Translocal Climate Justice
Solidarities

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CJ: Cochabamba Declaration, 2010

- Capitalist system commodifies everything
- ‘an imperialist system of colonization of the planet’
- Rejection of all market mechanisms (Carbon markets; REDD)

**Inherent Rights of Mother Earth**

- Demand that developed countries:
- Recognise the ecological and climate debt
- Radically Reduce and absorb their emissions;
- Assume the costs and technology transfer needs of developing countries (appropriate technologies);
- Assume responsibility for climate refugees: Construct an Adaptation Fund
Cochabamba Declaration/Klimaforum, 2009

Leaving fossil fuels in the ground (energy sovereignty; Renewables; climate jobs)

Reasserting peoples’ and community control over means of production (e.g. water sovereignty; energy sovereignty)

Re-localising food production (food sovereignty);

Massively reducing over-consumption, particularly in the Global North

Respecting indigenous and forest peoples’ rights
Climate Justice

- Multiple, shifting, and place-specific meanings: activists from different campaigns and political persuasions articulate and deploy climate justice frames in a range of conflicting ways (Hollifield et al., 2009; Building Bridges Collective, 2010).

- Third World Network: CJ as a battle between North and South states within the UNFCCC;

- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs leadership: CJ about the South's 'right to industrialize' in a carbon constrained world

- Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice: mainstream market environmentalism

- (‘REF 3’ comments, 2011).
mobilisations in Copenhagen, 2009
emergence, within the discourse of climate justice of 3 co-constitutive tendencies:
- antagonism,
- common(s),
- solidarity.
Climate justice “brings people into an antagonistic relation with capital” especially through “the active creation of different ways of organising existence” (Building Bridges Collective, 2010: 83)
climate justice activism

1. position climate justice activism in relation to broader antagonisms around uneven and exploitative social and environmental relations, as well as broader trajectories of contestation of neoliberal variants of capitalism.

antagonistic to “technicist, pragmatic and reformist attempts to bring environmental externalities into the marketplace through ecological modernisation” (Cock, 2006)
Climate justice antagonisms

- make power relations that make up neoliberal capitalism localisable and contestable
- Niger Delta oil
- Canadian Tar Sands
- Drax Coal Train hijack, UK
Climate Camp, Kingsnorth, 2008
Climate justice antagonisms

2. antagonisms generative of actions to create, defend and expand the common(s), especially given ‘accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003)

3. commoning as a spatial and social practice is generative of new solidarities that extend beyond the local (e.g. Routledge, 2003a; Featherstone, 2008; Juris, 2008; Routledge and Cumbers, 2009).
Climate justice: Common(s)

‘commons’.

those resources that are collectively owned or shared between and among populations as well as socio-nature - the air, water, soil, plants etc. of nature as well as the results of social (re)production and interaction such as knowledge, languages, codes, information (Hardt and Negri, 2009; Building Bridges Collective, 2010).

‘common’

the social process of being-in-common, a social relationship of the commoners who build, defend and reproduce the commons.
Climate justice: Common(s)

The common(s)

both territorial entity and social relationship and shape how and why antagonisms are articulated, and form part of the discursive terrain of antagonistic alternatives.

Dispossessions from poor, peasant and indigenous peoples’ of vital resources and attacks on their livelihoods have generated actions to create, defend, expand the common(s), which in turn generate antagonisms against those class interests which seek to undermine them.
Commoning evokes a political imaginary which is simultaneously anti, despite and post capitalist (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 2006; Holloway, 2010).

- prefigurative character of such practices (i.e. they practice the future that they wish to see) and the potential to generate solidarities (Franks, 2003).
Climate justice: struggles

Struggles for climate justice claims requires acting spatially in four interrelated ways (after Dikeç, 2001)

- acting from space: politically mobilizing from local material conditions
- acting on space: to appropriate or dominate it with a group identity (antagonism)
- acting in space: e.g. land occupations; electricity reconnections; (commons; food and energy sov)
- make space: creating conditions to expand public political involvement (forging solidarities)
The Bangladesh Krishok Federation
Bangladesh; vulnerable to sea level rises
- Limited coping capacity
- Increased landlessness and degradation
- Poor, depend on agriculture: cyclones, storm surges, floods, droughts
- Unequal land distribution; lack of credit
- BKF: 700,000 members
- Aaht Sangathan (2 million)
- Land occupations
Commons as Land Occupation:
Kurigram District, North Bangladesh, 2009
BKF acts from space, from material conditions of local villages

Creates alternative spatializations: land controlled by peasants; reconfigures political economy

Lack of resources:
The movement has not got enough funds to really expand, organize demonstrations, or train organizers at the thana or district level, and to fight the legal cases brought by landlords in the local courts in an attempt to stop the occupation. We are only keeping the movement alive at present. We are not really developing (Interview, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2009).
problems with local, national state

When we attempt to establish land for the landless, the district authority gives a response to the thana authority. They make a committee of social workers, development workers, local government members, and local political party members who decide if the claim can proceed. But the committee has no representatives from the movement. It is corrupt. They choose their own people to receive land

(Interview, Kurigram District, Bangladesh, 2009).
BKF acts on space appropriating it with movement identity

Occupied land crucial site for production of movement identities:

Then we occupy the land. We build makeshift shelters for the occupying families, and provide food relief until the peasants can sow *padi* (rice). The peasants must drink river water, and many get sick, until we have dug tube wells (Interview, Kurigram District, Bangladesh, 2009).
Commons as Land Occupation: Satkhira District, South Bangladesh, 2009

- 1998: 12,000 families
- Fish/shrimp economy
- Cyclone Sidr 2007: 3500 dead
- Cyclone Aila 2009: salt inundation
- Women: 4 hours per day for water
- Goonda violence
Peasant activists are attacked, beaten, burned, jailed, and their homes are burned. That is the reality that we face (Interview, Kurigram District, Bangladesh, 2009).

Alerted by blowing whistles and flashing torches, families defend the island from goonda attacks using glass marbles fired from catapults and wielding bamboo lathis (sticks). The government has yet to grant legal title to the poor and so the occupation continues (Interview, Satkhira District, Bangladesh, 2009).
BKF acts in space:
- land occupation
- street protests in Dhaka
- Meetings at village, district, national levels

BKF makes space:
- creating conditions for peasant involvement
- participation in networks:
  - La Via Campesina; People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty; World Social Forum/Asian Social Forum
Food Sovereignty: ‘different starting points, traditions and politics’ (Patel, 2009: 671).

Our own vision is based on food sovereignty. We are trying to link up with other organizations with similar climate change concerns. We are trying to build a network regionally, both in South Asia and Asia. We are also working to pressure the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment to take a clear position on climate change and incorporate food sovereignty into the National agricultural policy. We need popular pressure from the grassroots. We need culturally appropriate foods (Interview, BKF activist, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2009).
Climate Justice Solidarities

Solidarities forged out of the collective articulations of different place-based struggles (Featherstone, 2005)

requires negotiation of the politics of extension and translation of place-based interests and experiences (Katz, 2001):

struggles around the common(s) have been deployed as part of social movement strategies to generate translocal solidarities
Climate Justice Solidarities

Translocal: the connections, relations, and campaigns between different placed-based (but not place-restricted) social movements and other grassroots actors.
Common(s) as translocal solidarities

- LVC combined a commitment to the importance of localized forms of agriculture, and food sovereignty as an alternative to carbon-intensive agri-business etc, with a focus on translocal circuits of opposition to neo-liberalization (Via Campesina, 2009)

- Food sovereignty implies control over territory and biodiversity (commons); self governance; ecological sustainability; the articulation of cultural difference, etc. and has acted as a point of encounter, common interest and solidarity

- Climate change workshops, Dhaka, 2008
- Food sovereignty caravan 2011
CJ Solidarities

- more ‘local’ initiatives such as the Caravan: outcome of organising at the local, regional and national level also sees the convergence of activists from beyond Bangladesh

- more ‘international’ initiatives such as the mobilizations around the UN Meetings on Climate Change in Copenhagen in 2009 (BKF and LVC)

- Ongoing practices of networks such as LVC; Climate Justice Now!; Climate Justice Action; PACJA; Oilwatch
Translocal CJ Solidarities

facilitated by:
- significant mobilisation capacities
- regular communication
- responsibility for brokering
- Community exchanges (BKS with KRRS [India])
- shaped by the actions, policies, limitations and challenges posed by the governments
- ‘power geometries’ (Massey, 1999)
Climate Justice Solidarities: alterhegemony?

rather than a coherent climate justice ‘movement’

gerlapping, interacting, competing, and differentially-placed and resourced networks (e.g. see Juris, 2004; Routledge and Cumbers, 2009).

more work remains to be done for CJ to become effective in linking up and expanding social struggles (Building Bridges Collective, 2010).

‘Networks of equivalence’ (Purcell, 2009)

Gramsci: ideological struggle in civil society: coercion and consent
1. Shared ‘Common Sense’

shared notions of climate (in)justice can inform the practice of solidarity, potentially creating a shared ‘common sense’ (Gramsci)

“it is the result of an intentional act of creation. It is produced by groups who wilfully decide to construct a shared common sense, a collective way of both seeing the world and moving forward together” (Purcell, 2009:300).

*Klimaforum* and Cochabamba Declarations: ‘coherent programme for an alternative social order’ (Marais, 2011): post-carbon visions, planning, costings

Creatively and contextually linking economic and ecological crises
2. dynamics of uneven north-south class relations.

Campaigning for global justice in the South remains North-led .... [t]o be able to work in a true spirit of solidarity with the struggle of workers in the South, activists need at least some first-hand experience of living under oppression in the South (Yimprasert, 2009: 6).
Does vanguard politics empower mass movements?

- **Imagineers:**
  - conduct much of the routine (international) organisational work
  - mobilise resources
  - facilitate communication and information flows
  - ‘ground’ the concept or imaginary of the network
  - Discursive and material power inequalities

(Routledge and Cumbers, 2009)
Movements in South Asia have a limited resource capacity to fully engage in global solidarity, things like time, money, language skills and computer skills. Hence most Indian movements are not really ready to fully participate in a global movement, to commit to it full time, or to fully involve and engage the grassroots in it. Most movements in India are leader based and many of these leaders have neither computer skills nor English language skills and thus they profess to be uninterested in global organising since they so not possess the necessary skills for it.
Most folk who do global organising primarily like to travel and enjoy the benefits of conference hotels - they aren’t serious about global solidarity. The language of many movement leaders is influenced by NGO discourse and not by the language of the grassroots. We need to return to the grassroots since most global work is too much in the air (Interview, Kathmandu, Nepal 2006).
3. red/green

- role of unions:
- move away from narrow ‘workerist’ positions, that sideline or worse ignore militant NGOs (eg Focus on the Global South); peasant movements (MST; BKF); informal, precarious labour;
- In South Africa: create distance from what Marais (2011) terms ‘the limiting embrace of Alliance politics’
4. Political Parties

- Party-movement collaboration = context specific
- Deep distrust of party-process (Holloway, Tormey)
- ‘People’s Assembly’: CJN; CJA; LVC idea to meet Bolivia and Tuvalu delegates
- Potential allies amongst political elites (antagonism to capital, but possible collaboration/cooperation where it serves to strengthen the three key strands of CJ)
- Bolivia’s contradictions
- Against, Within, Beyond Capital
5. Diversity of tactics

- Gramsci: coercion and consent
- **Withdrawal of Consent**: NVDA – 3 levels
- Protest and persuasion (demonstrations)
- Noncooperation (strikes, boycotts)
- Intervention (blockades, shutdowns, hijacks; ‘nonviolent sabotage’)
- **In certain contexts coercion**: (Maoists in India; MEND in Nigeria; PCN in Colombia)
- History of NVDA = consent used in conjunction with coercion
Solidarity comes from the inability to tolerate the affront to our own integrity of passive or active collaboration in the oppression of others, and from the deep recognition of our most expansive self-interest. From the recognition that, like it or not, our liberation is bound up with that of every other being on the planet, and that politically, spiritually, in our heart of hearts we know anything else is unaffordable (Aurora Morales, 1998: 125).