

ISLAND REACH



2021

Annual Report

Introduction

Welcome to the Island Reach 2021 Annual Report.

We'll keep this introduction short: it was another tough year with the pandemic remaining in full force. Climate disasters, social unrest, and ongoing biodiversity loss compounded and darkened global prospects. Meanwhile, the largest oil and gas companies made record profits as did Big Ag industrial ag, including commodity powerhouse, Cargill Inc, which had its most profitable year in its 156-year history!

Island Reach continues to be devoted to grassroots activism and change, working as ally, consultant, and documentarian, engaging with communities and groups to respond to the climate emergency, biocultural decline, and denaturing economies of scale. Across our many activities in 2021 presented in this report, we are excited to highlight two in this brief introduction:

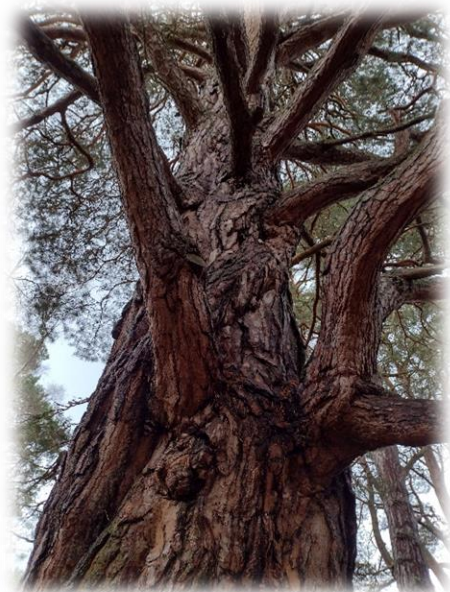
First, this year saw the launch of our collaboration with United Purpose Bangladesh on a year-long co-funded project focused on rural women entrepreneurs and agroecology. This is a dynamic project that extends naturally from our work in Vanuatu on climate adaptation, food sovereignty, and women's leadership as well as our years of farm and market experience in the US.

Second, we attended the climate talks, COP26, in Glasgow, Scotland in November. COP stands for Conference of the Parties and the Parties are the signatories of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty agreed upon in 1994. Here, you will read about IR's collaboration with Pacific Islands Climate Action Network at the conference, our screening of Immuto, as well as some of our impressions and photos of the event.

In addition to these developments, IR had numerous other activities and achievements take place in 2021.

Thanks for your interest and we hope you enjoy this report.

Janis & Brooks



Majestic old tree in Scotland

IMMUTO (Change) continues to reach new audiences

Screened at the People's Summit for Climate Justice at COP26, Glasgow Scotland

We were very excited to have the opportunity to screen *Immuto (Change)* at the People's Summit for Climate Justice COP26 in November at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. The People's Summit for Climate Justice was a stimulating 4 day event that occurred alongside COP26 and featured grassroots workshops, presentations, films, exhibitions and more. Their mission:

While world leaders meet to discuss our future at COP26, we'll be building power for system change together. Bringing together the climate justice movement to discuss, learn and strategise for system change.

We were pleased to be joined for a panel discussion by Immuto interviewee Shirleen Chin as well as by Pacific Climate activist Kato Ewekia with Saving Tuvalu. The event was well attended by an enthusiastic and inquiring audience. Here we are on stage during the post-screening discussion:



Film Festivals

Immuto (Change) was selected for three more film festivals in 2021:

- The International Social Change Film Festival.

As part of this event, Janis and Brooks were invited to join a Q&A with filmmakers focused on Climate Change and Environmental Stability themes:

- The Depth of Field International Film Festival
- Social Machinery Film Festival



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ART-AND-CULTURE

How development and climate change are impacting lifestyles, cultural diversity: Five films that tell the story

As the climate movement demands awareness, several filmmakers have turned to narrative documentaries to tell these stories, following an individual or community through their journey of tackling the climate crisis.

Aarushi Agrawal | June 05, 2021 09:41:55 IST



As the climate movement demands awareness, several filmmakers have turned to narrative documentaries to tell these stories, following an individual or community through their journey of tackling the climate crisis. "In the system we are living in in the western world, the connection with nature has been broken," says Aner Etxebarria, co-director of

An interview with Janis and the documentary were also the subject of an article appearing in FirstPost, an Indian online news and media website.

You can read the article here:

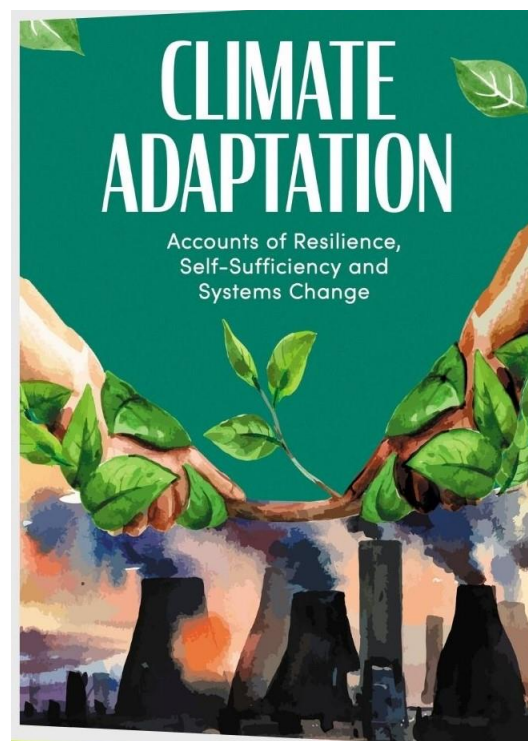
<https://www.firstpost.com/art-and-culture/how-development-and-climate-change-are-impacting-lifestyles-cultural-diversity-five-films-that-tell-the-story-9671221.html>

New Publication

Based on our work in Vanuatu, IR was approached by Arkbound Foundation in the UK to contribute to a book on climate change and activism.

Janis authored a chapter titled *Stories from the Blue Continent: Women Activists, Allies, and Radical Difference*, exploring Pacific women's climate activism. The book, **Climate Adaptation: Accounts of Resilience, Self-Sufficiency and Systems Change** was published in September 2021, ahead of COP26.

As part of promoting the book at Climate Fringe Week in the UK, leading up to COP26, Janis joined a Webinar panel with fellow authors to discuss our contributions.



Collaboration with Pacific Islands Climate Action Network at COP26

Leading up to COP26, we reached out to contacts in the Pacific Region to explore how we could help amplify their voices at the climate conference. In collaboration with Pacific Islands Climate Action Network, we received short video clips of climate activists speaking the top 7 demands they were bringing to the climate talks. IR quickly edited the clips, assembled B roll, and put it all together into a short video which was screened across the Pacific region and at COP26 by Pacific youth leaders. Here's the link at the Pacific Islands CAN Youtube page:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KK4rpeES3Uw>

You can also watch it at the Island Reach website on the videos page or at the IR Youtube channel:

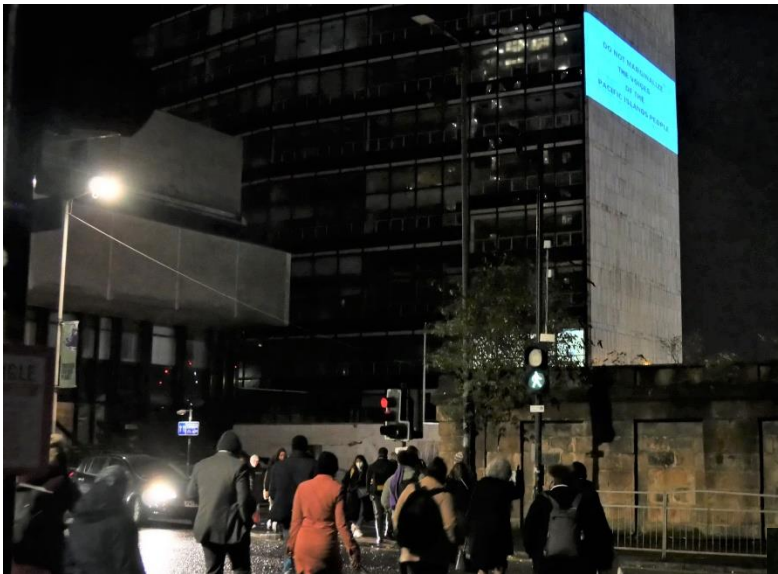
Working at high speed, we also sourced a New York based recording studio to produce a song featuring the demands that was then played on radio stations across the Pacific Islands as part of informing people about actions taking place.

Top Line PACIFIC Demands at COP26

1. **Fossil fuels** are fossils, **keep them in the ground** to save the Pacific! No new coal, oil, or gas projects, and an immediate end to all fossil fuel subsidies, everywhere.
2. Show real commitment, your **NDCs must limit global heating to 1.5 degrees**, we're already out of time in the islands. Sustained, radical, and socially just cuts to emissions are required now, not later.
3. Show us the money! **Mobilize all of the promised US\$100 billion annually** until 2025, and agree that **Polluters must Pay the trillions actually needed** for resilient Pacific peoples and communities.
4. **Loss and Damage is life and death** in the Pacific: Your political will is required now to finance and deliver support to the Pacific people who are already losing everything.
5. **Climate change is a symptom of deeper injustice and inequalities**. Gender justice and women's human rights and empowerment is a precondition for climate, social, economic, ecological, and climate justice
6. **Climate justice will prevail**. Your emissions are already **responsible for the loss of universal human rights, and environmental rights** of Pacific people, communities, and ecosystems. We will see you in courts of law, and in all other forums, to protect and retain our Rights.
7. Global climate negotiations at COP26 must be **inclusive, intersectional, and intergenerational**: Do not dare to marginalize the voices of Pacific Island peoples.

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Still working with PICAN, IR was the on-the-ground team, working with a local projection company, to clandestinely project the video and music on buildings across Glasgow on the night following the major march through the streets of the city.



Out and About at COP

Much was written about COP26 and its politics and impacts. To give a better sense of the event, we turn briefly to the words of **Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner**, poet and climate change activist from the Marshall Islands who received international acclaim for her powerful poetry performance at the opening of the 2014 United Nations Climate Summit in New York (Jetnil-Kijiner, 2014). When she thinks back to attending COP25, held in Madrid, Jetñil-Kijiner had this to say about the experience:

COP is an abusive space for Pacific Islanders. It's an abusive space for people of color, the global south, any disenfranchised so-called 'minority group.' It is a battlefield that requires strategy, an inordinate amount of funding in the case of first world countries, and for our countries in particular, grit.¹

Climate activist Greta Thunberg put her view of the 2021 COP event in fewer words:



COP was tightly policed and regulated to keep high level delegates safe, and also in response to COVID. IR had access to the Green Zone, which is a space for civil society, youth groups, academics, artists, and businesses to host events, exhibitions, performances, workshops, and talks.

Through pictures, we'll share a bit of our experience. In many regards, it was a display of Big Business and business-as-usual.

¹ Jetnil-Kijiner, K. (2021, 01 04). *Remarks for 2020 Pacific Ocean Pacific Climate Change Conference*. Retrieved from Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner: <https://www.kathyjetnilkijiner.com/remarks-for-2020-pacific-ocean-pacific-climate-change-conference/>

Check out this display, inviting people to “join the race against climate change” because “we are now living in a climate crisis.” No doubt, auto-racing will continue to be an essential pastime!



This display by multinational company Unilever presents the “Future of Food” and their commitments to be a “Force for Good in Food.”

“Hydrogen’s Role in a Net Zero Future” according to National Grid.

Hydrogen aside for the moment, Net Zero, the theme of the conference, has been widely criticized by environmental and grassroots groups for its lack of meaningful action, reliance on carbon markets and offset schemes, and using lands and lands in the Global South as carbon sinks.



Small civil society organizations, such as this one working on human rights and the rights of nature, did not get quite the same floor space as the big corporations!

Scenes from the marches



IR visits SNOWCHANGE Cooperative in Finland

Around the time of our trip to COP26 in Scotland, we were excited to make a trip to Finland to visit the Snowchange Cooperative. Snowchange Cooperative networks with indigenous cultures in the circumpolar north and across the globe to protect traditions and culture. They are also a powerful scientific organization working on rewilding and questions of biodiversity and climate change.

We had long admired their work and approach and were eager to meet in person. The dialogue exchange covered topics central to IR's missions and efforts to pursue allyship, activism, and networking for climate adaptation and the forefronting of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

We were hosted by Tero and Kaisu Mustonnen during our stay and had many far-reaching discussions with them about history, knowledge, science, and action. We are extremely grateful to them for their kind welcome.

Among other site visits during our stay, we were able to visit their flagship rewilding site, Linnunsuo, a 110-hectare restored wetland. Home to over 200 species of birds, mammals like wolverine, otter and moose, and occasionally visited by 100,000 geese at a time, Linnunsuo has emerged a national symbol for re-wilding efforts in Finland.



Linnunsuo wetland, May 2017. Janne Raassina / Snowchange

Globally, peatlands cover only three percent of the world's land area, but contain more carbon than the world's entire forest biomass, making them vital ecosystems for carbon sequestration. In fact, peatlands are second only to the ocean for storing global carbon.

In Finland peatlands comprise roughly 30% of the land area. During the 20th century, vast areas of peatlands were drained to increase the land area available for forestry and agriculture, road building, and peat harvesting for energy production. While new draining is more or less halted, existing drains and mining sites pose many hazards. Principally, the watershed of peat ditch networks and mining sites has been found to cause extremely acidic rushes of water to flow into nearby rivers and lakes after rainstorms and snow melts. Snowchange has documented the impacts of this on the landscape, wildlife and livelihoods of local people and has dedicated huge efforts to restoration projects. A visit to their website will introduce you to much of their wonderful work.



Tero Mustonen introducing us to the rewilding site of Linnunsuo



Janis and Tero, overlooking the site



Pulp and paper industry continues its dominance

Tero explaining stream rewilding efforts. Streambanks were straightened in the 20th century by the forestry industry to allow for the passage of logs downstream

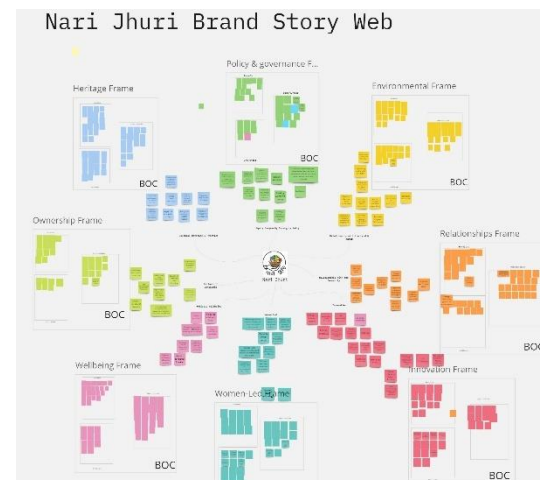


Launch of collaboration with United Purpose Bangladesh

Last, but certainly not least, this year saw the launch of an exciting new collaboration with the nonprofit organization United Purpose Bangladesh (UPB). For over 25 years, UPB has worked across Bangladesh with a commitment to building close partnerships with community stakeholders and leaders to support community designed and led programming to enable people to express agency and move beyond aid. Since 2016, a major component of their work takes place through grassroots enterprise hubs known as Women's Business Centres (WBCs) situated in rural and under-resourced communities. The initiative began with 10 WBCs and today they have helped women entrepreneurs form a network of over 450 women's business centers and sub-centers, reaching a network of approximately 450,000 women producers across more than 10 districts and serving a population of approximately 2.5 million people across Bangladesh. Starting this year, UPB is helping move into place a national-level social enterprise network called "Nari Jhuri" (Bangla for Women's Basket) which is connecting all the Women's Business Centres across Bangladesh as part of realizing a shared vision of safe food, healthy living, and environmental well-being. The focus of our collaboration is to assist in the design of constructing markets for agroecological products and the pursuit of a transition from an industrial to more agroecological food system.

This project is jointly funded by IR and UPB. In addition to our funding support, IR's role over the course of the next year is to design with UPB and the WBCs market strategies for agroecological products which, in turn, support the transition from an industrial to more agroecological food system. In a project concerning markets, the effort will involve careful attention to avoid reducing relationships strictly to the marketplace. Moreover, at different junctures, efforts to reshape markets around local practice and knowledge are always threatened – like agroecology itself -- with capture from industrial food systems based in neoliberal logics that reduce relationships and values to an exchange of services taking place only in the economic market instead of in the larger, more intangible biocultural sphere. This project is trialing innovative approaches and the power of storytelling as a pathway for rural women to move into action, recapturing authority over, and particularities of, their local markets and their wider biocultural contexts.

We began by working virtually with UPB staff to gather institutional knowledge, through informal interviews and then collaboratively using an online design tool from Miro. IR introduced a new model we are calling a Value Web that mimics a spider's web in nature to emphasize the inextricably linked, myriad biocultural qualities and elements at the heart of agroecology. As these Value Webs grow more intricate, they will emerge as the basis for rich stories that are essential for constructing robust agroecological markets. With women as agents of change, this project may bring not only economic advantages to WBCs and communities, but more holistic benefits that lie at the heart of agroecology. Looking ahead, we are excited at the prospects of building this project and traveling to Bangladesh in 2022.



Looking Ahead

As we look to 2022, here are some of our goals:

- Continue our collaboration with UPB and the WBCs including
 - Ongoing development of the Value Web model
 - Travel to Bangladesh
 - Developing an agroecological marketing toolkit for WBCs
- Continue to work on the structure and design of Island Reach as a nonprofit entity through
 - Strengthening and diversifying our board
 - Developing funding strategies
 - Ongoing website design
- Find new outlets for sharing stories through documentary, writing, speaking publicly

A final thought

In their powerful essay, *“Learning, Living and Leading into Transgression – A reflection on decolonial praxis in a neoliberal world,”*ⁱⁱ South African scholars Injairu Kulundu-Bolus, Dylan McGarry and Heila Lotz-Sisitka discuss what it takes to live as transformative and transgressive agents in this neoliberal world and its crisis times. They urgently remind us “to stay courageously fluid and in motion in and through the spaces we find ourselves; to shake loose the discourse in a way that allows us to move out of a tight frame of reference. And to be light and buoyant enough to find the re-generative spaces in between.” Good words with which to close this 2021 Annual Report.