

THERE IS NO PLANET B!

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FROM SEATTLE TO COPENHAGEN...

After the depressing 9-11 “terror era” decade during which state rhetoric often succeeded in conflating direct action protest with “terrorism”, the UN Climate change conference in Copenhagen demonstrated a significant stirring of political will. As one of many young people inspired by the Seattle WTO protests a decade ago, it was hard not to learn some difficult if not bitter lessons in the post 9-11 “terror era” about the power and capacity of the state to shut down protest and direct action under the prerogative of national security; it is all the more heartening, then, to see some cracks in this edifice. Copenhagen was by far the most inspiring mobilization I have experienced since the pre-9-11 protests of the anti-globalization movement, which bodes well for the prospects of a re-emerging global justice movement; a movement in sore need of revival as the worst of the anti-globalization fears of old— the permanent exportation and disappearance of jobs and mass ecological destruction— are steadily realized. But it will need to articulate more clearly the green jobs-economic transformation connection in the public imagination, as well as grapple with the formidable rise in climate change skepticism.

The mobilization was to center around two main actions: a large march on the 12th of December and a day of direct action on the 16th. Many people were comparing the political organizing around COP15 to the Battle of Seattle a decade earlier: “if Seattle was the movement of movements’ ‘coming-out party,’ perhaps Copenhagen will be the celebration of its ‘coming of age’.”¹ With Seattle, the objective was to shut down meetings that were viewed as fundamentally undemocratic; with Copenhagen, the object was to force the parties to function democratically— to save the planet. For Seattle, the point was to oppose the WTO totally, which gave the various movements something to unite against. With Copenhagen and climate change, it is not only giving the various movements an issue to unite against, but perhaps more importantly, something to unite *for*.

¹ Quoted in Naomi Klein, “Copenhagen: Seattle Grows Up” [Online], *The Nation*, 11 November 2009. (<http://www.thenation.com/article/copenhagen-seattle-grows>).

Upon arriving, I headed off in the dark (the sun setting at 3 pm) to one of the convergence centers on the city's outskirts to attend one of the nightly action councils, through which different actions would be discussed and debated via consensus principles and break out groups. I was pleasantly surprised to see an old Dutch friend of mine, Roy², facilitating the action council, and we later lamented that there was no organized, queer, Pink and Black Bloc at Copenhagen, but were excited nonetheless. Over the next several days I would see several familiar faces from the anti-globalization era, a refreshing sign of a new convergence.

A main concern at the action councils was the apprehension over the passage of a draconian, foreboding law the month before that gave the Danish police the right to preemptively arrest anyone suspected of planning to break the law, and which extended custodial sentences for civil disobedience to 40 days³. Danish police had also amassed police and equipment from surrounding countries, particularly Germany, and one would often see German police vans with "Polizei" painted ominously in bold lettering drive by. In question was whether the right to free speech and protest itself was being undermined.

Familiarizing myself with the city and the mobilization in the run-up to the days of action, it was impressive to see the high level of effort and skill which the central direct action contingent— the Northern European based Climate Justice Action (CJA) group and the Danish based Klimacollectiv had put into organizing the different major convergence centers for housing, food, media, and action councils. (The city itself had a circus-like atmosphere: "Hopenhagen" signs were omnipresent— activists hijacked this complacent, advertising slogan with competing "Jokenhagen" signs; there was even a huge aluminum one-story box in a downtown square that read "Help Tom Cruise Save the Planet" which I thought was a joke; it wasn't.) On the one hand, the Klimaforum functioned as the progressive "civil society" alternative to the UN summit, with 50,000 participants and hundreds of panels, films and other events. On the other, the Klimacollectiv organized more than a dozen social centers and convergence spaces at strategic points around the city— for housing, food (buttloads of fresh vegetarian and vegan food cooked by volunteers was available three times a day all over the city);

² I would like to thank Roy Pullens for his valuable feedback on this article, and Costas Panayotakis for the suggestion to write it.

³ Carus, Felicity. "Denmark approves new police powers ahead of Copenhagen". *The Guardian*. 26 November 2009. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/nov/26/denmark-police-powers-copenhagen>).

a media center where activists could post updates and upload video to Indymedia and other sites; and two coffeeshop/info centers, where protesters could reconnect with their affinity groups to discuss and strategize. These spaces were filled with a diversity of plentiful literature and daily updates of the progress of the COP15, including omnipresent copies of an issue devoted to the climate change movement by the intellectually stimulating Turbulence Collective⁴— a journal/newspaper with contributions from a variety of international writers and activists— reflecting on the significance of the summit, the debate as to whether a New Green Deal would result in the “greening” of capitalism, and reflection on the mistakes and lessons of the past ten years of global justice activism from Seattle to Copenhagen.

CHANGE THE SYSTEM— NOT THE CLIMATE! GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION, DEC. 12

Dec. 12 was impressive. On a frigid but sunny day, the police estimated 40,000 marchers; but the organizers 100,000 for the “global day of action”— the title slightly misleading, as it was not direct action, but a central march, and coordinated events happening all over the world in conjunction with the march. It was the largest globally coordinated day of protest since the anti-war protests of 2003, with vigils and protests happening in nearly every country in the world⁵.

When the lines finally started moving, I walked up and down the protest line videotaping. The range of groups and individuals at the march was expansive: environmental groups from every part of the world; communists, feminists, anarchists, religious groups, peace groups; young people, old people, indigenous communities from vulnerable nations, island nations at risk of being submerged by rising ocean levels; groups from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, Oceania and North America. The congregation was even more diverse than that of the Seattle protests, carrying banners “**there is no planet b!**”, puppets, chanting, singing, and dancing. While protesters were peaceful as planned, soon reports came that police had moved into the march, penning protestors and exercising their new right to preemptively arrest hundreds of protesters. Hundreds more would

⁴ And Now for Something Completely Different?, *Turbulence 5* [Online](<http://turbulence.org.uk/turbulence-5/>).

⁵ *Global Climate Campaign* website, retrieved 10 May 2010. (<http://www.globalclimatecampaign.org/>)

be arrested later that day in street skirmishes and at prison solidarity demonstrations, for a daily total of almost 1,000 arrests.⁶ Climate Justice Action would later accuse police of human rights violations.⁷

FREETOWN CHRISTIANIA, DEC. 14

A couple of days later, in the evening after the action council meeting, I wandered with some newfound friends to “Freetown” Christiania—the famous center of squatting from the 70s—when a whole swath of the city, a former military base, was “occupied” and declared a “state-less” place, independent of Denmark; a place that is a remarkable experiment in local self-governance, in which the police are (generally) not allowed and which, unbelievable by US standards, has held the support of the majority of the citizens of Copenhagen over decades. Tonight was the “Reclaim Power Party” to celebrate the big march and prepare for the Reclaim Power direct action two days later. A huge circus or “revival”-like tent was serving as the hub of entertainment for a host of bands, “progressive” artists and multimedia performers, some of the best on the European scene. Earlier in the evening, public intellectuals Naomi Klein and Michael Hardt discussed the significance of the mobilization and the role of direct action in it. After eating some delicious, freshly cooked vegan food, downing a few low-priced beers, watching some great video/multimedia artists and listening to some great music, I wandered outside to hang out with people and maybe catch a puff of some of that good stuff I was smelling. (One of the main industries of Christiania is the sale of marijuana, illegal outside of it, though many complain the drug trade has come to dominate it deleteriously.) Then I discovered something was afoot. Bang! I heard various noises/explosions and less savory smells and wandered along with some others in the direction the noise was coming from. I moseied a ways down the street to check out what was going on and smelled tear gas and heard helicopters flying above. A conflict was in progress between police and protesters at one of the entrances to Christiania. With a surreal July 4th-like ambiance, exploding tear gas canisters, like firecrackers, were followed by periods of silence, then wafting tear gas. At first, it was possible for those of us outside the performance tent to move from one point of the tent’s outer circumference to another to escape

⁶ “100,000 Protest at COP15, Police Make Mass Arrests”, *Indymedia Denmark*, 12 December 2009. (<http://indymedia.dk/articles/1526>).

⁷ “Police Accused of Violating Human Rights at COP”, *Indymedia Denmark*, 12 December 2009. (<http://indymedia.dk/articles/1554>).

the gas. Yet as the drifting, creeping gas slowly became stronger and more all-encompassing, we would periodically retreat back into the tent for fresh air, trudging through its long narrow entrance, to re-enter the festival-like atmosphere, still oblivious to the outside developments.

Suddenly a wave of stifling tear gas overcame us from every direction, and people fled beyond the tent towards the northern end of Christiania. Bright police lights suddenly appeared and police seemed to be coming from every direction. A wave of panic pulsed through the fleeing crowd, and I found myself instinctively running amidst a pack of people heading somewhere. Not really knowing Christiania that well I gulped and just followed along, hoping someone knew what they were doing. Suddenly individual people started yelling a single (presumably) Danish word, repeating it several times. It was not a reassuring feeling to be so “in the dark”, and I felt myself panicking a little. More floodlights swooped and suddenly the small group I was with turned towards a double storied wooden building, opened a side door, and started going up some steps in the semi-dark. A door opened at the top of the stairwell, and a somewhat stern-looking thirty-something male came and stared at us. My heart sank briefly, as it seemed an error had been made and we were about to be turned away. He instructed us (thankfully) in English: “Ok. Everybody calm down! Come up here, sit down, take your coats off and look like you’re having a good time!”. It turned out we were in a pub of some sort, and indeed, dozens of people were sitting around at tables talking and laughing, having a good time, seemingly oblivious to the police raids happening outside, two stories below. I took off my coat, sat down and ordered a beer, and found some friends to chat with. We could see police lights flailing around in every direction outside, but were instructed not to crowd the windows by staring and thus attract attention to ourselves. Periodically we would get updates as to police activity, mainly that they were still there, and that they were searching people outside. Yet, remarkably, the police never came up to check on us! After an hour or two, though the lights were still outside flashing, I decided to venture out. To my chagrin, I was quickly flagged down by police and searched. Finding nothing suspicious, I was let go; almost 200 people had been arrested we found out later.

RECLAIM POWER! DIRECT ACTION AND PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY: DEC. 16

Several days later on the 16th, it was finally time for the main day of direct action. While there had been small protests every day since the Global Day

of Action, at which there had been arrests and some pre-emptive swoops, today was the big day.

The point of the day of direct action, as strategized during the action councils, was to have a largely (but not solely) symbolic protest in which a “People’s Assembly” would hold a counter-summit outside the Bella Center (where the UN meeting was happening) to discuss the “real” solutions to climate change that the UN meeting was ignoring. While a long shot, the People’s Assembly would also try to break in and “take over” the UN meeting. At the same time, disgruntled Global South, NGO and youth delegates would walk out of the UN meeting to unite with protesters in the People’s Assembly. Given the all-but-assured failure of this round of talks to produce a real agreement for action to prevent climate change, the People’s Assembly was to hold its counter-summit outside the Bella Center in an (unfortunately police-caged) parking lot area on the conference’s culminating day, when the big heads of state such as Obama and Wen Jiabao of China would finally arrive and try to tout a worthless agreement as a “success”.

I was originally thinking of joining either the Green bloc— the more direct action oriented contingent that was to take its own route to meet up with the Blue bloc /People’s Assembly group at the Bella Center— or the Blue bloc itself. Yet, having befriended and formed an affinity group with two young Germans staying at the same collective as me who had already been arrested once, we decided to play it safer and go as an “autonomous” group.

Autonomous blocs (mini-groups that would move more flexibly to avoid easy entrapment) and the highly mobile Bike bloc were meeting an hour later to give the Blue and Green blocs a head start as they marched to the Bella Center.

The plan was to meet up with the Blue Bloc/People’s Assembly as it marched from its original meeting point to the Bella Center. After getting woken up and searched by the police at our collective early that morning, by the time we got off the train near the UN’s Bella Center, police were swarming almost as much as the snow, so we ducked into a coffee shop and tried to look innocuous. The frigid, windy, snowy weather was getting worse. Unfortunately, we had no idea where the People’s Assembly was— my fellow Germans had signed up for the CJA text message service which was supposed to be the primary source of communication (the police arrested leading media spokesmen and communication organizers with Climate Justice Action early in the day, disrupting communication, we would find out later).

A young, red-eyed woman from Finland— still recovering from being pepper-sprayed at the Green Bloc— entered the coffee shop and joined our affinity group. She told us that most of the hundreds of people making up the direct action/Green Bloc had been trapped and arrested quickly, before even marching. Neither she nor even the roaming bike bloc members outside the coffee shop knew where the People's Assembly was. A jolly, bearded German from a mountainous area of Germany who talked like a walking leftist Wikipedia site also joined us, as did a young Swedish student, before the police swarm softened and we decided to venture outside the coffeeshop again.

After a few failed attempts to use the internet to look for updates on Indymedia Denmark as to the People's Assembly's location, we decided to try our luck heading closer to the UN meeting center, risking arrest.

With luck, we breached two police lines and finally entered the Bella Center's orbit, where a crowd of people had congregated. It was hard to tell at first what was going on. Suddenly, we recognized the chants, stage truck and samba band of the People's Assembly to our right! Somehow, the Assembly had made it to the Bella Center after all! Even more miraculously, the weather started to let up as if on cue. We found ourselves at a kind of toe-jam intersection underneath the elevated tracks of the train station servicing the Bella Center. Amidst boos, jeers, and chants from the crowd, we watched the police beat back the Global South delegates attempting to leave the meeting to join the sit-down by excluded NGO groups and the People's Assembly . It was exhilarating yet disappointing to see how close yet far everyone was from each other: the delegates; the chants, puppets and beating drums of the People's Assembly; the hundreds of "autonomous" bloc people; like pie slices in a pan separated by fences and barbed wire.

Running circuitously around an open field to the People's Assembly from the far back end, we were able to reach the People's Assembly when (fortunately) police seemed to lose focus waiting for their next instruction. People had already broken down into breakout groups to discuss how to build local, bottom-up solutions to climate change. I joined and participated in a group that discussed the problems of unity and how to overcome divisions within the movement, particularly between green, anarchist and socialist groups. People agreed that a priority should be placed on unity above the divisiveness of leftist identity-politics.

Another conversation took place over the role of the media in shaping people's consciousness/opinion of events happening and the need to expose

and confront it. Another conversation in my group was over a focus on local, community solutions to climate change rather than just waiting for top-down solutions.

After some time (during which discussions were being taped and broadcast through the world by journalists/activists) representatives of each group got up and reported back to the Assembly a summary of the discussions of each respective group as well as the “solutions” they came up with.

Feeling a certain sense of cosmic excitement with the significance of the event that was happening, I couldn’t help but think about what I was and/or wasn’t doing in terms of creating local, community-based solutions to climate change and ecological destruction at home. Suddenly the idea popped into my head of starting a collective, a queer one perhaps.

I was impressed with the collective I was staying at in Copenhagen— which had been very involved with resistance to shutting down the Ungdomshuset punk youth house a few years earlier— Mads’ (“Mess”) collective, who I had met at Queeruption⁸ in Barcelona in 2005 (an international, annual, migratory gathering of queer anarchists and anti-globalization types typically held in an occupied, urban space). I found myself reflecting on how and why there seemed to be so many collectives in Europe and so few in the US. Shouldn’t there be more collectives in the US? Didn’t collectives facilitate radical political and cultural action much better than working simply on the individual level? Why does it always seem so much harder to do these things in the US compared with Europe? Hadn’t I been so influenced by my experiences at collective living/communal experiments at different Queeruptions, the radical fairy sanctuary at Short Mountain⁹, the music festivals and gatherings at Idapalooza¹⁰? Flushed with a sense of the symbolism of the moment, I resolved to do my part to fight climate change and move in a more ecologically progressive direction by thinking more seriously about collective living.

⁸ “No Justice for Climate in Copenhagen”, *Indymedia* [Online], 16 December 2009. (<http://indymedia.dk/articles/1830>).

⁹ Short Mountain is one of the central radical fairie sanctuaries, located in rural Tennessee. The radical fairies are a loosely organized network of queer intentional eco-communities (sanctuaries), with roots in the gay liberation movement.

¹⁰ Idapalooza is an intentional queer eco-community nearby Short Mountain Sanctuary in Tennessee that runs a weeklong music festival every summer. It maintains relations with Short Mountain and the radical fairies but is more dyke and trans-centered, attracting a somewhat younger and more anarchist crowd.

MUSIC AND MEMORY: DAVID ROVICS AND BRAD WILL AT THE YOUTH HOUSE (UNGDOMSHUSET)

Later that day, I had the pleasure of seeing David Rovics, a folk-punk singer songwriter considered one of the best contemporary activist performers, in the “Nueva Cancion” tradition as he put it, perform at Ungdomshuset, the new youth house. A testament to the perspicacity of Danish anarchists and punks, the year-long battle over Ungdomshuset— a underground music venue and radical meeting space with a long leftist history— became a global cause celebre in 2007 and resulted in the attainment of a new youth house after the police chief said the resistance was bankrupting the police department¹¹.

David was supposed to perform earlier in the week at the Candy Factory, one of the convergence spaces (an artsy, situationist style place I had the pleasure of staying up all night once, jamming and singing with a slew of musicians and activists). Since it got raided that night, the performance was postponed till this evening at the new youth house. Dozens of youth and activists gathered waiting in anticipation, swigging 2 dollar beers and feasting on delicious, free vegan food on the second floor. Looking for something to read while I waited, I perused the small free library there, settling on Jose Peirat’s history of Spanish anarchism, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*, volume 1. As I read, I noticed David hanging and getting an update on local developments.

A couple of songs into the show, I was already quite moved. David seemed vaguely familiar, and I wondered whether I had seen him play before, knowing that he was once part of the NYC scene. The third song was a love song — or so it seemed at first— a sweet, highly moving lullaby. By the second verse, however, I realized it was a song dedicated to Brad Will, the NYC-based activist and journalist killed in Oaxaca in 2006 while documenting the bloody repression of the teachers’ strike there. Brad had been a fixture of the NYC activist scene from DAN¹² days on, a sort of church-lady-of-the-

¹¹ After being sold to a radical Christian sect, the squatters evicted and the building demolished, the 16 month struggle resulted in a publicly held meeting of the chief of the police in which he stated the police could no longer effectively battle crime, prostitution and drug selling because they were too busy fighting the punks. He argued that the city should just give them another house, which, ultimately, it did. The battle over Ungdomshuset is featured in the documentary *69* by Nicolaj Vijborg.

¹² Direct Action Network (DAN) was a confederation of anarchist and anti-authoritarian affinity groups, collectives, and organizations that was formed to coordinate the direct action portion of the anti-WTO (World Trade Organization) mobilization in Seattle in 1999.

left. I then realized I had heard the song performed before, by David himself at Brad Will's funeral. Overwhelmed, tears streamed continuously down my face, ones that wouldn't stop till the end of the show. David's spirited, high-pitched tenor voice, and stirring, reflective lyrics spoke to contemporary struggles as well as those forgotten— the hidden histories of the coal miner, the slave, the anti-globalization activist on the barricades, the ironies of crustier-than-thou anarchism— combining artistry with political conviction in a way with little parallel in today's musical or activist worlds. I felt lucky to attend such a moving performance on such a momentous day. It was a good omen for a movement re-emerging from the shadows of the terror era.

WHITHER THE WEATHER?

With over 1800 arrests, activists ultimately succeeded in getting the public on their side in critiquing police repression. At the post-action affinity group report-back, some would complain that the issue of police repression/brutality became a distraction from the larger issue— climate change— at stake in the protests.

All things considered, however, activists would later tout the Copenhagen protests as a “success”— by preventing polluting heavyweights such as the US and China from fopping off a mediocre agreement as a “real” solution and proclaiming a “victory” that could delude the public and sap momentum— increasing the chances for a “real” agreement at the next Climate Change Conference in Cancun in December of 2010.

A significant development out of Copenhagen was the emergence of a people's climate change counter-summit in Bolivia— called by Evo Morales in response to the failure of the UN meeting— to gather together progressive forces to develop an explicitly “anti-capitalist” climate politics. The ambitious final declaration of the April 2010 counter-summit calls for a global “referendum” on climate change and an international ecological/climate change court. While its specifically “anti-capitalist” language may have a benevolent effect on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which it was submitted as an official document, its ultimate impact remains to be seen.¹³

¹³ Mueller, Tadzio. “From Copenhagen to Cochabamba: Walking We Ask Questions 2.0?” [Online], 17 May

Recent events since Copenhagen, however, are extreme cause for alarm: the BP oil spill; a weak, languishing US climate change bill; and perhaps most alarming, a steep rise in climate change skepticism around the world. The tragic BP oil spill, which could very well become Obama's Katrina, may likely swing support behind the Climate Change bill in the US Congress— till recently upstaged by the healthcare bill fiasco and sidelined via the Obama Administration's inaction. Yet, activists will need to take seriously the troubling development of climate change skepticism. Partly due to the IPCC email controversy and its "leaking" by conservative newspapers right before Copenhagen, climate change skepticism has abruptly taken hold in many countries over the past year, including the UK, Germany and the US.¹⁴ This is in stark contrast to what seemed to be a swell of public support for a climate change agreement before Copenhagen.

Parallel to some of the developments on the left, many have noted the emergence of a more moderate, eco-friendly evangelicalism (a la Rick Warren), which has led some to argue for the decline— even the end— of the Christian Right era. Ironically, even the emergence of the Tea Party and the turn by conservatives to more fiscal concerns may seem to support this. Yet it is hard not to see in climate skepticism an echo of the suspicion of science reflected in the resurgence of anti-evolutionist beliefs— ie, the "evolution skepticism"— associated with the Intelligent Design movement; which polls consistently suggest are supported by half of the American public¹⁵. In fact, the Intelligent Design movement and its evangelical and social conservative allies are themselves fresh with success in getting their anti-evolution and other revisionist views stamped in US history and social studies textbooks.¹⁶ The climate change movement would do well to examine the linkages between climate change skepticism and the broader suspicion of science associated with the Intelligent Design movement. Indeed, the recently exposed support of the energy-intensive, right libertarian Koch brothers for the Tea Party movement and the attendant Glen Beck rally on Washington details as well their significant spearheading of climate-science

¹⁴ Rosenthal, Elizabeth. "Climate Fears Turn to Doubts Among Britons". *New York Times*. [Online], 24 May 2010. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/25/science/earth/25climate.html>).

¹⁵ *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*. "Public Opinion on Religion and Science in the United States" [Online], 5 November 2009. (<http://pewforum.org/Science-and-Bioethics/Public-Opinion-on-Religion-and-Science-in-the-United-States.aspx>); Religious Tolerance.org. "Results of public opinion polls on evolution and creation science". [online], Updated 20 February 2010. (http://www.religioustolerance.org/ev_publi.htm)

¹⁶ McGreal, Chris. "Texas schools board rewrites US history with lessons promoting God and guns". *The Guardian* [Online], 16 May 2010. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/may/16/texas-schools-rewrites-us-history>).

denial.¹⁷ And it is all the more interesting that Glen Beck and Sarah Palin brought the focus of their “Restoring Honor” rally back to “faith” rather than politics— calling for “spiritual renewal and even a “religious revival”¹⁸. How can the climate change movement help people think about climate change as man-made if they’ve been indoctrinated to remove the role of humans in evolutionary history? Climate change awareness is not just a struggle over policy but education as well, and climate change activists shouldn’t take public support for granted.

The climate change mobilization at Copenhagen could bode well for the chances of re-invigorating the global justice movement. While direct action did not play as large a role as it did in Seattle, it didn’t need to. The People’s Assembly succeeded symbolically in upstaging and deflating the false consensus the largest polluters wanted to project, and the mobilization was able to frame the terms of the debate in a way that exceeded my expectations. While conservatives and even some activists pointed out the contradiction of “wasting” carbon to fly to another continent to prevent carbon release, the relevant question, I think, is whether the “end” justifies the “means”— whether one thinks one’s attendance at a protest such as Copenhagen (with its attendant carbon waste in getting there) will lead to a greater reduction in carbon release in the long run than if one hadn’t gone: ie, a little carbon released now to serve the end of preventing the release of much more later. Similarly in response to the recent “hawkish” talk on the budget deficit: we need more stimulus spending and a jobs bill now to prevent a double-dip recession, and more global misery, later. Given the global turn towards austerity, an echo of globalization’s “structural adjustment” of yesteryear, one wonders if the Copenhagen mobilization missed a chance to articulate the ecology-jobs connection more forcefully. Whatever happened to that New Green Deal, Obama? The question is how to articulate this connection that speaks to the current economic quandaries— jobs and stimulus— while preserving its potential for real transformation— ie, moving beyond a capitalist, cancerous economy to a sustainable, non-capitalist one.

The People’s Assembly protest could have benefited from more people. While it may work for corporate meetings, videoconferencing cannot sup-

¹⁷ Mayer, Jane. “Covert Operations: The billionaire brothers who are waging a war against Obama”. *The New Yorker* [online], 30 August 2010. (http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/30/100830fa_fact_mayer).

¹⁸ Wallace Watch, (Fox News blog) “Wallace Unplugged: Faith Before Politics”. 29 August 2010. (http://fns.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/08/29/wallace-unplugged-faith-before-politics/_)

plant good old-fashioned warm bodies for direct action (or in the case of Copenhagen, cold bodies). “Virtual” communication is not an adequate substitute for the cross-cultural communication, bonding and networking between activists in different nations and cultural contexts and the rich knowledge that comes from experiencing other vibrant political cultures. The People’s Assembly counter-summit and its small group discussion of bottom-up solutions to climate change were as successful as they were partly due to such cross-pollination between different political cultures. It certainly got me thinking seriously about experimenting with collective, ecological living in a more organized way— something that sometimes seems harder to do in the US compared to, say, Copenhagen, and Europe generally— which perhaps has something to do with the predominance of individualism in the US, counterbalanced as it is by a strong tradition of quasi-separatist, often (historically at least) religiously inspired utopian, communal living experiments. Given our isolationist tendencies, it’s also nice for people in other countries to meet Americans who aren’t just there to bomb, evangelize, or commodify.

The economic crisis, however, may present a great time to experiment with collective, ecological living. With the probability of a double-dip recession— possibly depression— many of us will need to hunker down and live cheaply anyway. The burgeoning ecovillage movement may indicate a trend in this direction— some are comparing it with the Back-to-the-Land movement of the 70s. Today, however, it will need to focus on the urban realm for a more significant, less escapist impact. Climate change and the global justice movements would do well to focus on making the connection between the ecological and the economic re-fashioning of society. How to create jobs for people who desperately need them— stimulating the economy in the short term and heading off the deflationary winds that howl in the distance— while working to transform and re-orient the economy toward a sustainable, ecological, non-capitalist future?