

Tuesday 1st January 2013

Dear all fellow Zeitgeist Movement volunteers,

It is with great sadness that I inform you all that I am leaving the Zeitgeist Movement in its entirety.

I would like to thank all of the hard-working and dedicated volunteers of the Movement for all of your efforts, strength, and support over the years. You are what makes the Movement what it is – philosophically and practically, regardless of the level of your engagement with its structure. The philosophy of the Movement stays with me, and I will continue to walk my talk to the greatest extent possible – with such possibilities increasing each day as we all work for the future our planet deserves.

With the ethos I possess you may wonder why it is that I choose to leave the Movement I once thought would be the vehicle to transition us to a new paradigm of sustainability and inter-and intra-generational equity. I have many answers, and it will take me time to express them all. I will begin with my overall reasoning, followed by some background of my responsibilities and experiences, and then go on to detail some of the flaws I have become aware of that I consider to be irremediable at this stage.

I have come to understand that the Movement is destined for failure if we do not rectify the issues that are causing cracks to appear in our structure and function. I have attempted, on many occasions, and with great persistence, humility, and creativity, to address these issues, and the result, for me, has been harassment and bullying. I have come to understand that in this structural climate there is no avenue for me to effect positive change within the Movement because the problems generate from its founder and foundations, and permeate every facet of the Movement. It is, therefore, time for me to move on and dedicate my time to the cause in a manner separate from the structure of the Movement.

1. Background

I have long been working as an agent of change, to use the buzz-phrase of the moment. Back in my teens and early twenties I was involved in direct action activism (probably the reason I have always wondered why TZM claims to do activism when the actions of volunteers don't seem at all activist to my eyes). I started with animal rights, and went through environmental activism, and became active in the stop the war movement and human rights groups – I have not truly left any of these causes behind although my approach has evolved. One of my bigger projects was co-founding a Food not Bombs collective while I was at university. My first professional job after university was as a coordinator of a national non-profit organization, where I learned the tools and tricks of non-profit management and promoting the cause on a professional level. Ten years have gone by since I left the non-profit world for teaching – a profession I found myself in almost by accident, but have had a decade-long love affair with. I have learnt so much through my interactions with the university of life, along with the universities in which I have taught, and have so many diverse people to thank for my current worldview and passion for sustainability.

I have been a supporter of The Zeitgeist Movement since its inception in 2008. As I was overseas at the time – working in South-East Asia – I did not become an active volunteer within any particular chapter until my return to Australia in 2010. Since I became formally active within the Movement my voluntary responsibilities within the Movement thus far have developed as follows:

1.1 Local:

- Volunteer in the Adelaide and Sydney local chapters – assisting with local awareness-activism, campaigns, organizing events including Z-Day and the media festival, and delivering workshops and presentations.

1.2 National:

- Shared responsibilities for coordination of TZM Australia with my life partner, David Zwolski, including fielding new chapter applications and assisting with development of chapters. Ongoing responsibilities involved support of the Australian local chapters throughout their development.
- Spokesperson for national chapter, delivering presentations at various events and conferences across Australia.
- Project team coordinator for the Australian content-development team – the team responsible for developing content for lectures, presentations, workshops, newsletters, and promotional materials for both our PR front and issue-awareness.
- Editor for *Spirit of the Times* magazine, a magazine established by a team of TZM volunteers (but which is aimed at a broader demographic, hence does not mention TZM) which is now available via several different channels both online and offline.

I have left all of these responsibilities aside from the *Spirit of the Times* magazine, which I will continue to work with as it is gaining traction with a readership outside the Movement – i.e. not just preaching to the choir.

The Australian chapter is currently in the process of deciding its next steps in light of recent events that have threatened the continuation of our four years of hard work and dedication as a team.

1.3 Global:

- **GCA representative for the Asia-Pacific region with David Zwolski** alongside representatives of other regions – Gilbert Ismail, Miguel Oliveira, Nelson Alvarez, Victor Mora (added July/August), and Jorge Forero (added July/August). GCA responsibilities involved fielding new chapter applications and assisting with development of chapters. Ongoing responsibilities involved support of the Asia-Pacific chapters throughout their development.

Asia-Pacific chapters that I have supported in their development since taking on the GCA responsibility are:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- India
- Singapore

Asia-Pacific chapters that I have assisted in their development to become official chapters, and then supported through their ongoing development are:

- Philippines
- Israel
- Kazakhstan
- China
- Malaysia
- Syria

Asia-Pacific chapters currently undergoing development are:

- Japan
- Taiwan
- South Korea
- Lebanon
- Sri Lanka
- Georgia

In addition I have also worked on a series of internal documents for chapter development, including editing the series of protocols released in 2011, and the 2012 Chapters Guide, to which I also contributed a few sections of content. I have taken steps to establish and orient

a replacement for myself in this role so that the pace and quality of development will not suffer.

- **Global Core Team member alongside** the following TZM volunteers:
 - Peter Joseph
 - Gilbert Ismail
 - Jen Wilding (left team google-group considerably before its apparent closure)
 - Jason Lord (left team google-group considerably before its apparent closure)
 - Brandy Hume
 - Cliff Faber (announced his resignation from the team in November)
 - Matt Berkowitz
 - Nelson Alvarez
 - Konrad Sauer (request for his removal from the team came from the Brazilian chapter, but was not carried out)
 - Ben McLeish
 - Tom Williams
 - James Phillips
 - Miguel Oliveira
 - Federico Pistono
 - David Zwolski (announced his resignation from the team in November)
 - Andres Delgado (added by Miguel after formation of the team)
 - Victor Mora (Added to the team recently by Miguel)
 - Jorge Forero (Added to the team recently by Miguel)

The core team exists, or existed – I am no longer sure which is the appropriate term – for the purpose of streamlining and developing the structure and function of the Movement in response to the recognition that we are losing membership and traction.

The google-group for this team no longer exists, as I have heard, although I was not directly informed of its dissolution. I had originally established the google-group myself, although I handed ownership of the group to Peter once I had decided, in November, to leave. I acted on the good faith that I would be allowed to leave the group of my own accord once I had completed my work with the GCA – a point which I communicated to the team at the time. Unfortunately I found the group no longer accessible to me on 09/12/2012.

2. Reasons for my departure from TZM

2.1 Flaws in the pyramid structure

Whilst describing itself publicly as a horizontal and holographic movement, TZM, in reality, operates with a pyramid structure – the structure most commonly used in the corporate world.

The traditional pyramid structure functions with several tiers of power and responsibility, and with the highest tier of power and responsibility inhabited by only one individual. This is a structure that can function effectively in a small organization where the workload is light – if the individual/s toward the upper tiers are highly competent in their work. However, as the organization grows in size and workload it becomes impossible for small numbers of people with a large degree of power and responsibility to complete their work to the same standard as before. Bottlenecks are created, slowing the pace of work, with much completed sub-optimally. Some work is neglected or ignored due to the incapacity to process it through the tight bottleneck.

In TZM we have a pyramid structure where the base of the pyramid has grown to a size that is unmanageable for those in the upper tiers of coordination – even if they were sufficiently competent to manage the workload, which they are not. Instead of reassessing this structure it has been defended as is, to the ultimate detriment of both structure and function of the Movement. In this way we have been ineffective in our efforts to streamline and develop the structure and functionality of the Movement as volunteers are faced with perpetual roadblocks and bottlenecks. The result is frustration and the departure of many volunteers who present solutions whilst the structural problems remain.

2.1a Communication

Within the Movement's pyramid structure it is concerning that all of the tools of communication for the global TZM network are in the hands of three people – Peter Joseph, Gilbert Ismail, and Miguel Oliveira. Rather than accepting assistance from other volunteers in managing these tools Peter Joseph has insisted that they remain in these three pairs of hands.

Currently I am witnessing some concerning patterns regarding the means/tools of communication in the TZM global network.

At present the [Global Chapters Portal forum](#) is locked; no one can use it. There is, instead, a re-direction for people to use the new [Public Global Forum](#). David Zwolski, a long-term admin and technical support volunteer for the Movement has today found that he no longer has back-end administrative access to the Global Chapters Portal site either. No notice was given.

The new [Public Global Forum](#) is also locked; even registration is disabled. When Peter Joseph requested for the Global Core Team to register on the forum in order to populate it, I

was the first member to request registration for the site, which Peter Joseph was taking sole responsibility for processing. However, I was never registered.

With regard to the ZM-chapters google-group the TZM Australian coordination no longer has access to it. David has been removed from the [ZM-chapters google-group](#) without notice. I had already left the group, but have still been receiving messages - unable to post - due to some unknown error in the system that Miguel has been unable to resolve. As the Australian coordination no longer have access to the google-group this means that TZM Australia no longer have *any* written means of communication with the TZM global network.

The only means of communication the Australian chapter still has with the rest of the global network is via TeamSpeak, although the effective use of this medium is limited when the chapter has no access to global newsgroups or other means of written communication for the purpose of communicating when meetings are held and what is to be discussed. It is likely that we retain access to TeamSpeak mainly because it is a third-party platform, and also due to the fact that we opted not to have an Australian channel (therefore there was none to remove) and to just use the non-password-protected Asia-Pacific channel for our communications.

Technically this means that Australia have all but disappeared from the global communications network, despite still being linked as an official global chapter on the [global website](#). With the tools/means of communication in the hands of only three people it is all too easy to deny access to the network to those who are unwanted, for whatever reason that may be. This is a matter of great concern for a movement whose very existence depends on effective, networked global communication.

2.1b Structural failures

Without knowledge of the existence of the Global Core Team or who its members are the global TZM network is in the position of not knowing who to contact with regard to most issues and projects. For this reason I felt it appropriate to inform the Australian chapter and Asia-Pacific coordinators of who is who and who does what so that lines of communication and appropriate channels for action are clear. I have raised this issue on a few occasions and was always greeted what I considered to be a paranoid response in that several of the other members of the Global Core Team felt afraid of others knowing about the team's existence. I do not know the reason for this fear as I was always of the understanding that when one has nothing to hide one should not be afraid of people knowing.

Interestingly, when it became known to some Latin American TZM coordinators that I had told the Australian chapter of the Global Core Team's existence some newcomers appeared at our next Global Core meeting. Andres Delgado and Jorge Forero, who were not at that point involved in the Global Core Team, spent a large portion of the meeting – for which Jason Lord explicitly requested that the recording not be shared – criticising me for having divulged this information – what they referred to as a “breach of security”. Ironically, these individuals need to have learned of the Global Core Team from two possible sources – either indirectly from me, therefore meaning that they were angry with me for providing them information that later led to their addition to the team – or that they had heard about it from

another team member, and hence were behaving in accordance with the double standards I have so often witnessed at this level.

As a result of a lack of clarity over the TZM internal structure the network has operated at a sub-optimal since inception and this shows no sign of improvement. Many valuable and hard-working volunteers have left the Movement due to frustration with this situation that has led to an inability for many voices to be heard and projects to receive sufficient oxygen to thrive.

2.1c Harassment and bullying of volunteers

Although I have heard, by word of mouth, of many instances of harassment and bullying of volunteers within TZM, I choose here to only detail those instances for which I have hard evidence through having personally witnessed various incidents.

The Colombian chapter has been under fire for many months without appropriate measures being taken by the GCA to resolve any issues that have been raised. Instead of simply adhering to the coordination protocol and chapter protocol with regard to the resolution of any issues it has been the GCA's practice to harass volunteers with the Colombian chapter on a personal level and lodge complaints about individuals with the purpose of eliminating the entire chapter. No official documentation of the process has been provided to the GCA Trello board until the November-December 2012 Colombia Chapter Review, which was difficult to even get the GCA to agree to despite it being simply adherence to protocol to do so. This behaviour is unconscionable, particularly when carried out by an administration that is expected to behave in an exemplary manner.

I have been harassed and ridiculed by members of the GCA – notably Nelson and Jorge, and coordinators of other chapters – notably Andres from Ecuador and Cristian from Chile – in response to my work with the development of the Colombian chapter. Gilbert, self-titled “team head” of the GCA, has also behaved in an unconscionable manner toward me with bullying and threats regarding my work – even during the process of my simply questioning what our approach to the issue with the Colombian chapter should entail. This is a grossly unprofessional form of bullying, and calls into question the appropriateness of these volunteers for roles of coordination.

The bullying of the Australian chapter started much more recently, and was instigated by Peter Joseph himself when he chose to threaten dissociation of the entire chapter on the basis of a single magazine article written by a single individual in *Spirit of the Times* magazine, a magazine that is not explicitly or officially a TZM publication. After the chapter was given 24 hours to remove the “offending” article or face dissociation the chapter held an emergency meeting to decide our course of action. A decision was made to comply with Peter's demand, and this was communicated in a timely manner. Despite this compliance and careful communication, I was greeted with an emotional tirade by Peter in which he informed me that the future of the Australian chapter was now in the hands of Miguel and Gilbert, and the Australian chapter found itself no longer with access to communication platforms in the global TZM network.

Since this incident things have gone from bad to worse with Peter again threatening dissociation of the chapter should we continue to promote his films via our website and enable their distribution to our active volunteers via the site at cost – which is significantly below the cost charged on www.zeitgeistmovie.com. Again, no discussion was entered into, and no consideration given to the hard work of volunteers – simply demands and threats were made, without acknowledgement of 3 years of tacit acceptance of the project. Several volunteers wrote to Peter in order to negotiate terms that might be acceptable to all concerned, particularly as this is an issue that likely affects many other chapters, but all of these were greeted with anger and further threats. This situation is particularly intriguing in light of the fact that Jen Wilding, of the US chapter and Global Core, had expressed interest in the project a few weeks earlier, and informed the project's coordinator that it would be discussed at the next US chapter meeting.

Currently the Australian chapter has until the end of January 2013 to comply with this latest demand. The chapter plans to fully comply with the stated demand. However, for many volunteers this is the last straw and many no longer wish to be associated with the global administration as a result.

Many other examples of bullying have occurred, but I will leave it up to individuals to tell their own stories as it is not my place to do so.

2.2 Hypocrisy & double-standards

Countless times I have been witness to breaches of protocol by representatives of the GCA and members of the Global Core Team. These are protocols that are invoked whenever someone outside either of these teams is the perpetrator, yet ignored when an individual in one of these teams perceives that upholding their position is of greater importance than upholding protocol.

It is natural for a volunteer to expect that the global administration and core teams would be the very exemplar of how to behave in a RBE, or, at least, be demonstrating a level of integrity in their efforts to do so. Sadly, I have found the majority of the GCA and Global Core Team to be precisely the opposite of what hard-working and committed volunteers should be able to expect from their administrative support structures.

It is my view that precisely the wrong people are in charge of the Movement's administrative structures, and precisely the wrong type of governance structure is employed. I have attempted to communicate the latter and work in collaboration with the Global Core Team to address the development of our governance structure in congruence with the RBEM. All attempts to approach this topic have been either rejected or ignored by all team members aside from Brandy Hume, who has made the effort to engage and discuss.

With regard to development of the Movement and communication of our message it seems that the administrative structure only wants volunteers to engage with the general public, and not experts in the various fields that could lend credibility to the Movement. My work with my the non-profit organization I have co-founded, called Integrative Services, has been either rejected or ignored by the Global Core Team. This is despite our work with experts in the fields of ecological economics, government policy, architecture, philosophy of ethics,

education, and computer programming in our core team. Our core team also includes Murray Lane, creator of the Carrying Capacity Dashboard, and the development team for the world's first open-source knowledge repository (the like of which Jaque Fresco only speculates about). It seemed to me for a long time that we were rather shooting ourselves in the foot by rejecting affiliation or collaboration with such a dynamic team of experts, and after I had worked so hard to establish the credibility of TZM with my colleagues I had to return to them with my tail between my legs and admit that TZM does not have either the maturity or the wisdom to be a suitable collaborator on the global stage of change-agency. I was left feeling as though TZM is a fraud as, in addition to failing to walk our talk, we reject or ignore the very people and organizations who we say we're looking to collaborate with, as though talking and holding screenings of PJ's movies is all we're ever intended to do.

So, I gave up. My efforts are better spent on projects that are leading somewhere, so that is where I will be putting them for 2013 and beyond.

3. Further Information

For anyone interested in gathering a deeper insight into the issues I have outlined, the scientific method of inquiry is a fantastic tool. A wealth of information has been collated and archived, and is available at [the click of a button](#). Please feel free to browse the information contained within these archives in order to gather a greater depth of understanding and familiarise yourself with evidence for the issues I have outlined in this letter.

In closing I would just like to reiterate my appreciation of the hard work so many have put into this shared direction we have toward a more sustainable world. I hope re-engage with many of you in the future, further down our shared path. Should anyone wish to contact me in the future, or as a response to this email, I am available via magazine@thespiritofcommunity.org or kari@sustainabilitysc.org.

Thank you and take care.

Warm regards & happy new year,

Kari McGregor

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