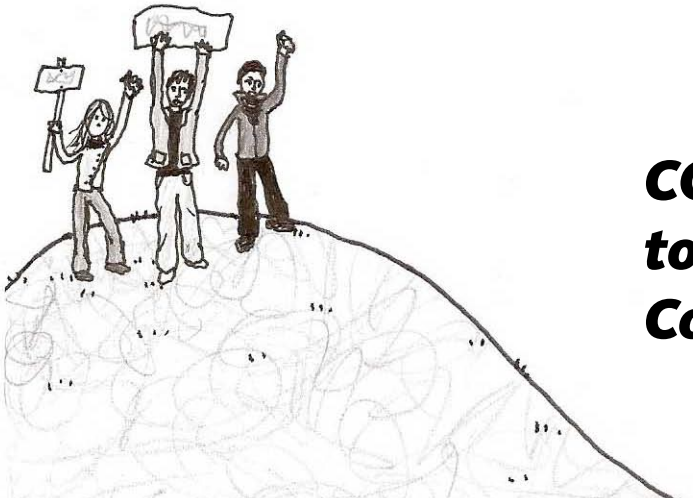


SHIFT



#5

Summit protests and the economic crisis



COP-15: how to mobilise for Copenhagen

Anti-militarism and Smash Edo



Jan '09 - May '09

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editorial

Summit-hopping is so last year. Or is it? When we began conceiving this issue a few months back, it seemed like everyone was gearing up for a busy 2009: NATO's 60th anniversary party, the G20 summit in London, the G8 in Italy, the UN's climate summit in Copenhagen... Ten years on from the 'battle of Seattle', 2009 was set to be the return of summit-hopping.

However, so far, anti-capitalists in Italy appear to have made little progress in mobilising against the G8 summit in July. What is more, everyone is talking about the UN's climate change conference next December in Copenhagen. This comes with the awful package of environment minister Miliband calling for a mass movement for green capitalism and an austerity deal. The threat of another paralysing 'Make Poverty History'-style mobilisation looms (see page 14). On the other hand, there are, of course, some summits that continue to attract fundamental antagonism. The EU's meeting on immigration in Vichy, France, last November was one example, despite a lack of mobilisation from the UK.

There is something that is fundamentally different from the previous decade of large anti-globalisation mobilisations: neo-liberalism itself is in crisis! The policies that were promoted by the anti-globalisation arch enemies (WTO, World Bank, IMF) are failing not only in Argentina and Mexico, but also in Europe and North America. The current financial crisis provides a platform for a systematic critique of the current economic system (see page 4).

Maybe we should be excited that suddenly everyone is talking about the economy. Or should we? Many analyses of the crisis seem to be putting forward reactionary solutions. For a start, who we blame will define how we respond. Socialists blame bankers, government ministers and conservatives (and increasingly liberals) blame immigration, environmentalists and the middle classes blame the mass consumerism of the working class and the corporate media blames everyone. And what, then, will the response be? Anti-consumerism and austerity politics? Economy-boosting interest rate cuts? Tougher immigration controls? Urban riots? Blame creates hierarchies and characterises anti-globalisation protests. If we are to build a collective, emancipatory response to the crisis we need to be critical of any strategies that ignore the realities of life in capitalism, that fuel moral superiority and reinforce class divisions (see page 8).

Furthermore, with every crisis comes a new conspiracy theory. The problem with these 'explanations' is that a capitalist crisis is not the result of the errors of a 'small and elusive group of people' as the conspiracy theorists want us to believe.

We live in a system that is antithetical to our needs, and importantly, our desires.

Crises are inherent in capitalism. There is no solution that will make capitalism free of crises. We can demand more regulation of the financial sector or the nationalisation and democratic ownership of banks. Still, capitalism's crises are based in its inherent contradictory character with the desire to produce for profit-maximisation rather than social needs. And this will always be the central goal of capitalist production. A crisis won't change that. There are more crises to come, with indications that speculation with raw materials and food could lead to much bigger misery than the bursting of the credit bubble. It is contradictory and irrational to produce, distribute and exchange resources as is done in a capitalist economy, thus capitalism without crises would be an oxymoron.

The left should take the crisis as an opportunity to push for more, to push for a system that puts our needs and desires above profit, to avoid limiting ourselves and scapegoating others. At a time where political leaders are making our demands seem reasonable (whether that's the nationalisation of banks or a strong climate deal), we should not settle for compromise but demand the impossible!

Despite these new opportunities, there are few signs for a new wave of summit protests that can escape the attempts by governments to recuperate them. Protests are not happening outside summits now. As we write, they are happening in suburbs and big university towns. The migrant youths of St. Denis, the anti-CPE students, the Anomalous Wave movement and the Greek anarchist youth all dominate the headlines, rather than the plans for opposition to the G8 or G20. Also in Britain, radical anti-capitalist protest is no longer connected to the anti-globalisation movement, but is at the radical edge of the failed anti-war movement of 2003. Maybe in 2009 'suburb-hopping' offers new opportunities for resistance?

speculating on the crisis

‘We are an image from the future’

(graffiti at the occupied University of Economics and Business in Athens, December 2008)

When we wander the streets of Leeds, Mexico City, Mumbai the wealth we see seems somehow familiar, yet we wonder where it has come from. That wealth is familiar because we produced it. But we feel disconnected from it because it has come not from our past, but from our futures. It is this problematic, this peculiar relationship between the past, the present and the future, that offers one of the keys to understanding the present crisis of capitalism.

A deal based on debt

The social relations and the processes that make up neo-liberalism have been blown apart. And it's in times like this, when a system is in far from equilibrium conditions, that it is easier to see what these social relations and these processes are. Like an exploded diagram helps us understand how an engine is assembled... except the capitalist mode of production isn't an engine and this explosion was neither

small nor controlled.

Neo-liberalism meant deregulation, of labour markets and of trade. It meant the removal of state-guaranteed protections for workers and the environment, and attacks on trade unions. It meant the removal of subsidies – e.g. for food staples – and the dismantling of public provision of services, such as health and education. It meant greater ‘fiscal discipline’ – enforced on governments of the South, largely flouted by the US government – and greater discipline on workers. It meant new enclosures and the expansion of property- and market-relations into ever wider areas of our lives. Globally, neo-liberalism meant stagnant or declining real wages, a declining ‘social wage’, longer working hours, fewer employment rights and ‘civil liberties’, less job security and increased general precarity. As a result of these shifts, profit rates have risen – almost relentlessly since the late 1970s, in countries such as the United States – and we have seen huge concentrations of wealth and dramatic increases in inequality.

But neo-liberalism also involved an implicit or tacit deal, at least for workers in many of the so-called advanced capitalist econo-

mies. This deal was necessary for the ‘resolution’ of two problems that neo-liberalism creates for capital. The first problem appears to be ‘technical-economic’, it's the problem of ‘over-production’. Capital is only capital when it is in the process of increasing itself, increasing its own value; commodities are only commodities (and hence capital) when they are being sold. But how can the increasing pile of commodities be purchased if real wages aren't rising? Economists describe this as the problem of ‘effective demand’, Marxists call it the ‘realisation problem’. The second problem is the danger that the mass of people made poorer by neo-liberalism will revolt and reject what is fundamentally an enormous transfer of wealth from workers, peasants – the planet's ‘commoners’ – to the wealthy.

Capital's answer to both problems was to be found in the same mechanism – plentiful access to cheap credit, which sustained a series of asset bubbles, primarily a sustained bubble in house prices – the so-called ‘Greenspan put’. In fact increasing house prices have been fundamental to the deal, making us appear wealthier and so disguising the terms of the deal.

Credit – borrowing – and house price inflation have acted as the necessary stimulus to growth. Or seen from our perspective, the whole world economy has rested on our ever-increasing personal indebtedness: “Between 2001 and 2007, homeowners withdrew almost \$5 trillion in cash from their houses, either by borrowing against their equity or pocketing the proceeds of sales; such equity withdrawals, as they’re called, accounted for 30 percent of the growth in consumption over that six-year period.” In fact the current global meltdown began with a credit crunch, provoked by the spread of bad debt: this crisis goes straight to the heart of the neo-liberal deal.

A categorical crisis

Capitalism may be in crisis, neo-liberalism may be over, but that doesn’t mean we’ve won. Far from it. Crisis is inherent to capitalism. Periodic crises allow capital to displace its limits, using them as the basis for new phases of accumulation. In that respect, it’s true to say that capitalism works precisely by breaking down.

But this is only when it works: all of the above only appears to be true when seen in hindsight – after the resolution of the crisis. In fact crisis is mortally dangerous to capital. The word ‘crisis’ has its origins in a medical term meaning turning point – the point in the course of a serious disease where a decisive change occurs, leading either to recovery or to death. This has been the case for every capitalist crisis.

Take the example of the New Deal in the US in the 1930s, and the more global Keynesian settlement of the post-war period. It’s easy to see this as the inevitable and sensible solution to secure full employment, economic growth and prosperity for all. But there was nothing inevitable about it. The poverty of the Great Depression was only a problem for capital because we made it so. (Capitalists never concerned themselves with poverty in the 19th century before workers were organised.) In the 1920s and the 1930s the real threat was one of global revolution, and capital’s future was always in doubt. In fact the New Deal never ‘worked’: it took the death of millions and the destruction of half the world to establish a fully functioning set-

tlement.

Just as the idea of a ‘deal’ only makes sense retrospectively, the very terms we use to describe what’s happening obscure the contingent nature of crisis. When we talk about ‘credit crunch’, ‘recession’, ‘deal’, ‘unemployment’, or even ‘financial crisis’, we’re framing the problem in a way that pre-supposes a capitalist solution.

Zero

How can we think of this in a different way that reveals our own power? One of the reasons we appear weak is because we don’t understand our own strength. Of course, when you’re in the middle of a shit-storm, it’s impossible to make a hard-nosed assessment of the situation: in the current global meltdown, the future is only certain if we are written out of history. (And predictions risk dragging us into a linear temporality, one where the past, present, future are open to simple extrapolation.)

«One of the reasons we appear weak is because we don’t understand our own strength»

But tracing the lines of our power, and identifying the roots of the current crisis in this power are also difficult because of the way neo-liberalism has set out to displace antagonisms. Many of the elements we associate with neo-liberalism have this as their main aim – globalisation of production (‘blame Mexican workers’), subcontracting (‘blame the suppliers’), labour migration (‘blame immigrants’), expanding hierarchies (‘blame your line manager’) and so on. The clash between worker and boss is shifted, sideways, into a bitter struggle between worker and worker. These effects have been amplified by the process of ‘financialisation’: our pensions, our schools, our healthcare etc increas-

ingly depend upon the ‘performance’ (exploitation) of workers elsewhere. Generally our own reproduction is so linked to capital’s that worrying about ‘the economy’ has become commonplace.

But neo-liberalism also depends on a temporal displacement of antagonism, established through the mechanism of debt. As we said above, part of the neo-liberal ‘deal’ involved cheap and plentiful credit. For capital this solved the realisation problem; for us it offered access to social wealth in spite of stagnant wages. Rather than a struggle over social wealth in the here and now, it shifts this antagonism into the future.

Capitalist social relations are based on a particular notion of time. Capital itself is value in process: it has to move to remain as capital (otherwise it’s just money in the bank). That moving involves a calculation of investment over time – an assessment of risk and a projection from the present into the future. The interest rate, for example, is the most obvious expression of this quantitative relation between the past, the present and the future. It sets a benchmark for the rate of exploitation, the rate at which our present doing – our living labour – must be dominated by and subordinated to our past doing – our dead labour. It’s hard to over-state how corrosive this notion of time is. It lies at the heart of capitalist valorisation, the immense accumulation of things, but it also lies at the heart of everyday life. “The rule of value is the rule of duration.” Under neo-liberalism, if you want a picture of the future, imagine a cash till ringing up a sale, forever.

But the crisis has brought the future crashing into the present. Once we take inflation into account, interest rates are now below zero. In the relationship between capital and labour – or rather between capital/labour, on the one hand, and humanity, on the other – we have reached a singularity. We are at ZERO. Capital’s temporality – one that depends upon a positive rate of interest, along with a positive rate of profit and a positive rate of exploitation – has collapsed. And the debts are, quite literally, being called in.

It is not always obvious how the creditor/

debtor antagonism maps on to the antagonism between humanity and capital: it's an antagonism that is refracted and distorted almost as soon as it appears. But the everyday appearance of debt collectors and bailiffs underlines the violence at the heart of the debt relation. In the words of a Swiss central banker, in the relationship between debtor and creditor "the strategic situation is as simple as it is explosive". Explosions are decidedly non-linear events – they are a rapid expansion in all directions. In the last few months, our relation to the present and to capital's linear temporality has shattered, and multiple futures are now more visible.

Short circuits

From capital's perspective, this crisis needs to be contained, that is, closed down. In these exceptional times, measures are rushed through and solutions imposed because the priority is to re-affirm capital's temporality and reinstate discipline. This will be the prime purpose of the G20 summit in April (in the UK) and the G8 summit in July (in Italy).

It's important not to over-state the importance of summits – summits are trying to ride a dynamic that they don't necessarily understand, and one that they can't control. Capital's logic is as simple as its metronomic beat – all it seeks is a chance to valorise itself. Like a river flowing downhill, it will go around any obstacles put in its way. Of course regimes of regulation can make this flow easier or harder, but they can't stop it. But summits have in the past provided a focus for our energies and desires. During these moments, against one world of linear time, value and the present (the-world-as-it-is), we have been able to construct many worlds, live other values, and experience different temporalities.

But the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen raises a new set of problems. It's a summit where institutional actors could be forced to face up to longer-term, structural contradictions, and dwindling faith in market-based 'solutions'. Seen through the prism of temporality, runaway climate change is a non-linear process but capital's responses so far have been based on a linear timescale, as if climate change is reversible at the same

speed at which it started. The problematic raised by COP15 is how a world of values and non-linear time can relate to a world of value structured in a linear, monomaniac fashion. One of the difficulties in working out our relation to institutions lies precisely in the fact that movements operate at different speeds and with a different temporality. It's doubly problematic because while the crisis of our environment demands that we act quickly, we also have to resist the pressure from capital's planners for a quick fix. As soon as crises are 'solved', our room for manoeuvre is diminished.

We find ourselves faced with different timescales of struggle. Fights against job losses, wage cuts, house repossessions, rising prices and old-fashioned austerity are the most immediate. We also have to keep an eye on the G20, and then, in an even longer timescale, on COP15. But events like the recent uprising in Greece and the 'anomalous wave' movement in Italy can collapse all these timescales into one.

In Italy, the Gelmini educational reform law has provoked a three-month long mobilisation, marked by sit-ins, occupations, demonstrations and strikes. The movement started with high school collectives but spread quickly to encompass students, researchers and workers in education. The 'anomalous wave' has taken up the slogan 'we won't pay for your crisis', which is fast becoming a NO! around which heterogeneous movements are uniting. The 'anomalous wave' has been able to address even wider themes of precarity, economic crisis and neoliberalism's future. And another of its slogans expresses participants' refusal to become subordinate to neo-liberalism's universalising identities: 'We are students, we will never be clients!'

In Greece, a wave of anger over the shooting of a 15-year old has snowballed into a 'non-electoral referendum' which has paralysed the government and traditional institutions. Major riots have been accompanied by mass assemblies, occupations of public buildings and attempts to take over TV and radio stations. In some ways it marks the return of 'youth' as a category in a way that's not been true for 30 years. Schoolchildren and students have led the first wave, and commentators talk of a self-styled '€700 generation' (a reference





to the wage they expect their degrees to get them). But the revolt has been so ferocious and generalised because it has resonated with thousands who feel hemmed in by the future. In the words of an initiative from the occupation of the Athens University of Economics and Business, "Tomorrow dawns a day when nothing is certain. And what could be more liberating than this after so many long years of certainty? A bullet was able to interrupt the brutal sequence of all those identical days!"

As movements step outside capital's temporality, the categories of 'past', 'present' and 'future' stop making sense: actions in Greece clearly draw on a history of resistance against the dictatorship, just as the anomalous wave in Italy riffs on a whole period of *Autonomia* in the 1970s. These movements may now spread to Sweden, Spain, France in what is being described as 'contagion'. Our temporality is one of loops and ruptures – violent breaks with the present that throw us forward into many futures while breathing new life into a past. Even President Sarkozy has acknowledged the danger (from his perspective) of such a rupture: "The French love it when I'm in a carriage with Carla, but at the same time they've guillotined a king." Of course, by definition exceptional times can't be sustained. But while the world is in a state of shock, it opens up the possibility for us to impose our desires and reconfigure social relations.

As usual we've borrowed ideas from all over the place, but we should make clearer a few sources of inspiration and quotations. The figures on debt are from Doug Henwood's 'Crisis of a gilded age', in *The Nation*, 24 September 2008. John Holloway offered some useful insights as well as providing the line about the rule of value, from 'Drive your cart and plough over the bones of the dead', *Herramienta*, http://www.herramienta.com.ar/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=169#_ftn2. There's great material about Greece on <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/>, and we found the following two pieces useful: George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, 'Must the molecules fear as the engine dies?', October 2008, <http://freelyassociating.org/2008/10/bankers/>, and George Caffentzis, 'Notes on the 'bailout' financial crisis', *InterActivist Info Exchange*, posted 13.10.08., <http://slash.autonome-media.org/node/11434>.

The Free Association are based in Leeds and blog at www.freelyassociating.org

interview with werner bonefeld

This year there's the NATO summit, the G8 in Italy, Cop-15 etc. Do you think this could be the return of the anti-globalisation movement? Could, or should, it take the same form that it did in the late 90's and how do you think the current financial situation affects this?

I don't know. Of course the mobilisations in the late 90's were disrupted by 9/11 and from then on took a tumble. They might come back as a consequence of the financial crisis but it very much depends how the financial crisis is going to pan out. The material effects of the crisis will be harsh. Uncertain is how people will respond to the challenges and the pressures that they face. It's difficult to strike against money as it were. It's much easier to strike against an employer or even against repossession of houses. It's possible to organise there. But with banks it's difficult to organise. Besides, the business of negation is not to render banks responsible, and make them accountable to their consumers, whatever that might mean. Such 'responsibilisation' belongs to the reality of bourgeois society. The business of negation, the anti in anti-globalisation, is the creation of alternative social relations by means of practical critique of existing social relations. Such

creation is always creation in movement. One has to see whether we will see such a movement.

What I haven't heard from the existing anti-globalisation movement is anything akin to what happened in Argentina with the financial crisis in 2001. I am sure there are discussions but I wonder what really has been learned from Latin America. There have been very many discussions, in Europe at least, about for example the Argentinean piquetero and the Zapatistas, and discussion as to whether we are witnessing the emergence of a new social subject and new forms of organisation. The outcome of these discussions have on the whole been rather predictable. Yet, what is the reality of these movements for us, in Europe. Suddenly, or not so suddenly, there is the long awaited and predicted crisis and the movement seems paralysed. There's an irony there. 'What should we do?' The whole learning process, particularly from Latin America was an academic learning process, or a process of mythologisation. Solidarity with the YA BASTA is easy for as long as the YA BASTA stays where it is, in Argentina, and requires no other practical commitment in the here (and now). Solidarity with the YA BASTA has to be a practical one, in one's own social relations.

The big issue now is not whether the pro-

testors who, say, were at Heiligendamm in Germany, turn up again in great numbers. The big issue is rather whether the YA BASTA assumes practical relevance. The composition of the movement will change. In the past, it was easy to coalesce in critique of the so-called neo-liberal state. The nationalisation of banks, employment guarantees by means of government credit to ailing companies, etc., might well rupture the movement. The state suddenly does what certain voices of the anti-globalisation movement demanded – and this despite the fact that the socialisation of debt is intended to guarantee, for want of a better expression, the privatisation of profits. What is the relationship between the YA BASTA and the state?

In North America and Western Europe at least, there is this critique of finance capitalism, that might come back again, that was the defining feature of the anti-globalisation movement protests against the IMF and World Bank and other sort of global financial institutions. Obviously people have always pointed to the dangers of just criticising financial institutions and not, as you say, how capitalism affects us on a sort of real person level. Do you think that

might be something that we are experiencing again? That the critique of finance capitalism will run the risk of stereotyping and projecting?

It might; it might not. It depends, again, how it turns out. It would be good to predict the future, but the critique of finance was always misguided I think. There was always this separation between good capitalism and bad capitalism. Bad capitalism was financial capitalism and the other capitalism was seen to be the one that was suppressed by the bad capitalism. And the connection between finance and production, between production and exchange, commodity form and money form, that was never really drawn in this anti-globalisation movement. The critique of speculation has to be a critique of the social relations of production. That is, one should not divide between 'bad finance capitalism' and 'good industrial capitalism'. The one depends on the other, and visa versa.

Especially in the current crisis here in England, what everyone's been talking about, from the conservatives to the socialists, is greed. That the reason we have this crisis is speculation and greed by individual bankers. The work you have done and that of others has pointed out that this may have a relationship to scapegoating the Jew or anti-Semitism.

Yes, well that is one of these divisions between financial capital, on the one hand, defined by greed and industrial capitalism on the other hand, not driven by greed but by concrete matter and productive activity. That spurts over into anti-Semitism - that's quite right - and that's where the difficulty lies, I think, for the anti-globalisation movement. How does it confront or understand the current crisis if it merely sees it as a crisis of greed, that is, as a crisis of regulation, a crisis that is resolvable by the state by means of responsible regulation. Responsible for whom? For the common good? What is the common good in a capitalistically constituted society? The purpose of capital is to make a profit. And that is, money must command labour. The

demand for better regulation, and a more effective integration of production and finance, does indeed focus this purpose of money - to command labour. An anti-globalisation movement that only focuses on the issue of greed does not see the vampire that sucks labour out in the production process as the basis of that greed.

So, for you then, is the way to avoid this problem a return to ideas of class and class struggles? Ideas which the anti-globalisation movement quite consciously has left behind?

«An anti-globalisation movement that only focuses on the issue of greed does not see the vampire that sucks labour out in the production process as the basis of that greed.»

I think what has to be left behind is the old social democratic or state socialist idea of class. That idea was based on the notion of market position, and sought to rebalance the inhumanity of exploitative production relations by means of re-distribution. That is the concept of class that I think needs to be overcome. In opposition to affirmative conceptions of class, we need to rediscover class as a critical concept, a concept that belongs to a false society. That is to say, class struggle is correctly understood the movement against the existence of social classes. Class analysis does not partake in the classification of people - its business is the critique of such classification. Class struggle is the struggle to dissolve class

society, relations of class domination and exploitation, in favour of commune - this society of the free and equal, an association of the freely assembled social individuals.

So if correctly understood, class should be a critical concept, not an affirmative concept. The old class concept was an affirmative concept; it affirmed class position. It wanted to re-distribute in order to create a fairer deal, a new deal, for those on the wrong side, or the wrong end of the stick. The critical concept of class, which is to dissolve class, battles against the existence of class society.

So could such a movement against class, offering such a critique, be relevant in today's society? Could the anti-globalisation movement, if it reconstitutes itself as such again next year, be an effective political player?

Again, I don't know. It very much depends how the current crisis pans out. It will affect jobs. It will affect income. It will be very bad for people heavily in debt. How will they react? What will they do? And the reaction of these people is, to a great extent, also a responsibility of the anti-globalisation movement in terms of their critical intent of enlightened democracy - the democracy of the demos that assembles in the street; a democracy of and in the street. This democracy, this practical subversion of everyday life, if the anti-globalisation movement is able to practice that then it will become something new in terms of its composition, relationship to capital and its state, organisational form, and negative purpose. If the anti-globalisation movement is not able to do that then it might well be that those who carry the brunt, financial and otherwise, of the crisis, might not be part of that movement. In the British context, the white working class, impoverished as it is, has tended in certain areas to go to the right rather than to the left. That I think is also a responsibility, not just of those people who go to the right, but also the responsibility of the anti-globalisation movement to mobilise for democratic purposes - here and now. So it depends on the mobilisation, who mobilises and where, and who is part of

IO/shift

the mobilising coalition.

On a practical level it can be argued that the anti-globalisation movement needs a symbol, or a target around which to mobilise and that's why summits are so attractive. Do you think that the oversimplification and 'personification' of capitalism, which manifests in the targeting of summits and global elites, can be avoided while the anti-globalisation movement continues to summit hop?

Well I think summit hopping is OK, who wouldn't want to travel around the world and see different places and do so for the sake of protest. Summits render visibility to struggles, provide them with symbolism, but the struggle itself takes place

in other places I think. Summits do not struggle. Struggles are always local, and their locality is the basis for their globality. That is, the everyday struggle over the production and appropriation of surplus value in every individual workplace and every local community is the basis of the class struggle on a global scale. 'Globalisation' has not done away with everyday struggle. Instead, it focuses it. If it really is the case that whole communities are in danger of losing their houses, if people are dispossessed, then the anti-globalisation movement will have to be a movement against repossession.

I do not know whether there will be a movement against default, practically, on the streets. A Latin American example is that people occupy their factories when the going gets tough and the machines are in danger of being taken away. Will that happen here? This is a practical question

that cannot be resolved by summits. It needs to be resolved in practice. Whether the (European) anti-globalisation movement assumes class form is difficult to predict, but if one looks at the often-mythologised struggles in Latin America, this is what the struggles are, from the protection of the neighbourhood and of homes and living-conditions, to the provision of food and water, and the self-organisation of subsistence, from the factories to the land. And what comes out of it? I don't know. Whatever the future holds will depend on the movement of the so-called anti-globalisation movement. Where will it move, what will it move, if it moves?

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mass action concept during cop15 in copenhagen

The answer to the question of whether we should attempt to shut down the COP15 summit and the entire process or block in the delegates until they have signed a protocol we can agree to is YES!

Starting from the beginning we do not believe for a second that large populist-orientated demonstrations will be enough to counter the dominant agenda of green capitalism, support progressive voices on the inside or to neither help solve climate change nor delegitimize global authority all together.

Parades, even endless, numerically vast ones, with more vague and defeatist demands are too easily absorbed by global authority and boomeranged back in the same direction they came from, carrying the momentum of the legitimate concerns throughout the public and smashing dissent by adopting a few points and camouflaging it as a good and reasonable compromise. Gleneagles became the Bermuda Triangle of antagonisms for the alterglobalisation movement. Global authority was revitalised due to the lack of an oppositional force. The lessons learned were expressed in the planning of resistance to the G8 in Rostock and still apply to this day. We need to portray our antagonism to the dominant agenda and kill the idea that climate change is a problem that puts us all in the same boat. This must be done through mass ac-

tion to open up the political space to express another point of view and show that we are many and diverse.

Legitimacy versus concerns

At the first meeting in The International Climate Network held in Copenhagen in September 2008 the facilitators, having foreseen tension in the discussion about the legitimacy of the COP15 as an institution, an inevitable parameter when discussing civil disobedience and mass action to disrupt or affect the processes and power exchanging within, a game of sorts was played out to soothe ideological and political differences. The deal was that all the participants should walk around the room and debate the legitimacy of the COP15, whenever one met a person who thought it had less legitimacy than you did, one should move towards one end of the room and vice versa. At the end everyone had settled at a specific point in the room and collective discussions began from there. After a while though it was obvious that nobody was really talking that much about the legitimacy of the COP15, actually it seemed like no one really believed that in their perfect world such an institution would exist in its current form, but they seemed not to really care either. Instead, what roughly came to surface were two sets of concerns. In the more-legitimacy end concerns such as; the summit being the only chance for indige-

nous people and other progressive voices to be heard and it's the only chance for an international and binding agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. While in the less-legitimacy end concerns about the rise of green capitalism, green austerity and the fear of trying to heal the symptoms without attributing any blame to the disease - the fear of lack of antagonism and cooption. Unsurprisingly the activists in the more-legitimacy end, roughly speaking, correlated with the ones entering the climate struggle from an environmental perspective and in the less-legitimacy end activists who had entered from a social perspective.

This action concept is an attempt to tie a knot between these concerns and make sure that we, at all times, action in a way where our concerns are met as much as possible in the given situation.

Objectives and aims

The only thing more gruesome than yet another round of capitalist accumulation and the further expansion of government and corporate control into our lives, are the disastrous case scenarios of climate change unfolding. Thus our primary objective must be to combat the dominant market based agenda on the inside and function as leverage for progressive voices pushing for a protocol which could actually save this

planet.

The logical syntax: A good deal is better than no deal – but no deal is way better than a bad one.

A truly social and serious agreement to a cut in greenhouse gas emissions which is fair globally as well as locally, not destroying the local ecosystems, not stealing away indigenous farmers lands and using up starving peoples' food supplies to keep the motors running in the SUVs of the western middle-class, is not only a restraint to global capital, but the happiest possible ending (within reason). On the other hand if the deal is just a new chapter in the Kyoto protocol with an insignificant cap in emissions as a global figure in the distant future, combined with poor local solution only benefitting the TNC's and the rich, it must be fought on all levels. Even though there will be no global convention after the year 2012. Global authority would have shown itself incapable of producing any results on the number one issue and the whole process would have been delegitimized; opening up for other possible solutions.

The strategy

It is not possible for us to shut the summit down before it gets started! It's not possible to shut down the process from the get-go without completely alienating ourselves from the general public and their concerns. In spite of their dissatisfaction with the way politicians are handling global warming the general public's reaction is to appeal for their given authorities to 'do something' - the fact that they now actually meet has all the legitimacy in the world.

To meet our concerns in the best way possible in the current situation we block the delegates in. We encircle the entire meeting and declare that not a single soul gets to leave until a socially just and binding contract has been signed. In all likelihood the contract won't be near good enough, both in terms of scientific numbers and measures but also in terms of how these new benchmarks are going to be reached. In the logic of keeping them inside until they sign a proper convention we are not going to let them out. 'We do not believe that this convention is good enough. Go

back in there until you have changed it'. This will show that we strongly disagree to the convention which has been signed and portray antagonism in the unavoidable, but not necessarily violent, clashes between police and our blockades. True to the mantras: 'a good (which we hate to call it; but would be categorised by a protocol with a probable chance of saving the planet...) deal is better than a no deal' and 'the only thing worse than another round of capitalist accumulation (a hard one to swallow for the bloodthirsty anticapitalists of KlimaX Copenhagen indeed) is the worst case scenarios of climate change'. We are not going to attempt to shut the process down, but portray our strong disagreement to how it's done and show our dissent and concerns with the new convention. However the encirclement is not a fixed position at all. It depends on what we stand to gain from an eventual outcome. During the summit the eyes of the world will be resting upon the Bella Center in Copenhagen, just like – and presumably even more - all the other summit/counter summit events. But this time we got reality working for us a lot more than usual ('If climate change didn't exist we would have to invent it', someone said) and this meeting could easily delegitimize itself. The pressure we exert on the outside will also donate power to the voices on the inside actually concerned about saving the planet.

If the new protocol is not a planet-saving one, we will be far from alone in our dissent. Powerful voices across parts of the political spectrum along with scientists, indigenous communities, all kinds of organisations and movements from across the world and even the more moderate NGOs would have to speak up against it. If the COP15 summit loses not only its legitimacy – understood not as some prefixed legitimacy defined in accordance with leftwing radical ideology, but as a much more frank and uncomplicated one in the eyes of the general public, but also its ability to carry out solutions to every single concern highlighted by the more-legitimacy group. If the indigenous people are not heard, if no progressive input gets to affect the work process and if there is no real, serious and binding contract aiming at cutting Co2 emissions, the process' value to us begins to wane. In fact, it can only be seen as an instrument for father-

ing corporatism and opening up new markets for exploitation. As the legitimacy begins to crumble we are in fact the ones affirming the summit as a possible and legit mechanism for solutions by just standing idle by and demanding – we think its time to go Seattle on their asses. We should attempt to shut down this illegitimate process for good! This not being a detail orientated writing, but a theoretical basis for mass actions, elaborations about methodology and exactly how are intentionally left out.

Even though, as you may have already realised, this concept suggestion is an attempt to work around the legitimacy issue, but here is our two cents on those regards anyway. The core of activists in KlimaX Copenhagen surely would like to see a much more participatory society. There is no doubt that an institution like the COP or even the elected representatives is not within our ideal for decision making. But to us legitimacy is about more than ideals, otherwise we would have to postpone all problem solving to a post-revolutionary calendar. Legitimacy also has to be about solving the problems of this planet and meeting the concerns of the people that live on it. As long as the COP15 holds a possible solution to the biggest problem we have, it also has legitimacy. Maybe our understanding of the word is rudimentary, but if aforementioned has nothing to do with legitimacy, maybe it isn't that interesting at all and we should find another word and get on with it. Certainly we believe that neither ideals such as anarchism or democracy and the 'the end of history' paradigm of the elite, neither of which a farmer in Brazil or a fisherman in Bangladesh, as they are the most, give a damn about, should stand in the way of plausible action aimed at saving the planet.

The parallel summit

Following the storyboard of the countersummits'r'us movement is having an alternative summit and to try and shut the actual summit down before it starts. This time around many things are different and we see a lot of advantages in that. This counter summit will more have a character of a parallel summit. In stead of 'just' discussing the newest theories about what the capitalists are now up to, we will



mirror the discussions going on inside the Bella Center and bring our conclusions into the streets, whilst fighting the dominant agenda heavily in the media and 'on the inside'. We imagine a much more homogeneous protest than BlockG8 with a mass action clause signed beforehand. This is not speaking against a clause in itself, which might still be a good idea, but without having any prefixed interpretation of exactly how things are going to be and how we will act. Since whatever goes on inside the meeting will also have a reaction on the streets, it will deliver an immense amount of pressure. Maybe we could even set up perimeters and move in closer and closer to the Bella Center whenever the process takes unsatisfying and greedy turns.

We should not work against the legitimacy of the COP15. We should have its legitimacy working for us. The besieging strategy is a multiple option position from which we will be able to act, in order to meet our concerns best possible in any given situation. If the summit 'turns ugly' to an extent beyond repair and beyond any viable solutions for saving the planet, it will have lost its legitimacy in accordance with any reasonable definition of the word and we can attempt to shut the process down. If we manage to accumulate and assert pressure enough to seal a convention with planet saving potential, but still far from an incompatible with that 'other world' we think is possible, we will have a chance to say no by keeping them in there. If the deal is a perfect display of solidarity and unselfishness we can all go home and wonder what the hell happened and still be happy, but we are not going to elaborate too much on that possibility... One could argue that this will create a tense atmosphere between trigger-happy activists wanting to shut the summit down and the ones who want to keep the summit going and by what principles and measures we are going to figure out when it goes from one scenario to another. But aren't we evidently going to have those discussions anyway, no matter what we do?

The block in strategy is the concept, if any, we can agree on. It's a strategically, tactically and logistically plausible concept.

We hope to facilitate a dialectical process around this concept to make it as strong as possible.

KlimaX//Copenhagen

<http://klimax2009.org/>

are we anywhere? carbon, capital and cop-15

“Everything is rational in capitalism, except capital or capitalism itself ...the system is demented, yet it works very well at the same time”.

(Felix Guattari, 1995)

“We mean business when we talk about climate change”.

(Jose Manuel Barroso, European commission president)

One of the biggest political spectacles of the coming year will be held in Copenhagen, (COP-15) in December. There, delegates from 170 countries, corporate lobbyists and NGO representatives will come together under the banner of the United Nations framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC) in an attempt to solve the problem of climate change via the implementation of a global, market based, carbon cap and trade scheme. The deal brokered here will replace the Kyoto treaty which will expire in 2012. The COP-15 will be a core global governance mechanism through which climate change mitigation will be implemented. The deal that emerges from this has the potential to affect the entire socio-ecological field.

Although the framework for the new treaty has been sketched out at Poznan there

is still lots to negotiate. Outside of state actors, NGOs from both North and South are calling for a mass movement to intervene in this process. Many are calling for a dramatic reduction in the maximum CO2 levels that will be permitted to be emitted whilst others are seeking greater flows of technological exchange and financial aid to cope with the effects of climate change. In the UK, the Climate Camp and sections of the radical left are also beginning to mobilise. However, heated debate still exists over whether we should go and, if we do decide to go what should our intervention consist of? With the upcoming anti-Nato, G8, G20 and COP-15 summits 2009 appears, at least on paper, as the year in which summit mobilisations come back into vogue. However, unlike mobilisations during the alter-globalisation cycle of resistance, the politics of climate change make an intervention at the COP-15 much more difficult. Whilst many are calling for the COP-15 to be de-legitimised and shut down others are calling for a pragmatic engagement with it and suggest corporate lobbyists or the most dilatory states as targets. This article hopes to problematise the (post)politics of the COP-15 process and highlight the difficulties a radical left intervention would encounter in doing so.

The formal political space of the COP-15

process can be defined by its emphasis on consensus. Although every actor involved has their own individual agenda and set of goals for the summit it appears a degree of consensus has been reached. A new political space based on science and technocratic administration is emerging where the only debates that remain are over the finer points of the carbon market which will be implemented. Climate change has been de-politicised and debate is now framed within scientific terms of carbon parts per million in the atmosphere. Despite appearing as a non-political issue, it is the exact opposite. Anthropogenic emissions stem from concrete forms of production. By focusing on carbon and not the flows of capital responsible for their emission, policy makers are confusing the effects with the system that produces them. This focus on carbon helps to insulate the system from criticism by creating the problem as external and divorcing it from its social context.

Climate change has been defined in terms of carbon and not in terms of capital, but any policy needs support in order to be implemented. The political willpower to act on climate change has been galvanised through an apocalyptic and millenarian narrative. The argument for averting climate change is clear and unequivocal; if we do not mitigate climate change the re-

sults will be disastrous for the entire world. This is of course true, the effects of climate change will be devastating for many, particularly for the most vulnerable sections of society. Therefore we must act now to avert this catastrophic build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The problem is defined as a universal problem requiring a united global response. Faced with the prospect of apocalypse, old left-right antagonisms begin to look outdated and those standing outside of this “carbon consensus” are marginalised as idealistic at best. Climate change therefore becomes a post-political space devoid of conflict and instead focused on implementing policy based on science, technology and markets. This appeal to universal action has helped to short circuit real political debate over future potential socio-ecological relationships. Within this depoliticised space David Milliband’s call for “millions on the streets” in a Make Poverty History style mobilisation to give Gordon Brown a mandate at the COP-15 sits comfortably with environmental activists calling for a pragmatic engagement with the process. Much like the Gleneagles G8 summit, COP-15 appears to be recuperating antagonism in order to re-articulate global patterns of capital.

This is tying the world into a disastrous course of action. Climate change must be defined as an issue of capital not carbon. Contrary to the claims of proponents of the emerging “green” economy, there is no equitable technological solution to climate change. A de-carbonised global economy (as many wish to see) will still be a capitalist economy with all the social and environmental damage this entails. A greener form of capitalism will be a more austere form of capitalism in which increasing unrest will require disciplining by increasingly authoritarian forms of state power. At best the COP-15 will be a pyrrhic victory in which catastrophic climate change is averted at the expense of many people’s standards of living. The Cop-15 process can be seen as one part of this emerging green new deal in which converging ecological and financial crises can be recuperated into circuits of capital accumulation. This carbon market will primarily benefit private interests in the North who have enough financial power to offset their emissions via “development” projects in the global south which look likely to only

benefit small sections of local elites. Real political contestation has been trumped by a process whose destructive and deeply political nature has been obscured behind a scientific and apparently universal mandate for action.

«Our intervention must embody a rejection of the false solutions proffered by the COP-15 process whilst clearly standing in opposition to liberals and environmentalists wishing to “make Kyoto Stronger”»

That the media and the entire political spectrum appear in support of this process makes an anti-capitalist intervention even more problematic. By demanding the end of capitalist social relationships and refusing to accept the COP-15 we are articulating a demand that is impossible to be accommodated within the existing political sphere, especially one which forecloses the political through its use of science and focus on “universal” consensus. By standing outside of this, our demands are likely to be made legible in one of two ways. The first narrative, already used by George Monbiot with regards to last years climate camp, is that a radical intervention at the COP-15 will be an outdated and ideologically driven form of protest in a situation which needs a unified global effort behind it. The second narrative, and perhaps the more undesirable, will be that our intervention will be conflated with that of more liberal groups.

Despite this, we must act. Our intervention must embody a rejection of the false solutions proffered by the COP-15 process whilst clearly standing in opposition to liberals and environmentalists wishing to “make Kyoto Stronger” who are in fact pushing for a more austere form of capitalism. Our only hope of breaking through this will be an intervention of such force that the post-political veneer of the COP-15 process will be shattered, even if only for the days of the conference. Given a trend of increasingly militarised summit policing this appears an unenviable, if necessary, task.

In terms of environmental politics the anti-capitalist left is nowhere. Climate change has gone post-political. The only debates left at COP-15 are over the finer points of the carbon market which will be implemented, a market which will produce new forms of structural violence. In an incredible demonstration of the adaptability of capital many NGOs and environmentalists are supporting this process. Although it would be tempting to remain in our local communities the impacts of climate change and its mitigation are so large that we cannot afford to ignore this summit. Although as a movement our energies are perhaps best focused on the local this is our last chance to try and de-legitimise this process and re-politicise climate change.

Given the post-politics of climate change however this will be very difficult to achieve. An analysis of post-political processes has severe implications for anti-capitalist interventions. If the political sphere is no longer, if it ever was, a viable space for protests then perhaps the focus should shift to autonomous interventions in spaces that we create. Indeed, the real intervention against global climate governance may well be expressed in food riots, anti-airport expansion campaigns and fuel poverty campaigns, perhaps even by people not explicitly identifying with climate change politics. Whether we are successful or not at COP-15 we must begin to recognise ways in which we can support these autonomous uprisings rooted in our everyday experiences of capital.

why is the smash edo campaign still growing after four years?

Well, starting at the beginning on our doorstep is an arms company that supports arms and is profiting from organised global terror. This factory, EDO-MBM, recently bought for a song by ITT Corp, is conveniently located halfway between Brighton town centre and Sussex University, on Home Farm Road Industrial Estate. For those who don't already know the factory makes bomb release mechanisms, triggers essentially, for the smart and not-so-smart weapons that our government (and its allies) have been littering the world with over the last decade. I have heard people say "but they don't actually make the bombs there" which is, technically, true. But, for bombs the same as guns- they're no use without the trigger.

The campaign has gone from strength to strength even as resistance to and mobilisation against the war has been on the wane. For all good intentions, a campaign needs more than just outrage to sustain it. A campaign needs focus and drive, and we've managed that by a successful (if not so original) combo of regular demonstrations (every Wednesday for two hours for the last four years) and diverse direct actions. The regular demos provide a backbone to the campaign, and the actions give us the oxygen of publicity, as well as buoying up the spirits of people in and around the campaign.

A lock-on, or a demo in town or to the factory, gets EDO, the arms trade and the Smash EDO campaign into the ether of popular consciousness. From the news (mainstream and alternative) people get interested, and then find us via Indymedia, or by seeing our flyers & posters. From there some people take the logical next step and come along to the weekly noise demos, where they meet other activists, get on the megaphone, hold a banner and, possibly, join us afterwards at the pub.

As the campaign has gone on for so long now it has generated its own history- its

personalities and key events. The SchMovies film 'On the Verge' has caught a lot of the best and most memorable moments on film. With this and various friends & supporters putting on benefit nights, the campaign has become a real focus for a lot of people- a movement of sorts.

The videos have really helped, especially 'On The Verge', which really helped bring Smash EDO to national attention. Thanks in no small way to the sterling efforts of Sussex Police, whose cack-handed attempts to ban the film led to major interest from the broadsheets. EDOs' (failed) injunction case back in 2004/5 had a similar effect also.

Over the years EDO has been plagued by a scourge of Pixies- strange, obscure night time creatures who have at various times smashed windows and air-conditioning vents, splattered paint over the factory and trashed company cars during the dead of night. No-one knows who the EDO pixies are but they none the less continue to be active when no-one's looking. But, beyond these things, the key factor underpinning the campaign is its sheer stubbornness. Many of the same people who were with the campaign at its inception in 2004 are still with it today; still banging pots and pans, still making banners, handing out flyers, writing press statements and generally giving up large chunks of their spare time. Alongside this, new people are joining all the time, bringing with them new ideas and creativity to Smash EDO.

This year Smash EDO has held two hugely successful street demonstrations in Brighton. At the first of these events, dubbed the 'Carnival Against the Arms Trade', over 800 people marched to the factory, broke police lines, smashed the company windows and trashed cars. At the Shut ITT demo in October, despite a huge show of force from Sussex and Hampshire police, demonstrators took to the woods and

hurled bottles of paint at the factory from Wild Park. These demonstrations were pulled off despite police repression, one reason this succeeded was the tactic of wearing masks and of sabotaging the efforts of police Forward Intelligence Teams.

Although we haven't shut them down yet, we've got quite a few tangible successes under our belt. We've helped them reduce their profits, directors have resigned, workers have quit (some of them didn't even know they were making arms until we showed up!), and we've cost them hundreds of working hours over the course of the campaign. For a long time there was a debate inside the Smash EDO campaign about whether we should encourage people around the country to set up their own local anti-militarism/arms/war campaign or whether we should instead get them to join us down in Brighton against EDO.

As it turns out, it's proved a bit of a false argument really. What we've seen is that there's been a whole lot of cross-fertilisation between us and other similar groups around the country. The people in Nottingham, for example, who protest against H&K arms, are the same people who are willing to travel to Brighton for our demos, and vice-versa. It's really what's needed to re-vitalise the whole anti-war movement: A network of local but mobile anti-war groups that plug away week after week in their part of the country, against their arms factory, military facility or whatever, but are able to rely on support from like-minded (and motivated) individuals and campaigns from around the country.

Chloe Marsh is a Smash EDO campaigner and professional trouble maker. The next big demo will be a Mayday action on 4th May. For more info see www.smashedo.org.uk.

Joseph Ritchie

where now? thoughts on the anti-war movement and recent developments

After the mass protests in 2003 failed to achieve anything substantial, many in the anti-war movement have been at a loss about what needs to be done to rekindle some momentum and, more importantly, bring an end to our Government's aggressive militarism. With this piece I want to first reflect on the antiwar movement as it was and take a look at where it's going now.

On February 15th the world witnessed something quite remarkable. Worldwide, streets became swollen with protest as millions responded to the proposed invasion of Iraq. As is oft-mentioned, the New York Times reported that these demonstrations evidenced public opinion as the World's Second Superpower. Looking back, it seems like that's probably when we should have first felt uneasy. What I want to do with this reflection is take a harsh look at what has constituted the 'anti-war movement' and to briefly consider where we might go from here.

The empty centre of protest

When asked to explain why the abstract of a proposed invasion motivated far more discontent than the actuality of brutal

devastation, there has been precious little comment from anyone involved in the mainstream anti-war movement. Despite the majority of the movement's arguments being vindicated, the number of people protesting has dwindled. On the whole, reasons for this have not been forthcoming.

What I want to propose here is simply that there never really was an 'anti-war' movement as such. The connotations of 'anti war' and 'movement' imply a couple of things. These words suggest not only an acute opposition to the war but also the development of a counterforce to it. This 'counterforce', or opposition, is what would distinguish a 'movement' from, say, a 'cultural phenomenon'. Looking back at interviews and oral histories of what is thought of as the movement, quite a different sentiment emerges. When, for example, you watch the recordings made of people on the marches and the justifications they give for their presence, they tend not to say that they are there to stop the war, but rather why they think the war is wrong. When pushed, they tend to say things like 'this [march] will show Tony Blair that people aren't behind him' or some other such democratic abstractions.

Alternatively, they discuss how important it is to show people that the war is 'not in our name'. In my opinion, the marches were more protests about democracy and illegitimacy than anything else. In this light, it's very telling how often the wars alleged 'illegality' was posed as an issue.

Then there was the complete lack of tactical thought. Even very mainstream avenues, such as the sustained lobbying of wavering MPs, were not convincingly addressed. To shed some light on why the movement took the form that it did, it's worth asking why people ended up on the streets. For one, there was the deep commitment to spectacle. Generating the appearance of an anti-war movement (consider the endlessly replicated images of the large marches, the mass produced signs, the endless focus on media representation) seemed to take precedence over all else. A particularly exhausting example of this can be found in a recent campaign that involved a concerted effort to sell copies of the single 'War (What is it good for)' as a form of protest. Even more grassroots tactics, like the practice of having anti-war protesters shout at Gordon Brown when he was touring the UK prior to becoming Prime Minister can be read

not simply as a good natured waste of time, but as a slight desperation to cultivate the appearance of antagonism when there was in fact none.

Part of this was pure reaction. For example, the lingering ghost of the (unsuccessful) movement that opposed the War in Vietnam was doled out in a largely fictionalized form as a model for the movement to emulate. Quite why it made sense to adopt a failed example, especially in the absence of a draft or comparable other circumstances was never explained, nor even questioned. Linked to this was the fact that rather than a movement rooted in the real world, i.e. in the space in which capital and the wheels of war are located, the movement took the bizarre route of existing primarily in what might be designated the 'protest space'.

This is consistent with the way in which Capital negates subversive movements. We can observe in the popular renditions of combative figures (Martin Luther King, Mandela etc) the way in which struggle, which engages directly with economic and social realities in a variety of confrontational ways, is reduced instead to a 'purer' form of 'standing up for a belief'. Rather than looking at them as tacticians, the focus comes to rest on their 'integrity' and 'courage' in a rather abstract form. This in turn promotes the inherent valour of 'protest', and 'doing the right thing' divorced from the pressing questions of reality. This is quite apparent in the modern concept of a march. Such tactics guarantee, as is a necessary part of liberal freedom that in no way will the protest spill over into the realm of the objects protested against. Instead, we would uphold our freedom to be ineffective.

The movement was also weakened by the hierarchies of knowledge and command within the movement that not only failed in their own prescriptions but fundamentally failed to empower anyone to think and act creatively. In my own experience with the mainstream movement I've often found that they are more concerned with crushing potential rivals who might steal membership fees than embracing singularities and exploring new routes of resistance. In this way, there was never a mass movement, so much as a mass orchestration.

Where Now?

This leaves us with the question of where to go from here. On the 29th and 30th of November a group called Edinburgh Anti-Militarists hosted a Gathering in Edinburgh to bring together the disparate strands of the anti-war movement. Given the recent flurry of anti-NATO activism taking place on the continent (and at the next summit in Strasbourg this January) we wanted to mobilize against the NATO parliamentary assembly this coming No-

vember. However, while putting together the agenda for the weekend it quickly became clear that this could also be a forum for trying to bring together the often oppositional parts of the movement and perhaps creating some kind of unity.

This seemed like a risky move. I'm sure we're not the only ones who've spent a lot of time locked into pointless debates about the nature of violence and the real meaning of 'diversity of tactics'. Nonetheless, after the first day of talks and presenta-



tions, the second day of discussion got underway and by the end of it we had created something quite remarkable. Despite the variety of campaigners (we had activists from Faslane, people from the Smash EDO campaigns and many others) there was a general agreement that what we needed was a non-hierarchical network of support which would use direct action to stop the NATO assembly next year. Even more interestingly, there was also a feeling that such a network should facilitate support for all the different small campaigns going

on around the UK at present. To continue this process and to get more groups/individuals involved, more Gatherings are being planned as we speak. Crucially, this was the first time that we had seen direct action as the central tactic of a UK-wide anti-Militarist network.

Is this sort of network the way forward? Part of me thinks so. After too long having our differences exploited by those trying to control the movement, it makes sense for the direct action elements to unify and

engage in protest and garner support on their own terms. It was stressed in discussions how important it was to involve more people and to, in a much more consistent way, explain our actions to the public at large. Further, it seems like after the failure of the anti-war activists to achieve anything through conventional routes direct action offers the possibility of more tangible results.

Still, I personally remain sceptical that this is all we need to do. No matter how vibrant and effective our resistance becomes, it remains fundamentally a rejection of what is. What we lack as a movement is something concrete to move towards. While it is understandable that, as anarchists and anti-authoritarians, we have not engaged extensively in questions about what a just 'world order' might look like, we nonetheless should not think we can dodge these questions forever. Much like the question of violence in society, if anarchists and anti-authoritarians don't engage with these issues effectively, we remain like Christian Priests of old, issuing unhelpful proclamations about how things ought to be and will be after the revolution/second coming.

So, in conclusion, I want to argue that after 5 years of getting it wrong, the recent mobilizations against NATO and the creation of an anti-war direct action network the anti-militarist network (or AMN, for short) offers a chance of getting it right. If we can simultaneously consolidate ourselves as an effective network and reach out to new people on our own terms, things might genuinely begin to shift. To this end, I would strongly urge you to get involved with AMN.

[DISCLAIMER: This article was written prior to the recent attacks on Gaza].

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To get involved with or find out more about the Anti Militarist Network, e-mail here: antimilitaristnetwork@riseup.net



rossport: safety begins with team work?

A critical analysis of recent events in Rossport and the 'Shell to Sea' message

Shell plan to build a pipeline from offshore in the Corrib gas field, through Broadhaven Bay, ending up in a £545 million refinery at Bellanaboy. Since 2000 the people of Rossport have been working with activists from across Europe and beyond, fighting this project with amazing determination, and a wide diversity of tactics. The solidarity camp and house act as bases where activists from outside the area can converge, live and take action from.

Many actions, from blockades, to car cavalcades, kayak flotillas to sabotage of police vehicles, occurred last summer in Erris. In August the Solitaire arrived to lay the pipeline required for Shell's project. Its work was successfully disrupted and no pipes were laid. This was due to close collaboration between the local community and activists from outside the area. How-

ever, as with any campaign, there are ideological tensions and conflicts in politics, strategy and messages. This article does not provide a historical overview of the campaign, but analyses some of the events and issues that arose during the Solitaire's presence last summer. The events and individuals described in this article are no more important than others that have taken action, or the actions that preceded them.

Shell's Tactics

The potential value of the Corrib and surrounding fields for Shell and its partners is in excess of €50.4 billion. Shell have the provision of 100% tax write off's on development, exploration and operating costs connected to the pipeline. The government has been supporting Shell at every-one turn, through tax rebates and providing 'security'. In 2006 the state spent €8.1 million on policing for the Corrib project.

The community in Erris have been torn apart by Shell through their tactics. They have also shown a stamina, courage and strength in persistently facing up to the threat which is truly remarkable. Shell have been buying up the community and intimidating and bribing individuals for information. This has caused strong divisions, but has also brought those together who are united in the resistance to Shell and Stat Oil. The solidarity people displayed, for example in connection to the famous 'Rossport 5' who were imprisoned in 2005 for 94 days each for their refusal to give up land and fishing rights, or Maura Harrington's hunger strike, are examples of this.

Community Responses

The most famous response to the threat of the Solitaire this summer was the hunger strike that community activist Maura Harrington undertook for 11 days outside the compound of the pipe complex to demand



for the Solitaire (the large pipe laying vessel employed by Shell) to leave Irish waters.

By day 10 of the strike tensions were running high as the local community and the camp had been maintaining a 24 hour vigil at the compound and doing actions every day against Shell and the Solitaire. The camp decided it was important to support Maura and that individuals should participate in the vigil and any solidarity actions organised by the local community during this time. It was difficult at times because the hunger strike was never agreed with the consensus of the community, and was not part of a particular political strategy. However, people rose to the challenge in supporting Maura and her family, taking action in a variety of ways, from solidarity demonstrations, to a kayak armada including members of the Harrington family to directly confront the Solitaire.

During the 'Reclaim the Beach' action international activists and the local community worked together to take down the fence and re-establish a public right of way on the beach in Broadhaven Bay. Meetings to plan the action were attended by individuals from the camp and the wider community. Decisions were made by consensus and the camp and the wider community worked together during the action to stick to agreed decisions and support each other.

Whilst most actions taken against Shell by the local community and the solidarity camp are broadly agreed upon, some tactics revealed ideological differences. The car cavalcade, first done to celebrate 'the Chief's' (Pat O'Donnell) release from prison, and repeated during the hunger strike, was an example of this. A three hour car rally including 500 cars drove around Bel Mullet and Bellanaboy. Certainly, in a campaign calling for environmental awareness,

a protest dependent on fossil fuels seemed an unusual course of action, but this tension did at least provide an opportunity to explore some of these ideological differences.

The solidarity camp and house are both examples of sustainable living. Power comes from the sun and the wind and there is a compost toilet. However, controversially, the camp is not vegan. The local community often delivered dairy products, and sometimes the fisherman even dropped off fish. This was a major challenge to many living on site. The danger of refusing gifts from the local community is alienation, and some did not consider the 'vegan issue' one of importance in relation to the issue of the pipeline. I found this deeply challenging however, as mass produced animal products depend on high levels of suffering to animals, and can play no part in an environmentally sustainable future. The tensions that arose from lifestyle differences

also proved to be fertile areas for discussion and exchange, and it was interesting to compare different view points and talk with people who hadn't thought about emissions from animal consumption and animal rights previously.

'Shell to Sea'? Or Shell to Hell? NIMBY-ism in Rosspport

The biggest white elephant of all in Broadhaven Bay is the 'Shell to Sea' message. Fearing for their land, homes, livelihoods and community, locals in Erris have adopted this slogan for their campaign. The 'Shell to Sea' demand was a source of controversy on camp. How can so called environmental activists endorse slogans such as 'Shell to Sea' and nationalistic turns of phrase such as O.G.O.N.I 'Our Gas, Our National Interest' (a reference to the struggle of the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta, a place similarly torn apart by Shell). Surely the concept of nation-state is not helpful when we should all be calling for this unstable pipeline to remain unbuilt, whether at sea, or on land? The Shell to Sea website states that it would 'wholeheartedly welcome any open forum' with the government and all those involved if better tax breaks and an off shore refinery were considered. However, on off-shore refinery would still have devastating environmental effects. This pipeline represents a line in the sand for new infrastructure at a time of increasing wars for resources and unstable energy projects.

It is often easy for climate activists to refuse to compromise on issues such as the development of new infrastructure. It is undeniable that it is easy to deal in abso-

lutes when we are dealing with 'climate' as a broad topic, but hard to put this into practice in specific struggles, but the concept of Shell to Sea is a compromise that would have terrible consequences for the wider geographical area beyond Erris. Many activists who have come to fight with the community return and feel a close link to the area and the struggle, but all are aware of the ideological differences which abound in the campaign.

As the campaign grows momentum a sense of urgency of the wider climate problem and the need for international networks of resistance (such as links with the Ogoni people) is growing in what began as a localised struggle. People involved in the camp for several years have described how the involvement of activists from outside the community has helped bring the climate change agenda into the campaign, and also brought new methods of organisation to the struggle, such as the consensus process which is now used in the regular meetings at Glenamoy.

The people of Erris are fighting to halt gas extraction and are taking on a giant multinational intent on profits at any cost. The work of the Solitaire was successfully disrupted this summer, through collaboration between the immediate community and activists from outside the area, and despite tax payers' money being spent on drafting in the Irish Navy to 'protect' the vessel. This is an amazing achievement and an example of how, by acting with real on the ground solidarity, environmental activists (to use a clumsy label) can work with specific communities to support them in their struggle and move beyond

the rhetoric which we often try to impose on people through local networking without meaningful community led actions.

The Solitaire will be returning in the spring and with it will come new problems and challenges, but I have no doubt that the people will continue to be united in their fight. This pipeline can be stopped, if people from many backgrounds work together to fight it. The diversity of tactics and creativity shown in response to the huge threat continues to be a major strength for this campaign. My time in Rosspport was one of the most inspiring and challenging experiences of my life, and I encourage anyone to get involved in the campaign.

Steph Davies has been working on various campaigns, from Climate Camp to No Borders and animal rights, for several years. She is committed to direct action as an effective form of protest but is aware of its limits when used as a form of movement building in isolation. Because of this she has also worked on various forms of networking and skills sharing in order to make sure that ideals such as sustainable living, autonomy and freedom of movement move beyond the 'activist ghetto'.

<http://www.corribsos.com/>

www.indymedia.ie/mayo

<http://www.rossportsolidaritycamp.11omb.com/>

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