



Module 1 reflection exercise

102 119

[Dan Wilton](#)[All Sections](#)

Objective 1.3

Identify and start to analyze the different responses by governments, community groups, and private sector actors to the crises in post hurricane Puerto Rico.

Central to becoming an effective change agent is scanning the context of any issues or set of issues that engage your focus. We invite you to undertake a structured reflection on a recent interview with Naomi Klein. She discusses the situation in Puerto Rico six months after hurricane Maria battered the island in 2017.

Re-watch Klein, Naomi. "Trouble in Paradise: Naomi Klein Reports from Puerto Rico".

The Battle for Paradise: Naomi Klein Reports from Puerto ...



Klein, Naomi. "Trouble in Paradise: Naomi Klein Reports from Puerto Rico," video, 17:27, posted by The Intercept to YouTube on April 7, 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTiZtYaB3Zo> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTiZtYaB3Zo>)

Optional: Read Klein's full written article.

Klein, Naomi, "Puerto Ricans and Ultrarich 'Puertopians' are Locked in a Pitched Struggle over how to Remake the Island." The Intercept, March 20, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/20/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-recovery/> (<https://theintercept.com/2018/03/20/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-recovery/>)

Use the interview (and the reading if you like) as the basis for this two-part exercise.

1. Using the MLP framework, review the transcript/video to identify and detail in point form the mix of issues that you see contributing to the situation that Puerto Rico was facing six months after the hurricane.

The key is to map the elements of the system that you see being relevant at each of the landscape, regime, and niche levels. Present your findings in the designated discussion forum as a graphic, text, or bullet list (one page maximum).

2. Recall our discussion of resistance and building alternatives. Use it to imagine what progressive actors and movements are doing and need to do, and at what levels, to find ways to come together if Puerto Rico is to increase social and ecological resilience and self-reliance.

What ideas do you have about how people might organize to increase their political effectiveness and create a base for advocating change? Take no more than one page and please share them on the discussion board.

This topic was edited by [John Restakis](#)



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[Guy Dauncey \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/546983\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/546983)

Mar 25, 2019

Dead Paradigm Blues

The question applies to so many areas of activism, so I'll focus on change for a new democratic cooperative economy, since that's why we're here.

My first observation, drawn from my community of progressive friends and world-changers on Vancouver Island in Canada, is a huge generalization that most have:

1. almost no understanding of what's causing all the problems with the economy,
2. no coherent grasp of the many alternatives, and
3. no coherent vision of what a different economy might look like.

They respond with enthusiasm to any suggestion regarding a particular component of a new economy, be it a cooperative, community farm or sharing circle, so their hearts know what's needed, but they have no analysis or larger vision of how the parts could fit together to radically CHANGE the current economy. Neither of our progressive political parties, the New Democrats and the Green Party, propose new thoughts about the economy – only small adjustments to the existing

economy. Tax changes, welfare changes and Basic Income are about as radical as it gets.

It seems as if we are living in a Dead Paradigm Blues period of history, referring to the stagnation of thought that happens at the end of a paradigm, when everyone knows that the existing paradigm has failed, but no new paradigm has emerged to create that “AHA!” moment when everything makes sense again. The neoclassical economists who uphold the dead paradigm talk to each other in language that is completely obscure, and that conveys no meaning to anyone outside their enclosed, tightly guarded circle. Various new ideas and schools of economic theory are circling the dying corpse, labelled collectively as ‘heterodox’, but none has emerged with a clarity sufficient to kick the corpse into the graveyard of history, bringing a new paradigm with the self-evident power of explanation and persuasion to replace neo-classical economics, and its political partner-in-crime, neoliberal policies.

What then must we do?

- We must continue to learn about the existing new ideas and approaches, including those that Mike Lewis describes in his paper and many more, so that we can classify them, and begin to place them on a coherent map of a new emerging cooperative economy. We need a huge proliferation of new economy study circles, video clubs, book clubs, and so on.
- We must extend our thinking and analysis deep into the core of the global economy, including the way businesses operate, the nature of money, new approaches to money-creation by banks and central banks, new approaches to global financial governance, including trade negotiations, the IMF and the Financial Stability Board, and the most hopeful prospects for neutralizing and evaporating the entire tax-evading offshore economy.

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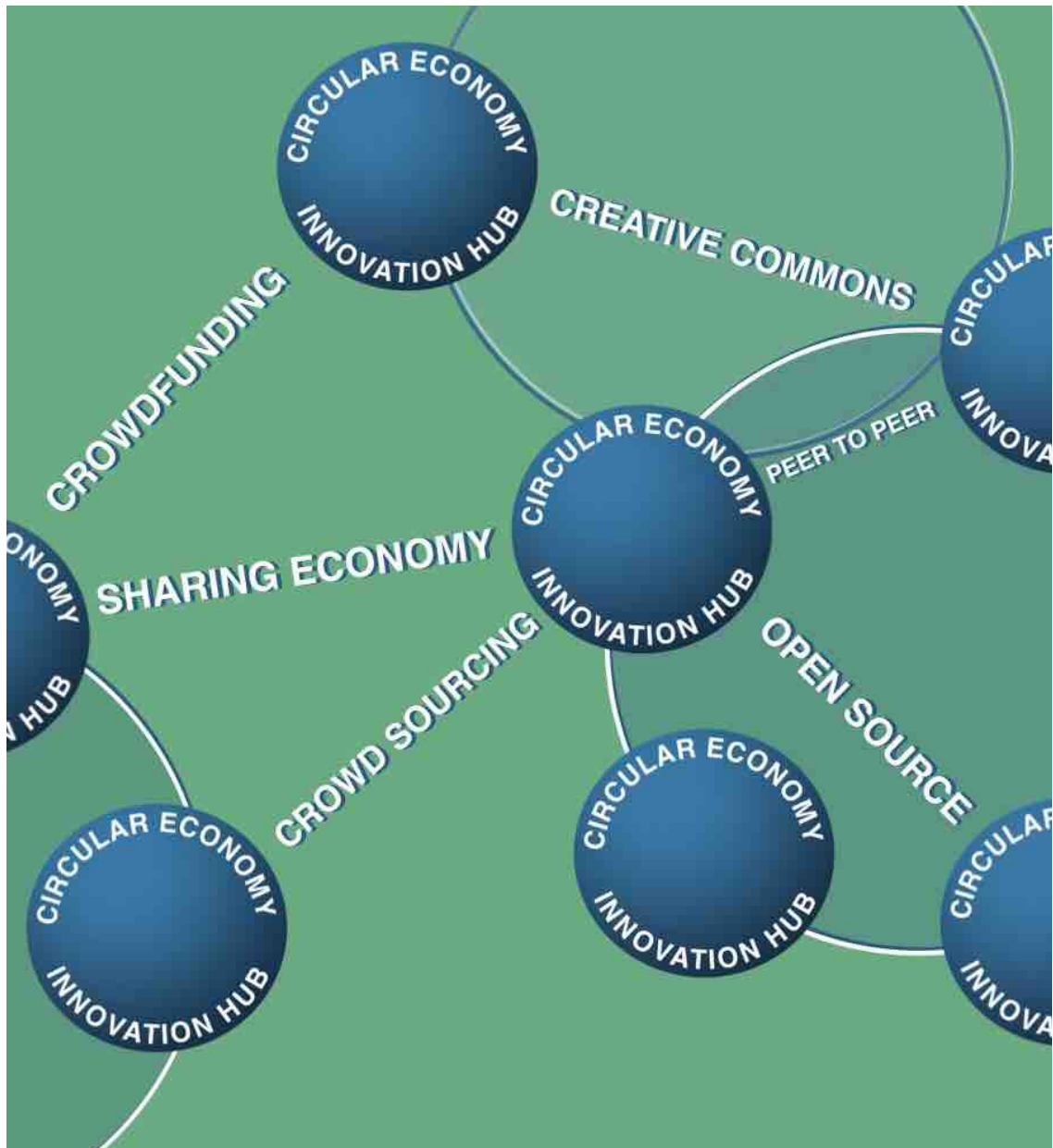


[Steven Liaros \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/889948\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/889948)



Mar 27, 2019

An important step is to appreciate that you can't change the economic system without changing the political system. We need to talk about a new Political Economy. This is primarily a question of scale. The dysfunction arises because the market is global, while political authority is least effective at the global (UN) scale, functioning ineffectively even at national scale. Generally humans can cooperate most effectively at the local community scale. We should be thinking about scaling in terms of networking local communities, as opposed to the current model of scaling by growing bigger.



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[Benjamin Turner \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723)

Mar 27, 2019

Interesting thoughts, Steven. I guess that's why the old adage exists of 'think globally, 'act locally'. As you say humans struggle to maintain structure at levels larger than a small community. Order can be found simply when you have a society of 100 people and there is a personal connection to everyone. Building structure and maintaining it is challenging as the population grows. How do we overcome this? I think it's largely due to the disconnect people have on a national and global scale. We need people to feel connected and get them to 'buy in' to whatever the issue may be.

← [Reply](#)



[Tristan Laing \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918)

Mar 28, 2019

Hi Steven,

I would like to politely suggest that this idea might be mistaken. Karl Polanyi argues in "The Great Transformation" for, among other things, the idea that politics can't create economic change, rather politics follows economic change. This idea was shared by radical co-operators, it was the justification for "political neutrality" as a co-op principle - the idea was, basically, we agree with the socialists in terms of the end goal, but we believe that goal can be achieved only through the grassroots transformation of the economic system, and that any attempt to grab power over that system to change it will fail because the people who do the grabbing will become implicated in the system and become defenders of it. Warbasse (founder of the Co-operative League of the USA) actually spent significant time in Russia in the 1920s, despite being highly critical of the Soviet revolution from the beginning, because he felt he had to take seriously what was going on there (and also, it didn't help that the Soviets were literally taking control of American co-ops, especially in the upper midwest). What he found was a state which theoretically supported the co-op systems, but in practice had tight fisted control over all the co-op boards.

This tendency for systems to preserve their own power is even a problem within the Co-op sector itself. In the early 1980s, the US Co-operative League (by then called the NCBA - national co-op business association) had (as Warbasse predicted) languished in its programmatic support for consumer co-operatives. A different organization, North American Students of Co-operation (NASCO), which had been started by Student Co-ops in the late 60s and had grown to serve the majority of new-wave food consumer co-ops by the late 70s, tried pivoting to become the main educational and technical assistance provider for consumer co-ops in the USA. However, the NCBA didn't like the sound of this, and levers were pulled, NASCO's grant funding was threatened, and they backed off. The non-profit industrial complex strikes again!

I realize it's a very unpopular idea today - to stress that autonomy as a key principle of co-operation is strategically crucial to avoid capture by external organizations. It seems, like for instance in many of the examples in Mike Lewis' text, that we need co-operation by the state, at least at the local level, in order to create successful community development strategies. And maybe we do. But if we don't do so from a position of strength, don't be surprised if all our efforts become co-opted by the institutions from which we seek support.

Edited by [Tristan Laing \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918) on Mar 28 at 2:35pm

[← Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Mar 29, 2019

Well thought through and sounds true. If we're genuine, obstacles will be confronted honestly while putting down solid paving-stones.

← [Reply](#)



[Carol Lomas](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906655>)



Mar 31, 2019

Your comment about systems preserving their own power is very shrewd. And your example about socialism after the revolution in Russia is a good one. Not only systems preserve power; individuals do that too if they can get away with it. I don't think power has to be an impediment necessarily with the right leaders. But it would be naive to not take it into consideration.

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860>)



Mar 31, 2019

I wonder. If power corrupts, and leadership bestows power, is there such a thing as a "right leader"?

← [Reply](#)



[Marta Hawkins](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908>)



Apr 1, 2019

Thanks for this observation. The question about "the right leader" has been bothering me for some time. What it mean and why we need the right leaders? What is their job if they represent the external power? And what isvtheir job when they are on the grassroots level? I just have a theoretical problem with "leadership" and what it represents, how it stands for those who "are being led". Who wants to be led"? Why can't we share leadership? I am not happy with the answer "people like being led as they can't think for themselves (or were trained not to). Either communism or capitalism has not offered a different concept of leadership to that one based on the accumulation of power on the leaders' side. And I have a problem with that, especially when it comes to organising change together.

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John Restakis (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201>)

Apr 5, 2019

⋮

Tristan, I hear what you're saying about the primacy of economic structure and power with respect to politics. However, I would like to raise a question about the history of the co-op movement's involvement in politics.

It is very true that co-operatives have jealously guarded their political autonomy – they have focused on transforming economic systems through the application of democratic principles and collective ownership over enterprises. But this has also led to a pre-occupation with economic efficiency and performance in the market to the detriment of political action and even political education within co-ops. The result has been twofold: first, many co-ops (especially large, successful ones) have been co-opted not by politics but by the culture and outlook of prevailing capitalist ideas and practices in the market; and second, a near irrelevance with respect to political impact and a marginalization *qua movement*, to the broader currents of progressive political action (Occupy, the plaza movements, climate action campaigns, etc.).

It feels to me that on the one hand, the expectation that changing the political economy through transforming the structure of enterprise ownership through co-operation alone has clearly failed, while the avoidance of political action for fear of compromising co-op autonomy and unity has rendered the co-op movement a toothless tiger. The question I ask is: is it preferable for co-op movements to maintain a surface unity by avoiding politics, or is a serious debate *within* the movement

concerning the political mission and direction of co-ops long overdue?

I would welcome your further thoughts on this.

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Kamson \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899285\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899285)



Apr 7, 2019

The cooperative movement does not have a choice to sit on the sideline with regards to political activities. Politics as power is exemplified by the capitalist control of the political process in the US. It is something the cooperative movement must consciously act to acquire. The fact is, if the actions of the proponents of the cooperative model is consistent with the principles guiding the movement, a cooperative through the active participation of its members in the affairs of the cooperative should be emboldened to become political activists in their community. Educating cooperators of how to channel their activism in the cooperative into political actions in the community must be a conscious effort of all cooperatives that want to stay relevant in their society, at the local, national and global levels. While it is true that cooperatives within a capitalist culture reflect more characteristics of that culture, changing the structure of ownership holds greater promise for economic change in the long run. The perception that this is a long haul and every inch must be gained must be a mindset of all activists.

← [Reply](#)



[Stuart Wulff \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313)



Apr 15, 2019

Very well said, John. But I also don't think it's either or. I almost always recoil from those who argue black and white dichotomies, saying it's 100% this versus it's 100% that, when reality tends to be complex and multi-faceted and, to some extent, a balance of factors that shape and influence each other. I think this is very much the case in all forms of political economy. Thus, any really effective transition strategy needs to engage with both and look for the cracks between to let in the light. I think this is also what you're saying by raising the political as a counterpoint to a sole focus on the economic. Or am I misreading you?

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[Conor O'Brien \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906698\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906698)



Apr 6, 2019

"autonomy as a key principle of co-operation is strategically crucial" Tristan Lang. This

point is critical.

I think it might also be useful to compare it to fractals in physics where a pattern at one quantum level is replicated at the next level; like the indentations of a rock on a beach being of similar scale to each other as the beach is to the other features of the shoreline.

The autonomy that we need in controlling our own lives is replicated in the need for autonomy in a cooperative venture.

On a practical level during the 2008 financial collapse in Ireland every bank collapsed immediately, 100%, while only less than .5% of credit unions immediately failed and just 4% were subsequently forced into larger units. The principle differences were that each of our 400 credit unions were autonomous; and their core values were people, not profit, orientated.

This autonomy at organisation level has problems when seeking a higher scale. The Mondragon cooperatives have dealt with that problem through what seems to be a fairly hierarchic centralised structure and education. The Emilia-Romagna model seems more networked. I would like to know more on it as I believe that in Ireland we still have an unusually strong bent towards community networking.

← [Reply](#)



[Stuart Wulff \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313)



Apr 15, 2019

Along similar lines, the BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA) conducted research into survival rates of co-ops versus private ownership businesses in Alberta and British Columbia, two Canadian provinces (a nod here to John Restakis for prompting this research). In both jurisdictions, co-ops had a much higher survival rate.

← [Reply](#)



[Terry Sterrenberg \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513)



Apr 7, 2019

Thank you for your reflections on this Tristan. I had the same question about Michael Lewis's article that you address in your last paragraph. There are of course countless programs at the local level that had to cease because their government funding was stopped. There also are probably far fewer that thrived after they got started with government funding. I believe we have to continue to search and discover ways that local community wealth can be generated that provides for continual local programming. These types of niche programs are being developed all over the world. Perhaps the opposition they receive are indicative of their levels of success and also

may provide the cautionary sign posts for their successful development.

Edited by [Terry Sterrenberg](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513) (https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513) on Apr 7 at 10:41am

← [Reply](#)



[Stephen Michael Zannakis](#)

(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895442>)

Apr 11, 2019

G'day Steven and Tristan,

I think you are both right.

Steven, your article in The Fifth Estate, paints a beautiful picture of what the built environment of place based communities could offer in terms of the nurturing of life essential needs. Your artful suggestion that the life giving 'built' environment could be an alternative to the universal basic income (designed to maintain consumerism), is beautiful!

<https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/planning/the-city-of-the-future-is-regenerative-circular-and-place-focused/> (<https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/planning/the-city-of-the-future-is-regenerative-circular-and-place-focused/>)

In addition to Steven's thoughts, as we have learned together, Community Land Trusts could function as the governing body, as well as providing housing affordability. Effectively networking or linking many place based communities that could be on an adjacent block, or in the same bio-region or internationally even.

If a fractal or holographic approach were taken to prototyping the governance (keeping it fluid enough to check efficacy, but balanced to check chaos), local independence could be coupled with responsibility to the whole. The 'Interest Circles' of Sweden or 'Sociocracy' of the Netherlands provide some great models. A lot like the old way practised by the First Australians for 67 thousand years and counting. The structure of the governance pattern could look like a lot like Kate Raworth's doughnut economics populated by independents. Co-operatives or individuals leasing from the Land Trust would have the same structured responsibilities to the whole's agreed common values, our 'common wealth' as the ancient Greeks put it. In the case of co-operatives, they would be the local projection of the whole, locally working towards the same needs and values building resilience.

Add to the CLT a 'Building Society' and 'Retirement Investments' (what we call 'Super' in Australia), we now have a funding stream that pays it forward, so we can be cared for late in life and death.

In this way we would be designing draw down in place, rather than attempting to make the current happening sustainable (the green tech myth). Ensuring our footprint is net +ve for the atmosphere and each other.

But I hear you Tristan, no one defends something (even if it is broken) more than the parent or creator.

← [Reply](#)



[Jacqueline Fletcher](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/757542>

Apr 18, 2019

Tristan, if politics follows economic developments, why were politicians like Thatcher and Reagan so instrumental in implementing neoliberal economics in the early '80s? Hayak had been peddling his theories for a long time until Thatcher picked them up. You could say the same about the demise of socialism in the US, killed off by a political initiative, namely, the House Committee of Un-American Activities and the McCarthy Witchhunts. Why do corporations spend so much on lobbying politicians and funding think tanks that promote a form of economics that is in their favour.

Polyani might have been right about the way Enclosures and the Industrial Revolution transformed self-provisioning and 'livelihoods' into wage labour and consumerism, but he was looking at this from the perspective of a self-regulating market economy. And we mustn't forget that while Enclosures benefitted wealthy land owners and capitalist factory owners, it was only possible due to acts of parliament.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)

Apr 5, 2019

You raise a crucial point Steven, how do you construct a political economy that is socially just and functional at a scale where global capital and power actually operate? If we talk about a co-operative commonwealth, realistically speaking, what does this mean with respect to two scales that are especially relevant - but in different ways: the local, where people actually form community and politics is most meaningful, and the global, where decisive political and economic power actually resides. The one obvious response to this is via digital technology and the global connectivity provided by online systems. But how does this resolve the innate connection between living community and meaningful politics? Second, how does global connectivity prevent the serious risk of further concentration of power through the dynamics of online systems? I continue to scratch my head over this.

← [Reply](#)



[Tristan Laing \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918)

Mar 28, 2019

Hi Guy,

Although it may sound a little cheesy, I agree with this "dead paradigm blues" characterization of our contemporary situation. I would just add, it's even worse than this, because the idea of "cooperative democracy", or a "cooperative commonwealth" is itself a kind of dead paradigm. In that, it's possible to talk about it (for instance, in this course), without even referring to its genesis (mid 19th century Europe), its origins (Utopian Socialism), the financial model which made the most progress in moving towards it (consumers' co-operation), or explicating it as something fundamentally distinct from political-economic options already on offer (i.e. Social Democracy).

I would offer a possible explanation of why we live in an era of dead paradigms, it comes from who I think is the clearest thinker on the origins of our economic discourses - Michel Foucault. In his 78-79 College de France lectures (titled "Birth of Biopolitics"), he accuses political socialism of not developing a new discourse or set of strategies for intervening and regulating commercial and productive activity. He calls this assemblage a "governmentality", we might call it a "philosophy of governance" or "philosophy of political rule". Whereas liberalism genuinely did offer a new discourse (markets as a source of truth), and the physiocrats offered new tactics and strategies of regulation (laissez-faire), the socialists in his view never came up with anything original in this area - which would explain why the best they can do is re-invent the police state on the one hand, or push for a kinder, gentler capitalism on the other hand. I'm a marginal thinker in that I do think co-operation can offer a discourse and set of strategies/tactics regarding commercial and productive regulation which is autonomous and genuinely distinct from liberalism and the police state, but I admit this is a hard argument to make, and I think it involves thinking about a return to many aspects of medieval "economics" (the term itself doesn't predate the early modern period). Actually, to be frank, I think what we need is a complete destruction of the concept of "the economy", which is at its root a slight of hand that collapses local trade, long distance trade, and production, into a single category - creating a fake "natural whole" where no whole exists. There is local trade, there is long distance trade, and there is production, but there is no "local/long-distance trade AND production" as a single being, except in the minds of economists and people who believe them.

I agree we need a huge proliferation of new economy study circles. The study circle I'm most excited about right now, however, is this course!

[← Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Mar 29, 2019

I wish I could tell you how many times we have debated cooperative commonwealth. Our UK colleague Pat Conaty reads those histories for their continuities and I will ask him to drop us all a note.

MikeG

[← Reply](#)



[mike hales \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887961\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887961)

Mar 30, 2019



I posted this earlier in response to a Polanyi comment in 'Module 1 discussion'. It's come out seeming a bit against Pat Conaty's perspective, which isn't what I mean to do at all, and I'm aware of Pat's own radicalism, and participation in P2P-commons work. But I do think that the **politics of commoning** which is possible today goes way beyond 'reclaiming' some lost mode of subsistence, and definitively beyond the State/Market double movement. We should be aiming to leave the double movement behind? And I'm not sure that continuities is the name of the game. We need new (historically informed but historically radical) stuff?

===

Yes, I find what I read about Polanyi a bit underwhelming too. Part of the difficulty with him, I think, is that at the time he was thinking, he was a bit close-in to the shifting movements of socialism around the turn of the 20th century when Fordism was just kicking in, and the shifts in formations in Britain and Europe. 'Associationist' ('utopian') formations were getting marginalised, as 'Statist' movements (revolutionary or social-democratic) gathered strength, and were accompanied by 'Collectivist' (expertise-oriented) formations (like the Fabians in Britain). There also was a lot of retro thinking at that time, **'reclaiming'** bygone historical formations - like guilds, and pre-enclosure modes of subsistence within class society (Polanyi's 'householding' with its very circumscribed feudal commons). I'm not sure that Polanyi's politics was even 'modern'; and now

we need post-post-modern (post-post-Fordist).

Today we have major, radical new, global-localist formations that go beyond a Polanyi politics of reversing or 'reclaiming' lost commons, engaged in **making** entirely new kinds of commons, in all spheres of living - not just Land/Money/Labour (Polanyi's 'triple enclosure' frame - which is a bit sloganistic and could do with a whole lot more analytical deconstruction, these forms are not *alike* at all) and the 'natural' wild commons: Air, Water, Biodiversity, Climate, Energy. IMO the essential insight and commitment is the verb not the noun - **commoning**, not 'the commons'. I hope this MOOC is a 'college of commoning' (verb) in this extremely broad sense. I see this perspective spelled out most clearly in stuff from the Peer to Peer Foundation (P2PF) on Commons Transition <<https://primer.commonstransition.org/>> and P2P-commoning <<https://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/books/10.16997/book33/>>.

Seems to me, P2P-commoning is the politics that goes right beyond the diabolical twins of Capital and liberal-democratic State - and beyond the dual movement as Polanyi knew it in the early C20. I believe it's the politics that can enable the 'pluriversal' weaving of activist threads (*conceptually* not just in practical solidarity) that this MOOC is for. The historical perspectives and the real pain of commons-loss really matter and are real resources. But surely there's no way back? Politics of 'reclaiming' can get a lot of votes from people suffering deep loss and confusion - as well as from sentimental folks who just want bonding, and don't want to work hard on substantially new designs and new sensibilities. But politics of new (historically sensitive) **making** has to be where liberation lies? There is no liberated condition to return to? Seems to me, the 'commons' contributions in this module are more retro/conservative, despite their undoubted radical commitment and passionate solidarity with struggles of dispossessed people.

[← Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Mar 31, 2019

You convinced me MikeH.

I like the commoning approach as you outline it here.

I have read elements of it in P2P and David Bollier's work.

Recently I like Tim Rogan's The Moral Economists and his take on moral economies in Polanyi and Thompson, and his effort to address basic needs ..not perfect but another piece in a mosaic of possibilities..

Every critique helps shape what we all are trying to develop.

Txs. Mikeg

[← Reply](#)



[Stuart Wulff \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313)

Apr 15, 2019

What I've heard in recent years from a bunch of us talking about these issues and at times using the term, "co-operative commonwealth", borrows some ideas from the historical thinkers and practitioners that used this term, but I don't hear anything remotely like a slavish copying or wish to turn back the clock. Merely acknowledging some good ideas while continuing to advance a range of thinking. Certainly, the whole integration of the economic, social and ecological is mostly (not entirely) missing from that earlier generation of CC thinkers and the much broader and deeper integration of ecology across a range of realms (climate change, biodiversity loss, food system insecurity, etc.) is mostly new. Maybe we need a whole new term. Certainly we have debated that, though to date nothing has captured the high ground, as witnessed by the use of the term still within this course.

[← Reply](#)



[Marta Hawkins \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908)

Apr 1, 2019

I totally agree with the overview below of the lack of understanding among people of the relations of production and consumption and their basic economic conditioning. Again, this is the task for education, but the mainstream is not interested. So this knowledge has to come from practising decision making power on the grassroots level, where else?

almost no understanding of what's causing all the problems with the economy,
no coherent grasp of the many alternatives, and
no coherent vision of what a different economy might look like.

[← Reply](#)



[Brendan Reimer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903250\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903250)

May 20, 2019

Hi Guy,

Your comments about economic literacy and vision resonate with me. Years ago, a leader in the Canadian CED Network responded to my desire to see greater political literacy in society to achieve the common goals we seek with a comment that what was really required was economic literacy. They believed that political literacy would not necessarily lead to economic literacy, but that economic literacy would inevitably lead to political literacy - and engagement. This was instrumental in my shifting my work in sharing and inspiring ideas to envisioning the kind of world, we want to live in, exploring the kinds of organizations we'll need to get there,

and the kind of economy we'll need to create as well.

Brendan Reimer

← [Reply](#)



[Benjamin Turner \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723)

Mar 27, 2019

Question 1:

1. Regime

1. The government in power decides to sell off, in turn, privatize, the energy sector along with shutting down hundreds of schools and privatizing others. This short term solution for a quick influx of money has no long term perspective.

2. Niche

1. Fortunately, there are small pockets of people trying to take back control of their lives and livelihoods. For example, 80% of their food is imported so local, community farm projects are beginning to resurface. It was the devastation of the hurricane that woke people up the realization of the lack of food security on the island. Many citizens of Puerto Rico have forgotten their traditional farming methods since they were moved from their farms into concrete, urban homes as an attempt to reduce poverty. It was falsely accepted that farmers, and those who lived off the land were impoverished. There are also niches of groups trying to get off the reliance on fossil fuels. The government has decided to sell off its energy infrastructure. They say publicly it is a way to modernize the country. The local niches are using local people and training them to develop and install solar panels in peoples' homes. They are attempting to show that there are effective alternatives to the status quo.

3. Landscape

1. Due to the severe poverty pre-hurricane and after, Puerto Ricans are needing a solution. There is social unrest amongst them motivating further uprising and niches. As terrible as the hurricane was, it exposed a lot of dependencies the people relied on. There are now movements to take back the reins of Puerto Rico and make it a Puerto Rico for its citizens and not solely designed for American tourists and tax dodgers.

Question 2:

There is a general feeling of disconnect between the average citizen and the different levels of politics. People need to know that their voices are heard even if it is through a letter, phone call, or even a tweet. During the politics unit, I have my students pick an issue, find out who would be responsible for enacting some sort of change, and write them a letter. Not all get responses, but many do from the municipal level to the national level. It's a small exercise but carries huge weight in showing high school aged students that those people they see in the News aren't unreachable.

Moving forward in their lives, they will have the knowledge and confidence that if an issue was important to them, their voice could be heard. So I really think it's about helping people understand that we aren't being ignored, we just feel that way because we don't reach out. If the masses wrote letters, made phone calls, or tweeted, I would suspect change to come a whole lot faster.

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)

Mar 28, 2019

What a simple but yet incredibly powerful exercise to initiate with your students that has such profound lasting impacts! Bravo.

← [Reply](#)



[Marta Hawkins \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908)

Apr 1, 2019

I like this exercise too! People don't usually bother to write, demonstrate, oppose, as they think they have no power or influence whatsoever. Hence the blazed approach to voting, for example. Writing a letter to your local councillor/MP should an early piece of homework in primary schools! While civic education should be introduced on all levels of schooling. We know it will not be and we know why..But such "classes" can be organised by and in the community. It happens in some places. Quite often around "making", "crafting" etc. But not always. There is still a strong detachment in communities from politics m, which was identified above as retro approach to bonding, reclaiming and nostalgia. Yes, it is growing, in facts. I need to think a bit why...

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

Apr 2, 2019

Teachers are constrained from teaching the most relevant, obvious, and available example of socio-political organizing; their own often excellent unions. Instead the kids are instructed to dream of becoming the next Elon Musk. Self-reliance. Entrepreneurship.

"Yes, Billy? I see you've raised your hand."

"Yes sir. Thanks. Are you a self-reliant entrepreneur?"

"No Billy. I don't have to be. You see, Billy. I'm a voting member of the OSSTF. That's a Union, Bill. We bargain collectively. So I get a decent wage, son. And our Pension Fund is quite substantial by now so, I'm not too worried, come what may. (Chuckle)"

"Gee, sir. Can I join a union?"

"Class. Turn to chapter 3 in your textbook, Simple Economics For Simple Folk and Other Simpletons: Don't Bite The Invisible Hand"

← [Reply](#)



[Terry Sterrenberg](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513>

Apr 2, 2019

I love this point Anthony Christie. Becoming a successful entrepreneur is the the projection of "making it" in our countries. We call it the "Ben and Jerry" effect in our upcoming documentary film, meaning that the goal of every small business is to become a big business and that is the way to become rich. The alternative teaching is the one of social service which is also given some levels of respect but not financial wealth. In fact cooperation and helping each other is portrayed as less than the rugged individual dynamic and not given the value. The underlying belief is that rightness is rewarded by wealth and if you are not wealthy then you must be doing something wrong because wealth is always deserved.

← [Reply](#)



[Marta Hawkins \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897908)

Apr 7, 2019

well, this approach is still dominant in most advanced and well-endowed business schools all over the world. I worked in them and I had to smuggle knowledge on solidarity economy. I think it is obvious why, especially in light of the MLP and the dominant neo-liberal landscape and pro-growth regime.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)

Apr 2, 2019

There are over 1,000 people registered in this course. I wonder what a letter writing exercise from these 1,000 might look like?

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

Apr 2, 2019

Lead on, J.R.! Anti-leadership ideology aside, I'll follow!

In fact, I would encourage the MOOC designers/instructors/administrators/leaders /fellow-learners, in the interest of constructively ambiguating that final "C" (Course vs. Community; no reason these be mutually exclusive), to solicit and consider lots of experiments in activism. Theory's all well and good, but...

← [Reply](#)



[Brendan Reimer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903250\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903250)



May 20, 2019

Only one way to find out :)

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)



Mar 28, 2019

Neoliberal Tactics post Hurricane in Puerto Rica

Landscape (encompasses the dynamics of deep cultural, economic and political patterns): not a state but a colony of USA & treated as separate; full federal economic support withheld and continually is threatened to be cancelled; almost complete dependence on imported unsustainable fossil fuels and food; crippling debt with criminal interest rates and severe austerity measures still exist; selling & privatizing community/island assets like power;

Regime (refers to the current practices, routines and dominant rules that prevail in a socio-technical system): failure of media attention and accountability; corporate agricultural lobbies that want status quo; tax haven for the elite that excludes local residents; closure of many local schools & new gated communities with private schools for the elite; imposed systems are inherently racist and colonial in nature;

Niche (represents the space where actors experiment with radical innovations that may challenge and break through into the prevailing regime): land grabs for development intended to serve rich tourists; crypto-currency mining; significant local depopulation

Building Alternative Solutions & Resistance

Landscape: early adopters of solar technology; revolutionary cells on island that value people, planet & profit...in that order; awash in sun, wind and wave power; crisis seen as opportunity for change; pockets of agro-ecological farmers;

Regime: micro-grid models are more resilient to weather impacts; small organic farms; solar skills

training available; democratic resource management is being put in place;

Niche: resilience and a rediscovery of faith in themselves and their collective abilities; deep community relationships; culture rooted in values & traditions of place; growing confidence in their ability to self govern; expectations of reciprocity from all members of local society; direct connection to the land through food; network of diverse grassroots movements; protected indigenous knowledge; long history of resistance; much of all of this organization is fuelled by women

← [Reply](#)



[Salvador Orofino \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897177\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897177)

Mar 28, 2019

Observations from extensive travel to Puerto Rico and substantial anecdotal conversations with those folks looking to relocate to live closer to the land as well as those in industry participating in the privatization of Puerto Rico influence the topical review of Ms. Klein's report.

Regime:

Puerto Rico must utilize any means it has at hand to keep stability while servicing debt loads that are un-servicable and always will be. The recent trend (pre-Maria) of tax incentives for high to ultra-high net worth tax avoidance paves the way for corporate interest to test new market feasibility for new urban models (think Sidewalk Labs in Toronto and Nextera's publicly-traded alternative energy division) - amidst the typical land-grab opportunists to develop the same-old.

Niche:

The Puerto Rican people are incredibly diverse, fiercely proud and were, as mentioned in the video, already taking means to create de-centralized living systems back into their own hands for their own people in their own cultural systems of relevance. The move has only strengthened as the combined effects of drought, storm, public service failure and marginalization hardens their resolve to serve their natural and people systems.

Landscape:

The beautiful and energetically powerful island that is Puerto Rico continues its dichotomy of people interested in preserving the island as a viable and powerful place to live amidst the ever-present internal and external agents looking to replicate models of development already played out in places like the Dominican Republic - a completely privatized, Henry Flagler-esque plantation economy with the core cash crop being gated real-estate and indentured servitude services.

Question 2:

This is a question that, luckily, the people themselves have been answering on their own, with

autocracy. And perhaps the question should be re-framed to ask what we can learn from their efforts and actions.

I say this with the greatest respect, but in essence, this is the fundamental difference between a group of outsiders (myself included) and a very particular group of insiders. As luck would have it, the Puerto Ricans, in all the various flavors of each corner of their island, share a solidarity as islanders that makes their unity particularly powerful to learn from. They share the island, they share a culture, they share a history - but they also take advantage and apply what's good from knowledge networks into their own cultural paradigms and achieve a sense of outcome that they live with, improve, share. From my experience, this binds them and gives them strength.

The surfing industry, as it moves to embrace "sustainability," champions this cultural niche set forth in this particular landscape - and in the micro-culture that is surfing - uses this as cultural and social capital that plays back into the economies of relevance and acts outside of the typical regime. In my opinion, this is one of the greatest models of creating parallel economies of impact that punch well above their respective weight by using combinatorics as an economic counter-strategy while still remaining within the defined system and letting solutions develop over time.

[← Reply](#)



[Tristan Laing \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/679918)

Mar 28, 2019

1. I don't think this is the framing that the instructions expect, but to me the application of the MLP framework looks like this
 - Landscape: Post-Hurricane Puerto Rico
 - Regime: Pre-Hurricane Puerto Rico government and commerce, including the existing school system, infrastructure system, tourist system, the norms that protect those systems
 - Niche: There are 2 niches, one is the Neo-Liberal niche (because neo-liberalism is a revolution, maybe we should think about it as a form of revolutionary conservatism, i.e. like fascism, important to remember there were many strands of "revolutionary conservatism" on the right in 1930s Europe, Naziism just became the most famous), and the other is the communities-working-together etc niche. Both of these niches open up because of the Hurricane, and try to take advantage of the liminal situation, although the community-etc niche has a more difficult time because it's funded by NGOs and grassroots contributions, and it has to both defend the existing regime against privatization/disaster capitalism etc, and also try to make its own economic revolution of creating locally inter-dependent communities, reduce dependence on long-distance trade (food) etc, etc.

2. So it seems like they already know what to do - build community wealth, local trade and production, focus on historical sustainable techniques for meeting needs (i.e. building, food, education). What's perhaps less obvious would be to suggest that the pro-happiness and community niche should try to enlist the state and its operatives who have an interest in

maintaining the elements of the current regime which the neo-liberals are trying to transform and undermine. Certainly there must be a lot of people whose salaries depend on the existing state apparatus, there must be some way to make use of them.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Michelle Colussi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/889950\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/889950)

Mar 29, 2019

1. *Using the MLP framework, review the transcript/video to identify and detail in point form the mix of issues that you see contributing to the situation that Puerto Rico was facing six months after the hurricane.*

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Regime</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Existing economic inequality & poor infrastructure · Existing state owned utilities that are corrupt · Mainstream perspective is an economy for growth and GDP - Pre-storm focus on encouraging large scale commercial farms of mono cultures (such as coffee) which contribute to reliance on food imports |
| <i>Landscape</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Private sector response: Storm = opportunity to get land/resources for cheap · Gov response: opportunity to move forward changes that were resisted such as privatization of services (means to capital for rebuilding) · NGO response: invest in energy, food for citizens and engage them in rebuilding · Local farmers focused on diverse crop production to feed people · Casa Pueblo and the farm school - alternatives exist to help people survive and rebuild |
| <i>Niche</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Local farms were able to keep producing immediately after storm · Education activists - volunteers ready; blocked by gov. policy · Climate activists are focused on “economic” solutions such as food and energy production |

2. *What ideas do you have about how people might organize to increase their political effectiveness and create a base for advocating change? Take no more than one page and please share them on the discussion board.*

- o Not sure I understand the context enough to suggest organizing approaches: place-based (neighbourhood), Interest based (energy, food, education etc), perhaps around churches or the

existing NGO's?

- o I like the idea of NGO's coming together (maybe that's what was happening in that final meeting in the video) to create a shared strategy. I can imagine farmers collaborating.
- o It sounds like there are some issues with FEMA supports - for example investments must go to rebuild what was there so that would mean re-building a poorly equipped, inefficient energy station versus scrapping what was there and investing in solar. I also don't know enough about whether or not FEMA can fund NGO's or only the Government? Might (or might not) be a lever for advocating shifts in resource flows?

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Mar 29, 2019

6 months after the hurricane in Puerto Rico, the country was trying to contend with recovery, with evaluating merits of offers of assistance and with non-consensus among authorities about the best approach.

I find Vendana Shiva's insights sound. She grasps the fact that grassroots workers have a longstanding commitment to certain principles regardless of the landscape or regime. At times of upheaval, as happen during and after natural disasters, corporate interests nose around. As Naomi Klein identified in her work, they may well appropriate concepts from the activists, proclaiming themselves green, only to further their greed motivations. That is, the regime insists it has niche interests at heart. It is very important and also exhausting unless supported in solidarity to be always scrutinising intentions.

In contrast, Casa Pueblo continues to work steadily in its modest niche aims. When the hurricane denied many power, people came to Casa Pueblo to avail of some very basic amenities that they could provide because they had chosen to be cheaply self-sufficient. This potentially fed into landscape change. This is an extremely impressive result but it does not mean that they are invulnerable. Corporate interests with their extremely powerful corporate lawyers follow the customers and try to woo them back into the regime, where steady profit is to be made.

Company law is very very sick. and enables mass dehumanisation. An intriguing recent piece of research proposes death penalties for corporations and how to assess for same:

[https://www.academia.edu/38378473/Towards_Quantifiable_Metrics_Warranting_Industry-Wide_Corporate_Death_Penalties_\(https://www.academia.edu/38378473/Towards_Quantifiable_Metrics_Warranting_Industry-Wide_Corporate_Death_Penalties\)](https://www.academia.edu/38378473/Towards_Quantifiable_Metrics_Warranting_Industry-Wide_Corporate_Death_Penalties_(https://www.academia.edu/38378473/Towards_Quantifiable_Metrics_Warranting_Industry-Wide_Corporate_Death_Penalties))

I don't think this is a bad idea at all.

← [Reply](#)

○



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

⋮

Mar 30, 2019

I'm having trouble with the verb "to map" especially as it is something we should do in seeing the island and its people as a single system. I guess a map is a simple representation of something complex.

There are all sorts of systems in Puerto Rico. Ecosystems, political/governance systems, food production/distribution systems, electrical grid systems, the hurricane was a weather system, the land/real estate allocation/registration system, banking systems, health care systems, the golf courses must have some sort of stray golf ball collection system, the hotel pools have filtration systems, there are undoubtedly organized crime systems..., but the question uses the definite article ("the" system), as though there's one particular system I should be paying particular attention to. Not sure which one.

The overall system of power, who wields it and over whom if this is what's meant, is a fairly typical example of systems of power everywhere and throughout history. It's "map" is pretty much the same every time. Those who have power hoard it, often wielding it violently upon those who challenge it.

I won't presume to advise Puerto Ricans on how to resist except perhaps to suggest any good resistance "map" should include solidarity with the least empowered, with the innocent, including the other species with whom we share the planet. I hope they find courage strength and creative ideas in each other and proceed with good ideas as they occur. Any ideas of mine, of an old, fat, first-world white guy from Ontario, would simply be more colonial nonsense. This seems too elementary to mention and I feel stupid doing so. Everyone knows this, or should.

"Take no more than one page and please share them on the discussion board."

Not sure what the discussion board is. Nor what a page is. Any help appreciated.

↳ [Reply](#)

○



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

⋮

Mar 30, 2019

You did just fine on the page and raised an obvious overlooked question about systems

Txs

Mikeg

↳ [Reply](#)

○



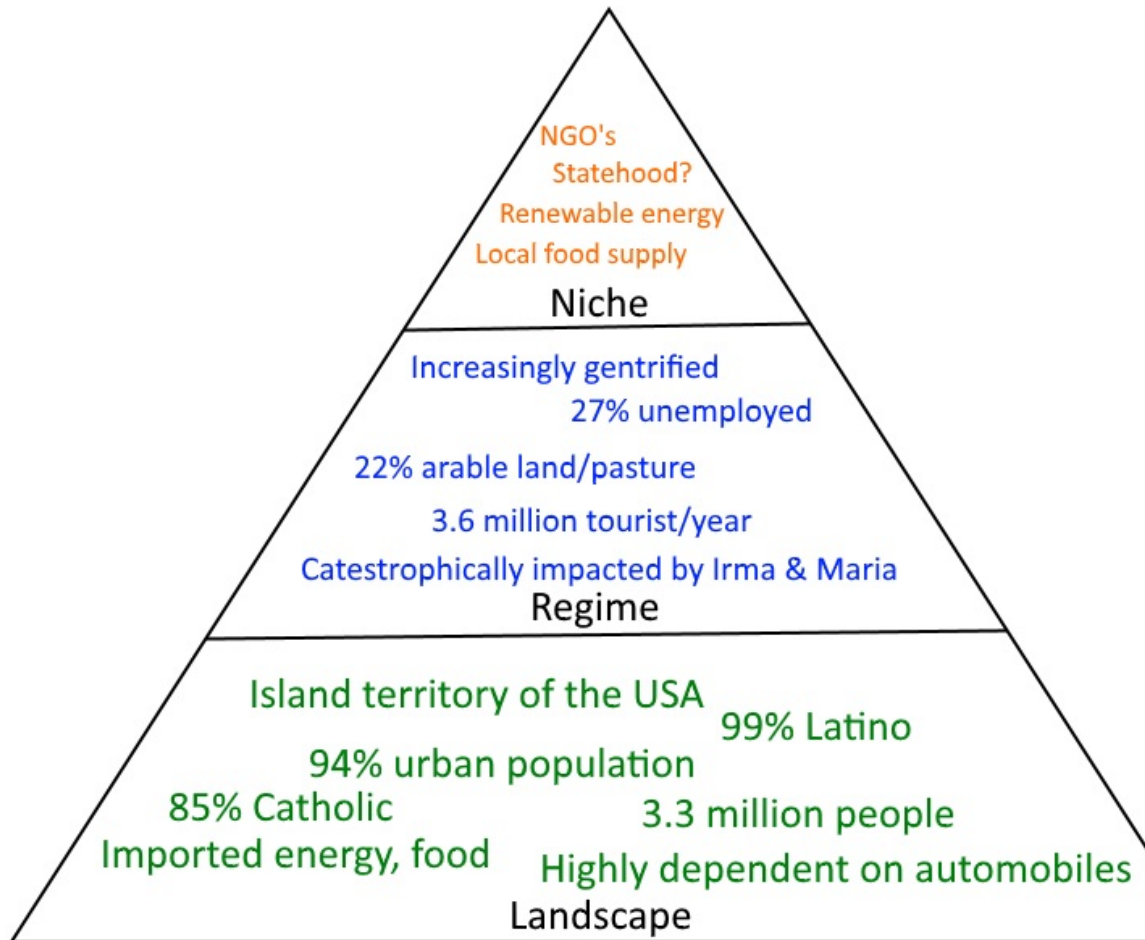
[Karl Horak \(https://learn.canvas.net\)](https://learn.canvas.net)

⋮

</courses/2527/users/903858>

Mar 30, 2019

Part 1 -- My attempt to capture a few of the MLP elements in a graphic. (Part 2 to follow separately.)



[PuertoRicoMLP.jpg \(https://learn.canvas.net/files/872458/download?download_frd=1&verifier=R9p6GNG9NsYWzwnG7BtZ7HzzmKMSAv8FgD8JtzOw\)](https://learn.canvas.net/files/872458/download?download_frd=1&verifier=R9p6GNG9NsYWzwnG7BtZ7HzzmKMSAv8FgD8JtzOw)

← Reply



[Lazaros Angelou \(https://learn.canvas.net](https://learn.canvas.net)

[/courses/2527/users/886724\)](/courses/2527/users/886724)

Mar 31, 2019

1.

Pre-Maria :

Regime : Puerto Rico is functioning as a colony of the U.S.A. 80% of food and 100% of energy (fossil fuel) is imported, profits are exported resulting in non-affordable dept. Austerity policies are imposed by the government and reduction of public expenditure by closing public schools and keeping public services like electricity, transportation, telecommunications, disinvested, in parallel

with promotion of privatization as the only solution (TINA).

Niche : Groups of citizens promoting alternative solutions like solar energy and local production of food, new paradigms of meeting the basic needs of people by taking local action for local production of food, energy, social care, housing, education and training, having a truly democratic resource management and keeping the profits and jobs in the community.

At the same time they organized massive protests against open-pit mining, as well as a proposed gas pipeline through their mountains.

Landscape : On the other hand bankers, real estate developers, cryptocurrency traders and the Financial Oversight and Management Board, an unelected body that exerts ultimate control over Puerto Rico's economy, in accordance with the government, promoted privatization of the public owned infrastructure as the answer to the country's problems.

Post-Maria:

Regime : Seeing the disaster caused by Maria storm as an opportunity to remake Puerto Rico's economy in accordance with a tiny elit and in their interest. Selling the infrastructure, under public ownership, to the private sector, in order to introduce proper free-market incentives. Rather than transforming it so that it truly serves the public interest they argue for selling it to private players.

Niche : Dozens of grassroots organizations are coming together to advance their vision: a reimaged Puerto Rico run by its people in their interests. They look at crisis as an opportunity to change, and Maria as a teacher. They argue that the storm's overarching lesson is that now is not the moment for reconstruction of what Puerto Rico was, but rather for transformation into what it could be. "Everything we consume comes from abroad and our profits are exported". It's a system that leaves debt and austerity behind, both of which made Puerto Rico exponentially more vulnerable to Maria's blows.

Landscape : Privatization of the infrastructure and a free market economy is a way to transform Puerto Rico into a "visitor economy", with a radically downsized state and many fewer Puerto Ricans living on the island. In their place would be ten of thousands of "high-net-worth individuals" from Europe, Asia, and the US mainland, with the promise of high tax brakes and living a five-star resort life style in fully privatized places year-round.

In a sense, both are utopian projects — the vision of Puerto Rico in which the wealth of the island is carefully and democratically managed by its people, and the libertarian project some are calling "Puertopia" that is being conjured up in the ballrooms of luxury hotels in San Juan and New York City. One dream is grounded in a desire for people to exercise collective sovereignty over their land, energy, food, and water; the other in a desire for a small elite to secede from the reach of government altogether, liberated to accumulate unlimited private profit.

2.

Progressive actors and movement not only act against neoliberal policies organizing massive protests against open-pit mining and gas pipeline through their mountains, they also provide alternative solutions to every aspect of their life on the island, breaking colonial bonds to the USA

(food, energy, etc.) and restoring control of their lives (local co-operative production meeting their needs).

They need to network their local initiatives to the country level, not only at the production level but at the political level as well. They need to change the regime from a colonial to an autonomous one at the local, regional and national level. To build bottom-up relationships, not top-down. To promote self-management, solidarity and social justice, living and participating in local, regional and national cooperatives producing biological food, solar energy, providing social care, education and training, the skills required to run collectively the cooperatives for social impact rather than profits. To recollect their heritage and bind it with the progress made by science and technology, in order to serve the people, not the elit.

When coming to the political aspect, always a big question occurs: shall they form a political party or not?

There is not one answer to that question. The political level is present and you have to take it into account. How do you do it? Forming a political party? Then political division, that is present in the society, will be introduced in the cooperatives and may destroy them. If you want to keep the cooperatives out of political division, you have to keep party politics out of it. Cooperatives gather people of a very diverse political spectrum with the same aim : to work together for a common cause, to meet their needs deciding themselves about what to do. Self-managed cooperatives without exploitive production relations, are reuniting people at the production level, simultaneously cultivating direct democracy at the decision level. This procedures are out of the sphere of party policies even in the most democratic countries of the world.

Building a self management and direct democracy culture, the cooperative movement has to start with local authorities, demanding similar functioning. Cooperative producers have to act similarly as citizens, deciding for the commons, welfare, safety, for every aspect concerning their own life in the neighborhood, the municipality, the region, the country, worldwide. The aim has to be "we must decide about our lives, not others". Not the leaders, the parties, the authorities, the corporations, the bosses, the allies etc.

This aim demands workers-citizens having the knowledge, skills and collectively decided procedures that lead to positive outcomes, not failures that disappoint people and bring back saviors. This a very heavy responsibility and has to be undertaken very seriously. Not forming one more party, but demanding all parties to adopt functions and policies similar to theirs.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)

Apr 2, 2019

Lazaros, thanks for your very thorough and thoughtful response. I am particularly struck by the problematic you raise between the necessity of practical, co-operative rebuilding efforts in the ground and the imperative of some kind of action at the level of politics.

You rightly point to the difficulties that occur when co-operatives formally adopt political party

allegiances. This is what you may be referring to in the context of the Greek experience when co-operatives were deliberately "politicized" by PASOK, in an effort to extend party control over this sector. Not surprisingly, this led to the destruction and downfall of many co-operatives in Greece, along with their reputation.

On the other hand, despite the fact that a plurality of political attitudes and member outlooks can be accommodated by co-operatives – and this is one of their great strengths – it is also a factor that constrains their political effectiveness and keeps the co-op movement on the sidelines of political developments. How then, do co-operatives which claim to represent a different form of political economy, actually translate this purpose into political power?

One fascinating example is Seikatsu Co-op in Japan, a radical consumer co-op, that has explicitly adopted a political agenda and runs co-op candidates for political office at the municipal level to advocate for progressive policies with respect to food, production, and the environment. In this way, the co-op has made good on its political mission, beyond re-organizing relationships at the level of consumption and production at the regional or niche level.

Perhaps there is something in that experience to learn from and adapt to our own political contexts?

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)



Apr 2, 2019

Tristan? Thoughts, please. :-) I think you can probably hit this one out of the park, sir.

← [Reply](#)



[Lazaros Angelou \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/886724\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/886724)



Apr 3, 2019

Dear John,

thank you for responding to my contribution on the matter of cooperative action and political effectiveness.

Maybe political action (and effectiveness) should be separated from party political action. Cooperative action, in the political context is an action of direct democracy, in which cooperative members are educated by experience. They have to demand from parties and political offices to respond accordingly, giving the power of decisions to the people than to the offices. Of course this has to be based on rules and procedures collectively agreed, that are transferring power from the top to the bottom.

I am talking about an institutional set-up rather than representation in the office. There are several examples of representatives that once they have been elected in the office, local, regional or national, they were lost for the movement. Political power at the top level

absorbes the representatives. Institutional power to the people is a way that prevents that absorption and gives more strength to the political effectiveness of the people.

An other aspect is the relationship between economic strength and political power. If the cooperatives have a strong presence in the economic level, they can have analogous political strength, otherwise things get very difficult. Avoiding party political division in the co-ops their economic strength is not divided at the political level.

On the other hand, if the cooperative sector is strong at the local, regional or national level, then a cooperative and direct democracy party could be an option that could be examined, very very carefully and under strictly direct democratic procedures.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)



Apr 8, 2019

Hello Lazaros,

The points you raise with respect to the political role of co-operatives are intimately connected to the point raised by a number of other contributors with respect to the operations of power and the question of "leadership". This prompts me to reflect on a number of points raised in this thread with respect to power and leadership.

I have no problems with power or leadership per se. They are in my view natural and essential elements of any functioning society. The key question for me is how do human societies mitigate and regulate the abuses of power that inevitably arise, given the fact that there will always be people who wish to benefit at the expense of others? Co-operatives for me, are perhaps the most effective means of setting controls on the abuse of power through a mechanism of distributing its operation in the widest possible manner through the democratic engagement of individuals – whether we are speaking of formal politics or of economic units, such as workplaces.

The mitigation of concentrated power in the hands of a socially or economically privileged minority is therefore one result of the widest possible expansion of co-operative practices and institutions. This presumably results in the widest distribution of benefits, as evidenced by the correlation of high social & economic distribution of benefits with strong operative democracies (the welfare state being one example). It is also the reason why elites so detest democracy and the institutions that promote it (like co-ops & trade unions).

A co-operative commonwealth is a social and economic system that actively promotes and protects these principles. And on this score, I would question the point raised by Foucault as mentioned by Tristan above, that socialism offered no alternative narrative to capitalism. Perhaps Foucault was thinking of traditional Marxism that took the dynamics of capitalism as given and simply reversed the roles of the contending classes. Centralized command and control remain unchanged. But this does not account for the historical vision of co-operative commonwealth that did indeed offer a different narrative based on the extension of the democratic principle to economics as

well as politics. The content of Governmentality takes on a different hue in this context.

Which brings us to the question of leadership. I believe it is problematic to perceive leadership per se as a problem. All human groupings generate leaders, whether acknowledged or not. The idea of "leaderless structures" has its own serious problems. See for example the famous essay The Tyranny of Structurelessness by Jo Freeman, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tyranny_of_Structurelessness (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tyranny_of_Structurelessness)

The question is how is this leadership exercised and managed in the interests of all, not just those exercising leadership? Here again, co-operatives offer a model for containing the inherent risks of unaccountable leadership through the widest possible distribution of accountability.

You raised the idea of a co-operative party, as one avenue that co-operatives might pursue. This is interesting, but the challenges of containing the abuse of power or the privileges of entrenched leadership would not go away. Witness the highly centralized operations and absence of operative democracy in many co-ops. This challenge may well be magnified in the context of a political party, with access to *both* political *and* economic power. Perhaps the solution lies in the emergence of a co-operative movement, or a *stream* within the co-operative movement, that is explicitly political with respect to the pursuit of its economic and social aims, without being aligned with any political party in particular. This protects the principle of autonomy.

Thus, the idea of such a movement would be to co-operatize (?) as many institutions of governance as possible, in particular the operations of government services that are amenable to user control, such as social care, which I explore in detail in module 5. The effect of this is the gradual democratization of the body politic and the transformation of the content of governmentality. This is one aspect of what I refer to as The Partner State, a concept which we will explore later in the course.

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

Apr 8, 2019

Thanks for this post, John. The Wikipedia article points to a whole literature on these topics that I can't wait to explore! The best I've been able to do so far is to try to imagine mechanisms to make leadership temporary, distributed, subject to recall, randomly assigned, assigned on a rotating basis, difficult to consolidate, ossify, etc. I agree that the problems are not inherent to the notions themselves, but to their realization in the world; their exercise.

One model that's always fascinated me is that of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra of New York which "conducts" itself perfectly well, in marked contrast to the standard model of some (usually fraudulent) Byronic Romantic Genius

Übermensch revealing Brahms' and Strauss' (Richard, that is; the Johanns not so much) deepest mysteries to innocent audience and ignorant working musician alike. According to one friend who used to sit in with them when they were short a bassoon for one reason or another (score requires more than are on contract, someone's on sick or maternity leave, etc.), rehearsals could be frustratingly slow and often fraught, but I can attest to the glory of the "product". If you don't believe me, just take a look at all their Grammys. Or just have a look/listen for yourself. Here's a terrific short documentary.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtbIP6ECnbl> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtbIP6ECnbl>)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtbIP6ECnbl>

Looking forward to Module 5

Edited by [Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860) on Apr 21 at 7:07am

[← Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)



Apr 8, 2019

Another, more concise look at Orpheus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec0-pBlcn6A>
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec0-pBlcn6A>)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec0-pBlcn6A>

[← Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)



Apr 8, 2019

Wonderful Anthony, thanks. I love the idea of conductor-less symphonies! On this score, (hope that joke doesn't fall flat), are you aware of the fact that the

London Symphony Orchestra, the Korea Co-op Orchestra and the [l'Orquestra Simfònica del Vallès](http://www.osvalles.com/) (<http://www.osvalles.com/>) are also among a group of co-operative orchestras?

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1 1



[Stuart Wulff](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313>)



Apr 15, 2019

The tendency of left wing governments - or at least ostensibly seeing themselves as left wing - to seek to co-opt civil society, including co-ops, in to their top-down socialist project, is a much repeated pattern. In Zimbabwe, the truly grassroots, independent and self-managed, co-ops coined the term "collective co-operative" specifically to distinguish themselves from the official "co-ops" that used that name, but were controlled arms of government policy. They also created their own federation, OCCZIM (Organization of Collective Co-operatives of Zimbabwe) to promote a co-op agenda in Zimbabwe.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Carol Lomas](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906655) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906655>)



Mar 31, 2019

Niche (new/old ideas)

- more and more people turning to each other for ideas, support and resistance
- pockets of thriving solar powered communities
- farms that grow multiple crops to increase resilience
- moving forward without government sanction
- involving school aged children in growing crops and sharing with their families
- growing recognition of rich energy sources such as solar, wind and water

Regime

- issues of colonialism with historical fear of resistance and dependence on state
- fostering dependence on outside world for most food (80%)
- mono crops by large corporations that are mostly exported
- attitudes of colonialism which stigmatize Puerto Ricans and violate their rights
- only one major port for import/export

--privatization of schools, transportation, energy systems and water as a response to crisis and to increase profit for corporations/individuals.

--dependence of many urban dwellers on imported food

Landscape

--global financial crisis

-- growth of neoliberalism

--excluding ordinary stakeholders from benefits of growing wealth

--worldwide stripping of citizens rights/abilities to grow their own food and direct their own future

--increasing pressures from climate change which are largely ignored in the quest for ever increasing profits

Both the video and Naomi Klein's paper were very interesting and rich in content and clearly showed that while there is hope, resilience and initiative by many in Puerto Rico, the vultures are circling.

← [Reply](#)



[Murray Hidlebaugh](#)

[https://learn.canvas.net/courses](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895967)

[/2527/users/895967](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895967)

Mar 31, 2019



Objective 1.3 Exercise 1:

The mix of issues that I see contributing to the situation that Puerto Rico was facing six months after the hurricane. (MLP as guide for points.)

Regime:

- Ongoing tensions continue from time of colonization- since United States takeover in 1898. Puerto Ricans are citizens under control of the United States with no significant democratic rights in the presidential elections.
- The United States government with “guidance” from the corporate sector are a de facto dictatorship over the colony. This is a continuation of the situation since 1899 with land “reform”.
- Historical ongoing tension among the political, economic, and social classes. (There are a large number of poor and small number of wealthy) .
- Dependence on the United States for most of its basic needs. (Food, energy, finance.)
- Ongoing efforts of financial capital in support of privatization of what are usually considered to

- be basic public services supplied by government.
- o Local people have a history of resistance against colonization and have built effective networks in resisting complete take over. It is not a coincidence that similar takeover events have occurred in the past after major hurricanes as well as after earthquakes and Tsunamis.
 - o Strong sense of community solidarity and willingness to physically challenge the power of the elite in an organized way. (Appear to have a culture of solidarity among the poor.)
 - o
 - o **Landscape:**
 - o Hurricane Maria presented an opportunity for disaster capitalism to once again attempt to privatize critical public infrastructure and resources, especially land .
 - o Power outage and failure to respond left citizens suspicious about the danger of privatization.
 - o Food shortage and lack of capacity to import exposed the vulnerability poor people faced..
 - o School closures increased threat f privatization.
 - o Water shortage.
 - o Shelter shortage.
 - o Promotion of "cheap" real estate available to foreign capital.
 - o Governor Ricardo Rossello's response that Puerto Rico was open to private ownership of land and privatization of education and other public services in exchange for a promise to make things better seen as an threat to local decision making.
 - o The double movement in this case is reflected by the resistance of the local population to primarily American control through.
 - o
 - o **Niche:**
 - o School gardens for food production and also the role it provides in connecting people with each other and with an important source of survival.
 - o Solar production. (Not mentioned in the video but part of this was that field employees of the power companies voluntarily worked with local groups to replace transmission lines and get power running as a public utility. (Their efforts remind me of the farm electrification program in rural Saskatchewan 1950s). Solidarity in action.
 - o Volunteers and staff, teachers operating public schools despite lack of electricity and in some places even roofs. There was tremendous local resistance to the concept of private schools and leaving it up to the private sector by parents and classroom teachers. It is evident they understand and are prepared to actively resist the "charter school" system that the capitalist system and the elite in Puerto Rico are prepared to embrace.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Kankshi Waghray](#)

(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/892027>)

Mar 31, 2019

1. MLP - Framework

Regime - The main systems/structures evident are electricity, public transportation system, telecommunications, infrastructure, energy system, tourism, roads, water, and real estate.

Landscape - Land is scarce, poverty was associated with being a farmer, there is a lot of food insecurity as they import more than 80% of their food. Traditional agricultural farming would be inter-cropped, but they had to change because of the Department of Agriculture's instructions for mono-cultures of coffee.

Previous hurricane experiences promoting privatization and reform that seemed to be prioritized over immediate community needs. To rebuild schools, contractors and businesses are open to helping but insurance companies and government deter or delay the process. Government is implementing new education systems i.e. alliance schools.

Niche - Casa Pueblo - a community based organization defending national territory, for solar power - helping in powering technology and health equipment to unplug from the grid, providing water power, etc. Farmers were back to the lands post Maria, ready to sell at the markets as they did prior to government interference. Volunteers are keeping the community motivated in spite of the government pressures that seem to weaken or discourage the community.

2. Resistance and building alternatives

Casa Pueblo - not waiting for government or US congress resistance. Agricultural Farmers are feeding people with sustainable practices that promote resilience in the farm and community.

People Summit against disaster capitalism and for other worlds - gathering of several 100 organizers and intellectuals from across Puerto Rico.

I would suggest the continuation and collaboration of these movements at all levels. Creating a capacity building plan with a program logic model could assist in the monitoring and evaluation process to gauge what is working, the level of impact and what needs further improvement. This might also assist in garnering the required funding for the rebuilding and development process.

[← Reply](#)



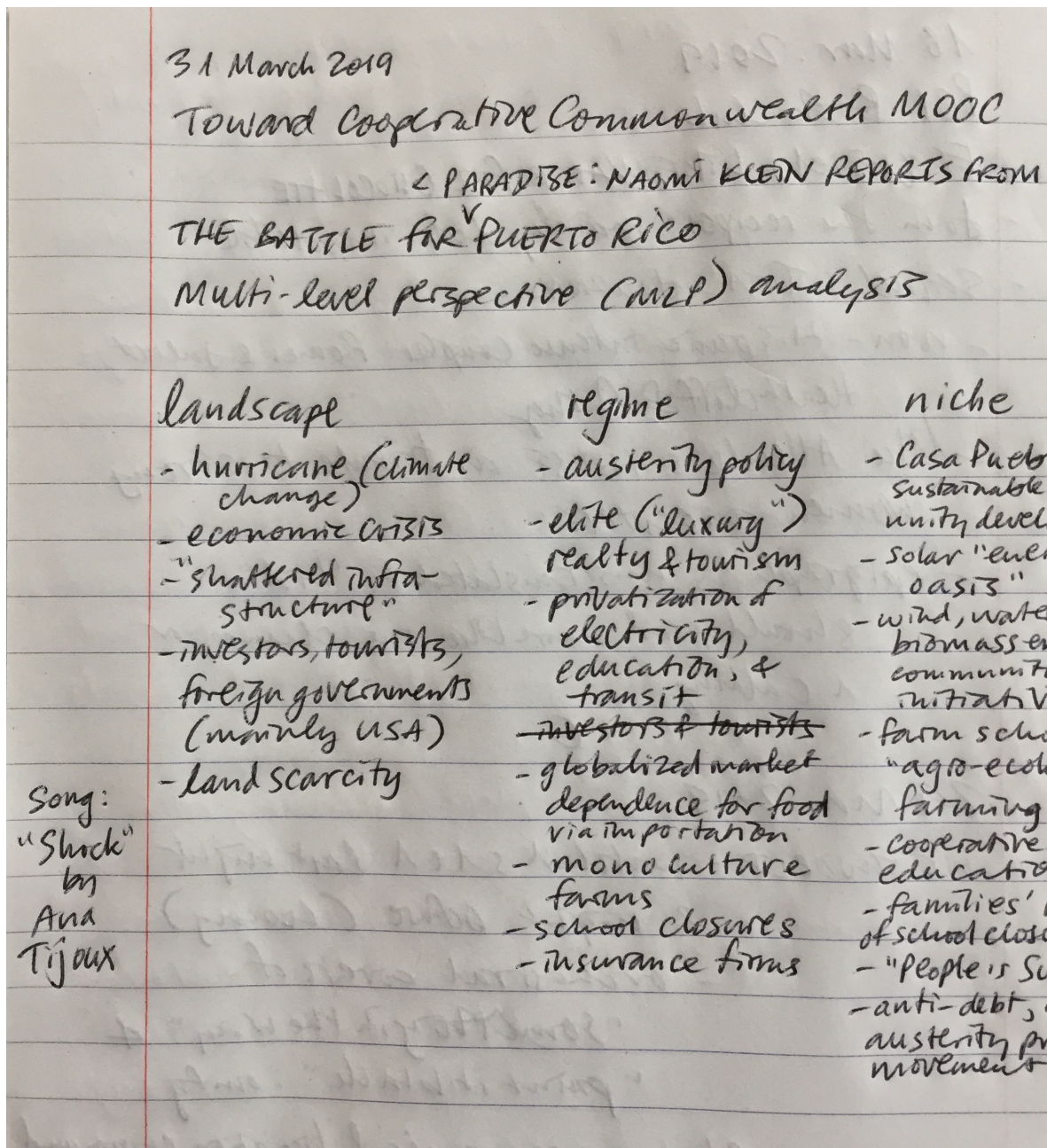
[Mark A. McCutcheon](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/251199>

Mar 31, 2019

Module 1: Reflective Exercises 1 & 2

1. Here is my MLP map of landscape, regime, and niche elements and agents depicted in *The Battle for Paradise*:



2. Klein's reportage on the Puerto Rico "People's Summit" in particular got me thinking more about the role of the arts in organizing and mobilizing people to further just and progressive causes. I was first put in mind of [Urayoán Noel's 2018 poem "No Longer Ode,"](https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/no-longer-ode) (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/no-longer-ode>) a poem that is about Hurricane María, its aftermath, and its contested reconstruction. It's a poem that manages to be both formally sophisticated and plain-speaking; note the line I've emphasized in boldface:

All that's left of the sea in you is foam,
 the coastline's broken voice and all its crags.
 You hear the governor admit some snags
 were hit, nada, mere blips in the biome,
nothing that private equity can't fix
once speculators pour into San Juan
to harvest the bad seed of an idea.

She tells you Santa Clara in '56
had nothing on the brutal San Ciprián,
and yes, your abuela's named María.

Noel's poem resonates with Klein's journalism in critiquing disaster capitalism, and -- with its identification of private equity and bad seed -- also critiques the globalized (and fragile) monocultural agribusiness on which Puerto Rico depends for its food supply. Noel's reference to "blips in the biome" also points to the "landscape" element of climate and climate change.

Noel's poem represents astonishing technical virtuosity (its stanzas are two sonnets and a décima); but it also demonstrates how poetry (a genre too often dismissed for its perceived elitism or obscurity) speaks to, of, and for the people: the décima is, as the author explains, "a ten-line Spanish stanza widely used in Puerto Rican popular poetry, often irreverently." And the highlighted lines target and condemn neoliberalism and its privatization program with blunt words and derisive tone. Noel deploys popular, vernacular form and blunt language to make this poem speak truth to power. In this context I should note, too, the unusually wide distribution of Noel's poem: far from reaching only a niche audience, it was published by the Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day service, which e-mails a poem every day to subscribers -- who now number over 500,000 worldwide.

Returning to Klein's video, it offers a further clue to the role of the arts in inspiring and mobilizing people: the song used for the film's soundtrack, "Shock" by Ana Tijoux, is a song about the capitalist "shock doctrine" that Klein herself has written about. Tijoux deploys that language in lyrics that celebrate the occupations, work stoppages, and hunger strikes that were undertaken in Chile in 2011 to protest university cost increases and to demand that education be public and free. The ease with which Tijoux's lyrics can be read as applying with almost equal accuracy and relevance to the post-hurricane "Puertoriconstruction" attests to both the ubiquity of neoliberal governance and the flourishing of resistance and alternatives among those oppressed by capital.

Watch the song's video, with a backgrounder about its context, at this link

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=177-s44MSVQ>)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=177-s44MSVQ>

Here's a sample of Tijoux's rap lyrics, translated (very approximately) into English (via this website):

Venom: your monologues
your colorless speeches
you don't see that we aren't alone
millions from pole to pole

To the sound of a single chorus
we will march with the tone
with the conviction that the thieving stops

Your state of control

your corrupt throne of gold
your politics and your wealth
and your treasure -- no

The hour has struck, the hour has struck

We will allow no more, no more your doctrine of shock

Poetry and pop music, then, while they can be very much integral to the neoliberal regime, can also provide means to propagate "niche" alternatives -- and forms of resistance -- to this regime. Pop music specifically also has a well proven track record of getting people to gather in large numbers, which is always a great way to remind the people of their inherent power, and sometimes a way to inspire and mobilize us to take action: to march, to occupy, and to dance -- which can definitely become its own act of resistance.

(Other examples of ways in which pop music specifically has facilitated resistance to regimes and spoken truth to power are featured in Netflix's *Remastered* documentary series, which includes, among others, an [episode about the murder of popular Chilean singer Victor Jara](https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/80191048) (<https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/80191048>) in 1973.

Edited by [Mark A. McCutcheon](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/251199) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/251199>) on Apr 2 at 12:20pm

↳ [Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458>)

Mar 31, 2019

What a great post for shifting my thinking. I watched that video so many times Mark and never listened carefully. You reminded us to use all our ways of knowing in the politics of change making. Thanks

Mikeg

↳ [Reply](#)



[Deborah Dergousoff](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895874) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895874>)

Apr 3, 2019

Powerful video Mark - thanks for posting - the power of pop music and courage of youth as agents of systemic change cannot be overlooked!

↳ [Reply](#)



[Dominick Christian S. Tabug](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/871852>

Mar 31, 2019

I would like to share things here in our country. We all know that the Philippines is one of many third-world countries but a progressive one. As an educator, I hope to give my learners all that I have for them to learn new things and experience the other side of life. Through this new learning and the framework that was shown on the previous page, I hope that everybody could learn and have new ideas in mind.

[← Reply](#)



[Jacqueline Thompson](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/889545>

Mar 31, 2019

The global influences, the hurricane disaster in Puerto Rico created a 'window of opportunity' to put more pressure on the existing regime to privatize local services and resources in favour of the US markets and tourist industry.

The public resources were already in a state of crisis and reliant on outside forces. Land was being mono-cropped for feeding America and tourists, residents were convinced that if they gave up their land and moved to cities, they would escape poverty. Electricity and clean drinking water, education and health care were already being dismantled to 'replace with more profitable models'. The regime saw the disaster as a golden opportunity to push their planned reforms through with little resistance. However, the lives of those living in luxury suffered no real loss. They seemed to still have access to the resources to rebuild and expand their holdings, while the islanders continue to struggle with no access to public sources for electricity, food, education, and medical care. The regime is not replacing what was there; which opens another window of opportunity for niche technology and human services to develop.

Some of the micro-level alternatives were already being developed and used on the island. When the landscape shifted, the innovators stepped up and shared the technology with other residents. This sharing created a centre where people gathered to connect to the broader world, charge their medical devices, and find ways of helping each other to rebuild their homes, food systems, and re-open schools. The regime provided the expected resistance to re-opening the existing school structures/system, so the residents educated the children about food production and let them take their harvests home to feed their families. People coming together, to help each other, is the beginning of mobilizing for change.

The people of Puerto Rico have a strong history of resistance. Using the alternatives for creating 'happiness', instead of profit offers an opportunity for social alternatives to spread. The social fabric needs to become strong enough to hold each other up while they struggle to create a new economy that benefits the residents, not the profiteers.

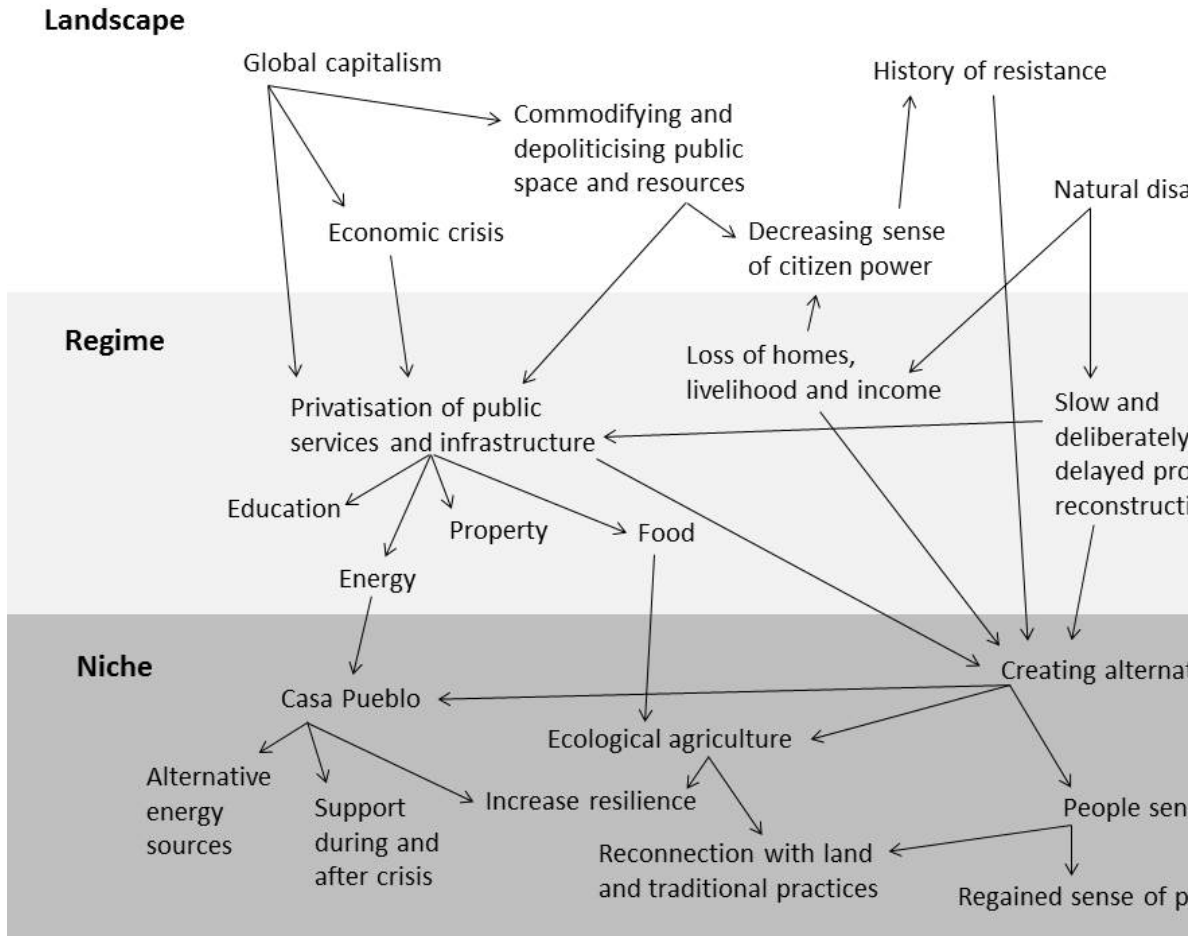
[← Reply](#)



[Inka Santala \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893538\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893538)

Mar 31, 2019

MLP framework applied to the case of post-Maria Puerto Rico:



The niche alternatives currently emerging in Puerto Rico are not only result of the long history of resistance but also response to ecological, social and economic crisis still unfolding in the area. These are mainly community-based local initiatives, aiming to provide alternatives, increase community's resilience and regain political power lost in the contemporary neoliberal governance that mainly seeks to increase market profits. I think in terms of moving forward it is crucial that these niche level alternatives start to collaborate and establish relationships with organisations and institutions working at different scales. This means not only working closely together with other local actors, but seeking support from regional, national and international institutions and networks to increase political effectiveness and achieve wider recognition and mobilisation.

[Reply](#)



[Terry Sterrenberg \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513)

Apr 1, 2019

I find this diagram and what you say about it extremely helpful to help me understand the MLP concepts. I am looking for the connections that make it possible for "niche level alternatives to collaborate and establish relationships with organizations and institutions working at different scales."

Edited by [Terry Sterrenberg \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513) on Apr 1 at 7:48am

← [Reply](#)



[Michael Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480)



Apr 1, 2019

excellent Terry. Yes Inka's work is so helpful. I have included in my video reflection on Module 1 work.

← [Reply](#)



[Michael Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480)



Apr 1, 2019

Inka, thank you so much. This is a brilliantly clear depiction of how the MLP can be applied to map the critical factors shaping the context we must work in. Also important, your setting out of the linkages between levels and their respective elements. It enables us to have a way of starting a discussion that can more systematically focus on strategy formulation and targeting of effort and resources. As a practitioner, I appreciate how you have applied the MLP. It is a tool/frame to employ to map, sort and engage in discussion with others on priorities, a pre-requisite for strategy design whether the emphasis be on resistance and advocacy or diffusing and scaling the impacts of a generative innovation or connecting the dots in a way that can help us target who recruit as allies in the tough work of movement building. Well done!

← [Reply](#)



[Inka Santala \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893538\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893538)



Apr 2, 2019

Thank you Michael and Terry, it is not a perfectly done diagram (I noticed there are couple arrows missing at least) but helped me to think through this case. Yes, I think it is important to understand that these local actions are not separate from wider structures and issues that take place in the society, but they are constantly impacted and impacting other actors and processes.

← [Reply](#)

[Deborah Dergousoff](#)

(http)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895874>

Apr 3, 2019

I'm a visual learner and your visual response to the question really helped locate the various elements in perspective! Thank you for posting!

← [Reply](#)

(http)

[Natalie Krasikov](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/904069>)

Apr 5, 2019

Thank you, Inka, this is a useful diagram which emphasizes the interconnectedness of things. There are so many good summaries and I am behind the class so I hesitate to add another niche/ landscape/ regime summary except to point out an obvious that I have not seen posted so far (my apologies if I have overlooked this in someone's summary). Specifically, the role of media, which is actually implicit in the making of Naomi Klein's video. As a niche item you would include Naomi's video and the frequent the postings on dailykos blog site by Denise Velez keeping followers in touch with developments and lack thereof in Puerto Rico during and since Maria. Keeping PR upfront in the minds of at least some people in the US. As a Landscape item, Mainstream media is obsessed with the occupant of the White House to the detriment of any other news and as a key in Regime control, the occupant of the White House calls the Press enemies of the people, follows Fox avidly, and tweets about "fake news" all the time as well as specifically belittling the Governor of PR and the Mayor of San Juan. I have read he is adamant about not sending any more aid to PR leading to Congress fighting over how much aid to allot, resulting in no aid bill being passed in the last week.

← [Reply](#)

(http)

[Lynne Fischer](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/904072>)

Apr 6, 2019

Inka, I add my thanks as well, for your diagram. I was pleased to see how many arrows led to 'creating alternatives!' And that led me to acknowledge that as we build this movement for change, some of this movement growth will necessarily come from crisis (hurricanes, flood, crop failures, 2008 financial crisis, polluted waters, etc.)

Someone above talked about the general public not understanding or knowing the forces at play....but everyone can identify a crisis/problem in their life or community. This is the fertile ground where activists can play a role in communicating and educating communities about what is happening in their locale and providing information on alternatives.

Edited by [Lynne Fischer](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/904072>) on Apr 6 at 4:39pm

← [Reply](#)



Stuart Wulff (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313>)

Apr 15, 2019

Well done.

← [Reply](#)



Paris Kirby (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897160>)

Apr 1, 2019

Module 1: Reflection 1&2

Landscape

- Growth of neoliberalism
- 3.3 million people, 99% Latino, 94% urban population, 85% Catholic
- Pre-existing shortage of basic human needs like food, water and shelter
- Pre-existing inability to grow their own food and direct their own future
- Almost complete dependence on imported energy and food, unjust systems that do not serve local Puerto Ricans and their communities.
- Ongoing selling & privatising community/island assets to foreign elite. This was accelerated by the crisis creating more opportunities for private investors to purchase land/resources cheap and Government to pass policy that would otherwise be unacceptable.

Regime

- United States takes control of Puerto Rico in 1898 resulting in the stigmatisation of Puerto Ricans and policies that violate their rights. Dependence on US for most of their basic needs.
- Existing economic inequality and poor infrastructure. Slow and deliberately delayed reconstruction process. Corporate elite want status quo. Mono crops by large corporations that are mostly exported
- Privatisation of public services such as schools, transportation, existing state owned utilities as a response to the disaster. A corrupt system that takes advantage of economic instability to increase profit for corporations/ individuals.
- Tax haven for the elite that excludes local residents
- Failure of accountability

Niche

- School student led community gardens as a place of education, community building and food source.
- Education activists - Locals actively resisting the government enforced charter school system by voluntarily operating public schools despite damaged premises and extreme lack of resource.

- Volunteers keep local community motivated despite government pressures that discourage community
- Casa Pueblo - a community based organisation defending national territory and empowering local citizens to take back control of their basic human needs and rights
- Growing recognition of sustainable and regenerative energy sources such as solar, wind and water
- Local farmers focused on diversification of crop production to feed people
- Local farms were able to keep producing immediately after storm

Task 2

Based on the MLP and Systems Change insights thus far... The multi-level collaboration of niche level alternatives will be vital in enhancing political effectiveness. Citizens fighting against the dominant regime will need to maintain motivation despite oppressive forces. Individuals, organisations and networks at all scales need to establish working relationships and bolster each other's initiatives. Widen visibility via media both locally and internationally to gain support and mobilisation. Build a strategy with allies, test and evaluate to gauge what is most effective.

Edited by [Paris Kirby \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897160\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897160) on Apr 1 at 2:25am

← [Reply](#)

○



[Toby Falconer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899411\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899411)



Apr 5, 2019

Nice one Paris! I agree with you!

← [Reply](#)

○



[Terry Sterrenberg \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513)



Apr 1, 2019

Laurie and I watched the Battle For Paradise several months ago when Naomi Klein showed it in New York City. At that time I knew about Naomi Klein's "shock doctrine" and had read several of her books but I did not know about her involvement in Puerto Rico. This movie raises the same kinds of questions that we bring out in the movie we are creating. The dynamic of the government and corporations taking advantage of a public catastrophe that causes pain and suffering is of course is not new. It happens continually and strategically as a way to make changes in public policy and increase profits for corporations and to diminish/destroy the influence of the commons, localization, and cooperation in general.

When Naomi Klein asks the question in the movie "Who is Puerto Rico for? What echoed in my head was the question "who is my community for"? and more personally "what is my life for"? The Battle between profit making and cooperative living begins in our heads, our minds and the lens

through which we view the world. The scene in the movie where the wealthy see only the opportunity for profit making and their biggest fear is of losing their hotels and golf courses I wish was an aberration. As we have encountered in doing the research for our movie, the battle for local economies to have a say in their own community development is real in the United States.

When the woman in the movie says she wants an alternative (economy) rooted in happiness (instead of profit making) I say to myself "I love that. I really do" and it seems like a pipe dream. I think it was Naomi Klein who says in the movie that communities building these (local) economies ... know what the solutions are and are able to operationalize them. Local economies are also happening in Denver, in Newark, and all over the world. The question I still have has to do with how these local projects can scale up and make a difference in the larger economies in which they exist when as Naomi Klein says they live in parallel worlds.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Michael Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480)

Apr 1, 2019

This is lovely and meaningful reflection .

↳ [Reply](#)



[Michael Sommerfeld \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903134\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903134)

Apr 1, 2019

As often as I'm reading over the assignment, I find it hard to formulate appropriate answers just based on Naomi Klein's article. I believe I understand how to use MLP framework and, like many others, I could endlessly theorize about causes and effects, as well as the great opportunities both sides see in rebuilding. However, I'm neither an eloquent scholar nor do I feel qualified enough to have an informed opinion on such matters. I've never met a Puerto Rican and don't know anything about culture, mentality, the general attitude, motivations or the needs most of them share. All I know is if the majority aspires to dream the American Dream, the political landscape will not change and Puerto Rico remains a colony. On the other hand, maybe a hurricane was needed to hit cracks into an established regime to finally allow niches for grassroots-movements to develop, to grow, and consequently, open these cracks wider until the constricting shell breaks, which again depends on the people I do not know.

What ideas I have to achieve that? I wouldn't even dare to give any specific advice to the people of Puerto Rico. It's their country, their lives, and if they forgo their chance to take matters into their own hands and instead prefer being bribed and bought, it is their decision. Advice had been given to all of us a long time ago, written on a gravestone, 'Workers of all countries unite!' For that, though, it needs a new breed of charismatic political and social leaders emerging from non-established circles, supported by all progressive forces in and outside the US.

← Reply



Michael Lewis (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480>)

Apr 1, 2019

Not to worry too much Michael. Our role here is not to dispense advice. It is to try and clarify, learn and test out our thinking and the implications for strategy. Take a look at Inka Santala's post of the MLP. You can go to search names and just write it into the box and you will be taken to it.

← Reply



Murray Hidlebaugh
(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895967>)

Apr 1, 2019

Objective 1.3: 2. Resistance and building alternatives.

Citizens of Puerto Rico have a long history in organizing resistance. They have had almost continuous resistance movements of various forms against the United States since the American invasion in 1898. The first protest against colonization came in 1899. They've had to deal with two other major hurricanes, two major earthquakes, and two Tsunamis. Hurricane Maria is just the latest environmental disaster where they have had to organize against capitalist efforts to expand private control over public services and to buy up high quality properties, including recreational land, at cheap prices for private development.

The Puerto Ricans have shown remarkable capacity to quickly and effectively mobilize after Maria. They have taken effective action against privatization of their electrical system, their water system, and their education system. They haven't had food security for a long time, importing over 80% of the food they eat. However they are concerned about food sovereignty and projects like the farm school system are aimed at building local capacity to sustainably produce and process the food they need.

Their concern about loss of public land to private tourism development is very insightful. There is little evidence that shows that foreign controlled tourism development provides any significant benefits to the local population. However, there is evidence that beachfront hotels do deny local citizen public access to the natural resources that offer quality leisure and recreation opportunities. (This is an enclosure of the leisure/recreation commons.).

I think that outside groups that are truly progressive and want to provide meaningful support to the citizens of Puerto Rico need to first make direct contact with the citizens who are challenging the current system. There is a need to discuss with them what kind of support they would find most effective, both immediate and longer term. It is also necessary to know what support, from the

Puerto Rican citizens' list of expressed needs, the outside group can actually provide.

From the taped interviews it seems apparent that a significant number of citizens support challenging American colonial policy, as well as challenging the disaster capitalists who are trying to take private control of education, food, electricity, and land. From a Canadian perspective we could lobby our government to include in its foreign-policy a clause that formally pressures the United States to address social justice policy for Puerto Rico. The Canadian position could include support for the Puerto Ricans attempts to gain full American citizenship, voting rights, and legislation giving Puerto Rico statehood status. It would be important to check with Puerto Ricans first though.

What ideas do you have about how people might organize to increase their political effectiveness and create a base for advocating change?

To be effective in advocating for change, community leaders need to make themselves aware of what the citizens in a community generally agree needs to change. Then they can start to work together to determined shared goals, desired outcomes, and appropriate strategies related to the place and the culture. Timing and pace are critical factors when organizing for change.

This form of participatory democracy is messy, slow, and with no predetermined end time. Nor can any results be guaranteed. However, a collaborative approach has been found to be more resilient to challenges and crisis because the citizens have a vested interest in working to support the future they have stated they desire and that they have been actively involved in developing.

← [Reply](#)



[Tao Orion \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897635\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897635)

Apr 1, 2019

Question 1

Regime:

- * Historic colonial relationship with US
- * Debt/Austerity resulting from neoliberal policies
- * Infrastructure and economy based on capitalism's false narrative of infinite resources available for exploitation

Landscape:

- * Climate change - increased storm frequency and intensity
- * Government catering to interests on elites

- * Disaster capitalism

- * Rising inequality

Niche:

- * Local food and energy production

- * Community and neighborhood engagement in pertinent social, economic, and ecological issues

- * Emerging understanding of linkages among regime, landscape, and niche factors

Question 2

The scenarios that are taking place in Puerto Rico right now are such an interesting microcosm of the types of processes that are likely to occur all over the world as the effects of climate change and late stage capitalist attempts to hold on to viability continue to increase in tandem - its definitely clear why you chose to lead with this fascinating example for the beginning of the course! To me the most important thing that progressive actors and interest groups can do, and what seems like is already happening in Puerto Rico, is to see how all of these processes are related to each other in order to help strengthen the movements toward a new system of political, economic, and ecological engagement on the island.

The fascinating examples of government inaction on repairing schools and electric infrastructure with the hope that people will become desperate enough to abdicate their repair to private interests who will subsequently own them are very telling - people understand what is going on and are organizing their own alternatives. To me this points to a broad need for folks to be willing to live with a measure of uncertainty and hardship as new systems are brought into being. Teachers working in schools without electricity are an example, though moving schools toward models that aren't based indoors like the farm school shown in the video would be a great move as well.

To me as a Permaculture designer and gardener, my whole life and career have been dedicated to setting up systems that will make the mainstream "regime" obsolete - I truly believe that communities who are able to come together in meeting more of their own needs for locally sourced food, shelter, energy systems, waste management, water security, health care, etc. will be much better situated to adapt to the continued shocks brought about by climate change and declining capitalist enterprises. Also when models are in place and functioning, more and more people will see that there are viable alternatives and won't be as prone to petitioning their governments to maintain the status quo.

To see the community gatherings shown in the video packed with people sitting in classrooms or in tents in the streets is very heartening - this type of grassroots organizing is often missing from modern-day politics. These types of venues are exactly where we take the power back by realizing our common interests and values, and finding ways to move forward that serve those very needs. Exciting times!

Tao

[← Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)



Apr 1, 2019

Thanks Tao. I like what you are saying about making mainstream regimes obsolete. In my work that focus is on banks and investing, and the generation of local energy and energy democracy. I love northern gardening too and will soon be sharing my tomato photos!

My friends talk about unlocking regimes, speeding up their demise, de-legitimizing them. What roles do we have to play? Some strategies include exposing how well the dominant regime actors and firms are subsidized by taxpayers, and how our support is not even recognized as anything but normal by the public. That's why we need muckrakers and critics. To identify those subsidies for big business and redirect them to community initiatives.

Others should feel free to share their ideas about actions and strategies.

MIkeg

Edited by [Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458) on Apr 1 at 12:17pm

← [Reply](#)



[Terry Sterrenberg](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513)
(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513>)

Apr 1, 2019

Just finished Michael Lewis's paper "Navigating System Transition in a Volatile Century". He presented a number of examples of projects in different parts of the world that have been able to break through and connect the the parallel worlds that Naomi Klein talks about. He describes the necessity of projects and movements to be able to work across the three social systems (public, private, and civil society) if change is going to happen. Michael then gives examples of how this was done successfully in several projects in Europe and Japan. He talks how these projects were able to utilize alliances and coalitions socially and even with the government in order to obtain funding. This article underlines for me how far behind the United States is in regard to supporting the use of cooperative business management and financial help for developing coops. In the U.S these "experiments" are often labeled as socialistic and immediately marginalized and dismissed by the general public. The idea of coop is very misunderstood and often misrepresented. Still a great deal of progress has been made in recent years as inequality grows and more and more people are looking for more intimate community living spaces even in the cities. I liked this article a lot. All of these projects evolved from the starting point of collectivism and collaboration, not just to make a profit.

Edited by [Terry Sterrenberg \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513) on Apr 1 at 1:26pm

← [Reply](#)

[Kenneth Eidel \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901522\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901522)



Apr 1, 2019



Part I

1. Hurricane Maria exposes, albeit to a limited audience, the potential for expanded and accelerated exploitation and the opportunity for positive, systemic change in Puerto Rico. The major impediment to the latter is the language of neoliberalism and the coercion used to demand conformance to that language.

Since everything is interconnected, it is difficult to breakout the issues into multiple levels. So, I will separate them but I'm afraid my commentary will overlap from one level to another...

o Regime

- Debt and corruption – endemic to the capitalist system, and abetted by government, debt is the primary means of control of populations and systems
- The government, in concert with media, land speculators and owners, as well as the financial systems, is complicit in a wide range of actions to enrich the future at the expense of the many through:
 - Privatization – that is Enclosure of The Commons
 - Expropriation of resources (such as land) by driving people off the land and even off the island itself
- Even if Puerto Rico had its own Yanis Varoufakis, it would still be extremely difficult to cut through the fog created by a compliant media to get the truth to the people. That is why *The Establishment* (i.e. the government with all its supports), of necessity will be the last level to be converted.

o Landscape

- Hurricane Maria made clear the deficiencies of capitalism to address climate breakdown and the needs of people in times of crisis
- Casa Pueblo literally shined a light on the dark truth that neither government nor the “free market” can (or is willing) to address human needs
- The “vulture capitalists” who, before Maria were maneuvering to get their share of the Puerto Rico debt pie, had even better pickings after the storm
- The waves of “brigades” streaming in to help with recovery and sustainability is the kind of outside help that needs to be encouraged and continued. Working together to Implement the Alternative solutions is the only way we can overcome the crushing weight of capitalism and create systemic change

o Niche

- A Caribbean island seems the ideal place for local food production, so it is indeed troubling that Puerto Rico must import most of its food. This is the result of the Regime's influence and control of the language or neoliberalism; no doubt claiming factory farming as a creator of jobs.
- Local, small-scale, organic food production is the type of endeavor that is needed for any community that wants to a sustainable and resilient economy. But the language of neoliberalism must be overcome in order to keep young people on the island
- Casa Pueblo is another example of resiliency at the community level. It is vital that these alternatives exist so people can actually see and experience something that works and

works for people rather than profit at the people's expense.

Part II

So, what is one to do? Before we can Implement the Alternative, we must create it. In terms of MLP, at what levels should we concentrate our efforts?

Puerto Rico gives us a good place to start as these efforts are going on in many parts of the globe in similar fashion.

At the Niche level. Movements like Casa Pueblo, the farm school, Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica, and the many other community-based organizations around the island working together to build, rebuild, and create the integrated, local systems to support people, nurture the land and the resources, and implement a just and sustainable environment.

Support from groups outside of Puerto Rico, like Via Campesina are also vital to creating sustainable alternatives.

These are the kinds of movements at work around the globe. The need is to share them, propagate and expand them. How else can we build the momentum for systemic change if not through efforts like those documented by Klein? I have seen, even in the limited work our non-profit has been involved in, the sense of empowerment and strength that comes from taking an action, creating grassroots group or even just speaking out at a city council hearing.

The age of willful ignorance is over. The young people today don't fall for the old gags of growth and prosperity, free markets and the freedom to do whatever you want, war and luxury. They know that the capitalist system has not worked, can't work, and is actually an impediment to social justice and a sustainable world. The truth is known, the jester unmasked, their propaganda rejected. That is why the wealthy no longer invest their billions in expansion of production but instead use it to further inflate their wealth, with stock buybacks, leveraged buyouts, and financial gambling schemes. Blockchain and crypto-currency "mining" operations produce nothing of value; they are just silly wagering games played by idle rich. Now is a perfect opportunity for people to band together and create new economic systems, forge new social alliances and relations and build the political processes (if we must have them at all) that meet the sufficiency needs of all people and respect the living Earth.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Rolando Ramirez \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893132\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893132)

Apr 1, 2019

1.-Issues Contributing to Puerto Rico's situation...

-Previous on going economic crisis

-A state government keen on privatization of services

-Open arms investments strategies

-Absence of civil society participation in rebuilding the island

-Use de hurricane as an excuse for foreign capital to deepen their corporate interests on the island.

2.- It seems that resistance and searching for alternatives, as a change system strategy, is what the ngos and community organizations are doing. Interesting that they visualize that as a complementary strategy. Resolving local needs but at the same time introducing new approaches to governance, participation and ownership. They clearly show that hurricane has meant an opportunity to empower them and their communities.

Eventually alliances between private -public sectors will need to be explored in order to address system change and the scales of the challenges they face in economics, education, health and the environment field. In the end are political choices to be made between continued dependence and democratic participatory strategies to resolve those challenges.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Maxine Winder \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903074\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903074)

Apr 1, 2019

LANDSCAPE

- pre disaster economic meltdown in process
- Disaster assistance congruent with devastation
- Lack of Defined Economic Culture and Identity
- Poor Disaster Response Time resulting in panic and insecurity

REGIME

- dependence on one sea port for life staples
- dependence on out of territory food sources
- lack of disaster proof essential services or available alternatives
- previous trending of agricultural methods toward large commercial production that eroded self sustainability
- privatization of schools
- exploitation of land by corporate entities
- impaired decision making due to stress of the disaster

NICHE

- impromptu shared solar charging station by local solar power owners
- ideas to move toward off grid power system
- local commitment to development to off grid power systems and away from use of fossil fuels.
- reimplement traditional self sustaining agriculture practices
- farm school where students are taught to grow their own food.
- discussion of developing local economies

2. Alternatives

- Re-establish the territorial government to be more independent of the US gearing it toward needs of the island and establishment of practices that promote self sufficiency. Democratic Governance by regional representation with diverse gender, educational and occupational background. Rotating leadership of the collective group.
 - o build a second port to ensure access at all times for essential goods and services
 - o Reduce dependence on external sources for everything especially essential products
 - o Locals must develop an independent Disaster Response Plan that is owned and implemented by them
 - o Establish alternate utilities and essential services as backups to sustain any further natural disasters.
 - o Develop alternate affordable public educational systems that service all of the island students i.e. online schooling with scheduled interactive days where required(labs).

← [Reply](#)

○



[Don Skerik \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/890501\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/890501)

Apr 1, 2019

⋮

Reading Michael Lewis's book "Navigating System Transition in a Volatile Century and Polanyi's The Great Transformation has created many questions about what a new system may look like and how we might get there.

From Polanyi we learn how societal structures changed from feudal days with the Enclosures Laws which led the way to the early Industrial Revolution and how they have continued to evolve to the present day.

Understanding how the early economies were enmeshed in Society may be a key to how we transition to a new economy. As Karl Polanyi described in his book, life in feudal days was based on trust in neighbours. A person did not act in his self-interest, rather they acted to safeguard their social standing, social claims, and social assets. Other early economies were based on reciprocity

and redistribution. As we now know early economies were not Capitalistic but were more communistic.

The major change in social structures that led to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution was the passing of the Enclosure Laws. This was not a “Just Transition Society”, but a revolution of the rich against the poor. All the existing social structures were torn apart. Human Beings have reduced to just another “cog in the wheel” since the advent of the Industrial Revolution. And we are told we must act in our self-interest. The self-regulating market we are told will “raise all boats”, but as we know the market has commodified the Human Being and is destroying the natural environment.

The questions become do we transition to a new economy based our self-interest or do we first create the social structures where we don't act in our own self-interest? Or do we need to both at the same time?

The world has many different social structures which should be taken into consideration. How do we incorporate the Chinese, Russian, African, etc. countries into a new economy?

Is it possible to create a universal economy?

Is the transition to a new economy only for the Western world?

How many transitions do we need?

How do we incorporate other societies into a new economy?

Sorry to raise so many questions but it seems I have more questions than answers at this time. I hope we can get the answers to some of the questions from this course.

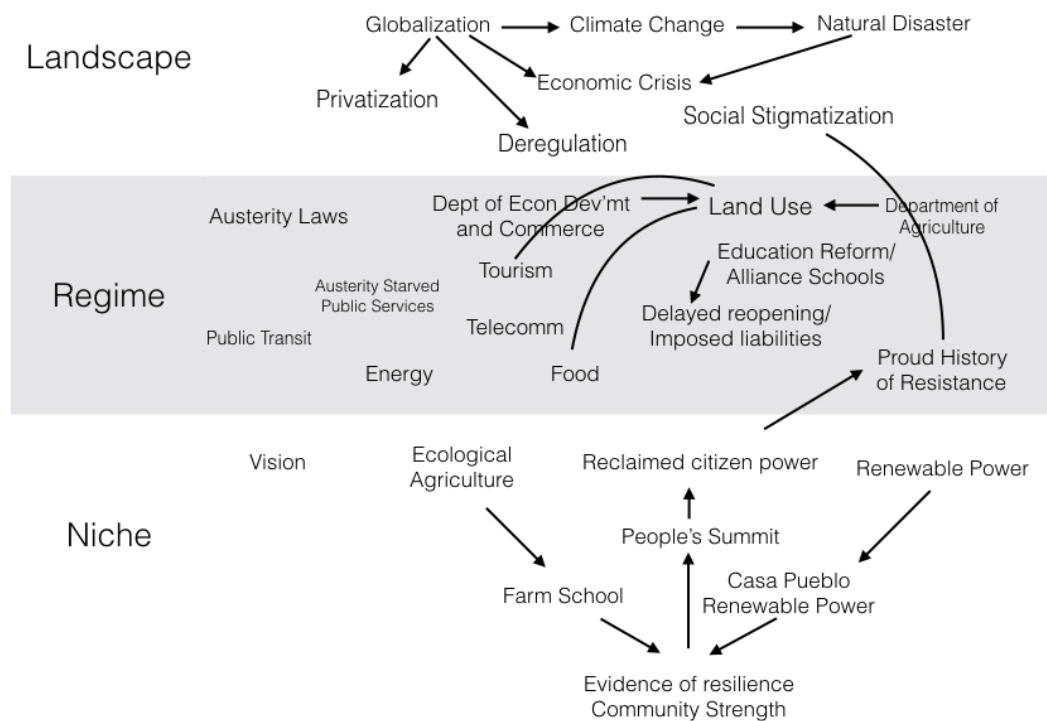
[← Reply](#)



[Sarah Heynen \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900717\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900717)

Apr 2, 2019

I was inspired by Inka's format (thank you Inka!).



Ideas for increasing political effectiveness/creating base for advocating change:

- Beyond meeting basic needs and apparent resilience in the face of disruption, I'm moved by the power of decentralized, community-based efforts to engender increasing and deepened pride, social bonds and mental health.
- As the sobering implications of the converging crises become ever more apparent, with denial shifting to despair, I wonder if an important window opens where the clear strength of alternative models can offer relief to fragile psyches of those in the failing power structures as they become alert to case for change.
- I see increasing value for those in field of mental health for research and activism in this area.

[← Reply](#)



[Girma Amare Wolana](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895461)
[/2527/users/895461](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895461)

Apr 2, 2019

After looking at the video: Trouble in Paradise, I recalled my village Sire, 80 km from Addis Ababa (the capital city of Ethiopia). The village was surrounded by namouras mountains with a number of

rivers flowing the whole year. On top of the mountains there was dense forest in which different species of wild animals in it. Because of the forest around the village, life was beautiful for human beings and other living animals as they were getting enough food and water which was organic and healthy. The community living in the village had strong culture and norm in common to protect the forest and take care of the gift from nature for the sake of the next generation. In general Oromos in Ethiopia have unlimited respect for nature, that is why they put Oda-tree on their flags.

But after the fall of Derge Regime (socialism) in Ethiopia, the EPRDF government came with market driven economy (capitalism) and most of public business and resources were privatized and as a result different woodwork companies established around the Sire Village and unfair middlemen propagated and cheated farmers to cut and sell big trees in the forest to those companies. After some years every individuals/Farmers enter in to competition to cut the trees and get enough sells without realizing the long term effect. After 10 years all the forest had gone and the factories involved in the wood work moved to other places. The village still didn't realize the impact, nor the government had created awareness and continue farming the deforested land.

After some years the soils has gone through erosion, degradation of land and deprivation soil resulted in the shortage of food security. It is lately the most trouble event had happened, all the rivers which had been flowing all the years has dried and shortage of water has encountered the community. After they lost all they have, the beautiful nature, the paradise, they are regretting and complaining the government.

Now I think there are thousands of possible solution to solve these problems for this village community. I am working in cooperative bank of Oromia, and I think we can organize these farmers through forestry cooperatives, implementing solar energy alternatives to reforest the mountain in collaboration with different stakeholders letting them to have access to finance through our bank.

From now on the Darwin's "Survival of the fittest" no more works, engaging, sharing and collaborating is the remedy for the trouble of our mother-planet earth

↳ [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)



Apr 3, 2019

A tragic account Girma, that really illustrates so accurately on a local level what is happening globally. Corruption of governance: corruption of Gaia. Your last sentence is wise and inspiring: "From now on the Darwin's "Survival of the fittest" no more works, engaging, sharing and collaborating is the remedy for the trouble of our mother-planet earth."

↳ [Reply](#)



[John Alexander Harrington \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902887\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902887)



Apr 3, 2019

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← [Reply](#)



[John Alexander Harrington](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902887>

Apr 4, 2019

It would be useful to know if there was any problem in reading my post which was not in word but in Office Libre. I found I could not cut and paste as recommended in Mike Gismondi's notes. John H.

← [Reply](#)



[Anthony Christie](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860>)

[/courses/2527/users/843860](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

Apr 4, 2019

Regime: Not sure what their relationship is to mainland U.S. but it sounds as if the Chicago Boys have been in town with their Structural Adjustment magic.. There was talk of public services being damaged by ongoing austerity. The politicians did not defend their public services but talked of cost effectiveness and efficiency—a chilling phrase; we have heard this a lot here in the UK and it points to a warm up to privatisation.

There had also been a rapid urbanisation in the recent past linked to the use of the land for agri-business and now 80% of their food is imported. Many of the urban poor had lost their links to the land it would appear and presumably land owning patterns had been much altered in favour of large land owners. Not sure if this is a “regime” factor but I would also identify a sense of cohesion amongst the population and this supports some responses to the crisis. This cohesion is a crucial factor. Is it cultural/societal/religion based. Where does it fit?

Landscape. World Bank standard development models have been applied as in so much of the world, to an agricultural land based society. The neo-liberal free market philosophy was clearly in full flood with a “belief” that tourism and all its features, hotels and golf courses and so on would somehow deliver the social goods that the society needed.

The hurricane had perhaps as an external factor also convinced many people of the need for a common response to the effects of climate change.

The international investment community was also in evidence with its need for big returns with little interest in patient capital of the kind that can support community based development. Having said that, we did not find out where the capital had come from for that amazing solar powered hub and that would have been useful information. Are the “ethical” funders such as Equal Exchange or Root Capital there? If so they would be an interesting addition to the “landscape”.

Niche. The factors resisting and innovation in response to the crisis were many and various and certainly with the solar energy project had scale. Seeing the fate

of the school sector and the dilapidated schools and the modest attempts to do something about it with no support from those with the responsibility for education was moving and sad. A real failure of politics and the glip talk of Alliance Schools. Intetesting how the the private sector knows about "branding" dressing up the change to appease. We have a planning application locally for an incinerator being branded as an "alternative energy producing scheme".

Food production was also at an interesting innovative stage with a renewed awareness of the true value of land and its role in food production. There are now high level reports from U.N. and others that champion the value of small scale agriculture but this is recent and the prevailing othodoxy is that agri-business is the only kind of agriculture deserving of investment.

Finally a eerily familiar factor that has no place that I can see in the Theory. Believers in the market have sharp suits and those working for community based change dress casually. By their suits you shall know them..

=====

JOhn's post

↩ [Reply](#)



[Terry Sterrenberg](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/900513>

Apr 3, 2019

What a tragedy. Thank you for posting this. The greatest sadness is that this is not an isolated event. It is the story of of how capitalism (profit over people) is destroying the planet.

↩ [Reply](#)



[Rachel Lachance \(https://learn.canvas.net](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897551)

[/courses/2527/users/897551\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897551)

Apr 3, 2019

1.

Landscape - "Who is Puerto Rico for? Puerto Ricans or outside investors and tourists?"

- existing economic crisis
- looming privatization
- mass poverty

Regime

- Colony of USA, but not treated as Americans
- Rise of Neoliberalism resulting in major wealth gap
- Political system which pushes through unpopular agenda
- Real estate market - Disaster Capitalism

Niche - "A people's recovery"

- Casa Pueblo (early solar adopters, energy oasis post hurricane)
- Gathering (People's summit against disaster capitalism)
- Activist groups against privatizing education
- Small ecological farm operations in partnership with schools (intergenerational knowledge exchange)

2. Puerto Rican's are already coming together to stop privatization and opposing disaster capitalism. If they used this momentum to establish cooperatives in each community, they could build people owned public services like Greece and Italy did (mentioned in this module and in discussions) they could drastically turn the tide and move away from private corporate owned services. This might mean protesting government actions, sourcing non-government funding and recruiting experts in mass co-op movements as well as launching social media campaigns to educate and empower local people to come together and demand change.

"Transition is a long-term process of increasing local and regional self-reliance and resilience"

This could happen through investments in renewable energy and in small biodynamic, ecological farms.

← [Reply](#)



[Stuart Wulff \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/553313)

Apr 3, 2019

What a truly amazing group and process this is already turning into. I feel blessed to be a part of this. Sometimes I wish the rest of my life and responsibilities could disappear for a few weeks so I could just take up residency!

← [Reply](#)



[Erinanne Harper \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897314\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897314)

Apr 3, 2019

Landscape:

- Neoliberal pressure from US Gov't to capitalize Puerto Rico
- Development agenda to modernize and reduce rural communities' self reliance began in 1940's
- Expansionist and colonialist agenda to expand and take over land and economy from local people
- Hurricane created moment of suspended expectations and chaos which made the people vulnerable to being taken advantage of by those with money and agendas to privatize and capitalize on rebuilding infrastructure

Regime:

- Puerto Rico already in a state of austerity and severe economic crisis
- Privatization was already on the Government mandate for energy and education
- Scarcity of land not supported by Gov't public access or ownership initiatives
- Corporations already had a strong hold on land and in the fabric of political life which allowed easier access to take advantage of the storm damage and increase their holdings and investment.

Niche

- Casa Pueblo initiated self reliance resilient energy systems well before storm as well as community outreach to weave in tightly to the local fabric of community (they were the community).
- Farm School and regenerative agriculture farms saw the benefit of their biodiversity and were able to keep feeding themselves and others immediately after the storm

The documentary showed some great examples of how people were coming together to create local renewable energy and distribute to the population as well as demonstrate and teach about renewable agriculture. Also the peoples summit was an important step in creating solidarity in the larger community of CED actors. There were proactive programs acting to up skill people and take measures into their own hands as well as hurdles from the gov't or authorities towards doing so as in the school rebuilding. I saw people cheerleading the movement and supporting each other to stay in the struggle, to be creative, to work from a place of compassion and integrity.

I hope there are some progressives working strategically in political realms to lobby and shift the lack of support for the real peoples movement and desire for self resilience and to gain positions in the energy, education, health an other sectors that could have influence on decisions and current support for investment through communalization rather than privatization. In addition there must also be radicals who are willing to break open the gates at the school and fix the roof themselves regardless of the decrees otherwise in order to engage the reality of what the people who use the schools desire.

[← Reply](#)



[Barbara S Balch \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903742\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903742)

Apr 4, 2019

Slide with MLP view of Maria/Puerto Rico attached.

[coopcommonsreflectionexercisemodule1mariafinal.odp \(https://learn.canvas.net/files/873433/download?download_frd=1&verifier=yEsczBmDxfYdRHrzBNvtlglW8IZ14U3oLAR7fy\)](https://learn.canvas.net/files/873433/download?download_frd=1&verifier=yEsczBmDxfYdRHrzBNvtlglW8IZ14U3oLAR7fy)

← Reply



[Anthony Christie \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860)

Apr 4, 2019

Puerto Rico Pre/Post Hurricane Maria

Landscape	Before Maria Regime	Niche
Climate Change: More frequent/severe storms	Vulnerable infrastructure	“People’s Revolution”
Tension: hotels vs homes	Isolation/dependency	Casa Pueblo
1948 US Anti-Poverty initiatives	Rural life degraded	Community collaborati
Austerity measures	80% of food imported	Decentralized farming
6 Months after Maria		
Entire island reeling after profound collective trauma		
“Too little/too late” US aid	Populace focused almost entirely on SURVIVAL	Casa Pueblo “Solar Oas
Disaster profiteering: Isla Verde	Systems destroyed: food/water energy, education, transport, health	Small farms producing
Exploitation of depressed market: Rampant appropriation	Monoculture (coffee, sugar) wiped out	Dalma Cartegena farm/
Privatization of systems	Pride in resistance harmed by extremity of circumstance	“Peoples Recover
Schools closed, repairs very slow	Volunteerism: food, water, schools	People with deep wisdom: Can collectively create Food, educationf health Systems
“Alliance” schools proposed		

Interesting to note that there is much crossover niche to regime as the small island gathers its resources for recovery. The pressures for profiteering are extreme; one hopes the power of local knowledge-- and the sunshine-- may lead to a true “Peoples Recovery”.

Barbara's slide

← Reply



[Barbara S Balch \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903742\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903742)

Apr 4, 2019

In the aftermath of a disaster, particularly one so profound, the near totality of systems disruption may potentially encourage collaborative experimentation. While the juggernaut soil-depleting monoculture coffee and sugar industries were essentially wiped out, the small, local, and diversified farms were able to bring food to market the day after the hurricane. Naomi Klein is quick to point out that while small undertakings like the Casa Pueblo solar project and Dalma Cartagena's farm school are but "oases" in a vast landscape of destruction, the possibility that these discrete micro-enterprises might federate and --because they are based so directly on the strengths of the people and their respect for and skill at working/living on the land-- create intriguing paths for change. The pressures that, in part, left Puerto Rico so vulnerable before the storm: looming privatization, competition with outsider profiteers for precious lands, external (US) intervention moving rural people to 'cement houses' based on an ignorant apprehension of 'poverty' in a farm-based culture --persist, and threaten to overwhelm seminal restorative, regenerative projects in post-disaster Puerto Rico. Yet groups of people, while grappling with the day to day challenge to survive, gathered to resist the establishment of the "alliance" (privatized) schools, and protect their vision of appropriate education for their children. Their voices loud and clear enough to echo through Governor Ricardo Rossello's assertion that "education is not business."

← [Reply](#)



[Kristi Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890)

⋮

Apr 5, 2019

What I am struck by in this particular issue is the total polarity of the people vs the profiteers. I am so deeply disgusted by the rush of the post-flood sharks, and so completely inspired by the examples of locals making positive impacts with their solar, gardening and farming projects. Of course infrastructure is necessary, but not to serve the takers. To serve the people who actually work and live and thrive there. I'm no expert, but from the ground up is what makes sense, in a way that provides basic needs without stripping the land of it's natural health and wealth. "Promoting resilience", says the solar guy. Yes. That.

← [Reply](#)



[Stephanie Hartline \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906461\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906461)

⋮

Apr 5, 2019

Question 1:

* Regime- Government, corporations, and investors taking advantage of Puerto Rico's citizens by privatization of public services and land.

* Niche- Post hurricane, citizens of Puerto Rico were given a chance to remember their profound ability to replace their shattered infrastructure by how it generates energy, feeds itself, teaches its children, and heals its sick. "A peoples recovery". Solar power is becoming their sole energy source for the community, and they are embracing the transition to clean renewable energy. "We are not waiting on the government".

* Landscape- Due to the public awareness of solutions against privatization and organizations growing in Puerto Rico, the citizens are motivating themselves to halt the reliance of fossil fuels and tourism as a means of revenue and survival.

Question 2:

I feel the initial issue is the lack of connection between neighbors and politics. I believe after a disaster strike your back yard, you are more dependent on you neighbors for support on multiple levels. However, after the dust settles then the conversation dies out and individuals tend to forget about each other once again. Respectfully, I feel is not that people fear their voices won't be heard, its they fear they will be forgotten once heard. I believe if a movement so vast is going to sustain itself and continue to help generations and beyond, there must be constant connection and source of communication on the subject. This source needs to come from the schools, from the farms, from the business owners, and from the governing sector.

[← Reply](#)

○



[Ulviyya Bahramova](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/708888>

Apr 6, 2019

[← Reply](#)

○



[Stephen McLuckie](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896934>

Apr 7, 2019

1. Landscape:

- Anthropogenic Climate Change and its impacts - Increasing severe weather events.
- The Neoliberal economic model spread of the last four decades and the accompanying burgeoning inequality.
- The 130-year-old colonial relationship with a U.S. government that has always discounted the lives of Puerto Rico's black and brown people. A history of exploitation, cultural oppression,

abuse and extractive economic experimentation

Regime:

- Ubiquitous Fossil Fuel Infrastructure - 98 percent of Puerto Rico's electricity comes from fossil fuels.
- No domestic supply of oil, gas, or coal, all imported by ship.
- Centralised Power Grid
- Industrialised agriculture - Large areas of mono-crops grown for export & profit or testing purposes
- Strong corporate agricultural lobbies
- Reliance on imported food. Roughly 85 percent of the food Puerto Ricans actually eat is imported
- The dubious debts that have been used as justification to impose austerity.
- Post 2008 Financial Crisis Austerity Measures - Deregulation - Privatisation - A public sphere bled & hollowed for decades - corruption and cronyism
- An inadequate relief effort and an administration content to see many poorer people leave the Island as a prelude to a land grab.
- An administration opportunistically unleashing Disaster Capitalism tactics after the storm upon a despairing and distracted populace.
- Advantaging high net worth individuals through tax avoidance.
- The dictates handed down by the unelected Financial Oversight and Management Board.

Niche:

- Casa Pueblo, a community and ecology centre with 20 year roots in Adjuntas.
- Grassroots, self organised relief efforts following Hurricane Maria - With few resources, communities set up communal kitchens, raised large sums of money, coordinated and distributed supplies, cleared streets, and rebuilt schools.
- Massive crowds of people protesting open-pit mining (a pitched battle Casa Pueblo helped win)
- Spreading the potential of alternatives - "the gospel of renewables, in the weeks after the storm, Casa Pueblo handed out 14,000 solar lanterns".
- #50ConSol, a campaign calling for 50 percent of Puerto Rico's power to come from the sun.
- Coquí Solar - Community based campaign to advance solar power and keep the profits and jobs in the local community.
- Agro-ecological farming at Segunda Unidad Botijas 1 farm school
- Organización Boricuá, a network of farmers who use these traditional Puerto Rican methods
- Citizens Front for the Audit of the Debt - Growing Popular movement prior to the storm
- Activism by parents and teachers opening up the doors to local schools.
- The PAREs broad spectrum collective gathering of change-makers.

2.

A sad tale laced with wee nuggets of hope for a transformed future. What's really heartening is the galvanising effect the demonstrable success the food and energy oases of vitality/resilience such as Casa Pueblo seemed to be having on people in the aftermath of Maria. The growing realisation of the hitherto largely latent potential of community and the possibilities of local decentralised solutions. The challenge will be maintaining the momentum beyond the initial reaction to the event to bring about meaningful system change. Love the potential of the PAREs gathering, An Island wide open space technology summit to spread, share and grow the ideas and initiatives to

accelerate the conditions towards wider system change and local sovereignty. The key to success is clearly in more of this and ratcheting up the connection and cross pollination between the diverse change-makers across Puerto Rico. Great that they are not starting from scratch but building upon generations of resistance to power. In terms of mind set shift away from the atomising straitjacket of neoliberal capitalism among the general population it was encouraging to see the "people who seem to be doing the best are those who are helping others , those who are involved in community efforts." An antidote to disconnection and despair was to be found in coming together with others. This kind of positivity is infectious. We are ultimately social beings and imitators and what better way to replace the bleak, narrow and self serving vision of the capitalist model than with more of a "tale of joy" that highlights our holistic, co-operative and creative natures.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Kevin Murphy \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897206\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897206)

Apr 8, 2019

MLP Analysis of Naomi Klein Video

Landscape: Hurricane Maria

To a degree the austerity that is already in play

Community initiatives already in play (e.g. Casa Puebla)

Wind, solar, biomass already available in Puerto Rico

Regime: Government, Corporations, Investors

Privatisation and austerity policies

Disaster Capitalism - pre-Maria and post-Maria.

So storm and disaster capitalism are coming on the back of austerity already in play threatening public services

The beach front real estate is both at significant risk from the storm and the place where most opportunity lies for those that would seek to take advantage of the situation - as it will reduce prices significantly

Gives government, corporations and investors perfect cover for pushing through damaging changes (e.g. privatisation of public services)

Breakdown rural life seen as the solution to poverty

Food insecurity and single crop farming

Resilience and ability to bounce back less evident....although possibly part of the plan to let existing public services dwindle

Driving people apart, atomising them

Niche: Own ideas for reimagining its social systems and recovery processes after the Storm

Casa Puebla (Energy oasis via solar - from the company - helping people unplug from fossil fuel.

Idea that an alternative life is possible

Farm school - sustainable practices that can feed people

Opportunity of the storm is to make these solutions more visible

Inspiration important - to give people hope to continue

Bringing people together - common purpose and common good

Some thoughts on how people/initiatives/movements can increase their political effectiveness and create a base for advocating change

- o Resistance may be necessary but how useful is it as a stance.....resistance is bound to meet with more resistance and there is a risk of entrenching positions.....how can we influence more effectively?
- o Perhaps we can we shift culture more effectively by creating the space for diverse initiatives to come together, to offer support, learning and inspiration to each other. Understanding that we are not alone and that we can be part of something bigger seems to help.
- o There is a network infrastructure that is essential to creating more influence and opening out the potential for long-term change. So lots of smaller initiatives linking and together developing some shared assets and resources that can not only support individual initiatives but create more visibility and influence for alternative movements as a whole. This has to be intentionally created and needs to be a dedicated role for an organisation - one dedicated to supporting collaborative working
- o Examples of approaches working on the ground - offering inspiration and hope that can be translated into action - Highlighting the parts of the Landscape that are already evidencing the change we would like to see
- o Virtual networks as well as offline/live networks
- o Working in partnership where possible with the Regime - find the people within the status quo system who have the leverage to make change and can see the value of what we are doing

← [Reply](#)

o



[Stuart Boothman \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899891\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899891)

Apr 8, 2019

⋮

1. 1. Regime

Before and after Maria, there were two regimes. The political and economic regime characterised by the US controlled government, controlled the vast majority of the economy. A third sector economy working with the poor and marginalised was present in the economy, possibly discounted by the economic elites and political controllers.

After Maria, both regimes were aware of the opportunity created by the devastation.

The elite regime moved in entirely predictable ways to privatise the public realm (witnessed through energy and education, but several other services mentioned); but also to encourage new development to satisfy the desires of this elite economy. This is witnessed through the property and hotel business section.

The third sector initiated their responses to meet immediate need, but quickly scaled up as some actors in this regime had anticipated the elite response. This allowed them to bring support to their regime from the population as basic needs were met.

2. Niche

Within each economic sector, the tension between the elite regime and the third sector regime is clear, even though the two regimes exist in nearly parallel worlds. Whilst there is opportunity for the third sector movements to tighten their grip on each sector, they are still on the margins and a third risk of being dispossessed.

3. Landscape

The political landscape is challenging for those resisting the disaster capitalism, and is likely to become more challenging over time. This is because as the elite regime grows in confidence and accelerates its dominance, they will use the powers of the state to forcibly disposes the people of their third sector landscape. There will be acts of resistance, but it is too early to predict whether the third sector regimes can gain sufficient power to resist effectively.

part 2. What do the actors need to do.

- link each niche into an umbrella group, creating a regime structure to avoid being isolated by divide and rule
- create effective communications, so that each niche and each community can call on each other's resources to resist effectively.
- develop programmes to build resilience - the struggle will be tough.
- pull in support internationally to lobby on their behalf and multiply their economic leverage.

[← Reply](#)



[Shazib Naveed \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/464318\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/464318)

Apr 10, 2019



[← Reply](#)

Brad Smith (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/907655>)

Apr 10, 2019

I started this course late and this is my first active form of participation, so I hope this place is what is meant by the "designated discussion forum." I have little available time right now and so have not read the other contributions yet. I imagine everyone else is already on to the next module and will not see this.

Part 1. Obvious double movement: neoliberal elites exploiting every weakness in the social/political /economic/ecological systems that they have created in order to take more for themselves at the expense of everyone/everything else. At the same time, the commoners, while reeling from multi-level devastation, are depending upon each other for survival, thus building solidarity and mutual strength in practical and productive ways.

Part 2:

- A simple compelling common story is needed that will bring together progressive forces that are, at least in my neck of the woods, commonly narrow-focused and fragmented from one another at best, in competition with one another at less than best, and openly in opposition to one another at worst. The story I have been developing is called *We're All in this Together*. Tried to get the link to my Op-Ed of that name in our local weekly but it seems to have been lost in their new website design. It was inspired by Monbiot's *Out of the Wreckage*.
- A radically human-scale, face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder, just and inclusive, low-carbon, and ecologically regenerative way of life must form the moral of the story.
- Plenty of vigorous healthy disagreement and dialogue, on the other hand, is necessary to remediate or improve upon ineffective, half-baked, or counter-productive beliefs and methods.
- This story must provide a framework upon which commoners can situate and coordinate their diverse perspectives and roles in order to work together for the common good.
- Ongoing places and forums must be established where commoners can get to know one another, learn from one another, develop trust, collaborate for the common good, and build collective wisdom and strength.
- Organizers must develop skills in community engagement, hosting, facilitation, transformative processes, coopreneurial (yup, made it up) organization and movement building, and multi-stakeholder governance, just for starters.
- Diverse prototype cooperative social and economic experiments need to be launched from which to learn what works and what does not and build upon both types of learning.
- A new ecosystem of community enterprises and support services must be cultivated to enable, protect, and grow delicate new ventures.
- Existing economic entities and processes must be converted into more just and sustainable forms.
- Existing political entities and processes must be transformed into more just and sustainable forms.
- Etc.

← Reply



Anthony Christie (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/843860>)

Apr 10, 2019

Not everyone's moved on, Brad, I find myself coming back to these discussions whenever there's a new post. Welcome.

I like your reflections and prescriptions very much and would only suggest adding to your "coopreneurial" idea, which sounds very modern, some balance of "coophistoricism" (ya, I'm a coiner too). One thread in the course's "weave" of conversation seems to be around questions of how-much/what-kind of "new" thinking/understanding/acting vs. which, if any, long established traditions of resistance/renewal (Co-operatism, Socialism, Anarchism, etc., in all their many flavours) will be helpful as this century's history continues to so rapidly reveal itself.

← Reply



Brad Smith (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/907655>)

Apr 11, 2019

Thank you, Anthony,

I am actually coming from where you suggest, which is why I am here. I try to study and learn about what has worked that we can build upon, adapt, and combine rather than fabricate theoretical schemes, which like all human endeavors are subject to the law of unintended consequences.

For example, I recently ordered John Curl's historical book along with John Restakis's book before I knew about this course. My favorite relevant book is Michael Lewis's and Pat Conaty's book, for which I had hoped to create a study/action circle. This course is even better, but getting people to study a book or take a course together in the bubble in which I live is not something I have been able to pull off just yet. At least two of us are doing this course, however, the person who told me about it and me.

That all said, at the end of the day, it all comes together in an incomplete model of reality from which my experiments emerge. Fortunately those experiments are finally starting to bear fruit.

← Reply



Jenni Huttunen (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/909276>)

Apr 10, 2019

① niche	regime	landscape
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casa Pueblo for sustainable dev. • solar energy off grid • school farms • demo for public schools • peoples senate • meta-level initiative • collective support (grass-roots) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • privatization ^{public services} • deregulation • auxiliary laws • making changes for profit private sector • privatization of vital infra to • monoculture farming • dependence of foreign import • 'alliance schools' • allow global actors to acquire land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> disasters Maria & Irma • economic 'down' crises before & • capital investors interest in catas sites • people people + s • acquire land for tourism & invest

② mentioning few actions for resilience & resistance

- niche practices adopted to other ^{In Puerto Rico} places and adapt
- collective support structures for sustenance farming
- 'eco tourism' pueblo-way, part-time entrepreneurship etc
- leveraging ^{keep} ~~the~~ el rol & educating motivating people on resilience
- basic infra like water could be locally ^{commons} cooperated but you need an positive experiment for coverage to show

← Reply



Ira Mollay (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/910303>)

Apr 14, 2019



Question 1

Landscape

- very low standards of living for big parts of the population (no electricity, ...)
- Biggest disaster has hit Puerto Rico at the time when it was suffering a major economic crisis
- Capitalism does not stop when it comes to disasters: Elites use disasters to push their political agenda through, at the expense of the local population
- Infrastructure has suffered great damage from the hurricane at all levels
- Puerto Rico as US territory comes with expectations: agricultural production (coffee, sugar) should be consumed by and benefit the US
- high import dependency for food

Regime

- pushing through conventional agricultural practices that are not resilient towards climate change
- putting in place laws that would otherwise not be acceptable
- shutting down public services after the disaster and privatize them (electricity system, schools, public transport) by selling them off at a very low price
- disrupts communities and cutting them off from social, educational and other resources by not reopening schools
- Prohibiting locals to take action (rebuilding schools, ...) for alleged insurance reasons
- appropriation of land and real estate for elitist purposes (office towers, hotels, golf courses, mansions) might lead to a shortage of land for food and energy production
- announcing state of exception, shutting out people and taking away their rights, and implementing very unpopular measures
- top priority (even during/after disaster): reaction of markets (e.g. real estate), market value of assets
- changes are framed as a . transition to 21st century standard and as opportunities for innovation, efficiency and modernization, all coming to people at a lower cost

Niche

- Casa Pueblo: community-based organization, committed to sustainable development and solar energy. Could still provide energy after hurricane: energy oasis, distributed more than 10,000 solar lamps . Want to help people unplug from fossil grid.
- Ecological farm school
- People's Summit against disaster capitalism: building on experiences of strong resistance (independence, anti-austerity and anti-debt movement): focus on what makes people happy instead of profit. Prospect of network of organizations based on food, energy regeneration,

Question 2

- strengthen community

- organize at local, regional and national level in inclusive and democratic forms
- form solidarity organizations that mutually help members to master the consequences of the disaster and take burdens from the individual to a more collective level.
- raise a strong voice towards authorities and call out practices and examples of disaster capitalism
- challenge authorities and hold them accountable by confronting them with facts, previous experiences and with solutions and positive visions already available
- be creative to get heard and seen: social media, joyful forms of resistance that others want to become part of, always connected to a constructive and positive vision.
- build bridges towards players on the other side: not all of them are evil, some of them just do not get the bigger picture but might be open up if shown that people have their own ideas and are capable of organizing and rebuilding if allowed to do so.

← [Reply](#)



[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses>

[/2527/users/901554](#)

Apr 14, 2019

Reflecting upon the content of this module in its entirety, it is obvious that the piece on Klein incorporates the main ideas presented. It illustrates that the chief weakness of the neoliberal capitalistic philosophy is that it does not work for the "common folk," as it keeps them in poverty. The fact that much of the island has been turned into money-making enterprises that benefit the wealthy and the corporations that run the tourism business and the agriculture of the island. The agricultural land has mainly been transformed into monocultures of products that get exported elsewhere. Secondly there is the response to a crisis such as a hurricane, where monocultures are unsustainable, leaving the population with nothing to eat, plus what is called "disaster capitalism" descending full-force upon the island, creating the chaos necessary for the corporations to move in and privatize the power supply, and the land itself. In neoliberalism, the government is working for the economy in the form of corporations, rather than for the people.

The video demonstrates the responses of the common folk in the form of sustainable farms, which are based on biodiversity and recover very quickly from natural disasters. They illustrate the need for "commons" where the population can focus on feeding the people on land that is devoted to sustainability and cooperative effort. This is echoed in the education system, where, through activism and resistance, the people are fighting for retaining their schools and educating their children, which the "powers that be" are intent on privatizing, thereby making education unavailable for the poor. The example of schoolchildren working on the ecological farm is a powerful illustration of how important it is for children to experience their relationship to the earth and nature.

What is apparent is the necessity of a System, that not only incorporates grassroots initiatives, but includes a voice on every level, including the power to influence at the political level (MLP) so that overall systems change can occur; in other words, a new paradigm. At the moment, the scenario

is more of a "David and Goliath" situation. What will transpire remains to be seen.

[← Reply](#)



[Gillian Loneragan \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899141\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/899141)



Apr 14, 2019

I can see a mixture of threats and opportunities, overcoming problems and taking advantage of the opportunities would all take good communication and understanding between very disparate parts of the community.

In common with many countries, the population is very divided along economic lines. This will have been worsened by the economic problems facing the country before the natural disaster hit. Everyone was hit by the disaster, but those with the money to have insurance or to be able to repair "bounce back" much more easily than those without money.

There seems to be a general recognition that there are opportunities to improve the infrastructure, including power, public transport and schools, though the methods being looked at are very different.

It would be good if there could be a "stepping back" to look at the infrastructure as a whole to develop a holistic, sustainable approach, which involves all the population. At the moment, the politicians seem to be looking at external investment to improve the infrastructure. This is, in a lot of ways, the easy approach, but is likely to lead to the country being reliant on the continued involvement of the investors and does nothing to involve the majority of the population in the development of their communities, identifying needs and planning for improvements.

Those looking at smaller scale community based systems - like those demonstrated to work by the small farms and the Pink House community centre - seem to be much more involving of the community as a whole. This would seem to me to be a more sustainable, though I do not have the experience to be able to suggest ways of getting people together to talk with each other, to come to a mutual understanding and to develop a plan of action.

[← Reply](#)



[Jacqueline Fletcher \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/757542\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/757542)



Apr 18, 2019

I'd like to make a couple of comments on the article by Michael T Lewis.

1. He claims that interconnectivity must be limited by a modular structure to the system and gives the example of the global financial crash of 2008 to illustrate the dangers of a system too highly interconnected. So, modularity is one of his seven conditions for resilience. However, his model for

a 'system' is mechanical rather than natural. In a natural (eco)system there are functions that support the interconnections in times of stress to ensure resilience: multifunctionality and redundancy. In a system in which there is more functional diversity than strictly required for support, the loss of elements is not a problem as there are other elements to replace those lost.

Ditto multifunctionality; a multifunctional element takes up the strain when a system is stressed due to loss of other elements. These are ways in which natural systems respond (creatively) to feedback loops (and therefore change) rapidly. Modularity is actually a hazard for resilient systems. He mentions 'redundancy' only in terms of institutions.

2. Ecosystem services. Pricing the 'services' provided to humans by the biosphere simply re-enforces the current paradigm in which humans are separate from 'nature'. It creates or maintains the delusion that 'nature' is our resource base and implies that we should use it well, value and protect it, but that isn't enough for human resilience, for health and well-being. As this exercise focuses on Puerto Rico, where indigenous peoples lived integrated within ecosystems until colonialism and slavery disrupted the original paradigm, it is worth pointing out that our present attitudes to 'nature', 'ecosystems' etc are colonial, Western, Christian, mechanical, which is essentially a paradigm based on hierarchies of exploitation and abuse. We cannot dismiss some aspects of this hierarchy and retain the rest. A commonwealth includes the common wealth of all species in the biosphere, i.e. the system. If we have to look at it from the mechanistic paradigm, the reality is that we are (malfunctioning) cogs in the system not the mechanic.

So, the landscape is the entire Western paradigm.

The regime is the paradigm in operation, expanding to absorb more resources into the exploitation and abuse of human and non-human resources and services for profit that trickles (or gushes) upwards.

The niche is the grassroots movement that connects some Puerto Ricans with a past and a future in which they can recognise their integral place in the biosphere and organise to create interconnected and embedded ecosystems, resilient networks of communities, a common wealth of food, shelter, energy, water, on a bioregional scale.

[← Reply](#)



[Rachel Wallace \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887890\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887890)

Apr 27, 2019

1)

Landscape:

Hurricanes/climate disaster

Fertile farmland

Tourism opportunities

Regime:

Privatisation of services, energy, education, transport, infrastructure to modernise, increase efficiency, upgrade; land grab/real estate to secure foreign investment

Niche:

Resilient local communities using local knowledge, 'rooted in happiness'

Agro-ecology, farm schools, off-grid clean energy - solar, wind, water, biomass

2)

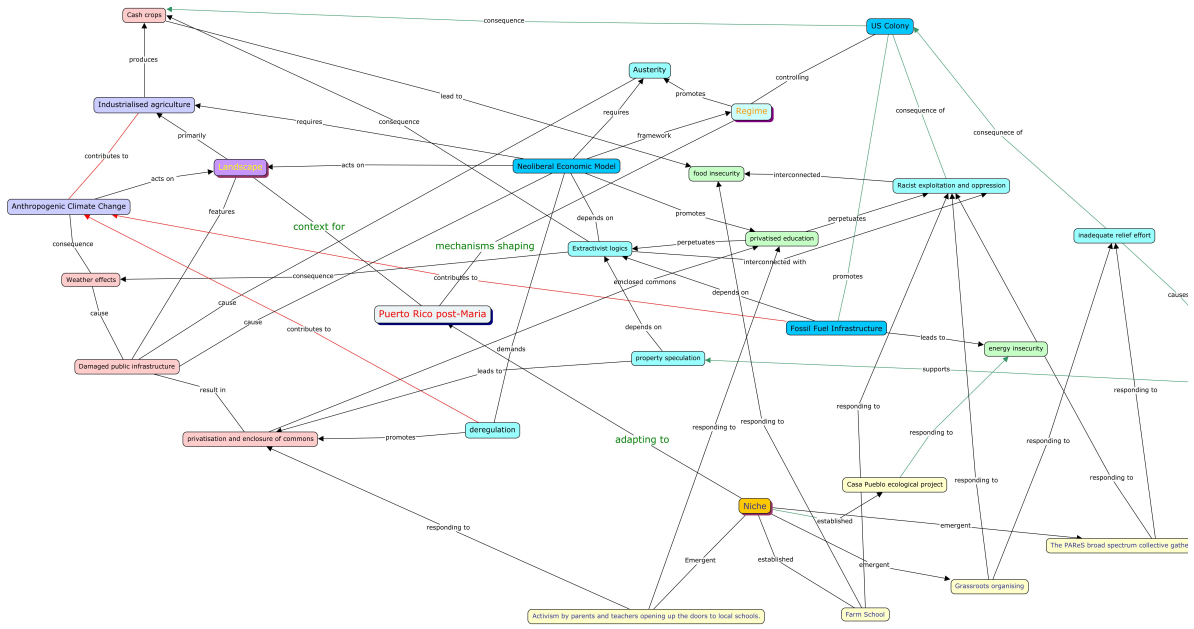
Local networks form part of national, international networks of resilient, local communities.

[← Reply](#)



[Fiona Woods](#) ([https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/898920](#))

May 17, 2019



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[Terri Cormier](#) ([https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/855727](#))

May 21, 2019

The Regime has been shaped by post-colonial control of the US, which was working well enough, Puerto Ricans thought, until Maria exposed their critical survival vulnerability in 24 hours. Until

then, there was neither great need of nor threat from unique niche organizations like Casa Pueblo and its solar panel programs, emerged as the literal light in the dark for Puerto Ricans who had no electricity no hope of same for a long time ahead.

The landscape was changed in that the damage done to Puerto Rico as a result of Maria created total obliteration of pretty much all things necessary for human subsistence except air and land. It presented an opportunity for the vulturistic nature of capitalism to take advantage of systemic weakness and socially engineer Puerto Rico's future outside of the best interests of its residents via corporations and their government-controlled off-shoot organizations.

Maria also presented an opportunity for niche developments to take hold and return some of the power back to the people of Puerto Rico in face of the resistance from the profit-driven actors. Casa Pueblo was long established and perfectly placed to provide the necessary care, co-operation and guidance to the island's people who now understood what they needed to do for themselves into the future.

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Puerto Ricans are firstly beginning to understand that their very lives are at risk daily, and they must work together toward reclaiming their power over their very lives and the systems which run them. Co-operation and communication are imperatives.

What they, and the rest of us need to understand is that what is happening to Puerto Rico is the application of a formula being used all over the globe to capitalize on every possible resource, in spite of the people of the region and their needs.

The people of Puerto Rico, like the rest of us, are up against a very powerful and voracious virus spawned from capitalism and gone global: greed. The power of greed is such that it is insatiable -- must consume by its very nature -- and it never knows 'enough'.

Thus we all will soon be forced to co-operate or at worst, die a long, slow, painful death as a slave to this capitalist consumption machine. It is very well entrenched into our livelihood and has control of our water, food and energy.

People will do well to learn co-operative models and ways and how to communicate in groups because it will be all of it very soon.

Edited by [Terri Cormier \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/855727\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/855727) on May 21 at 4:02pm

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