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System Change on a Deadline

Organizing Lessons from Canada's Leap
Manifesto

By Avi Lewis, Katie McKenna and Rajiv Sicora

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INTRODUCTION

How do we achieve emissions cuts that are rapid, deep, and just? In other words: how can we use the ideas and tools collected in this report to change the world?

Everyone reading this knows we need to limit global temperature rise to 1.5° Celsius. Climate justice advocates agree on one prerequisite for getting there: massive popular movements, capable of redefining public debate and policy agendas – in short, we need to upend what's considered politically possible.

But that's just the first act. This crisis of unfathomable size and stakes is unfolding on a punishing timeline. Around the world, progressives are grappling with an age-old question that is now infused with existential urgency: how do we get the power we need to win, without being co-opted into the structures we oppose?

Climate action commensurate with the scale of the crisis will require every kind of transformative change at the same time – bottom-up, top-down, and everything in between. To slash emissions quickly, we need governments to confront corporate interests and re-discover an appetite for large-scale economic planning. But if we want this shift to be genuinely democratic and responsive, then we also need durable forms of community control and accountability. How can we advance the transition on multiple fronts at once?

In Canada, we took on the challenge by gathering a diverse coalition to draft the 2015 Leap Manifesto, a 15-point people's plan for a just transition away from fossil fuels. We knew that to win, progressives would need to abandon a defensive stance and craft a vision of the climate-safe pathway we *do* want – not just resist the policies we oppose.

Because if the 99% doesn't set the agenda, the 1% will. Indeed, we know exactly the kind of climate future that global elites are planning for. It is a future dotted with protected enclaves for the few, in the midst of ever-expanding sacrifice zones for the many. Where capital wrings every last dollar out of destructive economies both old and new, and out of the escalating climate chaos they produce. Where technologies of surveillance and social control merge with the desperate dream of engineering the planet itself – all of it backed by militarized governments that repress and warehouse the victims.

There is still time to change course. But in order to build social movements with the power to lead the way, we need a vision of «radical emissions reduction» that is irresistible, vivid and concrete, connected to the issues and struggles that most people deal with every day. To succeed, the energy transition must promise real and continuing improvements to the material conditions faced by the majority of people around the world.

Our experience in Canada offers several lessons about the challenges and potential of this process.

In the essay that follows, we draw on the Leap story to explore how coalition-building can break down traditional «issue» silos, which too often restrict the scope and impact of social justice activism. We consider how these new coalitions can communicate positive, detailed pictures of the world we need, and deploy them to shift the goalposts of what is considered politically possible.

While documents like The Leap Manifesto are necessarily rooted in specific places and histories, they can play a role in climate policy at the local, national, and even international levels. So we conclude with a discussion of how initiatives like The Leap can complement emerging ways of engaging with electoral politics and efforts to scale up local democracy, and help forge a path to power for a radical, justice-based agenda for 1.5°C.



Building the Coalition

In the years leading up to the drafting of The Leap Manifesto in 2015, we watched with admiration as social movements around the world racked up unlikely victories against the fossil fuel industry.

While documenting some of those extraordinary stories in *This Changes Everything*, the documentary film accompanying Naomi Klein's book of that name, we saw a pattern emerge: there was power in organizing across traditional «issue» silos. Whether it was urban doctors and lawyers making common cause with subsistence farmers and fishers to stop a coal plant in southern India, or white-led environmental NGOs learning to follow Indigenous leadership to block oil pipelines in rural North America, we were seeing alliances that had never happened before, transcending lines of class, race, caste, language – and winning.

It seemed to us that these new alliances were a significant new variable in the calculus of resistance, and that they had the potential to take on more than just our energy systems. *This Changes Everything* argued that the climate crisis is a fundamental challenge to free-market orthodoxy and the values of dominance, extraction, and individualism underlying it. Skyrocketing emissions go hand in hand with rising inequality and white supremacy. It all has to be challenged at once – and doing so is a once-in-a-century opportunity to build a better world.

We also sensed a growing dissatisfaction with simply saying «no» to the extractive economy, as vital as those resistance fights have been and will remain to keeping fossil fuels in the ground. In Canada, where our work is centered, organizers were increasingly asking how to articulate a collective «yes» – how to define a new system.

We wanted a shared story about a better future, and the path to get there. We asked ourselves: could our varied movements come together to craft a genuinely collaborative, grassroots vision of the future we want?

In 2015, we had our chance. The story of The Leap Manifesto begins with a movement convening in Toronto in 2015, against the backdrop of the plummeting price of oil. It was a shock – the kind so often used to bypass democracy and ram through corporate-friendly policies, as Naomi Klein documented in her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine*. But if people could be prepared, remember their history, and tell a different political story, she concluded, shocks could also be harnessed in the interest of the majority.

In Canada, where tens of thousands of oil workers were getting laid off, we believed this was one of those moments. For a decade, a far-right government had doubled down on extracting some of the dirtiest and most energy intensive fossil fuel in the world from the Alberta tar sands. Under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, it seemed that Canada was determined to restructure its entire economy around the

extraction and export of this one commodity, to the point where our currency became a petrodollar on world markets. Now, with the industry no longer drunk on \$150/barrel oil, we saw an opening to propose a different economic future.

Adding to the political stakes, there was also a federal election coming up in the fall of 2015. None of the major political parties were talking about the climate crisis in any meaningful way. And not one was offering an ambitious, inspiring vision of a new path forward for Canada's economy and energy needs.

We sensed a deep hunger for a completely different way forward for the country, one that could begin to heal wounds going back to Canada's founding – from the theft of First Nations land and the betrayal of treaties, to the profoundly unequal distribution of wealth today.

So in May 2015, we invited progressive leaders from across a range of issues and regions to a two-day meeting in Toronto, titled «From Oil Shock to Energy Shift». There were First Nations leaders and trade unionists representing oil workers; a range of environmentalists, from direct action-minded folks to conventional NGOs; food justice, anti-poverty, and faith organizations; as well as housing, refugee, and immigrant rights activists.

We enlisted two facilitators to lead the gathering: Detroit-based social justice facilitator adrienne maree brown, and Toronto-based labor educator D'Arcy Martin. Their complementary experiences and backgrounds were essential to bringing the group together.

On the first day, we told stories of previous historical moments when diverse social movements had worked together on this land – like the first wave of resistance to the NAFTA «free trade» agreement. We used post-it notes to create a timeline of those moments on the wall, and heard reflections from attendees who had participated in some of those moments of unity.

Later that day, we shifted gears to asking how we could move from defence to defining the agenda in Canada. We had several different breakout sessions that forced activists to get out of their comfort zones and talk about hope, aspiration, and how to bring about the kind of society we want to live in.

For example: what does your free time look like if you're working less? What would it mean to have energy security, with local ownership rooted in communities? How would that make day-to-day life different?

It was fascinating how challenging it felt to imagine life «when we win.» It's easy to imagine dystopia – but the «yes» is a muscle too-rarely used in the course of social justice activism. It was gratifying to see everyone rise to the challenge as the afternoon went on, engaging in deep conversation with people they don't normally work with.

If the theme of the first day was asking how we break down barriers, the second day's question was, what could keep us apart? There is a long history in our society of workers being pitted against environmentalists, and both against Indigenous peoples. Decades of tensions and memories of betrayals surfaced in these discussions. They were blunt, and often painful, but always respectful. We confronted the reality that there are real obstacles separating our movements, and we need to continue working through them together.

On the last day, we stood together in the heart of Toronto's financial district, to announce the group's first collaboration: a March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate, to take place later that summer.

The idea was to test drive the new coalition by working together on a concrete action. We went straight into planning it after the meeting, and ultimately that summer's march made history as one of the most diverse climate actions in Canadian history – led by Indigenous youth, with trade unionists, migrant justice advocates, environmentalists and anti-poverty activists marching together.

We also started work on another outcome from the gathering: The Leap Manifesto itself, which eventually launched with the subtitle: «A Call for a Canada Based on Caring for the Earth and One Another.» With no single author, it is a consensus document through and through. But as a writer, Naomi's role over the three days of the gathering was to take in the full range of conversations and concerns, tease out common threads, and try to come up with a structural frame that spoke to the emerging demands.

Naomi worked to revise a first draft into something both lyrical and narrative-driven, which was then subject to a wide-ranging group process. Coalition members weighed in throughout that summer; the re-writing, horse trading, and negotiating all took place in Track Changes in a Microsoft Word document, battled out in the margins. Some of this recalled the perils of collective writing, but what we remember most is how thoughtful and impressive people's contributions were. On the whole, the collaboration and even the compromises made the document immeasurably better.

By the end of the summer, we had something truly exciting: a final text with 15 demands that all of our many different constituencies agreed on. The demands amounted to 14 powerful «yeses,» and one big «no» – a science-based call for no new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure. As far as the «yeses» go, many are the familiar pillars of climate policy: yes to a rapid transition to 100% renewables, yes to green housing retrofits and affordable public transit, yes to massive public investments in low-carbon infrastructure.

Perhaps more unusually for a climate-focused document, the manifesto opens with a demand to respect the inherent rights and title of Indigenous peoples in Canada, starting by upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. And it says that as we assert local, democratic control over our energy systems, Indigenous people and «others on the front lines of polluting industrial activity should be first to receive public support for their own clean energy projects.»

The text also includes calls for a «more localized and ecologically-based agricultural system»; a re-imagined trade system that serves communities rather than corporations; and welcoming refugees and migrants fleeing war and climate impacts, along with «immigration status and full protection for all workers»; a national childcare program; and «a vigorous debate about the introduction of a universal basic annual income.»

There was nothing radically new in the substance of the manifesto. These were all demands that have been made by different social movements for decades. What was

new was the particular configuration of the policies, situated in a positive and hopeful frame, and told as a story. More than just a laundry list of political demands, The Leap Manifesto unfolds as a narrative – a concrete picture of a safe and equitable future.

In the weaving of that story, several core themes came into focus:

- *Frontlines first.* The people and communities who have been most harmed by the current system should be first in line to benefit from the alternatives.
- *No worker left behind.* Nobody whose livelihood depends on fossil fuel extraction should be left to fend for themselves in the energy transition. This goes beyond financial assistance and retraining; like other frontline communities who have borne the brunt of pollution, these workers must be in the driver's seat as we design and build a new economy.
- *Care work is climate work.* Installing solar panels and building wind turbines are not the only kinds of green jobs. Education, health care, care of the young and elderly, and the arts are all already low-carbon forms of work – they are also the ones that have been under attack during decades of austerity, and need to be placed at the center of the next economy.
- *Polluter pays.* The money to pay for the great transition is available – this is an era of unprecedented private wealth – but a justice-based response to the climate crisis will require a major redistribution of both wealth and power across global society. Historic emitters like fossil fuel corporations, rich industrialized countries, and the hyper-consuming global 1%, all have climate debts that urgently need to be paid.

the leap manifesto

A call for a Canada based on caring for the Earth and one another



The leap must begin by respecting the inherent rights and title of the original caretakers of this land, starting by fully implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The latest research shows we could get 100% of our electricity from renewable resources within two decades; by 2050 we could have a 100% clean economy. **We demand that this shift begin now.**



No new infrastructure projects that lock us into increased extraction decades into the future. **The new iron law of energy development must be: if you wouldn't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard.**

The time for energy democracy has come: wherever possible, communities should collectively control new clean energy systems. **Indigenous Peoples and those on the frontlines of polluting industrial activity should be first to receive public support for their own clean energy projects.**



We want a universal program to build and retrofit energy efficient housing, ensuring that the lowest income communities will benefit first.

We want high-speed rail powered by just renewables and affordable public transit to unite every community in this country—in place of more cars, pipelines and exploding trains that endanger and divide us.



We want training and resources for workers in carbon-intensive jobs, ensuring they are fully able to participate in the clean energy economy.

We need to invest in our decaying public infrastructure so that it can withstand increasingly frequent extreme weather events.



We must develop a more localized and ecologically-based agricultural system to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, absorb shocks in the global supply and produce healthier and more affordable food for everyone.

We call for an end to all trade deals that interfere with our attempts to rebuild local economies, regulate corporations and stop damaging extractive projects.



We demand immigration status and full protection for all workers. Canadians can begin to rebalance the scales of climate justice by welcoming refugees and migrants seeking safety and a better life.

We must expand those sectors that are already low-carbon: caregiving, teaching, social work, the arts and public-interest media. A national childcare program is long past due.



Since so much of the labour of caretaking—whether of people or the planet—is currently unpaid and often performed by women, we call for a vigorous debate about the introduction of a universal basic annual income.

We declare that “austerity” is a fossilized form of thinking that has become a threat to life on earth. The money we need to pay for this great transformation is available—we just need the right policies to release it. An end to fossil fuel subsidies. Financial transaction taxes. Increased resource royalties. Higher income taxes on corporations and wealthy people. A progressive carbon tax. Cuts to military spending.



We must work swiftly towards a system in which every vote counts and corporate money is removed from political campaigns.

This transformation is our sacred duty to those this country harmed in the past, to those suffering needlessly in the present, and to all who have a right to a bright and safe future.

**Now is the time for boldness.
Now is the time to leap.**

Moving the Goalposts

As we prepared to launch the manifesto, our goal was to move the 15 demands into mainstream debate through the strength and diversity of the coalition that had come together to back them – including not only Indigenous and social justice leaders, but political figures from every party. With the manifesto written, and the drafters ready to go public, we brought one more ingredient to the mix: Canada's artists, celebrities, and public intellectuals.

Many of these public figures had already started to dig deeper into the climate crisis and the need for systemic change. In looking for signatories, we decided to go to this group first, and only then to large organizations that may be more reluctant to sign on to a controversial document.

We were thrilled to garner support from across Canada's arts community, from Donald Sutherland, Ellen Page, and Rachel McAdams, to Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, Feist, and Arcade Fire, as well as some of the country's best-known authors and poets.

Then, when we turned to the big unions, environmental NGOs, and other activist groups, there was already cultural momentum behind the manifesto. Dozens of respected organizations joined as initiating signatories in the weeks before we launched.

The launch was a star-studded event that made headline news across the country. Canada's national «paper of record» printed the Manifesto text in full, and outlets from Entertainment Tonight to the country's public broadcaster covered the press conference. It was clear we were shaking up Canadian political debate – though at that point, we didn't know how deeply.

As quickly as the debate opened up around an alternative vision for our economy and society, the country's elite began a campaign to close it down. «Madness,» exclaimed the *Globe and Mail's* editorial board. The *National Post* described the Manifesto as «economic suicide»; for the right-wing commentator Rex Murphy, it was a «wild-eyed, ultra greenist, anti-capitalist dogma sheet.» (Rex, you say that like it's a bad thing!)

Brian Mulroney, Canada's neoliberal prime minister during the Reagan-Thatcher era, crept out of retirement to weigh in, telling a business audience that the Leap represented a «new philosophy of economic nihilism that must be resisted and defeated.» Brad Wall and Christy Clark, then the sitting premiers of Saskatchewan and British Columbia, respectively, were equally bombastic; Clark infamously proclaimed that if The Leap were to become law, «hundreds of towns would be wiped off the map tomorrow, and turned into ghost towns.»

It was an incredible, all-out elite aerial bombardment – since 2015 there have literally been hundreds of columns and op-eds attacking The Leap Manifesto and its

backers. At times, it was difficult to be on the receiving end. But it also made us proud to be targeted by some of the most regressive and powerful voices in our society – it was proof we were shaking them up.

And in the end, they did us a huge favor. At the peak of the outcry, after weeks of sustained attacks, a prominent research firm did a national poll about *The Leap*. It found that 52% of Canadians had heard of the manifesto – and a solid majority of voters backing Canada's three progressive parties, ranging from 50% and 59%, endorsed the document's principles. Startlingly, even 20% of Conservative Party supporters agreed with them.

We had set out to change the goalposts of political debate, and ended up in a firestorm. But once we recovered from the attacks, what we discovered is that backlash can be beautiful. The more the country's elites smeared the manifesto, mischaracterizing its intent and spirit, the more Canadians wondered if it might be worth a look, and found that it spoke to them.

Since then, more than 50,000 people have endorsed the document, and well over 200 organizations have joined them. Those numbers are roughly the equivalent of some half a million Americans signing a radical climate justice manifesto in the U.S. – certainly no small feat.

In shaking up the country's political debate, we learned that Canadians are far more eager for transformative change than the governing class would have us believe. And many have already started working furiously to break with politics as usual. In 2015, rank-and-file members of the New Democratic Party, Canada's historically democratic socialist party, shepherded and won a resolution to debate *The Leap Manifesto* at the local level, with a view to eventually taking it up as party policy (that process is still unfolding).

Corresponding shifts in the national discourse have followed. In the 2015 election, for example, politicians of all major parties felt it necessary to pick a tar sands pipeline project to cheer for. Just a few years later, a government has been elected in British Columbia that campaigned forthrightly against the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and Federal Members of Parliament have been arrested as part of protests against the project. The goalposts are starting to move.

Building Power

When we launched The Leap Manifesto, our intent was to build pressure for a radical climate justice agenda from outside the political sphere. While we were working with a new constellation of demands, we were also following a familiar model of how outside social movements have achieved inside political change in the past.

Since then, we've witnessed (and taken part in) a rapid evolution of the inside/outside dynamic between movements and politicians around the world. By putting movement-inflected, decentralized organizing techniques behind transformative political manifestos, candidates like U.S. presidential contender Bernie Sanders and UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn have scored electoral breakthroughs: a fresh formula for change, with re-configured relationships between movements and electoral leaders.

As an example of this phenomenon, consider a game-changing demand made by U.S. activists two years ago:

«We believe the United States must lead in forging a robust global solution to the climate crisis. We are committed to a national mobilization, and to leading a global effort to mobilize nations to address this threat on a scale not seen since World War II. In the first 100 days of the next administration, the President will convene a summit of the world's best engineers, climate scientists, policy experts, activists, and indigenous communities to chart a course to solve the climate crisis.»

You might think this is an excerpt from the U.S. Leap Manifesto. In fact, it was an official plank in the 2016 Democratic Party platform. The provision was fought for by a group of Bernie Sanders supporters, as they anticipated how to pressure the then-expected future President Clinton to act boldly on climate.

In a joint op-ed recently published in Canada's *Globe and Mail* in 2018, senior Sanders advisor Becky Bond, along with Adam Klug and Emma Rees of Momentum UK, explain why they find The Leap Manifesto inspiring – and in the process, sum up some of the common principles that drove their own pioneering work. On both sides of the Atlantic, a fundamental premise was that young people are fed up, and «ready to work for genuine system change.» So above all, the organizers sought to put those people directly in charge: «Call it bottom-up, peer-to-peer, distributed or decentralized – our approach to politics is to offer voters both inspiration and the tools to lead the organizing themselves.»

And while much has been made of Sanders' and Corbyn's personal popularity, Bond, Klug, and Rees attribute their success as much (or more) to their radical

platforms as the candidates themselves. «Both the Labour Party manifesto in 2017, and Mr. Sanders' platform in 2016, rejected incrementalism and put forward system-level demands: Break up the big banks, free education from cradle to grave and an emergency mobilization in response to the climate crisis. Bold ideas such as these inspired tens of thousands to skip work on election day in Britain, knocking on millions of doors to get out the vote.»

Indeed, Sanders not only argued for free public health care for all; he also made the case for investing \$1 trillion over 5 years to rebuild America's infrastructure, and put over 13 million people to work. In the UK's last general election, the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn called for not only re-nationalizing the railways and the post, but also for a «publicly-owned, locally accountable» green energy system, 60% renewables by 2030, and the creation of a National Investment Bank to help fund the transition.

In the developed countries that must reduce emissions fastest and deepest, we believe it's imperative for climate activists and experts to take advantage of this momentum, and to align themselves with the political movements that are creating a progressive populism for the 21st century. After all, if any rich world politician is going to achieve radical, just emissions cuts in the near future, they will almost surely come to power (and be held accountable) by popular, youth-led movements like the ones that brought Sanders and Corbyn to prominence.

Deeper work is required to make these movements more inclusive and diverse, and to build greater unity on the left of the political spectrum. But the growing impulse to win state power and use it – to redistribute wealth, shift ownership to workers, and transform our economy and society for the better – is one that we simply cannot ignore. Indeed, with each late tick of the climate clock, that social and economic agenda looks more and more like a to-do list to halt catastrophic warming.

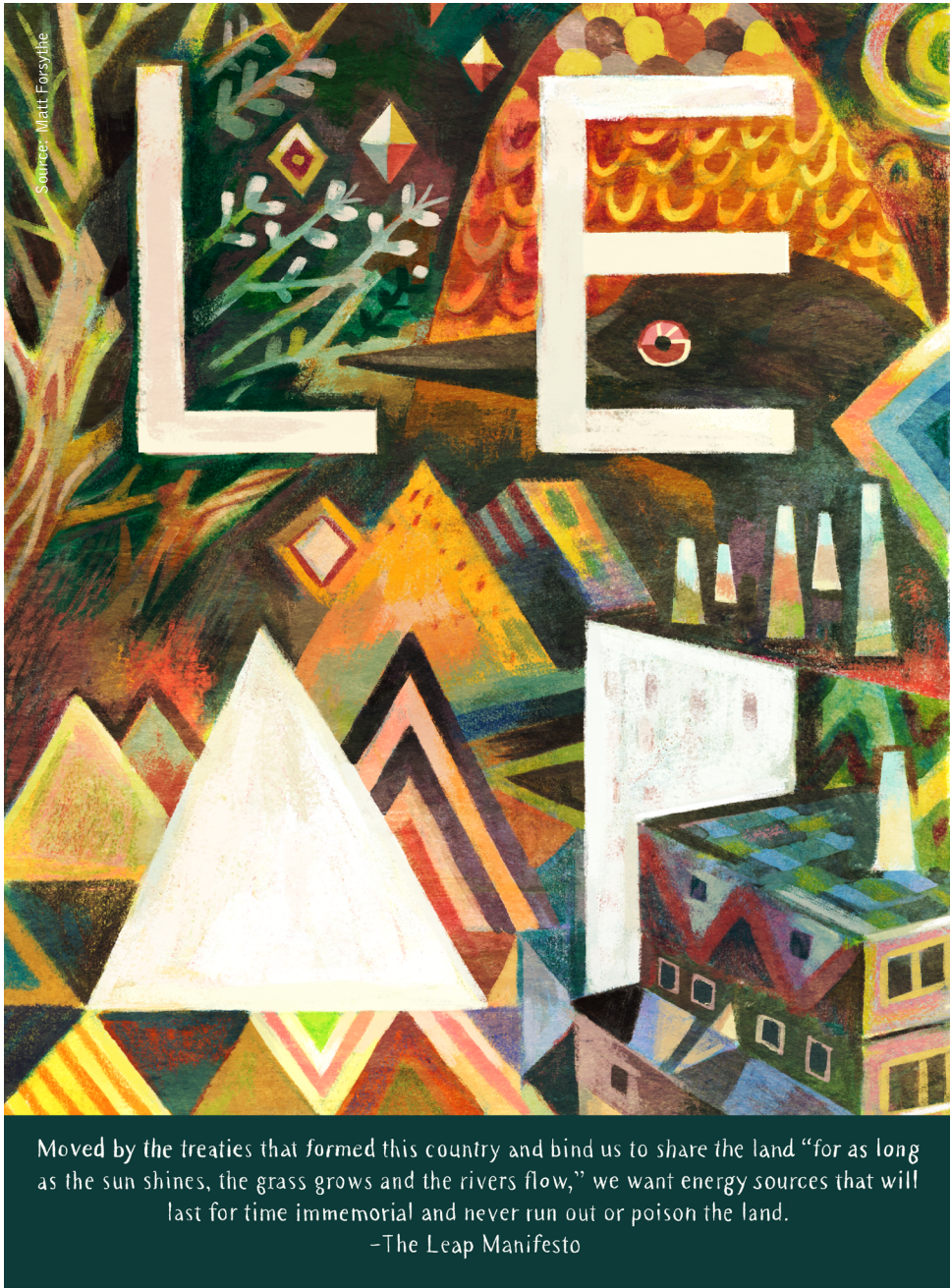
And yet, the re-emergence of democratic socialism à la Sanders and Corbyn is not the only exciting political development for those who care about climate justice. We're also living in a golden age for municipal radicalism and local democracy.

In a dizzying range of places around the world – from Barcelona, to the cities of Northern Kurdistan, to Jackson, Mississippi – people are building local institutions to bring progressive power and resources to their own communities. It's a global wave that is as varied as its geographical scope implies, its sites of struggle drawing strength from diverse movements and ideological touchpoints. But what many of these experiments share is a fusion of the practices of direct democracy with the tools of solidarity economics, such as worker-owned co-ops and community land trusts. In some cases, their leaders have already been elected to City Hall.

«Blurring the lines between social movement and local governance, these municipalist experiments [are] demanding socially just and ecological solutions to issues that concern the community as a whole,» notes a 2017 *ROAR Magazine* issue on the trend. «Patiently, through a combination of political education, grassroots mobilization and reform, municipalists seek to place decision-making power back in the hands of citizens.»

As the surest way to guarantee that climate action actually improves people's lives, robust local institutions can serve as a check on the centralized powers that

must mandate and guide the societal energy shift. We know that relying on top-down change is inherently risky; as governments change and constantly face regulatory capture, strength and pressure from below is crucial to top-down delivery. Progressive electoral victories can also solidify, institutionalize, and scale up municipal innovations.



Source: Matt Forsythe

Moved by the treaties that *formed* this country and bind us to share the land “for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow,” we want energy sources that will last for time immemorial and never run out or poison the land.

–The Leap Manifesto

CONCLUSION

If radical emissions reduction is a fundamentally global challenge, can radical cities truly lead the way? This is one of the central questions we're asking on the ground, particularly since we began working as a member of the Leap Los Angeles coalition.

The coalition draws its leadership from environmental justice organizations that have been fighting locally for decades – community-based struggles that are bright lights in the polluted history of L.A. But this particular project emerged from the hope and disaster of the 2016 US election.

When Trump was elected, the notion of a wartime-level climate emergency response was an obvious non-starter at the federal level. But some of the drafters of that language from the 2016 Democratic Party platform decided it was time to shift tactics – and move their efforts from the federal to the municipal stage.

In Los Angeles, that meant connecting with local community leaders and politicians, and launching an audacious effort to make L.A. fossil-free by 2025, and to do so on principles of justice, embedded in a community-led Leap Manifesto process.

That's right: the goal is take the second-largest city in the U.S. to 100% renewables in less than 10 years. As a first step, activists commissioned a rigorous technical roadmap for how L.A. can reach that audacious target, and recruited City Council allies to back policies to enact the plan. To ground the electoral and regulatory project in a framework of climate justice, the drafting of a grassroots L.A. Leap Manifesto is also underway – led by representatives of communities that have long been on the frontlines of struggle against environmental racism.

From a process standpoint, the L.A. project suggests a tantalizing recipe for building power: vision and policy demands from the people; a technical plan in dialogue with them, grounded in the urgency of climate science; municipal politicians ready to move in concert with community leadership; and a common front that is committed to actually making the platform a reality.

Crucially, it's also a local approach that has the seeds of a national strategy built in: L.A. Leap is consciously seeking to create a replicable and scalable model that could roll out in hundreds of U.S. cities in the coming years.

But as this project moves forward with maximum velocity, we do find ourselves grappling with one of the most difficult and time-consuming elements of this work: what does it really mean to put frontline communities at the center?

While we're still learning how to answer that question, we do know that taking direction from the frontlines is both a moral and strategic imperative. If you start in the places where people are facing life and death struggles, you'll find that they're fighting like hell to change our system; the urgency, fierce commitment, and creativity

we need to win already exists. But we must go to these movements and follow their lead, not expect them to come to us.

The communities most impacted by the current system, and who have done the most to resist and propose alternatives – Indigenous groups, people of color (especially women), workers, and many more – were at the heart of The Leap Manifesto in Canada, both in terms of the process that led to the document and the content itself. This, more than any other single factor, is what made the document compelling and gave it legitimacy. It's why it rang true for so many readers of so many backgrounds. It's why we were able to use megaphones of privilege to amplify it effectively, and why it stood stronger after relentless establishment attacks.

So as participants in the L.A. project, we've helped to reinforce those principles first and foremost. Some of the fiercest environmental justice fights in the country are unfolding in Los Angeles, including resistance to urban oil drilling concentrated in poor neighborhoods of color. In every aspect of their approach, the coalition is striving to foreground the struggles and aspirations of the city's frontline communities; several are represented on the steering committee, which is launching deep community consultation and mapping initiatives that will feed directly into an L.A. Leap Manifesto.

Los Angeles was built by oil, and has a special responsibility to lead the transition to a better system. The L.A. Leap coalition believes this can only be done holistically: addressing climate alongside homelessness, mass incarceration, skyrocketing inequality (including in the city's health care and transit systems), and much more. Think about what it could mean for the second largest U.S. city to spearhead this kind of integrated approach to just transition.

It won't be easy, and L.A. Leap won't pull everything off. But we believe that the underlying framework – major cities going carbon-free in less than a decade, driven by broad-based coalitions and people's platforms – has real potential. And one of our greatest hopes is that this current project, along with our previous experience in Canada, can provide usable templates for movements around the world to experiment with.

Organizing new coalitions with frontline leaders at the center is unbelievably hard, painstaking work. There will be times when doing the necessary groundwork feels difficult to reconcile with the very compressed timeline we collectively face.

But we believe there is revolutionary potential in being unapologetically ambitious, putting frontlines first, and connecting the dots between the great crises we face, and the holistic solutions already on offer from below.

For those interested in pursuing this model of change, we can only say: be bold, remember that if there's no struggle within your coalition, than it's probably too narrow, and know that you are investing in building people power – the kind that can unleash the urgency, unity and transformation this historic moment requires.

System Change on a Deadline Organizing Lessons from Canada's Leap Manifesto

The boxed set *Radical Realism for Climate Justice – A Civil Society Response to the Challenge of Limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C* includes the following soft-cover volumes:

VOLUME 44.1
A Managed Decline of Fossil Fuel Production

VOLUME 44.2
Another Energy is Possible

VOLUME 44.3
Zero Waste Circular Economy
A Systemic Game-Changer to Climate Change

VOLUME 44.4
De-growth – A Sober Vision of Limiting Warming to 1.5°C

VOLUME 44.5
System Change on a Deadline
Organizing Lessons from Canada's Leap Manifesto

VOLUME 44.6
La Via Campesina in Action for Climate Justice

VOLUME 44.7
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