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Do It Yourself: A Politics for Changing Our World

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Introduction: The (Re)birth of a New Kind of Politics

This chapter is about a politics of doing it yourself (DIY), or more accurately it is about doing it ourselves, collectively. There is nothing new about any of these ideas, but what I want to explore is what the shift towards DIY politics that has been quietly gathering force over the last few decades means for changing our world. And in relation to this book, what a DIY politics means for intervening in the continuing story of the rise and fall (and rise again) of neoliberalism. It is DIY because it doesn't wait for political leaders, party bureaucracies or elite summits to deliver social change, nor does it believe that they have any legitimacy or are able to do so. It believes that given the current severity and multiplicity of crises in our neoliberalised world, rapid change needs to occur immediately, and that groups and individuals at the grassroots have the requisite skills and abilities to effect substantial change as **Routledge** (this volume) also illustrates in the following chapter. Key to DIY politics is an explosive combination of making protest part of everyday life, but also making life into workable alternatives for a wider social good.

The spaces opened up during these events are necessarily fraught with tensions, disagreements and conflict, often reflecting the well worn divisions on the Left between majoritarian and minoritarian politics – or the horizontals and the verticals. The emergence of the movement of movements represented a clear tension and desire for a break with traditional models of Left political organizing, a rejection of ideological dogma in favour of fluid, creative and more shifting political affiliations that could surprise opponents, as well as participants. It rejected well worn routes to political change – central committees, organized marches and the ballot box. This newer kind of politics embraces a less clearly defined enemy, no set demands nor fixed programmes for state power, instead seeking to reformulate the future in the here and now. It is the revolution of everyday life writ large (Vaneigem, 1979).

In this paper, I draw on my own experiences within this recent history of the movement of movements including organising camps at the G8 and the camp for climate action, popular education grassroots activity with a group called *Trapeze* (see www.trapeze.org and Trapeze, 2007) and helping run an autonomous social centre in Leeds called the Common Place (see www.thecommonplace.org.uk). Given the recent crisis of capitalism, it's a good time to reflect critically on some wider meanings and instructive lessons for this kind of political organizing. The historic meeting of the G20 in April 2009 showed how the global elite are committed to disastrously reviving the old high-output, high-growth economy rather than making the necessary shift to a sustainable, low growth, participatory carbon-neutral global society. This is a huge failure and a huge opportunity. It shows that the movement of movements was right ten years ago at Seattle, but the movement was too young or too weak, or the ideas too much against the times, to have the impact it desired. What has been reconfirmed is that the global elite have no interest in the goals of social movements for greater equality, sustainability and freedom, and

that they remain an obstacle for, not a vehicle to, realising them. The triple climatic, energetic and financial crises that seem to engulf us have opened up a junction point and an amazing opportunity.

Much of what motivates me in writing this and stating some principles is that the progressive Left has been so weak recently in its ability to justify, demand and argue publicly for the implementation of our utopias. And the far right will only too willingly step in here if progressives do not (see **Birch *et al.***, this volume). In the cracks that have opened up in the capitalist order since the financial crisis of 2007-08 we now need to (as many of us have tried to do for years) make our alternatives seem feasible and sensible, not crazy and left-field. In this spirit of reflection, debate and renewal for progressive Left politics, I offer seven principles which can contribute to a strategic appraisal of what these movements, groups and initiatives have achieved, and can achieve, in terms of promoting radical and grassroots social change.

DIY politics

DIY politics have been a constant presence within human societies. Much philosophical writing from libertarian and anarchist traditions have shown that people can manage themselves, freely and co-operatively without the need for government. The nineteenth century Russian anarchist and geographer, Peter Kropotkin (1972) for example, detailed at great length how mutual aid has been a cornerstone of human life, without which we would not have survived while Harold Barclay (1990) has shown how people have long thrived without government. Such sentiments tap into deep historical currents which have resisted shifts to centralised, institutional forms of government. They link to a range of movements struggling for greater political autonomy, liberty

and self valorisation such as the English Civil war Diggers, the great slave rebellions, civil rights, peace and feminist movements. While many radical movements have been deeply tainted by associations with the failed social experiments of the Soviet era, this desire for self-management goes far beyond state-imposed experiments. In fact, the key to understanding DIY politics is to regard it as an ordinary, everyday affair. Most people's quibble would not be whether people can manage their own lives, but given the complexities and problems of our current society, it doesn't seem a very likely or appealing option right now. Addressing this concern is the core of this chapter.

Notwithstanding the deep roots of doing it yourself, recent strands of particularly creative and confrontational DIY politics can be traced to the European Situationist (Debord, 1983) and autonomist movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Katsiaficas, 2004), the DIY movements of the 1990s drawing on the energies of Earth First! and the free party, rave scene (McKay, 1998) and the more recent emergence of anti-globalisation activism often inflected with a strong anti-capitalist sentiment (see **Shaoul**, this volume). The term 'movement of movements' is often used to describe this latter turn, a vibrant hydra-like disorganisation with no clear centre, defined through the idea of 'one no, many yeses', and which has networked groups across the world and mobilised large international days of action (Mertes, 2004; Notes from Nowhere, 2005; Kingsnorth, 2004, see also **Routledge**, this volume).

The 1999 World Trade Organisation demonstrations in Seattle became a sacred birthing ground for this movement, and subsequent mobilisations against summits in London, Bonn, Prague, Ottawa, Cancun, Gleneagles, Evian to name a few, helped the movement's ideas and tactics to develop. Such events reflect a unique combination of being against corporate globalisation and the brutalism of the 1990s neoliberal Washington consensus (see **Birch and**

Mykhnenko; van Waeyenberge, this volume), while showing a passion for social and ecological justice. It insists on the need to build a new internationalism based on global north-south solidarities taking inspiration from examples such as the 1994 Zapatista uprising, the Argentinean uprising in the wake of the 2001 crisis, Brazil's Landless Peasant Movement and Via Campesina. Networks such as People's Global Action have emerged to give a voice to this 'movement of movements' which has questioned the legitimacy of sovereign nation states and self-appointed elite international institutions. Many contemporary examples reflect the continuing energy for self organised DIY politics such as the protests in Greece and Iceland in late 2008 and early 2009, the network 'We won't pay for their crisis', the wave of supermarket sit-ins and 'bossnappings' in France during 2009, and factory occupations by sacked workers such as those at Visteon in the UK in April 2009

Detours in DIY Politics: Autonomous Social Centres in the UK

Before I introduce the principles, I want to undertake a brief detour into one aspect of this DIY politics that I have been involved in: the UK social centres movement. Since the late 1990s the UK has seen the growth of a network of self managed spaces and collectives. The importance of self-managed autonomous spaces for resistance and creating alternatives to capitalism cannot be understated. They have been key in directly confronting the logic of capital by reclaiming private property and opening it back up to the public as non-profit, non-commercial zones. They have created spaces in which self-organisation, solidarity and mutual aid can flourish. Finally, they have become spaces for uniting social movements, strengthening local activism and thinking 'strategically'.

I have covered in detail the particular story of social centres in the UK elsewhere with others (see Hodkinson and Chatterton, 2006). But for the purposes of this article it is worth restating some key points. Social centres have developed through a number of waves, emerging first under the guise of anarchist Autonomy Clubs of the 1980s inspired by punk, anti-fascist and Claimants Unions activists. The mid 1990s saw a wave of squatted spaces emerge inspired by the UK free party and anti-roads protest camp culture, while the late 1990s saw many activists involved in anti-global and more conscious anti-capitalist activism, through which a desire emerged for more permanent activist bases or hubs for organizing. It was not until the early 2000s after activists visited and engaged with the daily militancy and innovations of the occupied *centri sociali* in Italy, was the idea translated into the UK, inspiring a whole wave of new centres.

The current network of social centres in the UK, numbering over a dozen, are bases for a range of radical, anti-authoritarian political groups such as No Borders and the Camp for Climate Action and have now become a recognized part of the UK activist infrastructure, hosting tours and national meetings of activists (see www.socialcentresnetwork.org.uk). They have attempted to create welcoming, professional spaces to avoid associations with squats and attract a broader audience. Typically social centres contain a mix of public talks, film screenings, reading areas, vegan cafés, bar and gig spaces, food growing areas, art spaces, open access computers, free libraries, language classes for refugees, free schools and classes and free meeting space. Some have set up workers co-operatives to run the buildings and most are run by regular open assembly meetings using consensus.

While they are far from perfect (problems include gender imbalances, creeping professionalisation and levels of bureaucracy, overwork, lack of sustainability, inclusion etc),

what I have found most instructive about social centres from my experiences with them is that they represent a huge outpouring and confidence in our ability to do it ourselves – to manage our own infrastructures based on different, largely non-capitalist, values. They recognise the importance of establishing stable bases for developing and testing out alternatives. In light of the current financial crisis, their potential benefits have only been magnified in terms of providing capacity for resilient communities that can organise and educate themselves, provide relevant services and bring people together in open, non-corporate spaces. In our times of plenty in the west (which may be drawing to a close), social centres have been quietly preparing and teaching these lessons.

Seven Principles for a Politics to Change our World

Value Self Management, Mutual Aid and Collective Working

Self management, collectivity and mutual aid have become core motives of the kinds of DIY politics promoted over the last few years. Its value today for contemporary grassroots political organising is how to build in the ashes of the now discredited neoliberal project which purposefully attempted to erode a sense that collectivity and mutual aid were worthy aspirations for any society (that ‘there is no such thing as society, only individuals and families’ as Thatcher said).

We are not talking about self management in the liberal-individual legalistic sense embedded in enlightenment values where individuals are cut adrift from responsibility, and acquire a legal right to freely maximise profits in the market. Rather, it is self management that builds times and

spaces to bring individuals together, undermining the logic of private ownership and recognising that our individual needs are actually met collectively. Collective self-management builds a common ownership and management of spaces and services and erodes the capitalist logic of accumulation for individual gain. It urges us to recreate and reclaim ‘the commons’ in its many forms: material, discursive, knowledge based, resources (see De Angelis, 2007; Midnight Notes, 1991; see also **Tyfield; Lohmann**, this volume).

Self management and mutual aid are realised through our daily encounters and activities with others. John Holloway (2007) stresses an important difference here between the externally imposed abstract, wage labour, and more self-determined useful doing. It is through useful doing, as opposed to work, that we struggle against the imposition of capital and capitalist work geared towards generating surplus value and the exchange of commodities. Working collectively, undertaking useful, life affirming activity allows us to revalue work not just as a means of securing employment, but to develop meaningful relationships with others.

A priority is to find ways out of demoralising and low wage jobs and developing ways of living which meet our own needs, not those of the money economy. In collective work, combining manual and intellectual labour allows us to appreciate the importance of stimulating our minds and ideas, but also learning practical skills to enable greater self-reliance. Mutual aid, developing an ethic of care for others and creating voluntaristic and free support structures, is both individually empowering and also provides incredibly useful social networks. It is not about waiting for politicians, planners, or local business elites and the media to tell us what will happen. Self management is embedded in a belief that we can do-it-ourselves; that given the right resources and circumstances people actually have the necessary skills and ideas. It is about

debunking the role of the expert – the architect, the planner, the teacher, the politician. Clearly, much leg work is needed so people gain the self belief that they can manage their own lives.

Many micro examples are flourishing here from self managed communities and eco-villages, workers co-operatives, syndicalist unions, self-build housing, workplace organising and strikes. Examples range from Mondragon in the Basque country involving several thousand members and networks of shops and banks through to small co-operatives of a few people who manage their own workplace. Carlsson (2008) has highlighted the ‘nowtopians’ –the dumpster divers, critical mass cyclists and back yard biofuel engineers who are building the future right here through useful doing outside the logic of capital (see **Routledge**, this volume). We are likely to see an increase in this community directed resourcefulness as people begin to reassemble the scraps of the neoliberal economy.

Be Committed to Participatory Organising and Direct Democracy

A significant critique of representative democracy exists within DIY politics, outing it as no more than a liberal oligarchy where the state guarantees the reproduction of the existing social and economic order through its legal monopoly on violence. Direct democracy, in contrast, is based upon self-governance which facilitates the participation of all. At times it is a slow and difficult process, but Benjamin Barber (1984, p.115) described it as strong democracy, as opposed to the weak democracy of most liberal states:

Strong democracy is a distinctly modern form of participatory democracy. It rests on the idea of a self governing community of citizens who are united less by homogenous

interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions rather than their altruism or their good nature.

DIY politics is an expression of this strong democracy which seeks a reinvention and reinvigoration of political process, decision-making and communication through experimentation with particular organisational principles such as face to face democracy, decentralisation and consensus (Seeds for Change, 2003; Starhawk, 1988). These are flexible tools and creative processes acting as building blocks for resistance. They value the input of all comers and attempt to reinvent everyday social relations and encourage participants to communicate more consensually. They have drawn on tools for direct democracy such as the use of affinity groups (action or organization in small groups sharing common goals), spokes-councils (a federated structure of the previous groups, offering proposals and making decisions at a wider level), and consensus decision-making techniques (a rejection of decision making by majority voting, hierarchy and committee) (see **Routledge**, this volume). Rather than trying to impose the will of the majority, tools for direct democracy attempt to highlight, acknowledge and deal with differences.

Many anarchist and autonomous groups have, rightly so, been wary of the idea of organisation. The traditional Left is often characterised, and with good reason, as containing dead end bureaucracies, ineffective party and union officials, declarations and marches, all leading to questionable amounts of empowerment, action and change. Instead, direct democracy values flexibility and innovation and seeks constant renegotiation and reaffirmation rather than dogmatic adherence to fixed leadership and hierarchical structures. These characteristics can,

given the right attention, create a certain robustness in the face of authority and surveillance, and lean, flexible structures allow quick movement as events happen. A key aspect is biogregability, where groups compost back into the subsoil of political activism, often reforming anew. This renewal and regeneration is a healthy part of the lifecycle of protest and dissent, guarding against hierarchies and rejuvenating energies. Again given the right commitment, experimentation in organisational form allows opportunities to evaluate, reflect and change, and the participatory nature of this process means that groups evolve to reflect the needs of participants.

Clearly there are limits here too. The temporary nature of political activity and groupings can also erode effectiveness. The key is to build capacity for sustained action in ways that also guard against hierarchies, cults of leadership and disempowerment. Other challenges exist such as the difficulty of shifting from passive consumers to active participant. The dominance of paid work makes most people sceptical to the idea of voluntaristic participation and outside pressures of debt, work and family prohibit many from getting involved. Direct democracy is also an experiment in group self discipline – how do participants (re)regulate themselves and others, not relying on values in our individual capitalist lives, but those to which we aspire to in our collective non-capitalist lives? Many people are, understandably, wary of self-policing, but recognition of collectively agreed norms is essential for the health and continuation of groups.

Build Infrastructure that Meets Needs Without Increasing Dependency

Beyond the temporary autonomous zone (Bey, 1990) communities of resistance need to build parallel infrastructures, which genuinely represent non-capitalist values and are embedded in

activities that represent the needs of a locality. Many aspects can be envisaged here – community bakeries, free shops, food programmes, skill exchanges and local trading systems, local currencies, seed swaps, printing presses, home schooling, local history walks, retraining and so on. A key aspect is to build this infrastructure in ways that builds a commons, where access is unmediated by the logic of work and capital. As welfare state infrastructures decline, outlined earlier by **MacLeavy** (this volume), and are made into new income sources for the private sector, what kinds of infrastructure can, and should, be built in its place? Can these meet our desires and needs right here and now and what are the consequences of building these spaces? Key issues include capacity for building and maintaining infrastructure, making wider links and strategic alliances with groups, sharing resources, managing conflicts, securing resources. Of particular importance is the need to embed activity that responds to actual needs, empowering without creating new dependency cultures.

One of the most difficult elements to resist is the seduction of social enterprise and the rise of enterprise culture at the grassroots. One concern which Mayer (2003) raises is the extent to which activist projects are becoming cornered by modes of neoliberal governance based around mobilising ‘social capital’, becoming entrepreneurial and chasing grants to maintain their activities. This is compounded by the fact that the decline of generous welfare benefit regimes which supported ‘dole autonomy’ (non-market labour) has shifted activists into professionalising and monetarising formerly more confrontational political activity. Some activists have found sums of money, for example, to provide activities and services for the most vulnerable groups in society such as the homeless or asylum seekers/refugees. One unintended, very important and often overlooked, aspect of this is that it can create a mini local welfare state, unburdening the local state of their statutory responsibilities for these vulnerable groups, without any shifts in the

allocation of taxes. The local state is then free to retreat to its core functions of promoting business and inward investment. In such a context, activists need to organise and make the case that if they are going to take on selected functions of the local state then the ownership of public assets and the payment of taxes have to become renewed arenas for political contestation.

Within such neoliberal governance (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; see **Jessop**, this volume), these groups need to consider what kind of relationship, if any, should be maintained by the state. Strategically, is it the right thing to do to opt out and promote self management? It is worth keeping in mind that poorly conceived and implemented forms of service provision can be as damaging as dependence on external ones if they are temporary and vulnerable to closure by the state. Nevertheless, all groups need to consider how to deal with the local state as it seeks to discipline, neoliberalize and depoliticise community activism.

Embrace the Impure, Messy Politics of the Possible

One of the most liberating aspects of recent political organising is that they invite participants to directly engage more experimentally and creatively with what social change means. When Holloway and Pelaez (1998) talked about ‘reinventing the revolution’ they were referring to a more participatory process – a revolution as the Zapatistas say, ‘that is made by walking’. The very idea of a revolution, then, is reconceptualised in a number of ways at a more mundane level as rupture through a million bee stings rather than a great dagger blow (Holloway, 2007); through ordinary people doing extraordinary things rather than heroic feats by a vanguardist party.

On this journey, participants aim to self critique their own practice and impacts, and seem to be genuinely open to dialogue rather than self congratulation. Following Routledge (1996), this kind of dialogue creates ‘third spaces’ between those who self identify as activists with wider publics creating new and unforeseen political identities. In this messy world of the possible, the process is as important as the outcome of resistance, that the journey is an end in itself (Wright, 2006). In the terrain opened up by the failure of state-based and ‘actually existing socialism’, DIY politics allows a rethinking of the idea of revolution – not about seizing the state’s power but, as Holloway (2002) argues, ‘changing the world without taking power’. However, we are not seeking the absence of structure or order, but the rejection of a government that demands obedience (Castoriadis, 1991).

DIY is a politics of possibility, where activism is also a post-capitalist politics for what comes next (Gibson-Graham, 2006). This spirit of possibility is used to counter the politics of fixity of representative politics. It is a politics of prefiguration (‘be the change you want to see’ as Ghandi said) which aims to build achievable future aspirations in the present through an accumulation of small changes. It is about embracing ‘power together’ rather than power over. A constant sense of opening and possibility, of becoming, is at the heart of this political identity - that projects are not fixed and can be altered or renegotiated by the creative energies of participants. DIY, autonomous politics embraces political identities that are open, incomplete, complex and multiple. There is a suspicion of Manichean politics, of its simple binaries, dividing activist from ordinary citizen, left from right.

Part of the messiness of politics is creating space for emotions. It is not just intellectual arguments, but also emotional connections which are key to building participatory politics (Pulido, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2006; also **Routledge**, this volume). We need to dispel notions

that activism is emotionally objective. Awareness of our emotions allows us to ask - are we promoting explicit, cooperative ways of interacting which are rooted in a deep desire for mutual aid, to develop a sense of care and responsibility for others? The everyday emotional work of caring in political communities, especially by women, is often overlooked but is central to building a sense of belonging. We need to be attuned to the sheer amount of unequally distributed effort which goes into the social reproduction in political groups.

Get Out of the Activist Ghetto - Be Accessible, Relevant and Fun

Recent activism has seen a tendency to reach out beyond what is seen as the activist ghetto as part of a conscious political strategy to engage more broadly about the usefulness of radical, anti-capitalist ideas and the potential for self management in people's daily lives; see **Hinojosa and Bebbington** (this volume) for examples from Latin America. Many involved in DIY, horizontal politics are aware of the need to avoid internally looking ghetto politics, and that subcultural spaces often fail to provide bridges between many people's daily reality and how radical ideas might be useful to that reality. We need to tease out the way that people's problems impact on their everyday lives, avoid judging people and encouraging them to express themselves in their own way. Activists too often forget that political engagement is also about looking at where people find themselves and how they understand what's going on around them.

The key issue at stake, then, especially in our media saturated societies is one of relevance, accessibility and messaging. One of the challenges is how progressive political groups on the Left need to shake off associations with dogmatic/moralist politics and promote accessible, alive, relevant and fun politics. In particular, how can anti-capitalist ideas be made relevant and gain in

popular currency, and be seen as a rational and feasible response rather than a minority concern. Duncombe (2007) explored how progressives often fail to capture the popular imagination and are often perceived to be dogmatic and moralistic as they don't creatively use the more spectacular elements of consumer culture (however, see **Routledge**, this volume).

The historic challenge which remains, as Wendy Brown (2002) reminds us, is to make whatever micro tactics we are involved in seem feasible and exciting. Humour can play a key role in generating common identification and solidarity. Saul Alinsky, the grandfather of community organizing, used to say that ridicule is man's (and assumedly woman's too) most potent weapon, and that a good tactic is one your people enjoy (see Alinsky, 1972). Many groups have taken these ideas seriously, creating fast moving, media savvy tactics that make people think and laugh, attempting to be more professional and welcoming, pitching themselves on the intersection between subculture and pop culture with greater attention to aesthetics and design. However, as we have seen this raises criticisms of co-optation and a creeping lifestylism. But attention to message content, distribution and the messengers are all still crucial. What is required is a clear, identifiable message, a solid analysis of your target audience and how you will reach them. Creating messages that tap into the way people see the world and pick up on popular narratives, opens up possible areas of dialogue between the radical and the everyday.

Think and Act Strategically

Thinking strategically and planning are the often overlooked elements of contemporary DIY politics. Spending time to fit our activities into a longer strategy, reflecting on tactics and making time to plan is also essential for the success of any group or initiative. It's only through these

kinds of steps that a group can understand where it is, how well it is doing, and if it is meeting its aims. A recurrent question for those embarking on DIY, less rigid political forms is what would it actually mean to win?ⁱ This is a tricky question when there is not a clear enemy (global capitalism, neoliberal elites, poverty, carbon criminals to name a few), and what is being challenged is an internalised social relation of capitalism possessed in varying degrees by us all. So what does social change look like and what does it feel like when it comes? When can we confidently say that we are making progress towards our goals? One response is that winning is related to process as much as content – it is about the way we struggle as much as the issues we are struggling on. If in the process of building a movement against climate change, for example, we are simply reinforcing market based solutions or building redundant bureaucracies, can we claim that victories for the kinds of politics we espouse?

Additionally, creating a series of steps as a goal, rather than aiming too high is essential to building a campaign that has coherence and is legible to those that might want to join. Setting aims and objectives can be done poorly, quickly and in a way that raises expectations about what can be achieved. But given enough time and focus any group can develop a core goal or aim, a clear target, and objectives to work towards. Knowing your enemy, as well as your allies, is crucial and depends on good research. These aspects don't have to be immovable, and they should be flexible and change as the group and its values change.ⁱⁱ Bill Moyer (2001) in his *Movement Action Plan* highlighted the need for clear organizing, and an awareness of where a movement is in a longer cycle of growth and decay. After an intense moment of victory, many groups misinterpret periods of inactivity as failure rather than quiet growth and consolidation. Moyer has stressed how social movements need to build towards structural change by proposing new alternatives and worldviews rather than just opposing symptoms. A key lesson here is not

relaxing back on false hopes that any gains secured will be permanent. Problems emerge when it is actually unclear what does come next or what our hoped for future looks like. Participatory visioning and action planning can help tremendously here, where collective energies are focused on planning actions, visioning alternatives and campaigning strategies.

Disorganizations and horizontal politics can also become over fetishised, seeing organization building as a sure route to co-optation and deradicalisation. But thinking strategically is not the same as succumbing to institutionalization. As Hardt and Negri (2000) outline, tactics of desertion, exodus and nomadism, allow us to reject established forms of institutionalized power and build more mobile counter-powers from our own resources. The process of institutional renewal needs to relate as much to group process as to content. The former without the latter can lead to lack of focus, and the latter without the former can lead to wasteful organisation building. Our strategies should look to be inter-connected and expansionary, making strategic alliances where practicable. They should also appreciate that reforms can lead to a demand for more reforms and create a non-reformist situation (Albert, 2004). A key lesson of the most successful campaigns is to recognise the long haul. There will be compromises along the way, but not so many that they undermine group values. Groups also need to be ready to take risks and defend gains. And this is where strategic allies can come in extremely useful, especially for smaller micro examples.

Evaluate and Reflect

Evaluation and reflection is an essential but often overlooked element of building and sustaining movements for change. In our urgency to move on to the next stage or action, we often overlook

the need to reflect on what is and isn't working, how people feel, what impact we are having and what potential problems are ahead. It often seems a diversion from the real business of activism out on the streets. We need to evaluate to be realistic about what anti-capitalist ideas can achieve, and in what ways they spread. It is important to recognize that reflecting on our practice allows us to refine our analysis and improve our practice. Regular times should be built in for evaluation and reflection so it becomes part of the natural cycle of politics.

Being critically evaluative is about being brave enough to acknowledge what isn't working and being prepared to change course. It is also about being clear on the differences between outcomes and impacts. Our activism should not be just about generating outcomes. What we are looking for is impact in terms of real change. And this should be embedded in our goals which we need to constantly return to. Consultations and militant co-inquiry are useful techniques to explore what issues to fight on. This kind of work has been used successfully in 1970s Italy and more recently in Argentina in the 2001 crisis (See Marta Malo, 2005; Holdren and Touza, 2005; Colectivo Situaciones, 2004).

Conclusion: From the Ashes of the Crashⁱⁱⁱ

In this paper I have focused on the idea of DIY politics as it contains so much potency for empowerment and galvanising immediate action in the face of the multiple crises of our neoliberal age. I have outlined seven principles, which I hope will be of some use in terms of critically evaluating and offering ways forward for building a politics for changing our world and for challenging the hegemony of the neoliberal market economy and market-society. This kind of politics is by no means a simple or straightforward process. It is not doctrinaire, well

organised, coherent and easily defined – and nor should it be. It is simultaneously in, against and beyond capitalism. Its complexity and shifting nature is key to its survival, resilience and creativity.

In the face of the recent failure and crisis of the global economic model of neoliberalism and the political institutions that hold it up, as well as the looming twin problems of fossil fuel dependency and dangerous climate change it is a politics that is needed now more than ever. Time has never been better for revaluing the potential for self managed forms of community, work and services based on mutual aid and collectivity. Examples of how people can do it themselves are part of the old battle of ideas, words and practices about how to build a better world. They need to expand, connect, and look feasible without becoming too fixed. We need to make the old order look ridiculous, and shout out, like the small child did, that we cannot see the emperor's new clothes. Given what is at stake and how dire the consequences of carrying on with 'business as usual' are, it is a battle that we cannot afford to lose.

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ⁱ See Issue 1 of Turbulence magazine at: <http://turbulence.org.uk/turbulence-1/>

ⁱⁱ Many guides exist on campaigning. See: Coover (1985); Crimethinc, (2005); Minieri, and Getsos (2007); Moyer(2001); Lattimer (2000); Rose, (2005); Coe and Kingman (2007).

ⁱⁱⁱ This phrase is taken from the recent New Economics Foundation report. See www.neweconomics.org/gen/fromtheashesofthecrashes051108.aspx