

## **‘Exit the system’**

### **Crafting the place of protest camps between antagonism and exception**

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#### Introduction

One of the more prominent features of contemporary political mobilisations is the political camp site, the activist encampment or protest camp. From peace camps in the 1980s to Anti-Road camps in the 1990s, on to “no- border” camps and Anti summit mobilisations in the 2000s, temporary and more permanent campsites have been created across the western world as essential part of protest campaigns. A series of ‘climate camps’, that started off in the UK in 2006 and has occurred in various countries since, are the most recent addition to the tradition. Protest camps can be understood as merely instrumental in that they facilitate protest in remote locations where alternative forms of housing are not readily available. However protest camps have often meant more than bringing protesters into place. Indeed they have been implicitly or explicitly constituted as alternative worlds, set antagonistically against the political status quo of the surrounding world. In this sense protest camps have been theorised as places ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 1994; Cresswell 1996) and as spatial expressions of political dissent (Hailey 2009). The borders of protest camps hence often describe lines of demarcations between the space of the camp and the political status quo.

Although protesters sometimes (ironically) allure in such a way, protest camps are not factually outside the political status quo. While the borders of a protest camp can be

and often are heavily fortified, policed and defended, they are not inter-state borders.

The status quo continues to be valid in protest camps; its laws, regulations and institutions are applicable. This raises the question of the ontological status of the antagonism that the protest camp expresses. If there are not actually political autonomous spaces, are protest camps merely artificial, exceptions to the status quo?

This question connects protest camps to the wider discussions on camps that have permeated political theory, law and geography in recent years. In Agamben's (1998) notion of the camp as the 'nomos of modernity', the relation between the camp and the political status quo in its legal order is clearly defined. While the camp is an exception to the status quo, it is ontologically the 'matrix' or 'paradigm' of the status quo. The legal and juridical structures, regimes of human rights and rule of law, that govern the status quo are, according to Agamben, somewhat secondary, based on what rules the camp: the unconditional power of the sovereign.

In this paper I discuss protest camps in the context of this thesis. I will firstly look into a history of protest camps from the development of leisureed camping in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and then focus on protest camps as they have occurred in the last 30 years. It becomes obvious that protest camps are often used as ways of influencing and changing the political status quo, by way of confronting it with a spatially expressed antagonism. I will further reflect on theorisations of the camp as the 'nomos of modernity'. While empirically focussing on penal camps, this discussion has touched upon camps that are more comparable with protest camps, applying Agamben's theses to tourist spaces. They are often seen as places where an inversion of the logic of the penal camp takes place. Tourist spaces are understood as cultural spaces, exceptional to the status quo but ontologically minor to it. As such they fulfil certain functions towards the stabilisation of the status quo. However such a position of a protest camp

would be detrimental to the aspirations of many protest campers, who set up the camps to change the status quo.

In the last section, I discuss empirical data from a series of protest camps, in the context of two domains of their workings: internal governance and education. A set of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, negotiating the antagonistic character of a protest camp can be understood as a balancing act, in which the camps need to be antagonistic towards the status quo without becoming an integrated exception in Agamben's sense. Secondly, the evidence suggest that over the years of the development of protest camps, a learning process has been taking place, within the UK but also, increasingly transnationally, how to best achieve this balance. Thirdly I will argue that the development of protest camps as an increasingly visible form of social movement activity brings new challenges for protest campers. While this development might suggest a higher relevance of protest camps as a form of political action and in fact their potential institutionalisation, such a normalisation puts new pressure on protest campers who want to 'exit the system'.

## **Protest camps**

"For what noble cause did my son die?" To put this question to the American president Cindy Sheehan decided to visit Bush's family ranch in Crawford, Texas in August 2005. When she wasn't received by the president, she put up her tent and started a protest camp on the road leading to the farm. She was soon joined by other Americans who opposed the war. 'Camp Casey' grew, expanded and spread into a network of peace camps all over the US. The camp had become the starting point of

the growing organised resistance of Americans against the war in Iraq (Hailey 2009). Opposite of the house of parliament in Westminster, Brian Haw has camped since 2001 in protest against UK policies and war in Iraq (Parliament Square 2010). Mass protest camps in Britain are mostly associated with the peace camps of the 1980s. No unlike Camp Casey, the women's peace camp of Greenham Common emerged and developed spontaneously out of a singular protest event against the deployment of Cruise Missile on the adjacent US military base. It was closed only in 2000, 19 years after the first campers had arrived (Greenham 2010). In Faslane, Scotland, near the base of the submarine fleet that carries the British trident nuclear warheads, a peace camp founded in 1982 is still in place, contesting the military with regular blockades (Faslane 2010).

Throughout the last three decades protest camps have become a permanent and visible feature of protest movements beyond these most visible examples. In the 1990s numerous camps have been taking place across Britain, often associated with protests against road building, like the Newbury Camp and the Pollock Free State. Other camps have been erected and maintained in order to prevent quarries in national parks (Urban75 2010). More recently British campers have followed the example of European human right campaigners and organised a series of 'no-border' camps in defence of the rights of migrants and refugees, often protesting at the sites of immigrant detentions-camps. Other than many of the protest camps of the first two decades 'no-border' camps were however never meant to be permanent or long lasting. They were instead erected for a limited amount of time, to be recreated at another site of protests in the following year. These camps are hence less intimately connected to a particular place of contestation. They have become more of an organising devise, a mobile way of protesting and organising across various spaces

(no border 2010). In this principle they are not unlike the camps that were erected in the last decade to coincide with meetings of global policy makers, like the G8 or global financial institutions, for example the G8 protest camp near Stirling in 2005 in Scotland (Harvie et al. 2005). Those 'summit' protest camps are short-termed, existent for the time of the leaders meeting and constructed like a counter-event. The most recent 'climate camp' movement, has applied the same principle, opting for the organisational form of the camp without focusing on a particular place more permanently. The climate camp exists in two forms now: on the one hand it continues to exist in particular places, on the other hand there is a climate camp organisation, operating in meetings over the year, practically like a social movement, running under the name of the camp (Climate Camp UK 2010).

Given the diversity of what is understood as protest camps, it is little surprising that a variety of perspectives can be taken to explain and understand them. On the most basic level protest-camping can be understood functionally. Protest camps allow people to protest over extended periods of time in distant and remote places that do not have the infrastructure to house large amount of visitors. At sites like Greenham Common or Faslane, no infrastructure was in place to house protestors and camping was hence functionally necessary. The occurrence of protest camps in summit protest can also be explained partly by the fact that these summits did not take place in large cities after the massive disruptions caused by protesters in Seattle 1999, Prague 2000 and Genoa 2001. In remote locations of recent European G8 summits like Evian (2003), Gleneagles (2005) and Heiligendamm (2007) protesters needed to be housed and large scale camp cities were erected in all cases.

Beyond the functional aspect of geography the place of the protest camp has also been understood as a geographical expression of political conflict. In reflection of

the protest camps on the 1980s Cresswell (1996) has argued that protest camps were 'places out of place', where the 'heretic reading of space' of the campers, meets the attempts by their opponent to put them out of place, to marginalise them. In Greenham Common which was for most of its existence a women camp, the women did not simply protest against nuclear weapons. They also protested against a patriarchal status quo that in their view enabled the military confrontation in the first place. The space of the camp, as a women camp, provided a direct challenge to the status quo beyond the contestation of nuclear weapons by building an alternative world. The status quo, represented by conservative media and politicians retaliated against this form of critique in their attempts to marginalise the protesters in the camp. Rather than considering and arguing politically, the women were portrayed as deviating from accepted norms of hygiene and sexuality which was to undermine the validity of their political critique (Couldry 1999; Cresswell 1994). Despite such experiences of marginalisation, it seems obvious that the women themselves were actively searching a place beyond the boundaries of the status quo, and in this sense, a marginal space to create an alternative world. The woman peace camp of Greenham Common posited itself in direct antagonism to the world, questioning not simply the deployment of nuclear weapons but the status quo of the surrounding body politic per se (Cresswell 1994; Couldry 1999).

Equally, anti-Road protest camps combined practical protest aims with a critique of the status quo via geographical expression (Pepper 1991; Pepper 1996). Routledge (1997) argues the 1990s camps were constituted by 'imaginary communities of resistance', including various sub-cultural identities and lifestyles (Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 1998), or 'tribal politics' (Bauman 1992) as much as agents with interest in particular aspects of political change. The ecological and

wholesome living in sites like the 'Pollock Free State' in Glasgow was posited against the surrounding civilisation (Seel 1997). The camp was meant to stop and blockade the building of a motorway, but it equally became an attempt to rebuild society in a better way. Resistance culture meant, as one participant had it, "We are living it, rather than just talking about it" (Routledge 1997, p.371).

The political-cultural reading of the place of camping, that posits it as antagonistic to the space of the status quo links protest camps to the modern camping tradition. In the early 20th century the 'Wandervoegel' movement developed from the initiative of Berlin school teachers, who deemed the experience of nature as central to children's development and developed organised camping in Germany (Hetherington 2000; Giesecke 1981). Concurrently, organised camping appeared in the American summer camp movement and in scout-camping in Britain. As Smith (2006) explains, these camps were often 'counter-modern' in spirit, reflecting ideals of nature, authenticity and simplicity. Camping activists understood these ideals to be lost in modern life. The camps were meant to allow for a contrasting experience to modernity, especially for the youth, to which such experience was deemed important. Smith argues in respect of the American summer camps,

[...] the people who operated these camps understood [...], that it was the contrast between the everyday world of a child's life and the camp world that had the potential to help children develop (Smith 2006, p.71).

Organised camping was pursued for two main reasons. Firstly, its aim was to educate participants, to 'develop them'. Secondly, more implicitly the camps answered to modern man's sentimental relationship to nature and romantic longing. It

addressed and expressed the modern feeling that something was wrong with civilisation; that it somehow had a corrupting influence on the human being and that a thorough simplification of life - its re-creation along basic principles - could cure some of this influence. In the camping movement 're-creation' was understood literally. This notion of re-creation implicitly involved a critique of the ways modern life was organised and the camping movement can hence be understood as an early counter-culture (Cresswell 1996; Hetherington 1998). The 'self-making' of education continues to be related to the world-making of politics. The scout movement is according to its current charter, aiming

to contribute to the development of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities (Scout Association 2009).

Self and world making as employed in the organised camping invites arguments about the best ways of achieving it which is a political question. Soon after their invention, summer camps and scouts movement were criticised for having authoritarian threads (Kneights 2004). And indeed the critique of modernity was never a domain only of the left. The German Wandervoegel, despite some anti-authoritarian underpinnings in its foundational period, were fully integrated into the German Empire's nationalistic frenzy in the build up to the First World War and later merged into the Hitler Youth Organisation (Giesecke 1981). General Baden Powell, who invented scout camping in Britain, called out to his scouts for the re-creation of the British Empire in proto-fascist rhetoric:

Remember, whether rich or poor, from castle or from slum, you are all Britons in the first place, and you've got to keep Britain up against outside enemies, you have to stand shoulder to shoulder (quoted in Rojek 1993, p.40).

In Britain by 1925, the 'Woodcraft Folk' splinter group separated from the scout movement because of the latter's militarism and since developed in its own way (Davis 2000). Its underlying motto: 'for social change' resonates deeply in today's protest camps.

Arguably the spatially expressed political antagonism of contemporary protest camps against the status quo is built into the modern camping tradition. However, given the political diversity of camping, from apolitical tourist camping to variations of left and right wing camps, it is crucial to understand better the nature of the antagonism that constitutes the camp space.

### The camp as exception

Affirmation of an explicit antagonism expressed in the spatial architecture of the camp can be found in contemporary protest camps. The recent climate camps have operated with this notion when a large cardboard sign at the entry declared that participant would 'exit the system' (See picture 1).



(*Picture 1 Climate Camp 2007 near*

*Heathrow Airport, sign saying 'Exit the system')*

Generally the borders of the camp allow an experience of the political antagonism created by the camps in very tangible terms. In many of the camps the border consists of two checkpoints, one controlled by the police and the other controlled by the protest campers. On the side of the police this involves searches of everybody entering the camp, often using recently created terrorism legislation. On the other side the 'checkpoint' consists of volunteer campers introducing the newcomer to the rules operating inside the camp. The camp borders somewhat resemble international borders in this respect with the crucial difference that the camping space has been carved out of the status quo without actually leaving its legal and political realm. Inside and outside do not simply stand side by side like in the international system. Police often try to penetrate the camp. Searches on the outside of the camp are just one means to this. Others involve helicopters and police units entering the side in surveillance and control. The camps are not protected against such intrusion simply by merit of their antagonism, or their physical power to prevent an intrusion. Indeed laws and logics that operate within the status quo protect them. Campers sometimes use squatter's rights to claim certain their campgrounds, protecting themselves against immediate eviction. Other times the protesters rely on checks and balances exercised for example by the media against police controlling logics. Often the camps are the result of extensive negotiations between local authorities, police and protesters, with local councils conducting health and safety checks on sanitary and food infrastructure in the camp. In this sense the antagonism between inside and the outside is to be seen as either symbolic or exceptional. The camps are not actually separated from the outside; they don't form their own body politic; rather they are arguably playacting at it.

This insight links protest camps to a broader discussion about the camp that has been triggered by Agamben's notion of the camp as the 'nomos of modernity'. Following Agamben the camps express the extreme and unique moment of sovereign power in so far as within them the rule of the law is suspended. As an exception to the regime of the status quo, the camps establish the sovereign power that is located both inside and outside the rule of law.

From this perspective, the camp -- as the pure, absolute, and impassable biopolitical space (insofar as it is founded solely on the state of exception) -- will appear as the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity. (Agamben 1998: 78)

In Agamben's view the regime of the camp is at the same time the exception to the status quo and its underlying principle, and hence arguable located on a different ontological plane. The rule of law of the outside is an artificial world, enabled and superseded by a reality of sovereign power that is fully realised in the camp.

Such theoretical reasoning has received increased attention recently, arguably to support the political contestation of prisoner camps as they re-occurred in the political-juridical structure of western democracy (Minca 2005). The most notable example is the Guantanamo Bay Camp X Ray (Butler 2002). Equally in transnational context of European immigration regimes camps play a crucial role in controlling and tracing human mobility. Empirical research has shown however that the camps erected to control migration into Europe often function contrary to the intentions of the sovereign power that erects them. In allowing migrants to form transnational

support networks and to establish safe routes camps become part of what could be called a counter-regime of autonomous migration (Holert & Terkessidis 2006; Panagiotidis & Tsianos 2007). Camps here become sites of political contestation of the status quo. For these authors Agamben's reading of the camp is hence insufficient.

Amidst the debate about the camp, very little attention has been paid to the voluntary, tourist camps, the camps that come about because campers make them. Clearly it is problematic to equate the different kinds of camps. Loeffgren (1999) attempts bridging the divide. For him the camp occurs in relation to mobile living, mobile practices, e.g. in the form of housing of actual nomads, but also of a variety of temporarily mobile groups like soldiers, migrants, refugees, tourists in need some sort of shelter while on the road. In the context of increased mobility (Sheller & Urry 2006; Hannam et al. 2006; Cresswell 2006) the camp becomes a more frequent occurrence.

Loeffgren finds it 'tempting to name the 20<sup>th</sup> century the era of the camp [...]' (Loeffgren 1999, p.256). The camp comes in two categories for him, on the one hand: holiday or tourist camps, and on the hand the 'more menacing ones.' Despite the categorical difference, he states that they have an

element of a common structure – the idea of large scale, detailed planning and control, self-sufficient communities with clear boundaries. Management experiences, as well as blueprints of Tayloristic planning are in constant circulation between the different kinds of camps (Loeffgren 1999, p.256).

Arguably Loeffgren describes a modern, architectural logic that combines the camps in their diversity. On from his insight, Hailey (2009) has offered a 'guide to the 21<sup>st</sup>

century space' of the camp. He orders his introduction of a variety of empirical camps into the three categories of autonomy, control and necessity. Autonomy describes camps of choice, linking tourist camps, musical festivals and protest camps in one category. The category of autonomy confirms the aforementioned overlap between the camping tradition and protest camping, whereby Hailey differentiates further between protest camps defined by antagonism and camps that operate with a previously formalized autonomy.

Control relates to 'strategic camping areas regulated by systems of power' (Hailey 2009, p.15). Hailey lists military and paramilitary camps along side camps of migration control in what could be criticised particularly in respect of the notion of the 'autonomy of migration', discussed above. Control is not absolute and limited by autonomy, even in the camps erected to control.

Necessity, finally relates to camps of relief and assistance, where Hailey lists refugee camps. Empirically comparing the camps, communalities seem to emerge between all his categories as he argues that '[t]hese designations [...] are not exclusive, and overlaps occur' (Hailey 2009, p.16).

This is an indication that camps can be theorised beyond their empirical diversity and the categorical differences that exist. Agamben (1998, p.21) himself has alluded to the parallel between the 'bio politics of modern totalitarianism on the one hand, and mass society of consumerism and hedonism on the other' indicating that his notion of bare life and camp applies equally in the 'total meaninglessness of the society of the spectacle'. Following on from this Diken and Laustsen (2005) have used Agamben's reading of the camp in the tourism sector. They argue that in the circumstances of hedonist holiday places like Ibiza, the 'tourist site is a camp' (Diken & Laustsen 2005, p.102), equalising the tourist to the figure of the 'homo sacer', the bare life to which

camp inmates are reduced in Agamben's camp. Contrary to their promises of autonomy, in the tourist camps any liberation or autonomy becomes an illusion. 'In the holiday camp, the rules are suspended rather than destroyed. (...) transgression does not suppress but suspends the rule.' (Diken & Laustsen 2005, p.104)

Following this reading tourist camps are like Agamben's camp on a different ontological plane than the reality of the status quo outside of it. They are an exception to the status quo, however in an inverse sense. The ontological status of the camps is less significant than that of the status quo. This inversion of Agamben's argument in the field of voluntary camping is indeed a frequent reading of tourism spaces, and broader, the tourist experience. Wang (1999), leaning on Turner (1977) has in this way affirmed the 'fantastic feeling' of a tourist communitas, in which normal social roles and hierarchies are suspended. Tourists may experience such exceptional moments, only to return to routine afterwards. Other authors have noted such functionality of tourism to the status quo more critically. Adorno (1991) has marked the difference between 'free time' and 'freedom proper', in which the former is part and parcel of the cultural industries' functionality in capitalism. In the notion of 'rational recreation' (Rojek 1993) this critique has pointed towards the way in which the exceptional experience of the tourist space/time affirms and strengthens the political status quo, functioning in the way of a safety valve to release social pressure towards system change.

Protest camps function by creating an antagonism between the space of the camp and the surrounding status quo. However, this antagonism is artificial in so far as it is rules and regulations of the status quo that allow the protest camps to exist in the first place. At the same time the opposition between the inside and the outside is

tangible and real. Following Agamben's argument the oppositional logics of the rule and the exception are in thread of complementing each other, leading to a situation whereby the protest camps became complicit in sustaining the status quo. Protest camp may become a place of an alleged freedom, of an outside that is experienced as radically different to the status quo but that actually affirms and enables it. For many protest campers, such a function of their camps would be considered diametrically opposed to their political aims, which, as I pointed out earlier, actually contains the demands for systemic change of the status quo. The political trajectory of protest campers would therefore be to create an antagonism that does not become an exception in the sense of Agamben. How do they do it, and are they successful? In which ways do protest camps succeed in becoming antagonistic without becoming an exception? To answer these questions it seems useful to look in more detail at the ways the antagonism is crafted in protest camps. This concerns the way the camps are emphasising difference in relation to status quo in particular areas and practices of the camp life. These areas allow studying the bordering of the camp and its limits in more practical terms. I have identified two areas that are both central to the camping tradition and central also in the running of the protest camps that I have analysed for this paper. These areas are the internal governance, the ways the camps are run and the domain of education in the camps. I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork, collecting data in a multisided ethnographic approach (Falzon 2009). I will utilise data gathered at a series of protest camps from the Anti G8 protest camp in Scotland in 2005 to the 2008 climate camp in Kingsnorth power station in Kent (see Table 1). What unites these protest camps, but not all protest camps, is an explicit focus on 're-creation', a spatially expressed antagonism to the status quo.

Year	Place/Name	No. of Participants	Focus
2005	Stirling	5000	G8 Protest Camp Horizone/Ecovillage
2006	East Yorkshire- Drax	800	Coal Power
2007	Heiligendamm, Germany	15000	G8 Protest Camps
2007	London Heathrow	1200	Aviation
2008	Kent-Kingsnorth	1500	Clean Coal

(Table 1)

By way of comparison between different camps I will furthermore identify more and less successful ways of crafting the antagonism in relation to the aims of the camps to political change the status quo.

#### Internal governance

Camps need to be run. The way they are run differs remarkable across the variety of camps. Central to all the camps I investigated is the notion of horizontality, or horizontal decision making. This way of running the site is equally about making decisions and about sharing and disseminating information. The closeness of the two modes is no coincidence. According to the theory of consensus decision making decision-making can be resolved into free communication. The ‘dissent guide’, given out at the Anti G8 protest camp, alternatively named ‘Eco-village’ or ‘Hori-zone’ in Scotland in 2005, explains:

Instead of simply voting, and having the majority of the group getting their way, the group is committed to finding solutions that everyone can live with.(...) Consensus is more than just a compromise. It is a process that can result in surprising and creative solutions (Dissent! 2005, p.3).

The politics of consensus are understood as the solution of conflict by communication and inclusion rather than by dominance and exclusion. Horizontality, as a political model, relates to the notion of re-creation in the organized camp. The shared and exceptional camping experience produces a realm of 'communitas' in which participants leave behind the structuring force of the status quo and can meet as equals. According to Cohen (2009), camping experiences prefigure a political alternative to capitalism. Cohen argued, that even normal leisure camping works on principles that are inherently 'socialist' in that camping implied voluntary cooperation and communal or horizontal decision making.

Quite clearly however horizontal decision making is an unreachable ideal if taken in this pure form. The limitations of horizontal decision making reside specifically in the fact, that the nominal inclusivity of its operation is based on an assumed a priori equality of participants. This equality is however already contradicted by the fact of differential involvement in the preparations of the camp. In fact all camps display a duality between camp organisers and camp participants, clearly contradicting the notional horizontality. Additional factors relating to the backgrounds of individual participants further complicate the picture. Entry to the camp does not create a blank slate of social organisation. The fact that inequality remains in place and that the notional horizontality is more or less ideological obviously creates a conceptual problem for protest campers. It might undermine the

political message of protest camps towards the status quo and hence an important trajectory of the protest camp. My evidence suggests that protest camps face a choice here between either strengthening the antagonism or formalising the regime of horizontality. Within the category of autonomy, Hailey (2009) has pointed to the difference between camps who posit themselves in antagonism to the status quo and camps that operate on the basis of previously formalised autonomy. Between these poles there seems to be a continuum of potential positions of the camps. Some protest camps emphasise and escalate the antagonism between the camp and the status quo. The more obvious the focus on the difference of the camp to its outside, the less pronounced appear the differences inside the camp. By focusing on protest actions, for example blockades and demonstrations, G8 camps in Scotland 2005 and Germany 2007 could mitigate some of the limits of horizontal decision making. Decision making was geared towards action based on a fundamental critique of the G8 as an institution, reducing the scope of potential disagreement within the camp radically. Diverging approaches to action, from direct action to symbolic protest could be accommodated in notions of a plurality of tactics. Obviously such a strategy has its clear limits. In escalating the opposition between inside and outside, the campers can get trapped in a somewhat isolating activist identity. This has implications for the diversity of groups and opinions present in the camp. Frequently criticised in regards of the 2005 protest camp in Scotland, the problem is the development of an 'activist ghetto'. The media relations team, at the forefront of some of the conflicts emerging from the 2005 camp argued in this respect against opposition to mainstream media:

(...) to what extent can a disdain for mainstream media be another way of remaining firmly locked in the inside-outside dichotomy of counter-culture/sub-culture vs. the mainstream, not wanting to engage with anything that is considered 'mainstream' because of being beholden to an existence as 'anti', as 'indy', as 'alternative', as 'pure', (...)?" (CounterSpin Collective 2005, p.328)

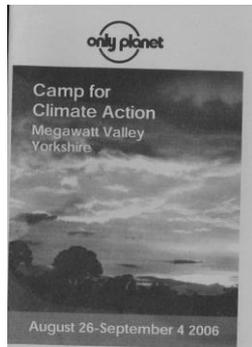
The activists' *communitas*, one could argue, depends on a clear dichotomy between inside and outside. While this supports the conditions to run the camp horizontally, it closes it off to the outside, the world of the status quo that activists want to change. In this way the camp is likely to become too exceptional in their antagonism undermining their power to politically influence the status quo.

A marked difference between the G8 camp in Scotland and the one in Germany resided in the fact, that activists in Germany had build a broad coalition of groups, involving many NGOs and civil society actors, based on a clear rejection of the G8 prior to the camps. This did not happen accidently. The camp organisers had learned from the experiences in Scotland and consciously build the coalition to prevent the isolation of the camp (Turbulence 2007). They hereby reduced the exceptionality of the camp despite its clear antagonism. The camps in Germany were still clearly geared towards action and hence strongly instrumental. This undermined the role of the camp as a world re-created as an alternative to the status quo. As a result, hierarchical structures became more pronounced, particularly in regards of the role of education in the camp that I will discuss in the next section.

In the attempt to remain true to horizontality in decision making camps can also take a different approach. This is exemplified in the development of a series of climate camps that has been taken place in the UK since 2006. Again there is evidence of

learning processes from the G8 camp in Scotland (Shift Magazine & Dysophia 2010). The climate camps, while still formulating a clear antagonism towards the status quo and while still focusing on direct action, additionally emphasised the functions of the camps as 'education, sustainable living, direct action and movement building' (Climate Camp UK 2010). In respect of the first and second function, deceive planning was put into place, signified by a more elaborated, or formalised structure of horizontal decision making. Indeed, veritable guidebooks were created to disseminate the ways the camps are running and familiarise people with the rules of horizontal decision making (Only Planet 2006; Only Planet 2007). This served both the function to make the system operating more successfully and it secondly allowed certain openness to newcomers. It seems the camp organisers were relying more strongly on a 'previously formalised autonomy', rather than on a clear cut antagonism to enable horizontal decision making and openness to newcomers at the same time. In the course of the development of the climate camps over the last years, this approach has shown some remarkable success, allowing the climate camps to run with high levels of participation. Indeed many participants and especially newcomers have described the experience of direct democracy and horizontality at the camps as extraordinary and not paralleled in the political process of the status quo (Berry 2007; Monbiot 2007). It is however important to note that with an increased role of meticulously planned processes and with increasingly 'formalised' process, there was also an increasingly obvious difference between camp organisers and participants. As I had argued above, such a difference occurs in all protest camps. However in the climate camps this difference has been becoming more pronounced. An indication of this lies in the way the newcomers make sense of the experience. There has been increasing references to the camp in language of consumption, and particularly tourist

consumption (Weaver 2007; Weinberg 2007; Berry 2007). This is mirrored to an extent in the language of camp organisers. The guidebooks, initially spoof version of the Lonely Planet, called 'only planet' already introduced this context, albeit with some irony.



Picture 3: Climate Camp Guidebook 2006

Later advertisement for the climate camp has involved flyers that operated in the irony free languages of adventure tourism (Climate Camp 2008; Climate Camp UK Flyer 2008). These are indicators of the problems that arise with formalised horizontality in the camp. The protest camps actually start resembling tourist camps as a clear hierarchy between camp organisers and participants becomes obvious. On this basis, the antagonism that defines the camp is again in thread of becoming an exception. If the underlying structure of the camp, the split between camp organisers and participants, contradicts the nominal structure of horizontality very obviously, then the nominal structure, formalised as it may increasingly appears as ontologically minor to the status quo.

A very similar logic applies in respect of the educational components of the camp to which I will turn now.

## Education

Traditionally organised camping has been a function of education, from the military camp on to boy scouting and the Wandervoegel movement (Scout Association 2009;

Smith 2006). Despite the very different political and social contexts in which protest camping operates today, educational regimes still play an important and often central role. This is partly explained by the fact that protest camping is a learning imperative. The set up of camping itself arguable creates an educational context simply by merit of its exceptionality. Many participants are non-local and unfamiliar with the site and the surrounding environment. Moreover the exceptional experience of high police and media surveillance in many protest camps prompts participants to search for knowledge, narratives and techniques of coping and justification. A clear indication of this consists of informal exchanges between more and less experienced participants by way of circulating information on campfires during evening hours and various other social occasions on the campsite. Formalising these processes camp organiser sometimes provide guidebooks that I mentioned above. Many protest camp sites also feature workshops where knowledge exchanges between more and less experienced participants are further formalised. These workshops have different educational trajectories. Some are used to convey knowledge about setting up the infrastructure of the campsite itself, involving hands-on practices like food, energy provision and waste management. Others are practical training workshops in techniques directed towards protest action outside the camp. These training efforts can play a significant strategic role in protest actions. In the camps erected around the 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm in Germany training workshops in the so-called 'Five finger technique' enabled the mass-blockade of roads leading towards the conference centre, involving thousands of protesters. Moreover topical workshops aim to provide information in respect of the target of protest and the issues protested about. These may be organised by experts, conveying particular knowledge or ideologies.

Alternatively they may be organised more in the sense of ‘open spaces’, places of debates in which all participants are considered expert (Keraghel & Sen 2004).

Arguably different regimes of education operate when information is exchanged informally between participants on a campfire, when an issue like carbon emissions in aviation is discussed in an open meeting or when a guide, written and printed by camp organisers is circulated in the camp. In educational theory the latter has been associated with traditional enlightenment understanding of education in which the learner is seen as a container or a bank (Freire 1985). Knowledge is conceptualised as an asset that can be placed inside the learner. Concurrently this model creates a clear hierarchy between the teacher and learner, or in this case between camp organisers and newcomers.

The more informal exchanges on the camp site on the contrary seem to indicate a regime of education in which hierarchies are less pronounced as the educator of one instant becomes the educated of the other. Such regimes support the notion of the camp as a *communitas* of equals. Freire (1985) has proposed to formalise these more horizontal notions of learning as ‘dialog’ and ‘co-learning’, ideas that have been picked up in critical education theory (Hooks 1994). In many protest camps such ideas have been adopted in the provision of ‘open spaces’ for debates to co-educate participants. These alternative regimes of education are posited as counter-regimes of the camp and often play a key role in the antagonistic positioning of the camp.

Concurrently the more hierarchical regime of education is associated with the status quo of the outside of the camp (Trapese Collective 2007). However inside the camp the more hierarchical forms of education continue operating. Guidebooks or workshops like the aforementioned five-finger technique are essential to the success of protest camps and occur in all of them along with the hierarchies of camp

organisers and participants that these educational regimes produce. While the nominal antagonism of the camp against the outside space is based on opposing regimes of education, the reality of every protest camp contradicts this.

The development of open space approaches to education in the camp follows a similar logic than the use of horizontal decision making in the domain of internal governance. 'Open space' was developed as an organisational tool for events, conferences and meetings since the 1980ies (Owen 2008). In political contexts it has been adopted by the founders of the world social forum (WSF), and widely debated ever since (Wallerstein 2004; Keraghel & Sen 2004; Patomaki & Teivainen 2004; Boehm et al. 2005).

As a principle open space is equally contradictory as is the notion of horizontality but interestingly open space inspired educational systems get formalised in the practice of protest camps in very different ways. The protest camps against the G8 in Scotland and Germany only provided a limited amount of workshops that were mostly geared towards the support of action. This indicates the stronger role of the antagonism that makes further debate unnecessary. In an extreme form, arguably the assumption is that problem and solution are already defined. There is no need for further discussion beyond tactics and strategies. In the climate camps the focus on education was broadened and full workshop programs were offered that increasingly transcended support for action. In these workshops a variety of issues was discussed. Increasingly over the years attempts were made to open the debate to a broader range of political opinions as well.

The guide to the second climate camp emphasised this outlook:

So it's up to us, the public acting together, to push solutions that fight against climate change and for social justice, to develop attractive solutions, to adopt different measurements of value, to turn things around. The good news is that most of the changes needed are social, psychological and political. They aren't about technology. They are questions to be answered by the public, not the expert. (Only Planet 2007, p.2)

Didactic or instrumental education is about the expert. However, in the climate camps education was more open than that, more of an exchange of the public with experts about the way forward, more about creating the sphere to 'make things public' (Latour & Weibel 2005), to have a debate about it, to empower people to speak. Practically however this development has shown its own limitations. With the arrival of prominent journalists, unionists and MPs at the climate camps the idea of an open public space without experts was undermined to an extent. Not only were now a variety of diverging opinions being equally discussed, often contradicting the original ideas of the camp organisers. Moreover the role of particular experts undermined the ideas of co-education in the camp. Such developments have been contested and critiqued in the organisation process of the climate camp, particular in respect of more mainstream political positions (Shift Magazine & Dysophia 2010). Opening space meant in practice to allow people who had strong voices in the status quo to feature highly in the camps as well. The antagonism of the camp space – seen from this perspective - seems increasingly nominal while real differences to the status quo diminish. New configurations might emerge from current discussions on where to take the climate camps in particular. It is clear however that the climate camps in their success to overcome a certain isolation of previous activist camps have encountered

new challenges. These challenges relate to the increasingly important role of ‘formalised autonomy’ or what can be called an increasing institutionalisation within the status quo.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the paper was to discuss the place of protest camps that position themselves in antagonism to the status quo. Not all protest camps search such a position and the empirical study was focused on camps that do. The conclusions from this paper are limited to protest camps that pursue an antagonistic positioning. Such a position is arguable artificial as the rules and norms of the status quo continue to apply in the camps. Protest camps, I argued, were hence in danger of becoming an exceptional feature of the status quo. Rather than changing the status quo, they would strengthen it.

The analysis focused on the ways in which protest camps craft the antagonism, looking in particular at the domains of internal governance and education in the camps. Protest camps employ the alternative modes of internal governance and education, horizontal decision making and open space. However the application of these modes shows clear limits and contradictions in practice. Horizontality and open space approaches are undermined by continuously existing differences between different groups of protest campers and their differential investments into the camps. The emerging contradictions are a challenge to the camps and it appears that both open acknowledgement and open denial seem to lead the antagonism of protest camps to become an exception and hence undermine their political aims.

On the one hand, to deny the continuous existence of educational and governmental regimes that produce hierarchies in the camps will demand increasing closure of the

camp to the outside, by way of an affirmation of the antagonism in ontological terms. The camp may claim increasing autonomy from the status quo based on claims to a more authentic, utopian social organisation inside the camp. In practice such claims to ontological difference will increasingly be based on cultural signifiers as evidently a political autonomy in strict terms cannot be achieved without the creation of a new body politic. The development of strong counter-cultural identities in the camp will however limit the political significance of protest camps, creating the impasse of so called 'activist ghettos'. It allows the status quo to ignore the campsite as marginal and politically irrelevant and will limit its appeal to core constituencies. An essentialist affirmation of the antagonism between inside and outside might moreover increase the role of hierarchical regimes inside the camp, as the antagonism is increasingly defined in cultural and not political terms.

On the other hand, the camps may try to tackle the contradiction of continuously existing hierarchical regimes in the camp by formalising governmental and educational regimes in the form of guidebooks and guidelines. This has the advantage that it allows for a broader appeal of the protest camps beyond core constituencies.

Indeed the development of the climate camps over the years has shown the remarkable success of this approach. However, as the regimes are increasingly based on previously formalised regimes, the difference between camp-organisers and camp-participants become more accentuated. The camp and its attempt to establish an antagonism via non-hierarchical governance and educational regimes increasingly seems to be artificial or nominal while the status quo and its hierarchical regimes are real as proven by their continuous existence in the protest camp. Previously formalised autonomy leads to a downgrading of the ontological status of the camp in relation to the status quo. The antagonism of the camp again becomes exceptional,

this time more in the sense of how tourist spaces are understood functionally integrated into the status quo (see above).

The practice of many protest camps indicates ways of a middle ground that prevent both extremes. Crucial here is an understanding of politics as akin to theatre and indeed artificial. The fact that the aforementioned guide-books often come across as parodies points towards the important role of irony in balancing between the extremes. More importantly these issues can only be successfully tackled to the extent that the camps operate as open political spaces. This involves bearing the contradictions that occur when creating an antagonistic space and preventing tendencies inside the camp to understand it as ontologically different to the status quo. Rather the camp is playacting at this, pretending that this was possible. The theatrical mode must not be conceived as a delusion however, because this would indicate that the camp is artificial while the outside space is not.

This is partly enabled by learning processes of participants and camp organisers. The evidence from the cases discussed here suggests that learning processes take place between different protest camps, sometimes across national boundaries. Such learning processes have led to an increasingly successful use of the tool of protest camping, certainly in the British context as exemplified in the climate camp movement. As I have indicated, the success itself brings new challenges, namely a tendency of institutionalisation.

The antagonism as exception describes an ontologically different status of the space of the camp, either as more real and authentic, or as less real and more artificial than the status quo. This is indeed Agamben's notion of the camp as the nomos of modernity: the camp is the authentic political space of modernity, the real reflection of social relations, while the status quo as we perceive it is merely artificial. Protest

camps seem to succeed as antagonistic spaces only in so far as they manage to resist the challenge to be understood as ontologically different to the status quo. Indeed this balancing act might be an indication of what Foucault's (1967) calls heterotopias. Political successful protest camps seem to mirror the status quo. Re-created 'mirror' images of the status-quo, they operate as antagonistic on the same ontological plane as the status quo, "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live." (Foucault 1967, p.3)

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