

# Grassroots Organizing is the Solution

## Capital & the State Created the Climate Crisis

Lex Ritchie

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a review of

*The Solutions are Already Here: Strategies for Ecological Revolution from Below* by Peter Gelderloos. Pluto Press 2022

The climate crisis is here. While climate change coverage in mainstream media remains paltry, it is impossible to miss the ways the climate crisis is unfolding. Year after year of record wildfire seasons, of the warmest years on record, of devastating heat waves in Europe and Asia. And, this is only the beginning.

In the midst of this, there are breathless reports of promising new technologies in development or reassuring coverage of technocratic solutions being implemented. Each time they repeat the technocratic assessment of the situation: Climate change is a complicated problem and complicated problems require complicated solutions. Or, that much more scientific research still needs to be done.

This standard narrative is intentionally disempowering. It means solutions will be implemented top-down, preserving the power of those who created the crisis. It seeks to reassure the listener that this threatening crisis is being handled by experts and the state, ignoring the fact that it is the experts and the state which created the crisis. It is a totalizing narrative that enforces solutions ignorant of local peculiarities and conditions. It is one that enshrines a worldview of extraction and entitlement.

In *The Solutions Are Already Here*, Peter Gelderloos takes aim at the dominant narrative of the systems of capitalism and colonialism at the root of the crisis.

The book turns a critical eye on mainstream environmentalism and presents ideas for creating an authentic ecological revolution from the bottom up.

The book is organized in five parts, guiding the reader from the present and rather bleak situation through to a place where a just and livable future can be imagined.

Gelderloos offers an anarchist analysis on which the rest of the book is based: that the current climate crisis is rooted in the extractive worldview and institutions of colonialism. The ecological crisis is one that is inclusive of every other crisis we face.

He demonstrates an anti-colonial praxis through interviews, allowing organizers and Indigenous people to speak for themselves and about their efforts to care for the earth and defend their way of life.

He presents some examples of successful opposition to the colonialist extraction from locally-based and led struggles in Indonesia, Europe, Brazil, and Venezuela, as well as positive outcomes in France, Catalunya, and the American Midwest. Pipelines are stopped, airports are canceled, biofuel plantations opposed, land reforested, and food sovereignty organized are among the battles fought across the globe chronicled in the book.

These accounts offer tantalizing descriptions of clandestine acts of climate rebellion from everyday people, such as an old car (*sans* engine) pushed into a Mediterranean bay to keep commercial bottom-dragger factory ships from overfishing. These mentions are necessarily brief and intentionally lacking in distinguishing details, given the illegality of such actions. But they are also deeply inspiring and this reader wishes there had been more of such stories.

Gelderloos then discusses the characteristics that his examples of successful movements share, and explains why they are strategically advantageous.

He contrasts some common pragmatic strategies for reform favored by progressive left environmentalist groups such as Extinction Rebellion and the Green New Deal. While recognizing the crisis, such groups employ state-focused environmental solutions that wind up limiting the possibilities for the radical changes which are needed.

A possible weakness of the book is one that many identify in anarchist politics generally: an inability to go beyond specific examples to describe *how* one might achieve the objective of ecological revolution from below. However, Gelderloos makes up for such an inadequacy by providing inspiration and a viable framework so readers can figure out the how themselves.

Missing from the book is an exploration of the necessity of using some of the modern technology currently being deployed and researched to combat the climate crisis. All of these technologies require some form of compromise in working with the technocratic force the book positions itself against.

This is something Gelderloos acknowledges, but does not examine in detail. It also would have been informative if more examples of community-led, climate-friendly technology had been provided.

The final section of the book is an exploration of ecological imagination. Gelderloos offers an inspiring vision of what an ecological revolution from below might make possible for a near-future Catalunya and Spain, where he lived for a decade. Ending with a vision for justice in an ecological revolution, he invites readers to reflect upon how they can plant their own seeds for ecological revolution.

This is the most exciting part for readers. Unlike so much of what is written about the climate crisis, *The Solutions Are Already Here* offers a vision and a framework that empowers each individual to respond to the root of the crisis. Gelderloos ends with an invitation to dream our own futures as a starting point for action. It is a welcome change of pace to explore one's own desires for climate justice, instead of being told to simply trust the experts.

All author royalties will go to Indigenous and anarchist initiatives in Brazil and Indonesia explored in the book, making this publication a part of the movement for which it strives to provide a framework.

*The Solutions Are Already Here* offers a convincing and inspiring vision for successful organizing and leaves readers with advice for how to make their own ecological revolution from below. This is a vital text for those who desire a revolution that honors the earth and ensures a life in balance with it.

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/413-spring-2023/grassroots-organizing-is-the-solution>  
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