

# Having the last word: towards Paris2015

## – challenges and perspectives

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### Introduction

As the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, France to be held December 2015 approaches, NGOs, social movements and environmentalists are asking themselves a series of essential questions: What should we expect from the negotiations? Where can we exert influence? What can we do to avoid the failure of Copenhagen (2009)? What should we set as our objectives? How can we carry out in-depth work on the need for ecological and social change? What climate change initiatives should be at the top of the political agenda without giving more power to those who want to impose techno-scientific solutions and financial “innovations”? On what basis can we build a climate justice movement that will have a broad impact on society over and above the 2015 Paris conference? How can we best build on the demonstrations that were held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2014 in New York City? How can we network with local mobilisations on the ground that are blocking extractive projects and for citizens’ initiatives experimenting and implementing sustainable and resilient alternatives in the here-and-now? The list of questions and discussions for those engaged with climate justice is indeed long.

Given that both the shape and the form of the most ambitious agreement that can be expected to be reached in Paris in 2015 (the level of emissions’ cuts, funding and legal form) is already evident and not nearly enough, this text argues why NGOs and social and ecological movements should stand back from the negotiations that are being held within the UN. We need to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes as those made in Copenhagen in 2009. We propose that activist and citizens’ energies concentrate on an agenda of their own, and in which the UNFCCC COP 21 is just one stage in a process of building a sustainable balance of power in favour of a large-scale ecological and social transition. This means not just limiting ourselves to defensive battles within the UN – waged in the name of the urgency of climate change, but rather to strengthen all the struggles and the offensive, transformational proposals that the “Blockadia” and “Alternatiba” dynamics are carrying forward. Following the demonstrations in New York City and elsewhere on September 21<sup>st</sup>, we propose that Paris2015 become “a Seattle of false solutions” and “a Cochabamba of ecological and social transition”. To do so we need to strategize beyond the UN negotiations and on how to have the final say.

1 Fabius Laurent, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs speech, presenting the IPCC report (30th September 2013) - <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/environnement-et-developpement/lutter-contre-le-changement/actualites-liees-au-changement/actualites-2013-liees-au/article/discours-de-laurent-fabius>

2 Hollande, François, French President speech at the New York global climate summit, 2014, september, spoke about carbon neutrality as “the level of greenhouse gas emissions compatible with the capacity of planet to absorb them” <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-lors-du-sommet-sur-le-climat/>

3 It is important to note that highly binding agreements are being negotiated in trade and investments

## No legally binding agreement in sight!

The French Ministry of Foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, announced on September 2013 that the objective was to reach, “an ambitious, legally binding agreement that would allow the 2°C limit to be respected”.<sup>1</sup> In September 2014 in New York, French Prime Minister François Hollande stated that the aim was to achieve “carbon neutrality”.<sup>2</sup> Given what is on the table today, it is an understatement to say that things have gotten off to a bad start: If an agreement is reached in 2015, it will likely not be a legally binding one, nor one that rises to the situation. Barack Obama, for one, does not want a legally binding agreement that establishes international obligations and political commitments on climate.<sup>3</sup> He stated last year that he prefers a legally flexible instrument that encourages states to define and announce their own commitments at regular intervals and in unilateral fashion in terms of emissions cuts, and funding for any given period.<sup>4</sup> This so-called “naming and shaming” model is premised on allowing countries to achieve international self-satisfaction if their objectives are reached, and censure if they fail to do so. Yet history has shown us how lightweight and inconsistent such voluntary mechanisms are in contrast to legally binding commitments.

This is a turning point in the climate negotiations where nations will attempt to eliminate the potential for global commitments and objectives. For Barack Obama and US authorities, domestic affairs and international geopolitical balance are more important

than reaching a binding agreement on climate change. Other countries also share this position. Neither François Hollande nor Laurent Fabius, despite their previous rhetoric, formally contradicted them either in Paris or New York during the climate summit organised by Ban Ki Moon on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2014.

## No sign of any ambitious agreement!

If the findings of the IPCC report published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2014 are to be taken seriously, important cuts to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions need to be made by 2020.<sup>5</sup> The UNEP report warns that human related-emissions should not reach higher than 44 gigatonnes of GHG by 2020 as “acceptable pathways that would allow a reasonable chance of remaining below the 2°C maximum limit increase.”<sup>6</sup> However, the current trajectory leads to 57 gigatonnes of GHG by 2020. Despite this, no country is considering reviewing and increasing their commitment to cut GHGs by 2020 in order to reduce the 13 gigatonne gap between what is desirable and the reality of the situation.

Moreover, the first commitments made for the post-2020 period are very far from the IPCC recommendations. Thus the European Union has committed to cutting emissions by at least 40% by 2030, whereas the IPCC is calling for the EU to achieve this level by 2020.<sup>7</sup> The US has recently committed to cutting emissions by between 26-28% by 2025;<sup>8</sup> barely corresponding to a reduction of 0.4% compared with the baseline of 1990. China is committing to reach a maximum level

- 4 Les Echos, Obama veut contourner le Congrès pour avancer sur la négociation climat, [http://www.lesechos.fr/27/08/2014/lesechos.fr/0203729354633\\_obama-veut-contourner-le-congres-pour-avancer-sur-la-negociation-climat.htm](http://www.lesechos.fr/27/08/2014/lesechos.fr/0203729354633_obama-veut-contourner-le-congres-pour-avancer-sur-la-negociation-climat.htm)
- 5 IPCC, Climate Change 2014, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers, 2014 November, [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5\\_SYR\\_FINAL\\_SPM.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf)
- 6 UNEP, The Emissions Gap Report 2014, [http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgapreport2014/portals/50268/pdf/EGR2014\\_LOWRES.pdf](http://www.unep.org/publications/ebooks/emissionsgapreport2014/portals/50268/pdf/EGR2014_LOWRES.pdf)
- 7 Civil society is demanding between 55 and 80% reduction in emissions by 2030 for the “developed countries”
- 8 Combes, Maxime, Climate : is the US-China announcement historic ? Not really, Mediapart, 2014, November 14, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/maxime-combes/141114/climate-us-china-announcement-historic-not-really>

9 Attac France, Climat : effets d'annonce et vrais renoncements, 2014, September 2014, <https://france.attac.org/actus-et-medias/salle-de-presse/article/climat-effets-d-annonce-et-vrais> See also: Hollande, François, French President speech at the New York global climate summit, 2014, september, declared: "The Green Fund will be a significant opportunity for companies to move towards energy transition. The green fund will also be growth opportunity," <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-lors-du-sommet-sur-le-climat/>

10 Goldenberg, Suzanne, UN green climate fund can be spent on coal-fired power generation, The Guardian, 2015, March 29, <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/29/un-green-climate-fund-can-be-spent-on-coal-fired-power-generation>

11 World Meteorological Organisation, Record Greenhouse Gas Levels Impact Atmosphere and Oceans, 2014, September 9, [http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press\\_releases/pr\\_1002\\_en.html](http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_1002_en.html)

12 Combes, Maxime & Haeringer, Nicolas, Face au changement climatique, une nécessaire clarification stratégique, Médiapart, 2014, September 19, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/transition-energetique/article/190914/face-au-changement-climatique-une-necessaire-clarification-strategique>

of emissions by 2030. This is the same as saying that they will break all their current records. The system proposed by the US, and now widely supported, allowing all states to set their own objectives leads to abandoning the idea of a maximum predefined shared carbon budget based on scientifically defined recommendations and needs. It calls into question whether the 2°C objective is being abandoned. Beyond the 2°C limit, climate change will become increasingly dramatic.

## Not much funding in sight

No "ambitious" agreement is possible without substantial funding. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was an outcome of Copenhagen, but it has only just become a reality (See Chapter 2). US\$100 billion was "pledged" to fund the fight against climate change, adaptation and the consequences of extreme climate events, but only US\$2 billion was collected in New York. The amount announced by François Hollande, with much pomp and ceremony, is in fact derisory, and the way in which it will be used remains unclear and contested.<sup>9</sup> Both the US and Japan have announced that they will pledge US\$3 billion and US\$1.5 billion respectively, without stating over how many years they will spread these sums. Other countries, the UK and Italy for example, have done likewise, without reaching the sum of US\$10 billion over four years. In other words, the total funds will be only 10% of what was initially pledged. Moreover, there is no guarantee that any future funds would be public, additional and grant-based. In fact, GCF financing will likely be made available as financial instruments such as conditional

loans designed for profit accumulation. Further, there is no guarantee that the funds will be available as a priority for the populations that need them most, and will not lead to adaptation for the rich at the expense of the poor. One can easily surmise a merging power structure when the GCF board refuses an explicit ban on fossil fuel projects.<sup>10</sup>

## Should we call upon states to take action?

There is no shortage of data or scientific studies highlighting the need for urgent action. The most recent IPCC reports are very alarming. Not a single month goes by without shattering GHG or temperature records, as shown by the most recent figures published by the World Meteorological Organisation.<sup>11</sup> Data and expert scientific reports are piling up, but they are not triggering policies in response to such challenges. This shows that there is no automatic relationship between the accumulation of scientific knowledge on global climate change and the desire to make it a political priority. Political leaders are informed of the latest available data, but are still sadly opposed to committing to changing what is causing global warming – the unsustainable economic system we live in.

There are also many calls inviting "leaders" to "take action", most recently during demonstrations in New York on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2014.<sup>12</sup> These demonstrations, like those in Copenhagen in 2009, were both massive and determined. They were also diverse in terms of the demands from the different

groups that took part, including “Change the system, Not the climate”. Obviously, if we go beyond their declared intentions, the “leaders” who were present at Ban Ki-moon’s summit did not wish to address the deep underlying causes of climate change.<sup>13</sup> It begs the question, are there any “climate leaders” in the UN? While international negotiations have been ongoing since the early 1990s, global emissions have increased since then by over 60% and are continuing to do so, year after year. Many blame emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil, leaving aside the issue of historical and differentiated responsibility. For example, France’s carbon footprint has increased by 15% in the last 20 years. Should we still be calling these “climate delinquents” to “take action”?<sup>14</sup>

## Too many false solutions

When heads of state and governments “take action”, they tend to implement an agenda of false solutions. Such actions aggravate the situation by strengthening the hold of finance and multinational control over our economies, our lives and nature.

To increase the use of fossil fuels, there is an attempt to put a price on carbon through new market mechanisms and carbon finance; and this at a time when the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS), the supposed pioneer of carbon trading has proven itself to be ineffectual, dangerous, costly and impossible to reform.<sup>15</sup> To optimise carbon sequestration in soils and forests, there are proposals to experiment with new agro-forestry practices and techniques – including

the development of new genetically modified crops – and fund them through new carbon finance mechanisms.<sup>16</sup> To help farmers in poor countries face the consequences of climate change, they are being sold sophisticated weather forecasting tools and insurance policies. Vast renewable energy investment programmes, especially in Africa, are being bestowed upon multinationals and financial markets, and will be launched to achieve mega-infrastructures aimed at providing electricity for big mining projects and industries that are often useless and ill-adapted to meet the needs of the people. The list of false solutions is unfortunately far too long to include in one article.

## Should we desert the UN?

Although it looks unlikely that there will be any meaningful, legally binding agreement made in Paris in 2015, does this mean we should simply abandon the UN arena?<sup>17</sup> Some people believe this to be the case and consider it ineffective for NGOs and movements to be involved; or worse still, are misled by continuing to be present at the negotiations. The argument is that their presence as well as being ineffective, is also legitimising space that leads to institutionalising and softening critical voices.

These criticisms are justified, especially because NGOs and movements have contributed to a popular illusion that the UN could really be an effective forum. On the other hand, others argue that abandoning the UN would leave free reign to those who wish to extend the power of multinationals, finance

13 Combes, Maxime, Mémorandum pour le climat de Ban Ki-moon, 2014, October 1, [http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Memo\\_Sommet\\_Ban\\_Kimoon.pdf](http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Memo_Sommet_Ban_Kimoon.pdf)

14 In Durban in 2012, Anjali Appadurai, a Canadian student declared: “You’ve been negotiating since I was born” and “You forgot to make commitments, you lacked objectives, and you have broken your promises”

15 Collective Statement, Time to scrap the ETS, 2013, February, <http://scrap-the-euets.make.noise.org/KV/declaration-scrap-ets-english/>

16 Combes, Maxime, Climate Smart Agriculture, Vers une agriculture sous l’emprise de la finance carbone et des multinationales ?, 2014, September [http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Note\\_Climate\\_Smart\\_Agriculture\\_vfin.pdf](http://www.mediapart.fr/files/Note_Climate_Smart_Agriculture_vfin.pdf)

17 Negotiations are going on under the Durban Platform, adopted in late 2011. According to the New York Times, Todd Stern, the chief US negotiator said in Davos in early 2012, “the Durban platform was promising because of what it did not say”. After all, revealed Trevor Houser, “there is no mention of historic responsibility or per capita emissions. There is no mention of economic development as the priority for developing countries. There is no mention of a difference between developed and developing country action”.



18 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1942, <http://www.un.org/fr/documents/charter/preamb.shtml>

19 Where you criticised it – as was our case – or supported it, the European leadership in the fight against climate change is based on two pillars: the objectives of cutting emissions and the carbon market - the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) – which is considered the key instrument for achieving these cuts. In 2014 the objectives in terms of emissions cuts for 2020 and 2030 are inconsequential and the carbon market doesn't work and can't be reformed. Regarding the ALBA countries, without even mentioning here the contradictions between their international commitments and national policies.

20 Climate issues are often perceived as distant from the daily action capacity of the majority of the population

21 Alternatiba, Alternatiba continue d'avancer, Médiapart, 2014, October 27, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/alternatiba/271014/alternatiba-continue-d-avancer> See also: Aguiton, Christophe, Après le succès de la marche pour le climat de New York, trois défis pour le mouvement pour la justice climatique, 2014, October 16 <https://france.attac.org/se-mobiliser/vers-la-cop21/article/apres-le-succes-de-la-marche-pour>

and techno-science. Withdrawing would leave governments to accept GHG and funding targets far short of what is required and would give a free hand to the private sector to control the UN bodies and programmes. Such a move would counter calls from civil society to have a body that stands for the interests of the “Peoples of the United Nations”.<sup>18</sup>

## Within the UN: a series of defensive struggles

Given the above, it appears preferable to continue participation with the UN process, yet we still need to determine what we can achieve, under what conditions, and to be clear and realistic about these objectives. In taking a realistic and pragmatic approach, let us realise that these negotiations are not independent of geopolitical, economic and financial realities. Let us begin by recognising and accepting that most battles that can be fought within the UN are defensive ones – battles to limit our losses. Battles that aim for the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable to be taken into consideration. Battles to fight against the stranglehold of the private sector interests on the negotiations. These are all essential battles but they are defensive ones, in as much as they are linked to government-set agendas, and not objectives that NGOs, movements and people want.

These battles thus do not interest and do not serve to mobilise people beyond those already engaged; largely because they are generally couched in the coded language of the negotiations, and because they do not

speak to societal projects that are envisaged, promoted or defended. On the contrary, given the inaction of governments and the limited space for manoeuvring that geopolitics permit, frustration and discouragement cannot fuel citizen mobilisation. Further, these lost battles should not become the image or mottos of citizens' commitments. Finally, these battles are defensive because within the UN process there is no longer the possibility of a progressive bloc of actors who may be capable of upsetting the current neoliberal agenda embedded in the UN framework. The EU is no longer legitimate in playing an exemplary role, and while the ALBA countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela etc.) still pay lip service to strong positions they are no longer truly determined to change the negotiations in a deep and meaningful way.<sup>19</sup> This is also true for the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) that includes rich Island States like Singapore deeply involved in global capitalism.

## From defensive to offensive struggles

So what is left? What can we do that does not compound discouragement and helplessness?<sup>20</sup> This is a huge question and has no easy or final answer. Obviously, recent mobilisations on climate, such as the massive NYC demonstrations or the success of the Alternatiba process are positive dynamics upon which to build.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless these are not the first successful citizen mobilisations in terms of the fight against climate change. By mixing a successful

demonstration (100,000 people), a high quality alternative summit and massive civil disobedience actions, citizen mobilisations at the Copenhagen conference were successful. And yet the majority of the NGO representatives, and social and environmental movement activists left feeling discouraged with the outcomes.

They went “to save the climate”, encouraged by a number of NGOs and opinion leaders who had turned Copenhagen into “the last chance summit”, so they could only be disappointed by the results of the negotiations; just like the majority of the people who had stayed home in their own countries, and were keeping a close eye on the conference. Yet the outcomes of the Copenhagen negotiations were foreseeable for anyone who considered the global geopolitical landscape. And climate change will no more be saved in Paris than it was in Copenhagen. No more than it will be possible to achieve an ambitious, binding agreement. Certainly, we can remain in denial and call yet again, as some people are doing, for mobilisation to “save the climate” in Paris, without specifying the outlines of the objectives we are setting. However, because the outcome of a possible future agreement and the commitments made by countries are for the most part already known, people are sure to be left disappointed. *Bis repetita* Copenhagen.

Another option is to anticipate the pending disappointment now. Yes, of course we need to “act”. But the movements for climate justice cannot wait for governments and the private sector to “do something”. They cannot limit their purview to the negotiation agenda.

No, what we want is to “change everything”!<sup>22</sup> Not just for the fun of it. Not just because we prefer to set ambitious objectives rather than a strategy of small steps. Nor is it because we are fooling ourselves. We want to change everything because the situation calls for this. It is *our* development model not neoliberal capitalism that is unsustainable and that needs to be transformed into a system that does not reproduce a model of infinite growth, but a model that stands for harmony between human beings and nature, and that meets the needs of the majority.

### **“Change the system”, but with the right people!**

Real solutions to the climate crisis have not been implemented because they forcibly clash with the dominant economic model and the ideology it represents. Energy efficiency, decentralisation and democratisation of energy systems, food sovereignty, small-scale agroecology, relocalisation of production and consumption, more egalitarian life-styles in a framework of political well-being, degrowth of the ecological footprint, economic cooperation and solidarity etc. are some of the places to start. Such real solutions are anchored in the principles of respecting major ecological balance and cooperation between people to build a shared future, whereas the policies of competitiveness and liberalisation place economic and financial profit before all else, including the needs of the climate and future generations.

*Yet the outcomes of the Copenhagen negotiations were foreseeable for anyone who considered the global geopolitical landscape. And climate change will no more be saved in Paris than it was in Copenhagen.*

22 Klein, Naomi, “This Changes Everything : Capitalism vs the Climate”, Simon & Schuster, 2014, September

*We need to address the structural causes of climate change, but there can be no win-win game with those who defend an economic model based on fossil fuels, starting with the multinational oil companies.*

<sup>23</sup>Attac France & Aitec, Climate or TTIP, make your choice, 2014, December,

<sup>24</sup>It would mean the implementation of a global carbon price through the connection of local, national and regional carbon markets and carbon taxes experiences.

<sup>25</sup>Climate Justice Action was an activist network of direct action during the Copenhagen conference: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate\\_Justice\\_Action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_Justice_Action) Climate Justice Now! is, as CAN, one of the two international coalitions of networks and organizations, recognized by the United Nations: CJN highlights the importance of social justice and fights against the “false solutions”, including carbon finance - <http://www.climate-justice-now.org/fr/>

There can be no reasonable compromises with these unsustainable, productivist, development approaches if we want to “save the climate”. We need to address the structural causes of climate change, but there can be no win-win game with those who defend an economic model based on fossil fuels, starting with the multinational oil companies. We need to take this on board, and block them where their agenda is about so-called “making progress”. This holds true for the free trade agreements and investments that the EU is negotiating respectively with Canada (CETA) and the US (TTIP) that aim to extend the production and sales of unconventional oil (tar sand, shale oil and gas) on both sides of the Atlantic. These free trade and investments policies structure our economies and societies in such a way that we become locked-in to dependency on imports and exports of fossil fuels, while simultaneously limiting the ability to implement energy transition policies.<sup>23</sup> If we are to impose our solutions, we need to stop contributing to the agenda of “business as usual”. It is not in everybody’s interest to change the system. It is not in our interest for everyone to continue acting as they are.

## **Change our strategy: from COP 21 to Paris2015**

Such deep societal and economic change will not be achieved in the blink of an eye nor will it be advanced at a UN conference like the COP 21. That is self-evident. Is it enough to delegitimise their perspectives and hide our aspirations under the blanket of realpolitik

and pragmatism in an arena that is so lacking in ambition and pathetic in its results? Even international institutions, such as the World Bank, have decided not to wait for an international agreement within the UN to start implementing climate projects; this therefore encourages us not to focus solely on the UN conferences.<sup>24</sup>

We desperately need to refocus away from the UNFCCC, and stop getting lost in the technical aspects of the negotiations. This would leave open the requisite time and energy, to use Paris2015 as a key moment to accumulate the strength and energy to organise for the months that follow. This does not mean that we should stop taking an interest in the UN negotiations. On the contrary, it implies that we should use this opportunity to refocus our attention, impose our own agenda and wage a whole series of battles we can win that are not necessarily played out within the UN. In a way, shifting the focus away from the COP 21 to Paris2015 implies not lessening our struggles against climate change in the UN negotiations, but rather, extending them to include a whole series of existing issues and conflicts that are not systematically included.

## **From climate justice to Alternatiba and Blockadia**

The post-Copenhagen evaluation carried out by Climate Justice Action and Climate Justice Now! identified that the construction of a global climate justice movement need not depend on the agenda of the global summits.<sup>25</sup> After the success of the

non-violent civil disobedience action Reclaim Power<sup>26</sup> on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009, there was a commitment to decentralise and disseminate the organisation of peoples' assemblies at local and regional levels.<sup>27</sup> The aim is to fight projects that damage climate and implement direct solutions through translocal forms of solidarity – solidarity between struggles or alternatives that are anchored in local initiatives – as a vector towards the construction of a global movement. This is a huge challenge and is ever-present. Some challenges include: how can we relocalise and anchor our imagination and mobilisation towards experience and concrete realities, including in our daily lives and rediscover the power of acting together?<sup>28</sup> The power of our mobilisations and our capacity to include more people will be all the stronger if we are able to move beyond the logic of awareness-building and citizens' mobilisations that are undoubtedly too linked to an heuristic analysis of science and expertise; it's not enough to be aware that climate change exists to actually take action. The accumulation of scientific studies have not led to the implementation of the needed measures and policies nor have they led to generalised citizens' mobilisations. Further, they have likely led to incredulity more than a commitment to act.

Two citizens' dynamics are inspired towards the process of relocalisation of struggles and imagination, as they confront the structural causes of climate change. The first is grounded in the "frontline struggles" that aim to halt the extractive industries from expanding (from shale oil and gas to new mining projects), and the construction of new useless infrastructure that is

imposed and ill-adapted (airports, motorways, dams, stadia etc.). As a result of powerful mobilisations in North America against new pipelines for exporting tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, this new dynamic of international mobilisation has been termed Blockadia.<sup>29</sup> The second are the diverse concrete alternative experiences – be they local, regional or global – that put into practice deep changes in our unsustainable production models and consumption patterns. By using the name coined in October 2013 in Bayonne (the French Basque country) by Bizi!, and dozens of Basque, Spanish and French organisations, we could by extension, call this citizens' movement that is up and running, Alternatiba; it is taking various forms in the four corners of our planet.

These two dynamics clearly represent an eco-territorial turn in social struggles, to use the term coined by the Argentinian sociologist Maristella Svampa, who characterises the rise in struggles in Latin America that combine ecologist mobilisations and the practice of resistance and alternatives grounded in territories.<sup>30</sup> Territory is not to be understood in this sense as scraps to be saved from the damage of productivism, industrialisation or neo-liberal globalisation. Rather, it is a space for building resistance and alternatives; in other words the place for imagining and experimenting how to reach beyond the existing unsustainable economic, financial and technological models. Here there is no space for selfish attitudes like NIMBYism. Preservation, promotion and resilience of all territories make up the overall picture. To some extent, the mobilisation against shale gas in France and many

*The accumulation of scientific studies have not led to the implementation of the needed measures and policies nor have they led to generalised citizens' mobilisations.*

26 The Guardian, "Reclaim power protest march in Copenhagen," 16 December 2009. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2009/dec/16/reclaim-power-march-copenhagen>

27 Chapelle Sophie, Video of the Reclaim Power Action, Copenhagen, 2009, September, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_3Jh5pyiR30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3Jh5pyiR30)

See also: de Marcellus, Olivier, CJN and CJA activist, Reclaiming Power in Copenhagen. A decisive step towards a global climate justice movement, <http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=88>

28 Lindgaard, Jade, *Je crise climatique*, Editions La Découverte, Paris, 2014

29 This is also the term chosen by Naomi Klein in her new book

30 Svampa, Maristella, *Consenso de los Commodities, Giro Ecoterritorial y Pensamiento crítico en América Latina*, <http://maristellavsvampa.net/archivos/ensayo59.pdf>



*They enlarge it because they are grounded in opposition to devastating projects that affect our daily lives, and in the development of experiences that improve them and provide us with a glimpse of tomorrow's world.*

other countries that are calling for “Neither here nor anywhere”, especially when they are combined with the demands for a radical energy transition, are all part of this same logic.<sup>31</sup>

## **Enlargement and radicalisation for imposing an ecological and social transition**

Although these two processes have distinctly different points of departure, they open up spaces that both enlarge and radicalise Peoples' dynamics for climate justice. They enlarge it because they are grounded in opposition to devastating projects that affect our daily lives, and in the development of experiences that improve them and provide us with a glimpse of tomorrow's world. These two processes therefore make it possible to include people that would otherwise not become involved in activist spheres; there is no need to be a climatology expert to become involved in these dynamics. And these processes both allow the juxtaposition of all kinds of practice, tactics and strategies.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, it is possible to become involved without having to conform to any activist mould – something often perceived and felt as being overly restrictive. This enlargement is also a process of radicalisation, although it does not forcibly involve “radical” participants: confronting the power of those who promote climate-destructive projects or the difficulty of rolling out concrete alternatives enables people to feel that the struggle against climate change cannot be solved by mere discourse.

Shale gas and oil, expanding the borders of extractivism, small and large useless projects, free-trade agreements and investments, projects that financialise nature, agro-industry, GMOs, nuclear power, increased inequalities, unbridled lobbying of multinationals, banks that profit from climate change, the list of local struggles and global battles go on. As do the battles to implement concrete alternative experiences: food sovereignty and small-scale agroecology, short distribution chains, relocalisation of the economy, job-sharing and fairer distribution of wealth, insulation of housing, social and ecological changes to production that ensure jobs are protected, the re-appropriation of the Commons, repairing and recycling, waste reduction, environmentally-friendly transport and sustainable mobility, eco-renovation, renewable energies etc. Blockadia and Alternatiba dynamics clearly state that ecological and social transition require deep structural changes. These changes are rejected by the elite who do not wish to see their political and economic systems changed, or to lose their domination and power. If we are to break the stranglehold of multinationals and corporate interests on our lives, nature and our future, we need to build and strengthen these struggles and alternatives so that they become unavoidable.

## **Make Paris2015 a “Seattle of false solutions” and a “Cochabamba of our solutions”!**

Turning Paris2015 into a “Seattle of false solutions” implies working for it to become a watershed moment

<sup>31</sup> Combes, Maxime Let's frack the fracking companies, EJOLT, 2012, September <http://www.ejolt.org/2012/09/global-frackdown-on-fracking-companies/>

<sup>32</sup> The anti-fracking movement could not have achieved such successes if it had not been able to include different tactics and practices: legal actions, political pressure, grassroots mobilisation, national events, disobedience actions.

for climate justice, just like Seattle and Cochabamba were for the *Altermondialist* movement. The reference to Seattle is an echo of the civil disobedience needed to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the false techno-fix solutions promoted by the UN conferences. The reference to Cochabamba refers to a watershed struggle against multinational plans to privatise water that has led to over 180 cases of remunicipalisation of water in the world over the last 15 years.<sup>33</sup> This means making Paris2015 such a key moment in building an international movement for climate justice that will be able to mobilise in the long-term and grow in strength, accumulate small and large victories, while telling a story that mobilises people. It is less focused on “text in brackets”<sup>34</sup>, and more on our own agenda; that of building our “actions and alternatives”.<sup>35</sup>

The reference to Seattle is nothing new. Copenhagen in 2009, was already referred to as “a Seattle-like moment” as it was supported by a massive, dynamic citizens’ mobilisation that blended classical initiatives (demonstration, people’s summit etc.) and large-scale actions of civil disobedience (the Reclaim Power action on 16<sup>th</sup> December) and a rather successful linkage between what was happening inside and outside the negotiations. Nevertheless, the choice to hold actions and the big demonstration before and during the negotiations, seems to transmit the message that: “it’s up to you, the governments to act and fight efficiently against the effects of climate change.” This is the same as handing the government the keys, and waiting for them to act. And because they are not acting, not acting enough, or not taking the right actions,

fatigue and disappointment are always the feelings at the end of the day.

## Having the last word!

Another strategy is to choose different times for mobilising so as to have the last word in Paris. If Paris2015 will be one stage in building mobilisation for climate justice, and we want it to resonate in such a way that will help our struggles move forward and gain strength, why not hold the most important mobilisation at the end of the negotiations? Thus the anger born of the mistakes and limits of the negotiations could feed into the demonstrations and massive civil disobedience actions that we could organise at the end of the negotiations. We want to stimulate all the energy during the very last days to put out the message, “you, the governments, are speaking and negotiating for the worst; you, the multinationals are using the negotiations to maintain your stranglehold on our future; we, the people are marching, acting to change the system and will never give up!” A proposal of this kind implies not giving up any hope of influencing the UN, states or the negotiations. Firstly, because it is possible to organise decentralised mobilisations of this kind throughout 2015, including at the beginning of the negotiations. On the other hand, because situating the massive mobilisations during the final days leaves the possibility open for derailing the negotiations if it is deemed relevant to do so.

But any such proposal tells a totally different story from that of demonstrating during the two weeks

<sup>33</sup> Poupeau, Franck, «La guerre de l’eau. Cochabamba, Bolivie, 1999-2001», *Agone*, n°26-27:133-140, 2002. See also: Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), Multinational Observatory and Transnational Institute (TNI). Here to stay: Water remunicipalisation as a global trend 2014, November 13, <http://www.tni.org/briefing/here-stay-water-remunicipalisation-global-trend>

<sup>34</sup> Literally “texts in brackets”. In negotiations the proposals of texts where all parties are not in agreement are bracketed. It has become a standard joke to make fun of the “bracketed” text that is often longer than the parts that have been validated.

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of negotiations with a view to bringing pressure to bear on the UN, states and the negotiations. If it were enough to demonstrate a few days before the end of the negotiations to influence the outcomes, Copenhagen, which was heralded as the biggest climate demonstration ever organised at the time, would have led to a different outcome. Leaving the biggest citizens' mobilisations to the end of the COP 21 in Paris 2015 implies giving ourselves the possibility of having the final word, rather than leaving it to others. It means an end to being the spectators and

commentators that we have been in the last hours of previous negotiations, and using the uncertainty that surrounds us to become opinion leaders and imposing our ideas and our perspectives in a public space. This would mean no disappointment or bitter taste at the end of the negotiations; quite the contrary, energy and determination can be generated and communicated by successful mobilisations. And this would allow us to build the future of the post-Paris 2015 in our countries, territories and respective sectors because "we will never give up!"

**Acknowledgements:** This text would never have been written without the many discussions within Attac France and the many associations and trade union organisations, researchers and experts in recent years. Specific thanks for the discussions, remarks, and critical comments of Nicolas Haeringer, Geneviève Azam, Christophe Aguiton, Jeanne Planche, Txetx Etcheverry and the many others that I cannot name here. All views expressed here are those of the author, who takes full responsibility for them. Special thanks to Judith Hitchman for the translation into English.

