in the distant future

- **Disruption of Ocean Circulation Patterns** – The Thermohaline Circulation is driven by heavy saltwater sinking in the North Atlantic, but this water is becoming fresher and lighter as glaciers melt in a warming climate. The change in water density may prevent sinking and result in a permanent [shutdown of the circulation](#). Research suggests that weakening of the Thermohaline Circulation is already in progress, but that an abrupt shutdown is unlikely to occur in this century. Some models suggest that these changes may prompt a secondary tipping element in which the subpolar gyre currently located in the Labrador Sea shuts off. Such a change would dramatically increase sea level, especially on the eastern coast of the United States.
- **Release of Marine Methane Hydrates** – Large reservoirs of methane located on the ocean floor are stable thanks to their current high pressure-low temperature environment. Warming ocean temperatures [threaten the stability](#) of these greenhouse gas reservoirs, but the necessary heat transfer would require at least a thousand years to reach sufficient depth, and may be further delayed by developing sea level rise.
- **Ocean Anoxia** – If enough phosphorous is released into the oceans – from sources including fertilizers and warming-induced *weathering*, or the breakdown of rocks – regions of the ocean could become depleted in oxygen. However, this process could require thousands of years to develop.

### Potentially disastrous elements, but with considerable uncertainty

- **Dieback of the Amazon Rainforest** – [Deforestation](#), lengthening of the dry season, and increased summer temperatures each place stress on rainfall in the Amazon. Should predictions that at least half of the Amazon Rainforest convert to savannah and grasslands materialize, a considerable loss in biodiversity could result. However, the dieback of the Amazon Rainforest ultimately depends on regional land-use management, and on how El Niño will influence future precipitation patterns.
- **Dieback of Boreal Forests** – Increased water and heat stress could also lead to a decrease in boreal forest cover by up to half of its current size. Dieback of boreal forests would involve a gradual conversion to open woodlands or grasslands, but complex interactions between tree physiology, permafrost melt, and forest fires renders the likelihood of dieback uncertain.
- **Weakening of the Marine Carbon Pump** – One mechanism through which oceanic carbon sequestration takes place is the *marine carbon pump*, which describes organisms' consumption of carbon dioxide through biological processes such as photosynthesis or shell building. As ocean temperatures rise, acidification progresses, and oxygen continues to be depleted, these natural systems could be

threatened and render the carbon sequestration process less efficient. More research is necessary in order to quantify the timescale and magnitude of these effects.

### **Tipping elements complicated by competing factors**

- **Greening of the Sahara/Sahel** – As sea surface temperatures rise in the Northern Hemisphere, rainfall is projected to increase over the Sahara and Sahel. This increased rainfall would serve to [expand grassland cover](#) in the region, but is balanced by the cooling effect of human-emitted aerosols in the atmosphere.
- **Chaotic Indian Summer Monsoon** – The fate of the [Indian Summer Monsoon](#) similarly depends upon a balance of greenhouse gas warming and aerosol cooling, which strengthen and weaken the monsoon, respectively. On the timescale of a year, there is potential for the monsoon to adopt dramatic active and weak phases, the latter resulting in extensive drought.

### **More research necessary to establish as tipping elements**

- **Collapse of Deep Antarctic Ocean Circulation** – As in the case of the Thermohaline Circulation, freshening of surface waters in the Southern Ocean due to ice melt may slowly alter deep water convection patterns. However, the gradual warming of the deep ocean encourages this convection to continue.
- **Appearance of Arctic Ozone Hole** – Unique clouds that form only in extremely cold conditions currently hover over Antarctica, serving as a surface for certain chemical reactions and facilitating the existence of the ozone hole. As climate change continues to cool the stratosphere, these “ice clouds” could begin formation in the Arctic and allow the development of an [Arctic ozone hole](#) within a year.
- **Aridification of Southwest North America** – As global temperatures rise, consequential changes in humidity prompt the expansion of subtropical dry zones and reductions in regional runoff. Models predict that Southwest North America will be [particularly affected](#), as moisture shifts away from the southwest and into the upper Great Plains.
- **Slowdown of the Jet Stream** – A narrow and fast moving air current called a jet stream flows across the mid-latitudes of the northern hemisphere. This current separates cold Arctic air from the warmer air of the south and consequentially influences weather in its formation of high and low pressure systems. A slowing of the jet stream has been observed over recent years. Should slowing intensify, weather patterns could persist over several weeks with the potential to develop into extended extreme weather conditions.
- **Melting of the Himalayan Glaciers** – Several warming feedbacks render the Himalayan glaciers vulnerable to dramatic melt within this century, though [limitations on data availability](#) complicate further study. Dust accumulation on the mountainous glaciers and the continual melt of snow and ice within the region both prompt a decrease in sunlight reflectivity and amplify regional warming.

### **Gradual, continuous changes**

- **More Permanent El Nino State** – 90 percent of the extra heat trapped on Earth’s surface by greenhouse gases is absorbed by the oceans. Though [still under debate](#),



the most likely consequence of this oceanic heat uptake is a gradual transition to more intense and permanent El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions, with implications including extensive drought throughout Southeast Asia and beyond.

- **Permafrost Melting** – As global temperatures rise and the high latitudes experience amplified warming, melting permafrost [gradually releases](#) carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere and creates a feedback for even more warming.
- **Tundra Transition to Boreal Forest** – Much like the conversion of the Amazon Rainforest and boreal forests to other biomes, tundra environments may transition into forests as temperatures increase. However, this process is more long-term and continuous.
  - **Additional Information** <http://blogs.edf.org/climate411/2015/06/17/six-climate-tipping-points-how-worried-should-we-be/>
  - <http://www.pnas.org/content/105/6/1786>
  - <http://www.ecotippingpoints.org>

# Control Mythologies



# Control Mythologies

---

## What Is It?

Brainstorm, Discussion & interactive activity inspired by Theater of the Oppressed (involving physical movement and some optional contact) that explores dominant mythologies, stories and assumptions about ecological problems and environmentalism that allows participants to express their thoughts and emotions about being subject to such mythologies. The workshop explores not just dominant Western assumptions, but also the stories we tell ourselves in our own communities.

---

## Why Do it?

- Help people understand how even as conscious, progressive, left people, we can still be controlled by stories and assumptions that keep us from constructively engaging in problems that are fundamental to the well-being of our communities (the ecological crisis)
  - Allow people to process what they've learned about the global and local ecological crises in a more physical and emotional way
  - Allow people to take a look at their personal, as well as organizational and political orientation to these problems
  - Give people an opportunity to envision how they can integrate the ecological justice frame into their work, lives and communities.
- 

**Time:** 2 hours and 30 minutes

---

## Materials needed:

- Butcher paper, markers, tape, easel pad
  - Facilitators' list of control mythologies (Attached at the end of this curriculum)
  - Props for report-back, if you'd like to offer them
-



## Directions/Script:

### PART 1: 60 min

#### Set up

1. Have at least 2 sheets of butcher paper ready for a brainstorm. Give the top paper the title of “Control Mythologies”.

#### Brainstorm

2. Set the context:

*Now that we have spent some time learning about the global ecological crises, we understand that no matter what racial, economic, gender, social justice work we are doing, the issues and communities that we care about stand to be severely impacted as ecological erosion continues, and if we allow it to worsen.*

*This is not a new phenomenon, many social justice leaders have had this notion for a long time, yet the social justice movement as a whole is only recently beginning to explore how it can best respond to the eco-crisis while still maintaining a racial & economic justice agenda.*

*The mainstream US is even farther behind in acknowledging and accepting the significance of the ecological crises. We suggest that there is a whole world of control mythologies (stories, narratives, assumptions propagated in the dominant culture) that keeps people (specifically, but not exclusively in the West) from facing these significant threats to humanity, and keeps even us conscious, progressive, intelligent left radical people from engaging in this problem that is so huge that it underlies and encompasses all the separate issues we individually work on.*

3. Invite the group to begin brainstorming some of these mythologies with you. Explain that once we have a good list, the facilitator will select a few of them and the whole group will go through an activity that will give people a chance to physically and emotionally express the way they feel and are affected by these mythologies.
4. Model brainstorming a control mythology by beginning with an “easy” one, and then let the group escalate to more challenging mythologies, including several that represent the control mythologies that are entrenched in the left and have kept us from addressing these issues.

**Start with “HUMANS ARE SEPARATE FROM NATURE.”** This is a dominant mythology that is often reproduced by all of us in our daily lives without even realizing it.

5. Encourage any and all ideas. Refer to the facilitator’s list of mythologies to make sure those concepts get covered. (A facilitator’s list is attached at the end of this curriculum)

As people brainstorm, make sure to have folks explain/unpack any mythologies that are not clear to the whole group.

Once the core mythologies have been covered and the list feels complete, thank everyone for their really great ideas!

### **Theater of the Oppressed: Modeling Our Responses**

6. Before explaining the activity, take a moment to select 4 mythologies that you want the group to model for this activity. Make sure that 2 of them are mythologies that pertain particularly well to controlling racial, economic, and social justice focused politically conscious folks (i.e. “environmentalism is a white-people thing,” or “people of color can’t care about the environment, right now.”)

Ask the group to count off by 2’s, so that you end up with 2 groups of equal number. (If your participant group is uneven, you may step in as a participant while you facilitate in order for everyone to participate.)

7. Ask one group to be the ‘inner circle’ and the other group to be the ‘outer circle’. Help the groups position themselves, with the ‘outer circle’ surrounding the ‘inner circle’.

The people in each circle should be facing one another so that each person is lined up with one person in the other circle. Let people know that the circles will switch places half way through this activity.

8. Explain that the people in the ‘outer circle’ start off being the molders and the people in the ‘inner circle’ start off being the clay. Using one control mythology at a time, the facilitator will give a prompting question to the molders, who “mold” the clay to illustrate their response to the prompting question. This process should be done in silence to the degree possible.

Explain that we will also start with a simple still modeling and then add motion, sound/word, sentences, props, (if desired) etc. to give more complexity to the responses.

\*\* If someone does not feel comfortable being physically handled the molder can verbally guide the clay into the position/shape that is the molder’s response or provide a “mirroring,” in which the modeler demonstrates what they want to see in the clay. \*\*

9. Choose the simplest of your selected mythologies, then:

State the mythology out loud (Example: “You can buy your way out of any problem...”)

Ask the prompting question: What does this control mythology look like? How is this mythology manifested in the world?

Instruct the molders to mold the clay to reflect their answer to your question



*Allow a few minutes for molding. Once everyone is done, let the outer circle walk around the inner circle so that everyone gets to see everyone else's clay. After everyone has walked all the way around, have the clay turn-around so that they can see each other's sculptures.*

10. Choose a second mythology:

State the mythology out loud (Example: "Environmentalism is for white people")

Ask the prompting question: How does this mythology make you feel?

Instruct the molders to mold the clay to reflect their answer to your question, and add a motion to their clay

*Allow a few minutes for molding. Once everyone is done, let the outer circle walk around the inner circle so that everyone gets to see everyone else's clay. After everyone has walked all the way around, have the clay turn-around so that they can see each other's sculptures.*

11. Now have the 'inner circle' and the 'outer circle' switch places so the clay are now the molders & vice versa. Choose a third mythology:

State the mythology out loud (Example: "Food comes from the supermarket")

Ask the prompting question: How does this mythology connect to the work that you do?

Instruct the molders to mold the clay to reflect their answer to your question, and add a motion and one repetitive sound to their clay

*Allow a few minutes for molding. Once everyone is done, let the outer circle walk around the inner circle so that everyone gets to see everyone else's clay. After everyone has walked all the way around, have the clay turn-around so that they can see each other's sculptures.*

12. Choose your fourth mythology:

State the mythology out loud (Example: "Technology will provide the solution.")

Ask the prompting question: How do you see yourself resisting this mythology in your life?

Instruct the molders to mold the clay to reflect their answer to your question, and add a motion, a sentence and a prop (if available) to their clay

*Allow a few minutes for molding. Once everyone is done, let the outer circle walk around the inner circle so that everyone gets to see everyone else's clay. After everyone has walked all the way around, have the clay turn-around so that they can see each other's sculptures.*

13. Thank everyone for letting themselves be seen and doing a great job!



Explain that we'll be taking a short break. When we come back we will break into groups for some deeper discussion on these how these control mythologies affect us.

## 5 MINUTE BREAK

### **PART 2: 1 hour 30 min**

**Note:** This is the debrief portion of the workshop. There are many ways this can be debriefed, based on the time you have and the group. Below is one method.

#### **Small groups**

1. Explain that we will create three rounds of small groups (5 or less) in which the groups are different every time. Use counting-off, life-boats, or some other way to set up groups.

Each round will take 20 minutes (including the time to create the groups). The group will have ~15 minutes to discuss a different question. With each round, the questions will build on each other, and the last group will answer the last question with a creative report-back method.

2. Use a method of your choice to create 3 groups of 5 people or less. Once groups are established:

State discussion question #1: How are you controlled by these mythologies (personally and politically)?

Allow remaining time for group discussion. Give the groups a 5 minute warning and a 1 minute warning. When the 20 minutes for that round has passed, call everyone back together to create the next round of groups.

3. Use a method of your choice to create another 3 groups of 5 people or less. Once groups are established:

State discussion question #2: How do these mythologies impact the sector/issue/area you work on: i.e. racial justice, economic justice, youth development, etc?

Allow remaining time for group discussion. Give the groups a 5 minute warning and a 1 minute warning. When the 20 minutes for that round has passed, call everyone back together to create the next round of groups.

4. Use a method of your choice to create another 3 groups of 5 people or less.



Remind people that for this discussion question the group will come up with a creative way to present their discussion to the other groups. After having 20 minutes for discussion, they will have an additional 15 minutes to develop their report back. They can create a series of sound-bites, chants, a skit, a newspaper front page, political poster, or action role play that shares one way their group sees addressing the ecological crisis in the future.

Once groups are established:

State discussion question #3: How do you envision integrating what you've learned into your life/organization/ political work? (Understanding that there are many ways for us to engage these ideas, and that groups may form net- works, or other formations outside of their existing organization).

Allow remaining time for group discussion. Give the groups a 5 minute warning and a 1 minute warning.

At the 20-minute mark, let groups move around to get any supplies they need for their report-back.

When the 15 minutes for creating the report- back has passed, call everyone back to begin the presentations.

5. Let groups self-select who will perform first, second and last. Cheer loud and congratulate everyone on their performances!

Remind people that this creative space can be the first step in planning concrete steps for their organizations (or wherever they do their political work) to begin integrating goals around ecological sustainability into their personal, organizational practice and their program plans.



**Facilitator notes:**

**FACILITATOR'S LIST OF SOME CONTROL MYTHOLOGIES**

Humans are separate from nature.

Humans are more important than animals/nature.

The creativity of "the market" will solve the problem.

Technology will provide the solution.

(Economic) Growth is Good.



Progress is Inevitable. (here, progress refers to technological progress, as above, and capital-intensive industrial development, as progress)

There is nothing we can do about it - the crises are natural/normal part of the planetary life-cycle

Resources are infinite (Resources = minerals, metals, water, wood and so on)

You can buy your way out of any problem

Conscious consumerism alleviates the problem

Environmentalism is for white people

People of color don't care about the environment

Food comes from the supermarket

Our folks have more pressing problems to deal with

The ecological crisis is FAR AWAY

Corporations will solve the problem

Poor countries have the right to develop just the way the West has

Humans have to dominate nature

The earth is in crisis (Rather than humans being the ones in crisis)

Poor people have too many babies — population is root cause of problem

It's all China's fault – if they're not doing something, why should we?

Taxing the rich hurts the economy

Poor people are lazy

Western is Civilization

The Work of  
Love and the  
Love of Work:  
Resilience-Based  
Organizing as a  
Path Forward

## ***The Work of Love and the Love of Work: Resilience-Based Organizing as a Path Forward***

*By Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project*

We are hard upon the seas of transition, constantly bombarded with waves of terror churned up by apocalyptic narratives of economic collapse and climate catastrophism. It often seems that the only thing we can wrap our heads around is a fear of the worst. And while it is all true – the dominant economy is collapsing (as it must) and Mother Earth will continue to change in all the ways needed to rid herself of the very economy that pesters her – fear of the worst isn't enough to turn things around.

Why so much catastrophism?

Why is it, as Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network has said, “So much easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism?” The fear of the worst, it turns out, constantly reinforces a powerful, unstated lie burrowed deep in our consciousness – even among progressives: that There Is No Alternative. As it turns out, there are many and they are here, now, weaving a better way forward for us all. These are not simply a laundry list of “projects” occupying the fringes of the economy that we can point at to feel less bad about the severity of the transition upon us. They are true exemplars of an actual remaking of economy that's contesting and upending concentration of power – and creating an economy that decentralizes, democratizes and diversifies power while reducing and redistributing resources. And one doesn't have to look far to find them.

Pointing to a distant ridge in Black Mesa, on the Navajo Reservation, Roberto Nutlouis, an organizer with Black Mesa Water Coalition says, “That used to be an agricultural field, but without our traditional ways, there is a real problem of soil and cultural erosion.” Roberto leads Black Mesa Water Coalition's work in building a new, green economy based on the traditional lifeways of the Navajo people. Despite forced assimilation, an economic stranglehold by Peabody Coal and over 40 years of federal policy barring their traditional pastoral ways, there is a growing movement to assert their traditions as the new economy. “We are a keystone species of this ecosystem,” insists Roberto, with soft-spoken certainty. “Our ancestors practiced dry-land farming and depended only on the precipitation during the winter and the monsoon season. Our traditional ecological knowledge is about where we strategically place our fields to slow down the water and increase the nutrients in the soil,” he explains. “That method requires a lot of people to participate, so that strengthened the family and kinship systems and reinforced the social structures.”

“Then, with the introduction of boarding schools, kids were taken away from home for years and that would breakdown our families. And then the wage economy would breakdown our traditional economy. Then the fields stopped being used, but when you remove the indigenous people from the land, the land suffers. The water came through, but nobody was there to manage and slow it down, and the land eroded and eroded. The erosion problem has gotten so severe that invasive species are coming in, such as Russian Olives and tumbleweeds. So in the area that gets very little rain, these invasives out-complete native plants. This is parallel with the cultural erosion, many of our people have taken on more and more of the American way of life.”

For Roberto, healing the land by strengthening traditional lifeways is the only path for real economic development. Bringing together young people with the wisdom of their elders, BMWC is

reasserting the traditional food system to increase health and economic benefits in the community – returning their labor to the land to restore it.

As indigenous people, the Navajo have co-evolved with the land. For them, when they talk about economy and sustainability, they are talking about time-tested knowledge that allows them to restore the land while they cultivate it to feed their people. Their approach has been to engage local youth, elders, farmers and ranchers directly to find a way through the maze of federal land-use policy. “Nobody is going to do it for us, we know that now. Any change that comes is going to come from the people. We have to become self-reliant. This is our vision of green economy.”

The struggle of the Black Mesa Water Coalition and their visionary path out of economic depression and towards a local, living, loving economy illustrates how ecological restoration and community resilience are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Their work is truly inspiring.

And however inspiring one example can be, it is nowhere near enough. Luckily, there are too many to mention. There are the milk farmers in Maine asserting their democratic right (in many places through hand vote in their town halls) to directly sell raw milk in their communities, despite state and federal laws prioritizing corporate agriculture over community needs. There are the organizers in the West and East sides of the San Francisco Bay Area taking over vacant foreclosed homes and underutilized lands to meet the real needs of real people through food and housing, asserting the inextricable relationship between healthy communities and healthy ecosystems – all the while finding new and creative ways to expose the banks, contest the titles and create new commons. And there is the inspiring, “Disaster Collectivism,” as writer, activist Naomi Klein calls it, of Occupy Sandy and Communities Against Anti-Asian Violence in NY, boldly going where FEMA and the Red Cross – and even the NYPD – refused to go – into the most vulnerable communities, providing direct, real relief contextualized by a politic that asserts that Sandy was not a natural disaster, but the reasonably predictable consequence of an economy based entirely on exploitation of the natural world, beginning with humans. As Helena Wong of CAAAV, a grassroots organization in Chinatown and throughout NYC, told us, “We were providing relief services that nobody was doing. At the same time that the police were telling us we had to leave, at the police station they had flyers up directing people to us.”

What all these inspiring stories of direct action resilience all have in common is a shared recipe for change – one that draws deeply from our diverse ancestral and experiential wisdom of how to live well together (*buen vivir*) and combines it with the strategies needed to upend the power-structure of the dominant political-economy and usher in the next economy based on a new, single bottom line: balanced, life-affirming relationships in the places we call home.

## **Recipe for Resilience**

This recipe for resilience combines the right ingredients - in a new way - to cook up effective change. In traditional campaign-based organizing, communities identify a problem/issue and then target a political figure with decision-making power to change rules or implement regulations in order to alleviate that problem. This is still absolutely valuable and needed work – the work of winning the incremental changes that improve conditions. However, a different strategic approach (new for many today) is emerging among organizers across the country and the world.

**Resilience-Based Organizing (RBO)** is emerging among communities that are steeped in an ecological consciousness and who recognize that a way to make transformative social change requires that we organize communities into a collective effort to meet the need at hand through **direct democratic decision-making and physical implementation by those who are being impacted by the problem.** These actions are taken with the knowledge, and, ideally, the

*intention*, of butting up against legal or political barriers that force the questions of whether we have the right to self-govern and take right action in our own interests. The approach is to lead with the vision; live that vision; and live it in a way that reorients power to be more local and democratic; rather than simply trying to win concessions from corporations, or the structures of government that serve them.

The concessions that are often obtained through traditional campaign-based organizing are tempting – and at times needed just to get by; especially when we are all so hungry for change. But concessions are like fast food: convenient, even tasty sometimes; but in the end, leaves you unhealthy and, more often than not, unsatisfied. And while it is much harder to grow, harvest, cook and share our own food, in the end we all know how much better it really is. It is power. Just like healthy food, resilient communities are not meted out on a tray, served up hot, anonymous and uniform. Resilient communities can weather the inevitable changes set in motion by a death-dependent economy, built entirely on exploitation. They are grounded in reflective, responsive and deeply reverential relationships.

There are three core ingredients that make Resilience-Based Organizing effective:

**Building a Transformative Narrative: People will not go someplace we have not first traveled to in our minds.** “Here at the Center for Story-based Strategy we always remind organizers of that,” asserted Christine Cordero, of CSS. And so we must first craft together and paint for others an irresistible vision of the future. A vision that is not built on a fear of the worst, but of knowing that everything can be better. A vision that recognizes that social inequity is a form of ecological imbalance, and the solution to millions just “getting by,” is not in “getting ahead,” but in “getting together.” What has anchored so much transformative organizing is a willingness to articulate a bold vision worth working for.

**Restoring our labor: What the hands do, the heart learns.** While there is no way forward without vision, vision is not enough. We must apply our own labor to build that vision now, regardless of how “un-realistic” or “impractical” we are told it is. If we put our work only into opposing what we don’t want, we build not love for our vision, but only longing. The first rule of ecological restoration is the restoration of our own labor. Human labor is the precious natural resource, concentrated, controlled and exploited, that has been wielded like a chainsaw against the rest of the natural world. Because of this, we must take it back from the chains of the market and restore it to the web of life. This should be the basis of our organizing at every scale, from the school to the workplace; from grassroots organizing to trans-local movement building. Through models of Transformative Justice, for example, in which people self-organize to directly address harm in their community without relying on policing and prisons, organizations such as Creative Interventions based in Oakland, Ca are working with victims of violence to create their own solutions.

**Contesting for Power: If it’s the right thing to do, we have every right to do it.** Ultimately, the struggle at the heart of Resilience-Based Organizing is one of democracy. In order to remake the very shape of governance, from one that centers power in the illegitimate authority of corporations, military states and global financial elites to one that centers power in the hands of the people, we must organize in our communities to take the visionary right action that directly asserts our right to self-govern. If it is the right thing to do, we have every right to do it. This is how we expose and depose the corporate oligarchy that is the barrier to the collective liberation of our communities and ecosystems.

And that is just what the community of Black Mesa is doing. In addition to restoring ancestral agricultural fields, BMWC is strengthening another pillar of their traditional lifeways: sheep herding and the wool economy, creating new infrastructure to support families in getting more value for their wool by eliminating middle-men and sharing resources including sheering, cleaning and hosting wool-buys on the reservation. But what makes these effort so unique and powerful is that this is happening despite the fact that since 1966, these activities – in fact almost all economic activity from keeping livestock to repairing houses – has been banned from an area of the reservation larger than the state of Delaware that covers most of the Black Mesa. A land dispute between the Hopi and Navajo in the mid-sixties that many assert is the result of Peabody Coal's interest in mining concessions resulted in a federal executive order, known as the "The Bennett Freeze," in which no development activity could happen in the freeze zone while the dispute continued. Thousands of Navajo had their livestock permits and grazing permits revoked and were never re-issued, despite the repeal of the freeze in only 2009. To this day, almost no resources have gone to address the four decades of what amounted to economic sanctions by the US – concentrating power in the extractive economy.

Despite the 'lack of papers,' Navajo have continued to maintain their traditional wool economy, which has suffered from rampant skimming by middlemen and hustling by buyers. For many Navajo, after driving their wool hours off the reservation to sell it, they are unable to recover even the gas money. Yet, instead of seeking conventional "job growth" as the solution to their dilemma, the Navajo are seeking restoration of the land and culture through cooperative activity that cuts out the middlemen and engages youth and elders alike *while actively asserting their positive right to maintain their lifeways despite the law.*

All of this cultural and ecological restoration requires a strategy to break the stranglehold of Peabody Energy and the Navajo Generating Station on the economy and their land. After leading the fight that led to the closure of the Black Mesa Mine and the Mojave Generating Station, BMWC is setting it's sights on an even more ambitious and visionary project. "We have to figure out how to not just shut things down, but build what is appropriate for our communities' health and stability," says Wahleah Johns, referring to the their campaign to transition the Navajo Generating Station from a coal fired power-plant fueled by the Kayenta mine, to a solar powered plant fueled by Black Mesa Solar; which would be a community owned and controlled solar facility using reclaimed mine lands. "These lands can never be restored for growing food or grazing sheep, so we should use them for the next best thing, clean energy owned by our community." The Navajo Generating Station, in addition to providing electricity to Los Angeles, Nevada, and parts of Arizona, also pushes water up over the mesa from the Colorado River to the desert cities of Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tuscon. This vision of a transition from coal to solar that can be owned by the Navajo people is part and parcel of making the great transition to a community-controlled economy based on deep held ancestral wisdom. "Our stories and traditions tell us that we should not be digging up the coal, which is the liver of the Black Mesa; or polluting our sacred waters. But we have been forced to ignore this wisdom and that is why our people are suffering from poverty, poor health and the climate is changing," says Wahleah.

What is particularly powerful and unique about all of the communities mentioned here is that, while grounded in lessons from past movements, there is a central commitment to principles of ecology – that we must organize our economic activity towards ecological restoration, beginning with our relationships.

Occupy the Farm (OTF), which Movement Generation has been a part of, was born out of Occupy Oakland & the Food Justice movement and inspired by the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (the MST, or Landless Workers Movement of Brazil)*, and is a another

example of Resilience-Based Organizing in a urban context. On Earth Day 2012, OTF took control of a gated 7-acre piece of public land administered by the University of California-Berkeley (UC) in the city of Albany. The land, known as the Gill Tract, is some of the last, best prime farmland in the urbanized East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area. Edward Gill sold the original 104 acres of agricultural land to the University of California, a land-grant institution established for the study and practice of agriculture, in 1928. “Since 1928, the UC has chopped up and developed on the vast majority of the agriculture land, leaving only a little over a dozen acres today with half of it intended for immediate commercial development, including a chain grocery store,” explains Effie Rawlings, an organizer with OTF. Over the last couple of decades, the 7 acres of remaining prime ag land has mostly been used for plant genetics research. The research, like most of what is now happening in our public universities, primarily serves corporate interests, from Big-Pharma to Big-Oil. The three-week continuous direct action farming of the Gill Tract was family friendly and publicly accessible. It was followed by repeated direct action harvests along with local organizing in Albany and the greater East Bay, alliance building and campaigning at the city council and University levels. All of this was undertaken to demand the permanent protection of the remaining Gill Tract for the practice and promotion of sustainable urban agro-ecology needed to support the food sovereignty of the greater East Bay. Occupy the Farm uses dignified work as direct action to asserts the peoples’ right to redefine the food system to meet our needs (food sovereignty). “We rejected arbitrary political borders (the City of Albany and the University of California) and instead embraced flexible, permeable, social and ecological boundaries by insisting that The Farm serve the needs of the greater Bay Area and be governed as a commons rather than through either the City of Albany or the UC,” asserts Rawlings. While there has been over 15 years of efforts to open up the Gill Tract for public access and, more recently, a couple of years of opposition to the commercial development there, Occupy the Farm represents a fundamental turning point. By combining direct action, resilience and dignified work, the movement was able to realize a vision, forcing the University into a double bind.

We were fully aware that we would be challenged by the UC on the legality of our actions, and we were prepared to do so in order to publicly spark the debate around the proper use and tenure of this precious resource. Using simple, positive messaging such as, “Farmland is for Farming,” and “If it is the right thing to do, we have every right to do it,” and by having all our efforts be radically inclusive of people from all walks of life (including encouraging opposing views at the community meetings), our activities were unimpeachable,” explained OTF activist and Movement Generation Collective Member, Gopal Dayaneni. “When asked by people from other parts of the US and the world how they can support our efforts, we begin with, “Take more land. Decentralize and diversify, it is our best defense.”

Occupy the Farm is also part of an evolution of Occupy, moving away from occupying public parks and setting up temporary settlements, and moving towards “occupying at scale,” to directly and democratically meet our needs. From actions that turn abandoned buildings into libraries, turn public schools slated for closure into peoples’ schools to converting vacant lots and empty houses into community gardens and peoples’ housing.

## **ROOTED IN TRADITION**

There are past movements that have paved the way for this approach, such as the Black Panther Party. Although the legacy of the Panthers is usually associated with it’s militant street patrolling, (which was itself a form of resilience based organizing for a community under constant, direct attack by the police state) the Panthers also had at least 65 other community programs designed for the Black community and it’s allies to meet their needs at a time when Black people were under attack by every arm of the government. These included teen and senior support programs, health clinics and medical research committees, community schools including a GED program,

free transportation and support for families of incarcerated people, counseling services, free clothing, dental and furniture programs, and of course the well known free breakfast program for school children. The Black Panthers protected their community with arms despite it being illegal because it was the right thing to do. They built the infrastructure to provide their own services, and did it all in a very public way, thus shining the light on this radical and honorable way of reclaiming power and building resiliency.

Internationally, we look to mass-based movements such as the MST of Brazil and the international network *La Via Campesina*, among many others. The MST, over the past 30+ years has built 30,000 communities of landless workers/peasants totaling 2 million people living on land that was taken through direct action. Using a model of occupying underutilized land of the wealthy large landholders, and immediately making them more productive by working the land, the MST then uses their productivity to contest for the title to land using land-reform laws in Brazil. **Take back, make productive, contest the title.** More than just driving land reform, the MST communities are organized from the family level on up in communities that work collectively. *The land reform is not the conversion of land from a few large landowners to many small landowners, but from a few large land owners into many collectively organized landed communities.*

Of course, there are always challenges, complexities and contradictions to navigate, but the vision of directly meeting needs through collective actions *begins to liberate our labor from the chains of the market and restore our labor to the web of life.* This is at the heart of ecological restoration and community resilience in the face of ecological disruption and economic collapse.

We see these examples as prototypes of Resilience-Based Organizing and as a strong point of departure for building out an organizing approach that can be shared and adapted for today's political moment, and that can meet the needs of our communities today.

**For more information about Movement Generation:**

[www.movementgeneration.org](http://www.movementgeneration.org)

[info@movementgeneration.org](mailto:info@movementgeneration.org)



# Resilience-Based Organizing

In traditional campaign-based organizing, communities identify a problem/issue and then target a political figure with decision-making power to provide resources, change rules or implement regulations in order to address that problem. This type of organizing is absolutely essential, and often wins incremental gains and reforms that make the difference in the lives of countless everyday people. And yet, a different (for many of us) strategic approach to organizing is growing among communities deeply steeped in ecological consciousness.

Using **Resilience-Based Organizing**, or RBO, we use our **collective labor** to meet our **collective needs**, in such a way as to publicly **expose illegitimate laws/power**, and instead **assert our right to self-govern**. Rather than asking a corporation or government official to act, we use our own labor to do whatever we need to do to survive and thrive as a people and a planet, knowing that our actions conflict with legal and political structures set up to serve the interests of the powerful. This forces the question of whether we have permission to take right action in our collective interests. We call this **creating a crisis of governance**.

## There are 3 core ingredients that make Resilience-Based Organizing effective:

### 1. Reclaim Our Labor.

*"What the hands do, the heart learns."*

If ecological collapse is rooted in the exploitation of our labor, the first rule of ecological restoration is to restore our labor: to put it back to use serving our communities, not the concentration of wealth.

### 2. Contest for Power, Create a Crisis of Governance.

*"If it's the right thing to do, we have every right to do it."*

Our actions must assert a new right - the right to directly and democratically meet our own needs, the right to self-govern – and in doing so, expose and denounce the existing laws and structures set up to concentrate power and wealth in the hands of the few at the expense of the collective needs of the many.

### 3. Lead With Vision.

*"People will not go someplace we have not first traveled to in our minds."*

Our actions must paint an irresistible vision of the future for people - one based not on our fear of the worst, but rather a bold vision of a future, (the *buen vivir*) worth fighting for.

# Relationship to Place



## Relationship to Place

---

**What Is It?** An individual reflection exercise that should take place in a spacious natural setting providing the opportunity for participants to contemplate their relationship to land/the Earth, as well as the circumstances that have led to their relationship to land.

---

### Why Do it?

- To highlight how the current global economy fosters a crisis of disconnection, specifically between people and the Earth
  - To highlight the importance of Relationship to Place and how having a relationship to land/the Earth and knowledge of Earth systems is critical for shaping ecological justice solutions
- 

**Time:** 60 - 90 minutes

---

### Materials needed:

- Participants should have paper and pen/pencil to write with if they want to write down their reflection
- 

### Directions/Script:

*This exercise is most effective when conducted soon after spending time discussing ecological justice, principles of ecology and their relevance to social justice, Eco=Home, the Just Transition framework and/or MG's Web of Life curriculum. Participants should have an understanding of ecological justice, the principle of interconnectedness and an orientation to Sacredness & Caring as the culture of a regenerative economy.*

1. Begin by sharing a quote with your group: *You cannot protect what you don't understand.*  
*Ask: what does this quote mean to you and how does it relate to our work towards ecological justice?* Take responses from a couple of people.

Scripted language for facilitator to read:

2. What we have learned together from [the Web of life, Ecological Justice, etc.] is the interconnectedness matters. Humans and human health are inextricably connected

to the health of the Earth and the land around us. And how we experience ourselves in relationship to the land or the Earth is directly related to our own lived experience.

There are many factors that shape a person's relationship to land/the Earth. Most of these factors can be traced back to ethnic and cultural roots, as well as global economic activities that some how impacted the generations of family that came before us, how the global economy affected their way of life and how integrated they were able to be with the natural environment, etc.

For many people who were born and raised in an urban environment, especially in low income neighborhoods, "land" and "the Earth" can be like a relative that we know we are related to, but that we don't actually *know*, understand or have a relationship with. For urban youth who have not grown up with green space around them or may not have had opportunities to spend time in natural environments, being outdoors can understandably be an uncomfortable experience.

Yet, even if this was our own experience, we know now that understanding our Home, Earth, is necessary for developing real solutions to the consequences of globalizing the mismanagement of our collective Earth home for so long; that leaving the health of Earth's ecosystems and all of our non-human relatives/counterparts out of the equation when we strategize for liberation for our communities won't lead to true freedom and will only generate partial or temporary gains for our people.

3. After sharing the framing above, let the group know that we will be doing a reflection exercise using the following questions as prompts:
  - What is your own relationship to land/the Earth?
  - Has anything you have learned recently about ecology and ecological justice has changed the way you relate to or feel related to the Earth/nature?
4. How to conduct the silent reflection:
  - Each participant should find a place in the immediate natural setting where they can be alone, not too close to anyone else
  - We will spend 20-30 minutes in quiet, individual reflection around our prompt questions. Participants can record their thoughts in the form of notes, a poem, a story, a drawing or any other form, including *not* writing anything down.
  - Everyone should remain silent for the duration of the reflection period
  - The facilitator will call participants back after 20-30 minutes. [Specify for your group how they will be called back – a whistle, bell, call out, a visual cue, etc.]
  - Once everyone returns there will be an opportunity for several people to share their thoughts and reflections.
5. Ask if there are any clarifying questions about the exercise itself. Once it is clear for everyone, send participants out into the open natural setting to find a place of reflection, making sure to note any parameters or limits to where they may go.



6. After 20 minutes has gone by, take a pulse of the group by noting how many people still seem engaged in their reflection, versus how many people seem to be done and looking for the sign to come back together. Depending on what you observe, you may want to give the group another 10 minutes to reflect. Once the full amount of time has passed, call your group back together.
7. Invite participants to share their reflections with the group. Depending on how much time you have, you may want to specify the number of shares you have time for.

NOTE: for some people, the reflection questions can bring up trauma from lived experiences, like being displaced from another country or place where they or their family was once connected to the land, including displacement due to war or economic poverty; or the experience of never having had the opportunity to develop a relationship to the Earth.

It is helpful to be prepared with tissue paper, plants for smudging, or anything else that may be soothing to participants in your group who become emotional.

8. As participants share, make space for expressions of emotion, drawing connections between reflections that are shared, and connections between reflections and the concepts of ecological justice, just transition, etc.
9. After everyone who wants to share has had the opportunity, or you reach the end time of your session, thank everyone for the intention and vulnerability they put into this exercise.



**Facilitator notes:**

As part of your introduction to the exercise, you may want to consider finding a quote that elaborates on the role of our relationship to the Earth in organizing for liberation or as part of our collective human history. Share a quote by an author that is respected by the group you are working with.

Tales of Just  
Transitions:  
A Narrative  
Tool For Our  
Visions &  
Stories



# TALES OF JUST TRANSITIONS: A NARRATIVE TOOL FOR OUR VISIONS & STORIES



## DESCRIPTION

This workshop uses the concept of a Fairy Tale as a simple tool for generating, concise, fun and engaging stories about our communities' conditions and campaigns for Just Transition. It is an adaptation by Movement Generation of the Fairy Tales curriculum developed by the Center for Story Based Strategy. It is best used after the Being the Change workshop or the Building our Movement of Movements workshop, found in the CJA Just Transition Popular Education Toolbox.

## WORKSHOP GOALS

- To generate creative synthesis and distillation of a framing narrative for communities engaged in Just Transition work.
- To prompt groups to think creatively about how to tell the story of Just Transition, particularly the process of moving from where we are to where we want to go.

This workshop can be done as a stand-alone activity, or combined with other workshops segments related to just transition. It can be done as an individual writing exercise (giving people 5-10 minutes) or it can be done in pairs or groups of three or more to push participants to synthesize their ideas. If doing the exercise in groups, people will require more time (20 minutes).

## MATERIALS INCLUDED

- no materials needed

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Blank butcher paper
- Markers
- Other art/coloring materials

## AGENDA Time: 1 hour

Time	Item	Description	Materials
30 min	From Community Struggle to Comic Strips	Using the comic strip concept to generate a framing narrative about Just Transition in our communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blank butcher paper</li> <li>• Markers and other coloring materials</li> </ul>
15 min	Sharing our Tales	Gallery walk and group shares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masking tape</li> </ul>
15 min	Debrief	Questions to harvest good story ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butcher paper</li> <li>• Markers</li> </ul>



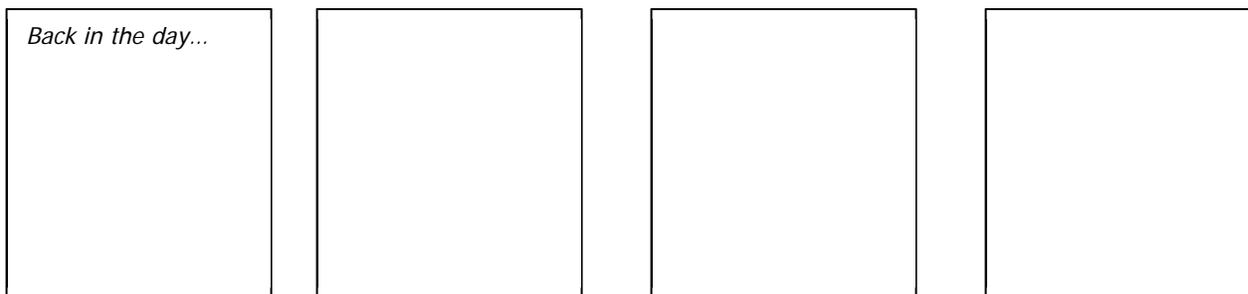
**FROM COMMUNITY STRUGGLES TO COMIC STRIPS**

**30 MIN**

- Once we have engaged in a visioning and planning process around Just Transition in our communities it is important that we develop inviting and provocative stories about this work in order to inspire our communities to see themselves as part something big and bold that will liberate our people and the Earth.
- Drawing on the ideas that were generated around Visionary & Oppositional possibilities in our communities or the brainstorm around RBO in our communities, we are going to use the template of a comic strip to tell our story of Just Transition.
- Sometimes it's easy to get so caught up in details of our work that we forget to zoom out and tell a compelling story about what just transition looks like on the ground. And when we do, we tend to be good at talking about the problem, and often what our solutions are, but not necessarily how we get from here to there. Today we're going to draw the simple template of a comic in order to tell our story of a just transition.

This is essential for organizing new people into our vision and work. People must understand our vision AND be able to see that it is possible.

- There are so many stories about our communities, but what happens when you create your own? You have generations of story, imagery, symbols, and truth to draw from. Tap into the deep knowledge that you already have.
- We are going to split up into 4 groups. **The rules of this activity are simple: you have to tell your story in no more than 4 sentences.** Your comic strip will have 4 panels that will feature one sentence each. The first sentence must and it must begin with "*Back in the day...*" and the story has to end with "*...and so it shall be*".
  - Post 4 butcher papers on the wall as an example, in the order they will be used for this activity. Labeled the first panel with the header *Once upon a time...*, and the last panel with the footer *...and they all lived happily ever after*. Leave the middle 2 panels blank.



- Offer an example of a story you are familiar with that begins with "Back in the day..." and ends



with "...and so it shall be."

· Break participants up into 4 even groups.

- Groups will have a total of 20 minutes to generate their comic strip. Suggest that the groups spend 10 minutes to conceptualize and 10 minutes to draw their comic. Encourage everyone to be mindful of roles and full participation in the group process.
- Encourage people to be brief, but don't hinder their creativity. Often groups break the "rules" and add a sentence or two, which doesn't really matter.

### **SHARING OUR TALES                      15 MIN**

- When the groups are done, ask each group to post their comic strip on the wall and invite participants to do a gallery walk.
- Then invite 2 groups to briefly share their story. Give each group 2 minutes to share. (You may have 3-4 groups share their stories, depending your time constraints.)

### **DEBRIEF                                      15 MIN**

- Debrief the activity in the full group using some or all of the following questions and scribe the things that come up and can be used for future story telling:
  - Were there specific phrases, images or ideas that you found really compelling?
  - What do we want to keep working with or incorporate into the narrative?
  - Where are there commonalities between the panels?
  - Did you have any 'light bulb moments'?
  - Did anything pop up for your group around panels 2-3 when thinking about getting to panel 4?
- Synthesize the responses of the debrief discussion and thank everyone for their creative work.