

MINUTES OF 'WHERE NEXT?'

- A DAY OF DISCUSSION AT CLIMATE CAMP ON TUESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER 2009

Introduction

An outline of the camp process including the national gatherings. This day is for a range of things – navel gazing; self-assessment; where can we go from here.

HISTORY OF THE CAMP

Climate camp is part of a movement of humanity against the enclosure of space, air, and the planet – against enclosure by capital.

Various aspects of climate camp:

neighbourhoods

A way of doing things that emerged from the dissent network, in turn from the broad anti-G8 / No Borders movement in France, which was inspired by the Argentinian uprisings in 2001 where decisions were made by 'barrios.'

tripods

Used in Australian tree-defence campaigns in the 80s.

Consensus decision-making

From a 1970s feminist text 'the tyranny of structurelessness'. But most decision-making outside government, especially in indigenous groups, has aspects of consensus.

Affinity groups

From the anarchist movement in the Spanish civil war which led to the successful liberation of land, and from the 1920s Machno-vite movement in the Ukraine.

Occupation and land squats

we have been reclaiming land since time immemorial. More specifically from the peace camps of the 1980s and the German anti-nuclear movement.

Four themes of climate camp – direct action, sustainable living, movement building and education.

Climate camp 1 was outside Drax – a group of people from the dissent network – out of Horizone ecovillage in Gleneagles outside the G8 – pitched in explicit opposition to the 'carbon neutral G8'.

G8 Varg camp in France – where neighbourhood decision-making began.

The Dissent network – adopted the PGA (People's Global Action) hallmarks – principles that identified us including a confrontational attitude and a rejection of lobbying as part of the problem rather than the solution. Also identifying ourselves as specifically anti-capitalist. PGA as a global network reaching from north and south.

Climate Camp broke from previous camps by doing this on *our* terms, and setting *our* targets rather than on the terms of or as a reaction to the G8.

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMP AND WHY?

Not homogenous.

Main three objectives were movement building, creating a space of resistance & capitalising real and symbolic antagonism.

Why a social movement?

Overcoming the power of the fossil fuel economy – all else were working within the paradigm – oppositional power. something on a scale of other social movements was needed. Top down solutions would make the causes of climate change worse.

What kind of social movement?

Grassroots, participatory and self-organised. Challenging consumerism, growth & capitalism. Strong anti-capitalist ethos. Slipping between anti-capitalist / anti-growth – an ongoing debate. Needed to embrace civil resistance / direct action – to challenge the 'democratic norms' which don't themselves challenge the system, and because its not about asking others do do things.

But it is difficult to do this because of the atomizing ethos of consumer society which encourages only individual response. We wanted to reject this and come up with a collective solutions. Climate change as a social rather than an environmental issue. The Greens saw climate change as a separate environmental issue, whereas the left saw climate change as something not relevant to them.

Climate change is abstract – about the weather. We wanted to create symbolic moments of tension to break through this. This was the reason why the first camp was at Drax, Europe's biggest coal-fire station. Saying we'll shut it down was central to this idea.

Hedging our bets politically, we try and have strategic objectives on the way to our Utopian goals – stopping new coal; aviation expansion etc. We try to strike a balance between broad social objectives and immediate strategic objectives.

All of this(!) was distilled into movement building, education, direct action and sustainable living.

History is important but should be used to interrogate the present. This is our camp now!!

ACHIEVEMENTS

The broad picture. As part of a wider movement.

Achievements in terms of:

- Combining anti-capitalist agenda with effective action.
- Create a space for resistance
- building a social movement

Small group discussions on what we've achieved relating to the above,

Feedback:

Creating a space for resistance

- Creating an opening;
- inspirational – growth of the movement; sparking an ecology of diverse groups .
- formation of a radical identity through involvement;
- getting out of the ghetto? Links to NGOs etc.;
- spreading our tactics beyond the ghetto – direct action, affinity groups etc.

Building a social movement

- Opening up politics to others;
- creating a space that the police can't come into – normalising this;
- self-management;
- normalising squatting.

Anti-capitalism and effective action

- Capitalism being challenged in the mainstream;
- dialogue with media;
- root causes of climate change on the public agenda
- Heathrow & Kingsnorth on the backburner;
- Radicalised the NGO sector;
- concept of new coal challenged;
- police repression on the public agenda.

CRITIQUES OF CLIMATE CAMP – EXPLORING THE ISSUES

A range of critiques exists – some are contradictory if opposite extremes; some are personal gripes.

There hasn't been space in previous camps for listening and sharing critiques. If this isn't done, people might leave the process; we might make bad decisions that are contradictory or unhelpful to overall aims. We need to think about which of the critiques might block the process.

Different types of criticism:

- block – issue needs addressing or I will leave;
- effectiveness – issue needs addressing or won't be effective;
- partisan – this doesn't fit into my world so I will criticise;
- clarification – misunderstanding/ not listening;
- personal – bugbears, or history / relationships;
- opinion – not a criticism – need to make this clear.

Group discussion and feedback:

EXPLORING THE ISSUES

Relationship with the state

- Potential at the moment – unclear position – danger of co-optation as moving towards the mainstream – for the agenda to be taken away from us. Need to push in the other direction and create the space for resistance.
- Difference between placing demands on the state and making an accommodation with the state.
- Needs to be addressed – state is inherently linked to the problem.
- All short-term gains are state decisions so we run the risk of being an aggressive lobby group.
- Climate camp should support transitional demands e.g. Vestas etc..
- This camp isn't threatening anything – is why they're not here.
- Are we playing into police hands by not having a mass action at camp? If we shift back towards being more radical they will be able to use this as an example of their 'good' work.
- Confusion about engagement with the state – what we are pressing the state for? Using parts of the state against the state to strengthen ourselves. Using this years camp to train ourselves up for action.

Directness of our actions

- Not much direct stuff in London. No single big-impact target – reduced to symbolic acts of civil disobedience.
- Negativity of the actions that have been taken – more positive action needed.
- We don't distinguish between direct action and publicity stunts. Both are useful, but ...
- We focus on accountable, arrest-able actions – but we can't get arrested every day!!
- G8 & anti-road – physical interventions were successful – climate camp isn't following this.
- We need to find proportional action to the situation we face.
- We need to relate to other struggles and be part of long term ongoing mass-action.
- We need to explore the difference between types of action.

Inclusivity of our actions

- Festival feel – neglect of both defence and families.
- Neighbourhoods
- We spend too much time trying to include other people rather than engaging with other struggles.
- 2 types of inclusivity – how do you get the people in the room to feel included / who should be in the room? So, who are we and what are we about?
- Unvoiced political differences at gatherings.
- Camp process is frustrating but it does work.
- Hard to get involved with ongoing process; difficult to get involved if not living somewhere permanently.
- Too London-centric. Neighbourhoods are dis-empowered – existing outside the main process.
- Perception of sense of piety and smugness of people associated with the climate camp. People looking radical rather than being radically inclusive.
- Camp experienced as a festival with punters rather than everyone seeing the involvement process – rotas etc..
- There is an Illusion that having a militant radical message puts people off. We don't need

to be scared of this.

Coherence of our messaging

- We don't support smaller groups
- Using the mainstream media
- A lot of thought goes into the message that we do have – we need to admit that we have made decisions and stick to them.
- We're too quick to pass messaging on to the media team.
- Climate camp gives us a fake radicalism – we need to move beyond camping and change our name.
- There is confusion between stopping climate change and breaking down the state and starting again.
- How coherent can a message be in a network like this? Linking to a critique of the financial system was good. The underhand way things have to be done is problematic – we need to create spaces for resolution of issues.
- Discomfort with the key message: consumption/ growth/ making do with less. We don't come across clearly enough to people who have very little now.

Perpetuation of prejudice/ discrimination

- If climate camp sees itself as THE agency for change then we have negative interaction with those who also have agency;
- We're too focused on visible categories we discriminate against – gender etc. rather than age, experience etc.. Interventions we do make are done badly.
- Despite peoples best efforts, hierarchies are replicated within the camp. e.g. kids space with women; media mostly white middle class men ... needs to be a space where people can experiment with roles.
- More women than men cleaning the loos. Discrimination against children.
- Different chronotypes are discriminated against (those awake different times) - B society in Switzerland
- Invisible disabilities – climate camp favours those who are young and fit

Our diversity

- 'We're not dirty gypsies, we're people who believe in a sustainable planet' – quote in the Sunday Times. Worries at the fact that some people didn't see anything wrong with this.
- Report-back from Brixton – our occupation of space was seen as impressive.
- Lack of clarity about what it means to block decisions – someone was told she shouldn't be here. Shouldn't pressurise people if not vegan/ want to drink.
- Issue around trusting people when organising open things. Those involved are in a social group; those not involved are not in that group.
- We leave dealing with difficult people to a small group – throughout the year.
- From the outside someone who agrees with the camp may be deterred from coming in because they don't look or feel different enough.
- Lack of working class people and people from different races.

The dilution of our radical message

- We need to learn that the broad church approach doesn't work. Within the anti-globalstion

movement the people fighting for the middle ground were able to get there because of the riots.

- Culture of skirting around controversies – avoiding disagreement.
- Confusion that to be inclusive we have to give an inclusive message
- Dilution bound up with clarity – making clear what the message is
- Internal dilution. Not seen as an anti-capitalist movement by all.
- Not admitting that some things don't work. We need to try more radical stuff.
- A radical fringe needs to be open – not all or nothing.

Informal hierarchy – small groups making decisions affecting all

- There is one!
- We need to step aside and let stuff happen.
- Because organising is focused on national gatherings, heterosexual couples' worlds can fit neatly into that structure.
- We need to recognise that informal hierarchies are always present and address these continually.
- Decisions are often made quickly by email so participation depends on whether you're online at the time or online at all. Part of the problem is how quickly we need to make decisions.
- Some informal hierarchies are based on experience of using the process – we need to have less experienced people there.
- Informal hierarchies often come into existence to get stuff done. We need to be clear about how we are empowered / accountable.
- We need to stress the importance of teaching others about our role – more time for skill-sharing
- Too much workload? Is this the best way to do it? - this is why informal hierarchies are created.
- No clarity of decision-making process – how can we make it clear?

Unsustainable activism / division of labour

- Our current process isn't appropriate for where are movement has grown to.
- We don't recognise that activism is unsustainable – need to train others up before handing over.
- We need to integrate activism into everyday lives.
- Silver command wants to facilitate sustainable activism!!! we want to stop runaway climate change.
- Taking personal responsibility for not taking on too much. Need fun and rest. Just as important – get beyond the work/ play divide.
- We don't have structures set up to support ourselves long term.
- Group sustainability – we need to look at how we get people in to do this.
- There is a macho culture around capacity – stress and massive capacity should not be seen as a good thing
- Activism is a mystical division of labour – climate camp as a skill source or tool kit to take to others to exchange with them. We can't do the job ourselves.
- Hidden process from the beginning – method of secrecy is negative to our movement.
- We need to find a way to make sure that neighborhoods are working groups.

- We need to push jobs out to others rather than sucking them up ourselves.

Large-scale one off events are draining energy

- Creative people in a non-creative process – not the best place to put peoples minds to.
- This comes from a period where we had to make our own space as opposed to capitalism. This is changing – we should be responsive to society cracking open.
- Camp shouldn't be relaxing and fun for one group while others do the work.
- Climate camp cares too much about its message – missing what we actually want.
- We need to be thinking about multiple one-off large scale events.
- Have to travel to get here.
- We aren't practicing what we preach – not sustainable ourselves.
- Too much time talking about how to sustain 'us' rather than our politics.
- Haven't reflected enough.

Engagement with workplace & community struggles

- Other aspects of our activism are seen as peripheral rather than integral to our movement. How can we do this?
- We need to be embedded in the community for our movement to grow.
- Difficulty in recognising that were actually doing these things already but not under climate camp banner.
- Problem with seeing us as the agency rather than as part of a broader constellation of struggles – need to look at workplace struggles and see how they are constructed – ecological approaches spill over.
- Best way to answer the criticism on diversity.
- Need to broaden out to other transnational movements including the movement around migrancy.. climate camp needs to engage with these movements.
- We need to be more responsive in the immediate term. Need to be able to respond to local issues as the 'cracks open up'.
- Its hard to teach others about workers struggles – need to skill-share on this as a good way to go strategically.
- We need to change the jobs we do to create the world we want to see.

Group discussion reflecting on the above – how can we move forward in relation to these criticisms?

Feedback:

- The desire to solidify at regional level; to have regional rather than national events bearing in mind that this is difficult to do – strategies to negotiate the gaps re. Travel / only email contact.
- Us going to other groups rather than trying to get them to join us.
- Continuity with the camp – more permanent land occupations.
- Embrace buddying for tasks.
- National process isn't helping local solutions. National spokes council.
- Too much to travel to all meetings. We need to regionalise working group tasks. Rotate places doing each job.

- What we're doing today is the way forward – creating space for discussions.
- Bringing the camp to local campaigns works well - working with local communities.
- We deal with 'others' differently – challenge our own prejudices.
- National gathering once every 2 months; neighbourhood gathering every month.
- Radically change the way we make decisions.
- We need to document and skill-share
- We need to formalise how we introduce people to the movement
- Continue workshops throughout the year
- We shouldn't over-analyse ourselves
- Changing the name!

*
lunch!

*

Afternoon structure

- 1.Directions and objectives, e.g. Disengage from capitalism
- 2.Forms methods and tactics, e.g. Create an alternative economy using chick peas as currency
- 3.How will we organise to make this happen? e.g. suspend gatherings and set up permanent camps in each neighbourhood.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Facilitators recapped the camp's four aims; upcoming forums – climate swoop; COP15; e.on f.off; Bristol Co-Mutiny.

Connected groups include Plane Stupid, Climate Rush, Climate Justice Action, Workers Climate Action. Its a Movement of Movements.

DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Feedback from small groups discussions on directions

Group 1:

- Localise and expand through strengthening neighborhoods.
- In doing this we need to have an anti-capitalist framework
- We need to connect with other struggles.

Group 2

- Focus on just transition.
- Open new areas of contention.
- Get lots of people taking action.
- Orient ourselves to work alongside other struggles.

Group 3

- Empowering local communities.
- Continue to build a diverse grassroots international movement to stop governments companies and the military from destroying the environment (using direct action).
- Need to analyse the cause of climate change.

Group 4

- Provide space locally for radical ideas to spread and local communities to organise. Not as missionaries but providing space for people to develop radical ideas.
- Increase our diversity – make this a central aim.
- Don't lose national campaigns.

Group 5

- Global solidarity.
- Building a commons – this would incorporate climate change.
- Social Justice.

Group 6

- Create space for more action, radical and everyday.
- Other ideas: questions that need to be resolved – climate camp an umbrella or regional organisation? Camp could become forum space rather than single thing.

Group 7

- To explicitly state that we are building a better society that does not cause climate change and is resistant to it
- Decentralize.
- Diversify (but don't dilute).

Group 8

- Confront the capitalists and the state's use of climate change to restructure capitalism.

Group 9

- Create space for debate.
- Build a strong movement.

Large group shout-outs around the themes emerging:

Anti-capitalism?

We need to stop being afraid of our own politics;

educate people so its less scary;
debate the alternatives;
show that capitalism is physically impossible.

How do we build a strong movement?
Work with other movements;
speak to people in other countries we've never spoken to before.

How do we build locally?
Speak to local people we've never spoken to before;
gather on common ground;
show films.

Increase diversity?
Ask people to get involved;
join up our struggles with ones that already exists;

Spaces for debate?
Reclaim land;
squat buildings;
more extreme radical action to move the debate forwards;
spaces for action?
occupy a building in every town centre;
occupy the factories.

Group discussions on each of these areas – feedback:

Anti-capitalism

- identifying ourselves as anti-capitalist/ anti-authoritarian
- climate camp having a narrative referring to the commons as discourse
- roots of climate camp are or were quite explicitly anti-capitalist
- climate camp tackling the root causes of climate change i.e. capital
- need to make anti-capitalism explicit again?
- agreed we wish to tackle authoritarian tendencies that emerge
- movement away from focus on climate change
- we need a clear vision

Building a strong movement

- we need to emphasise neighborhoods as building blocks
- suggesting twinning neighborhoods with others around the world
- hallmarks or values should be defined – we need to go to the heart of what we are doing
physical presence in every neighborhood permanently?

Diversity

- similar to building strong movements
- diverse messaging for different communities

- expose media
- work with other movements
- better internal communication – take on what people are already saying
- outreach all year round

Localisation

create spaces within communities

- mapping local areas before infiltrating!
- understand the needs of the community and work with this
- mixture of permanent presences
- engage with local environmental groups
- more power to monthly planning meetings so more action and outreach connected to these
- link up local solutions
- day of local action

Space for action

- facilitate formation of affinity groups
incorporate into existing structures
- buddying up
- building a network of trainers and targets e.g. through crabgrass

Debate

- internal and external debate
creating time or space (physical or political) for this to take place
- many structures exist already – workshops and gatherings
- using existing social centres / new physical spaces such as shop in Gillingham / Transition Heathrow project
- making use of media – again both external and internal

Social justice

- working with other organisations
- challenging current forms of education
- looking at kids area in camp – more of a role for education
- acknowledging climate camp is about education
- policy solutions climate camp might favour

Connect with other struggles

- workers struggles mainly
- engage with struggles outside the flashpoints – relationships with unions etc
- plan the engagement rather than just rushing in
- build up lines of communication with international groups

PROCESSES TO DO THESE THINGS

To discuss in groups:

- decision-making processes
- national and neighborhood space

- working groups
- how we communicate

Current process overview:

We have monthly national gatherings moving around the country to try and include accessibility. Facilitators are arranged by those putting on the gathering; process group tries to make sure it goes smoothly. The camp is made up of different working groups to tackle different elements of the camp. All have remit, budget, email address & need to participate in gatherings.

This year, there's been a South-East bias to national gathering locations. Scotland and Wales have had their own camps and Bristol are about to put on different event. So these neighbourhood have self-decentralised. This time last year at Kingsnorth we said we'd stop it being built. Different projects within the process have been a challenge to manage – e.on f.off and international etc.. Also, working groups are now also meeting outside national gatherings. The finance process has also been very challenging this year.

International group working towards building for Copenhagen and building links with international camps. Part of the CJA, going to meetings in Copenhagen - participating in the wider network. Its been difficult to get going as we need more people; and difficult to have meetings when we're split around the country, but we have been using skype. Its a complicated process. We are connected into an international process – meeting of all climate camps is planned at Copenhagen.

Group discussions ... feedback suggestions:

- splitting up national process work and working group work
- turning national gathering into spokes meeting
- coordination of local and national process
- twinning
- working groups to be allied with neighborhoods
- internationalisation of the movement
- outreach through the year
- we need more time to talk about this! Conference to thrash out ideas. Accept that consensus takes a lot more time.
- separate political & organisational gatherings?
- make use of the spokes system – build neighborhood system like that.
- keep themix of geographical areas in working groups
- more skill sharing at neighborhood and national gatherings
- working groups should make sure people are working where needed
- all neighbourhoods to be involved in working groups
- more stuff back than discussed!
- Climate camp to be replaced by regional autonomous groups. UK national meetings as skillshare / discussions.
- use consensus for political rather than administrative decisions. Too bureaucratic. Some working groups too big?
- more time for debate like we had today. Have internal discussion and open this out to other groups at an urban convergence rather than a camp.

– have a strategy day once politics/ aims have been sorted out.

So, where next?!

- The Leeds national gathering on 3rd & 4th October, plus working group debriefs.
- Proposals about organising our structure should go to the Leeds gathering.
- Arrange neighborhood meetings prior to the next national gathering.
- Suspicion that by November the decision about Kingsnorth will be made – need to take action now!!

Where are other ideas going to go?

- Take proposals to neighborhoods / national gatherings / affinity groups as appropriate. Need to organise ourselves – send to process@climatecamp.org.uk
- We need to start networking now – swap email addresses etc..
- Need rapid response process for getting engaged – situations such as workplace struggles, floods etc..
- Post-Copenhagen – 2010 as year for international climate action. Host european wide strategy gathering then?
- Climate camp as completely different from the world around us – need to remember this.
- Choose a community and organise in that area – make a party of sorts.
- Can just get on and do stuff!!
- Talk to friends – why will/ will not people come to climate camps?
- Create local community groups on e.g. facebook.
- Doing stuff online – googlewave, wiki, crabgrass ... need skillshare.
- Let's address this 10 year old problem.
- Join the international working group.
- Logistics of neighborhoods if not in same city/ town etc..

We are super-amazing!