

Articulating Climate Justice in Copenhagen: Antagonism, the Commons, and Solidarity

Paul Chatterton

*School of Geography, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK;
p.chatterton@leeds.ac.uk*

David Featherstone

*School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK;
david.featherstone@glasgow.ac.uk*

Paul Routledge

*School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK;
paul.routledge@glasgow.ac.uk*

Abstract: Articulations of climate justice were central to the diverse mobilisations that opposed the Copenhagen Climate Talks in December 2009. This paper contends that articulations of climate justice pointed to the emergence of three co-constitutive logics: antagonism, the common(s), and solidarity. Firstly, we argue that climate justice involves an antagonistic framing of climate politics that breaks with attempts to construct climate change as a “post-political” issue. Secondly, we suggest that climate justice involves the formation of pre-figurative political activity, expressed through acts of commoning. Thirdly, we contend that climate justice politics generates solidarities between differently located struggles and these solidarities have the potential to shift the terms of debate on climate change. Bringing these logics into conversation can develop the significance of climate justice for political practice and strategy. We conclude by considering what is at stake in different articulations of climate justice and tensions in emerging forms of climate politics.

Keywords: climate justice, antagonism, commons, contentious, post-political, prefigurative, solidarity

Introduction

On 12 December 2009, 100,000¹ people marched through the streets of Copenhagen, Denmark to protest against/lobby the United Nations “COP15” negotiations. Protesters marked their resistance to the solutions being proposed by official negotiators and marched to the Bella Conference Centre where the negotiations were taking place. They protested at the failure of governments to take meaningful, urgent and coordinated policy action to address climate change. They also contested the neoliberal, market logics being promoted through the

negotiations as tools for solving the climate crisis. Protesters refused to view climate change politics in isolation, but linked issues of climate change to critiques of the global economic crisis.

The demonstration formed part of an attempt by social movements, grassroots activists and campaigns from across the world to take action on, and challenge, the various processes and policies contributing to climate change. During the week long UN meeting, activists held an alternative “climate summit”, staged a range of protests and direct actions across the city, and created a variety of autonomous self-managed “free” spaces throughout Copenhagen in which activists met, ate, slept and planned actions. The Copenhagen mobilisations were marked by the further development of “climate justice” as a key framing and mobilising discourse which, we argue, articulated a new political agenda for mobilising climate activism.

The presence of justice in contentious politics has been a leitmotif for alter-globalisation and anti-poverty activists (eg Juris 2008; Notes from Nowhere 2003; Routledge and Cumbers 2009), as well as certain environmental campaigns (eg Cutter 1995; Rhodes 2003; Schlosberg 2007). A defining aspect of the protests in Copenhagen was the intensity through which claims of “climate justice” were mobilised. Climate justice is used and defined in different ways, but primarily is mobilised to contest the unequal impacts of climate change, both geographically and socially. This paper interrogates the terms on which climate justice was articulated through these protests. We contend that articulations of climate justice pointed to the emergence of three co-constitutive logics, antagonism, the common(s) and solidarity. By foregrounding these logics the paper engages with the importance of contentious politics for reworking the terms of debates on climate change.

Copenhagen’s Contentious Spaces

The Copenhagen mobilisations were the culmination of diverse forms of translocal organising. This included the Camp for Climate Action in Kent, August 2008, where preliminary discussions concerning the mobilisations were held between a range of European activists; the emergence of CJA (Climate Justice Action) as an organising platform for the mobilisations the following month; and the various international meetings that were held during 2008 and 2009 to develop CJA strategy and local logistics for the COP15 meeting. The prelude to the COP15 was characterised by translocal activism and networking. For example, on 24 October 2009, a global day of action organised by the “350 campaign” saw 5200 actions in 181 countries unite in a call for an equitable and meaningful solution to the climate crisis (White 2009). Immediately prior to the mobilisations in Copenhagen, a “From Trade to Climate” Caravan was conducted which linked the mobilisation against the WTO summit in Geneva (November 2009) with the Copenhagen protests (Burton 2011).

A diverse range of civil society actors converged upon Copenhagen for the mobilisations against the COP15 Summit. They included European autonomist groups and direct action networks such as Camp for Climate Action; the Climate Justice Now (CJN)! network, composed of over 160 members ranging from single

organisations to large networks, federations and coalitions²; CJA which comprises a smaller number of groups, networks, organisations and collectives generally of a more radical and autonomous nature; grassroots social movements from the global South exemplified by the presence of members of Via Campesina, the small farmer and peasant network; a range of NGOs from around the world (eg Focus on the Global South, Climate Action Network); trade unions; politicians; journalists; and concerned individuals.

There were principally five different spaces through which the events of the week unfolded. First, there was the space of states and officially sanctioned lobbying NGOs that attended the COP15 meeting that took place at the city's main convention centre, the Bella Centre. This space was important as it became a boundary space for contentious political action bringing together those inside and outside the centre in creative and tense ways (Klein 2009). Second, there was the space of corporate and business interests that turned the summit into an opportunity to present big technology, science and market-based solutions to climate change. These green capitalist accumulation strategies were embodied in the "Hopenhagen" exhibition area in central Copenhagen, opposite the Tivoli Gardens.³ The third space was an alternative climate summit, the KlimaForum, which took place in a sports centre in the middle of the city centre. This became a focus for a range of voices largely antagonistic to the official UN process and base camp for individuals, grassroots movements and NGOs from around the world. It was organised by a wide array of both international and Danish activists.

The fourth space comprised several autonomous sites that were established across the city to house the huge influx of activists and protesters from across Europe and beyond. In these spaces approaches to climate justice were characterised by anarchist and self-organised, autonomist politics. These spaces provided free communal sleeping spaces, kitchens, info points, indymedia centres, convergence spaces and legal information and support spaces and included the longstanding Free state of Christiania (see Figure 1).

The final space of activism was the streets of Copenhagen which became the focus of numerous demonstrations, skirmishes, stand offs with the police, preventative arrests, street theatre, exhibitions, interventions and stunts. It is worth noting that there was a significant amount of movement, blurring and exchange between these different spaces. NGOs, journalists and friendly politicians who predominantly attended the Bella Centre also talked and held workshops at the KlimaForum, and were involved in a "break-out" from the Centre to join the demonstrations outside. Activists from the autonomous spaces protested on the streets and also attended the KlimaForum. The streets became a site of engagement for people making their way around the city to official events and demonstrations.

Our collective participation in the mobilisations in Copenhagen is part of longer engagement with the diverse trajectories of climate justice politics and alter-globalisation networks. We have been involved in different forms of organising that has sought to refuse the dominant terms of climate change politics. These trajectories shape the theoretical and political commitments of this paper. These organising practices also position the summit at Copenhagen as just one key moment in the development of an antagonistic climate politics. It

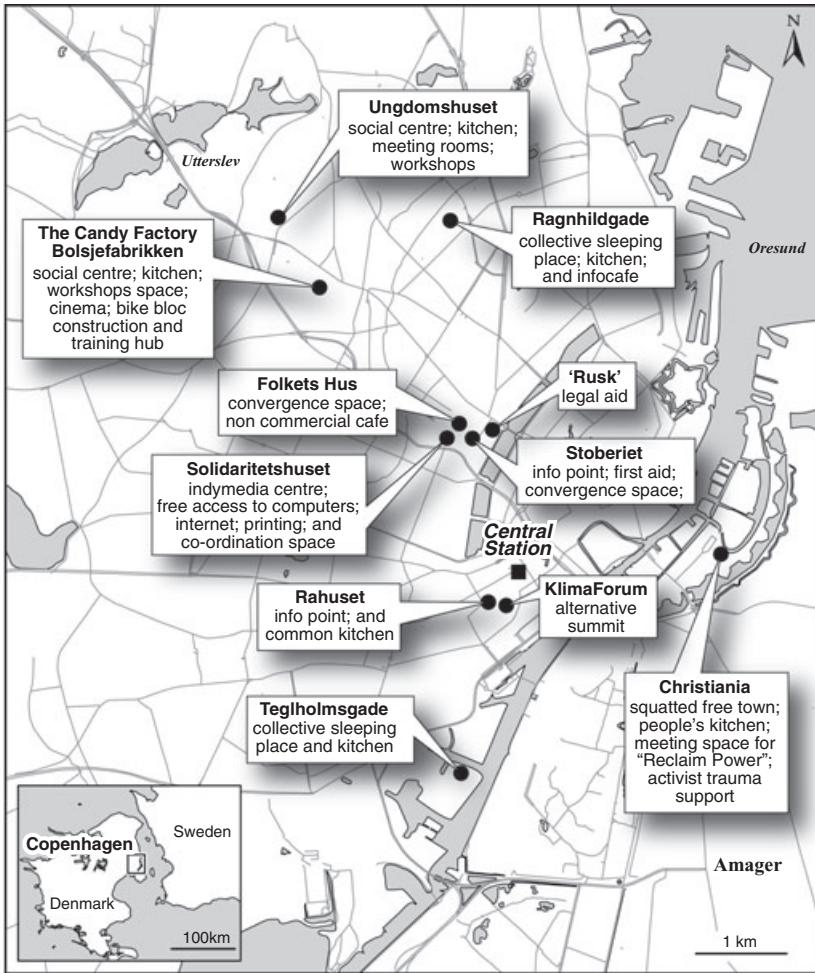


Figure 1: Map showing the activist spaces in the COP15 at Copenhagen (produced by Mike Shand, University of Glasgow, using information from <http://www.climatecollective.org/en/cop15/practical-info/>).

provided momentum that has led to further events and organising practices which have been defined by attempts to politicise the terms of climate change debates.

The Philippines Movement for Climate Justice—a network of 100 organisations—was formed in the prelude to COP15 and is now engaged in a regional solidarity alliance with the Thai Climate Justice Network and the Indonesian Civil Society Forum on Climate Justice (interview, Bangkok 2011). The CJA network has held a series of further European-wide meetings. In April 2010, the World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia. This conference, called by the Bolivian government, has created a space where many climate justice concerns can be further discussed and worked upon. The inter-ministerial in April 2010 in Bonn and the 16th COP meeting held in Cancun, Mexico also became key sites of climate justice activism. Prior to

COP17 in Durban, the People's Dialogue (a coalition of South African and Latin American movements) was formed.

The term "climate justice" emerged and developed through a broader constellation of events beyond and before Copenhagen. The first use of the term was in a 1999 report appearing on a website⁴ followed by a November 2000 Amsterdam conference of the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCDO) of the Netherlands, during the COP6 Climate Change negotiations.⁵ The concept gained further elaboration in the Bali Principles of Climate Justice 2002; the Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading 2004, articulated by the Durban Group for Climate Justice; the formation of the Climate Justice Now! (CJN) network in Bali, Indonesia, during the COP14 negotiations in 2007⁶; and the "Climate Justice Action" (CJA) network as an organising platform prior to the Copenhagen mobilisations. These ideas were central to the Declaration of the Klimaforum (the alternative climate forum held in Copenhagen), and the "Reclaim Power" action, the most significant direct action mobilisation during COP15. Subsequently articulations of climate justice have been taken forward through the World People's Conference on Climate Change in Bolivia in 2010, and the mobilisations during the COP16 in Cancun, Mexico, and the COP17 in Durban, South Africa.⁷

Briefly defined, climate justice refers to principles of democratic accountability and participation, ecological sustainability and social justice and their combined ability to provide solutions to climate change. Such a notion focuses on the interrelationships between, and addresses the roots causes of, the social injustice, ecological destruction and economic domination perpetrated by the underlying logics of pro-growth capitalism. In particular, climate justice articulates a rejection of capitalist solutions to climate change (eg carbon markets) and foregrounds the uneven and persistent patterns of eco-imperialism and "ecological debt" as a result of the historical legacy of uneven use of fossil fuels and exploitation of raw materials, offshoring, and export of waste (see Martinez-Alier 2002; Muradian and Martinez-Alier 2001).

It can be understood through a series of demands that have progressively been elaborated since the 2002 Bali Principles. They are sensitive to relations of unequal global geometries of power and how these intersect with relations of class, race, gender, generation, indigenous rights and socio-nature (not least in terms of responsibilities and capacities for mitigation and adaptation). Building on the Climate Justice Now! declarations in 2007 and 2008, climate justice principles were articulated in the KlimaForum's declaration during Copenhagen and included: leaving fossil fuels in the ground; reasserting peoples' and community control over production; re-localising food production; massively reducing over-consumption, particularly in the global North; respecting indigenous and forest people's rights; and recognising the ecological and climate debt owed to the people's in the global South by the societies of the global North necessitating the making of reparations. In a further elaboration, the Cochabamba Declaration of 2010 has argued for a series of "Inherent Rights of Mother Earth",⁸ and demanded that developed countries radically reduce and absorb their emissions; assume the costs and technology transfer needs of developing countries and responsibility for climate refugees; eliminate their restrictive immigration policies, offering migrants a decent

life with full human rights guarantees in their countries; and construct an adaptation fund to assess the impacts and costs of climate change in developing countries and provide a mechanism for compensation. This articulation is now accepted by a broad range of climate justice campaigning networks.

Clearly, this use of justice is far from unproblematic. Just like climate change debates, the term climate justice itself is a terrain of contestation (Hulme 2009). In particular, three uses of the term diverge significantly from the grassroots articulation described above: the Third World Network and other participants within climate change negotiations consider climate justice as primarily a struggle between global Northern and Southern states within UNFCCC process; the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs leadership consider climate justice to be concerned with the global South's "right to industrialise" in a carbon-constrained world; and the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice's approach to climate justice conforms to market environmentalist approaches.⁹ What is at stake in these different articulations of climate justice can be developed through exploring how climate justice can intersect with three co-constitutive logics, antagonism, the common(s) and solidarity.

Antagonisms

Positioning a politics of climate change in relation to unequal and contested geographies of power allows us to frame climate change politics in terms of antagonism. Mainstream debates around climate change have frequently isolated processes like carbon emission and global warming from the unequal social and environmental relations upon which neoliberal globalisation depends (Giddens 2009). Both these debates and emerging discussion on the left around the economic crisis have marginalised the responses of social movements and other grassroots initiatives (Blackburn 2007; Panitch and Gindin 2010). Engaging with political movements that have foregrounded unequal social and environmental relations changes the terms of debate on the relations between politics and climate change. This is because they have come to issues of climate change through a longstanding engagement with antagonistic environmental politics.

The alter-globalisation mobilisations, such as the iconic mobilisations against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle, brought the unequal relations of power produced through neoliberal globalisation into direct contestation. They made the power relations that constitute neoliberal globalisation localisable and contestable (eg see Featherstone 2008; Juris 2008; Notes from Nowhere 2003; Routledge and Cumbers 2009). This has important implications for contesting dominant responses to climate change.

Erik Swyngedouw has argued that climate change has been constructed as a consensual, post-political issue (Swyngedouw 2007, 2010). He usefully asserts some of the ways in which climate change has become a post-political issue. We agree that a "carbon consensus" has emerged shaped by organisations such as the 10:10 campaign, "a movement of people, schools, businesses and organisations cutting their emissions 10% at a time" (10:10 campaign website). Such campaigns are focused on tasks such as how to reduce carbon emissions from the atmosphere rather

than critical discussions of the economic and political institutional arrangements used to do so (Pusey and Russell 2010).

This “consensus” on how to deal with climate change is “rebooting” capitalism, creating new opportunities for accumulation, overcoming present failures and increasing market penetration and resource/land privatisation (Swyngedouw 2007, 2010). Swyngedouw goes as far as to argue that “the environmental question in general, and the climate change argument and how it is publicly staged in particular, has been and continues to be one of the markers through which post-politicization is wrought” (Swyngedouw 2010:216). There are, however, important tensions in such arguments, not least a rather limited engagement with the actually existing forms of contestation that are emerging.

First, while there are key attempts to de-politicise key issues such as climate change, to argue that these are the only ways that such politics is being articulated is reductive. Climate justice actions around the world are politicising climate change through making capitalist business-as-usual localisable and contestable. Particularly significant examples include ongoing protests against the exploitation of Tar Sands in Canada that have recently targeted the White House in the United States; occupations of the Dominion Virginia Power’s new coal-fired power plant in Wise County, Virginia, USA; a range of protests in the UK, such as climate camps (located at sites of fossil fuel emissions, eg the Drax and Kingsnorth power stations and Heathrow airport; see <http://www.climatecamp.org.uk>); protests against new coal exploitation in Scotland and Wales (eg see coalactionscotland.org.uk); ongoing efforts to achieve a moratorium on coal and oil exploration in Nigeria and South Africa.

Second, this work has tended to adopt a rather nation-centred account of the political (Mouffe 2005; Žižek 1999, 2005). Swyngedouw, for example, fails to engage with the ways in which contestation to climate change exceeds, unsettles and undermines attempts to contain contestation within the nation. The organising in advance of the UN Meeting on Climate Change in Copenhagen 2009 and the networked constituencies of activists who coalesced there produced antagonistic politics of climate change beyond and below the nation state (as the alter-globalisation protests did earlier; see Featherstone 2008; Routledge 2003a; Routledge and Cumbers 2009). They also produce a set of political interventions that can usefully be described as “environmentalisms of the poor” that contest assumptions that environmental alliances and tactics are a middle class privilege (Martinez-Alier 2002; see also Featherstone 2008; Martinez-Alier and Temper 2007).

Third, these antagonistic interventions in climate change politics generate perspectives which are antithetical to further capital expansion, and develop movements which do not just want to tackle climate change, but challenge the unequal social and environmental relations which carbon emissions are embedded in and locate it within the broader crisis of contemporary capitalism. Such antagonisms are plural. Tactics to achieve this are rich and varied. To provide one example, ongoing struggles against biofuel projects (eg such as the Isabela Bioethanol and Cogeneration project in San Mariano state, Philippines) are folded into translocal alliances through solidarity networks, such the Asian Peasant Coalition and the

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty. In addition to representing struggles against environmental, economic, and cultural "erasure" (see Routledge 2003b), these struggles also challenge the marketisation of solutions to climate change represented by carbon credit schemes such as the UN Clean Development Mechanism facility through which many biofuel projects are seeking funding.

Antagonisms also exist between and within different climate justice networks in terms of approaches to climate change concerning carbon markets. In particular, the rejection of all forms of carbon trading by CJN! has placed it in conflict with the Climate Action Network (CAN)¹⁰ which has engaged with the carbon market process. Indeed the formation of CJN! constituted a radical response to the post-political climate change agenda of more mainstream networks such as CAN.

Finally, the antagonism underpinning climate justice mobilisations is not simply towards certain aspects of injustice, it is also an antagonism over how life is produced and reproduced and whether it is produced in common or not. *La Via Campesina* (LVC)—the international peasant and small farmers alliance which is a member of Climate Justice Now!—have generated forms of alternative political practices through their organising and mobilisation as well as opposing unequal social and environmental relations they also generate (Desmarais 2007). They have combined a commitment to localised forms of agriculture, and food sovereignty as an alternative to carbon-intensive agri-business with a focus on translocal circuits of opposition to neoliberalisation (Via Campesina 2009). During the Copenhagen mobilisations the Farmer's Action on 13 December led by LVC was both a protest against industrial agriculture and an articulation of LVC's campaign of food sovereignty; and the "Resistance is Ripe!" Agricultural Day of Action on the 15 December, focused on the enclosure of peasant and indigenous commons around the world.

This emphasises how articulations of climate justice were produced on antagonistic terms through key mobilisations in Copenhagen. The various spaces outlined above placed antagonism at the heart of much analysis of climate justice. Klimaforum was perhaps the most noteworthy here, which provided a space for the articulation of grievances, and antagonisms concerning a range of climate justice campaigns. A diversity of narratives, especially from struggles in the global South, concerning the effects of climate change on communities were voiced. For example, a Tibetan delegation from the "Third Pole" network, for example, gave a presentation in the Forum that discussed the forcible relocation of Tibetan nomads by the Chinese authorities from the grasslands of the Tibetan plateau into fenced model villages. This struggle over a primarily human rights issue was reconfigured as a climate justice issue since the grasslands upon which the nomads lived were carbon sinks that were themselves threatened by the construction of the model villages.

Articulations of climate justice explicitly challenged the links between climate change and uneven global geometries of power. During the Climate Reparations demonstration outside the Bella Centre on 14 December, speakers from activist groups based in the Philippines, Senegal, India and Brazil and beyond, for example, used climate debt as a way of articulating climate change in relation to the unequal histories of colonialism and continuing global inequalities. Demonstrators demanded "reparations from highly industrialised countries for their climate debt"

and urged that the World Bank and its sister institutions “stay out of climate finance” (Jubilee South 2009). In this instance, as an antagonistic issue climate debt was not reducible to simple financial transactions that place a monetary value on the damage done to people’s lives after centuries of human and resource exploitation. Rather, it was used to dislocate the dominant agenda, reminding people of who is responsible for industrialised capitalism and the current bio-crisis (see Bond 2010a).

Further, on 12 December 2009, the main public Climate Justice demonstration demanded major systemic change to address the issue of climate change. The streets became the focus of antagonism from the Danish police and state. Although the climate justice protests were largely peaceful, the levels of police violence, provocation and intimidation were excessive, including mass arrests; the caging of activists; raids on activist convergence spaces; and the tear gassing of the autonomous district of Christiania which was shut down. During the mass demonstration on 12 December the police made 968 arrests in the course of what was an overwhelmingly peaceful march. The arrests were “pre-emptive”. Of the 900 arrested only three were brought to trial. Police held protesters in wire cages, joking that they were “mini-Guatánamos”.¹¹

This emphasises the work that is done to push antagonism out of dominant constructions of the political, especially within the public realm. What was notable was that whole clusters of venues and public places became, if only temporarily, a focus for the playing out of antagonistic interpretations of the effects of climate change. The various spaces we have described were forced open (Sen 2010), providing opportunities for a more disruptive playing out of identities, national affiliations, and conflictual interchanges on the meanings, causes and solutions to climate change. If only for a short time, Copenhagen became a theatre for antagonistic interpretations (Free Association 2010) which exposed the unequal social and environmental relations that underpin the “post-political” carbon consensus. The key issue we return to in the conclusion is how such antagonistic social-spatial relations can be maintained.

Common(s)

Central to these antagonistic articulations of climate justice has been the creation, defence and expansion of the “common” and the “commons”. We use two variations here as the former refers to the social process of being-in-common, a social relationship of the commoners who build, defend and reproduce the commons. The latter refers to territorial entities and those resources that are collectively owned or shared between and among populations as well as socio-nature—the air, water, soil, plants etc of nature as well as the results of social (re)production and interaction such as knowledge, languages, codes, information (Building Bridges Collective 2010; Hardt and Negri 2009).

The commons have emerged as an alternative political keyword of our times. Dispossession from poor, peasant and indigenous peoples of vital resources and attacks on their livelihoods have generated moves to defend the common(s), which

in turn generate further antagonisms against those class interests which seek to undermine them. As De Angelis (2003:1) notes:

Commons suggest alternative, non-commodified means to fulfil social needs, e.g. to obtain social wealth and to organise social production. Commons are necessarily created and sustained by “communities” i.e. by social networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human exchange that are not reduced to the market form.

The commons consists of a shared interest or value that is produced through communal relations. It potentially forms the ethical coordinates of an alternative politics when common “wealth” (eg land, water, seeds, air, food, biodiversity, cultural practices) that provides direct input into social and physical wellbeing, is faced with “enclosure” in the form of the destruction of physical environments and the privatisation of resources and genetic stocks (Gibson-Graham 2006:95–97, 237). Protecting this “commonwealth” is central to generating new forms of antagonism and solidarity (Hardt and Negri 2009). Mobilising around the common are productive moments that build commonalities, group identity, shared understandings, and repertoires of tactics (De Angelis 2003; Linebaugh 2008). Commoning, as Peter Linebaugh insists by using the term common as a verb as well as a noun, is a dynamic, generative process.

Interrogating the spatial constitution of the common and commoning can be a useful project in understanding how alternative political strategies are formed (see also Vasudevan, Jeffrey and McFarlane 2008). Hardt and Negri see the common as a form of “bio-political production” and envision the commons as generative of new relations between people and things (Hardt and Negri 2009). The common, then, creates new vocabularies, social and spatial practices and repertoires of resistance which activists are creatively using to challenge a problem as complex as climate change. Commoning evokes a political imaginary which can be anti (against), despite (in) and post (beyond) capitalist (eg Gibson-Graham 2006; Holloway 2010). Activists accept that commoning will be contradictory and will weave together practices and values that will sometimes feel embedded or trapped in capitalist ways of doing things, and at other times will be more creative or antagonistic. This is not to say that building commons are likely, easy or free of diverse cross cutting relations of power. What is crucial is that they are prefigurative (ie they practice the future that they wish to see), open, experimental and have the potential to generate solidarities (Franks 2003).

The planet is riven by struggles over resources and territory that evoke the dynamic generative process of commoning. Struggles such as the land occupations of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* [Movement of Landless Rural Workers or MST] in Brazil, the Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities of Chiapas, Mexico, the South African Shack Dwellers movement, and the Bangladesh Krishok (peasant) Federation (BKF) are indicative of attempts to obtain social wealth and collectively organise social (re)production through antagonistic politics that directly challenge resource dispossessions of the poor (Routledge 2011; Wolford 2010). Moreover, the wealth of temporary encampments and caravans that have characterised the anti-globalisation movement in places such as Gleneagles, Nice, Cancun, Durban, Adelaide and Edinburgh are moments of experiments in commoning.

Drawing on these diverse examples, it is important to see the common as a central demand/practice of translocal political networks, rather than as something which is necessarily bounded or particular (Gilroy 2010). Therefore, the task of commoning is not just to (re)create locally controlled commons, especially for the most marginalised (although this is a crucial task), but also to mount a connected geopolitical challenge to move the present balance of power away from ever more powerful coalitions of multinational institutions and to strengthen a globally connected grassroots movement for greater climate justice.

The concept of the common(s) raises some difficult issues for the climate justice movement. Mainstream climate management is predicated upon the “privatisation of the air” through carbon market mechanisms—the world of carbon offsets, credits, trading, and clean development mechanisms. Commoning in this context implies complete antagonism to all carbon market mechanisms (as articulated by the Durban Declaration on Carbon Trading). However, such antagonism must confront the spatial dilemmas associated with attempting to common the global capacity to “develop” through carboniferous capitalism (and its associated greenhouse gas emissions) (Harvey 2011). Difficult questions arise concerning the institutional and legal frameworks for creating or indeed regulating an “atmospheric commons” (eg through a Climate Tribunal as suggested in the Cochabamba declaration) that are far from being resolved, let alone instigated.

Moreover, given the current global terrain of “climate governance” (such as the UNFCCC process) which works directly against climate justice goals, local and translocal climate justice action needs to be a much greater focus for constructing a more effective global challenge in the future. Exploring, understanding and promoting novel spatial forms constituted through commoning practices, then, is central to mobilising the alternatives that are developing through place-based movements, networks, and translocal alliances for climate justice.

In Copenhagen this commoning worked on several levels. First, the many spaces attempted to put prefigurative politics into practice and create a physical commons in order to educate, inspire and organise. The KlimaForum acted as an informational commons that over its 12 days featured 202 debates, 70 exhibitions and 43 films covering a wide range of climate-related issues. It provided a space for bringing together activists from different struggles. The various self-managed autonomous spaces around the city embodied the practice of commoning where actions during the protests were planned, information provided, media reports written, and solidarities forged between activists from different local and national contexts. For example, one space served as the location where LVC activists from across the world who had arrived in Copenhagen could sleep, eat and hold strategy and campaign meetings.

These spaces were largely self-managed by local collectives, with groups of activists from other countries bolstering efforts to maintain and coordinate these spaces. Over the week, these stable bases formed an infrastructure for design making, discussion, action planning, post action safety, debriefing and trauma support. Such commoning practices in alternative spaces also solidify strong subcultures associated with radical activism. These can be useful in terms of maintaining an oppositional politics, but they can also hinder the actual cause

of climate justice and solidarity amongst diverse groups by creating hermetically bounded identity norms as well as attracting heavy police surveillance.

The events of Copenhagen also attempted to codify common agreements as the basis for future organising. The commons has become a key discursive tool for the climate justice movement precisely as it directly stands as an antidote to the dominant response to climate change based on privatisation, capital accumulation through dispossession and market penetration. The demands for a climate debt owed to the peoples in the global South by the societies of the global North as articulated in the KlimaForum declaration is an example of recognising this importance of the common(s). Conceptualised as an attempt to balance the severe disequilibrium in emissions produced in the industrialised countries whose consequences are predominantly experienced in the global South, the notion of climate debt necessitates reparations in terms of, for example, the removal of patents on technologies so that they are free and available for all. Ideas of common ownership and governance emerged as key themes that were discussed and debated here. These were small but significant interventions in terms of articulating exactly what the commons means for a new deal based on climate justice.

Solidarities

Solidarity means fighting for our own autonomy at the same time as we struggle against corporations and the relationships of capital that exploit people everywhere (CJA 2010:1).

Solidarities are shaped through the ongoing contestation of spatially stretched power relations and the construction and defence of the common (Featherstone 2012). Solidarities constructed through processes of relationality, connectivity and commonality between diverse place-based struggles over climate injustices have the potential to refigure the terms of debate of climate politics. To be effective, struggles concerning climate justice require the forging of solidarities and mutual responsibilities between groups and communities, and the articulation of those rights within, between and beyond particular places (Massey 2007).

Shared notions of climate justice begin to create common ground enabling different themes to be interconnected, and different political actors from different struggles and cultural contexts to join together in common struggle (della Porta *et al.* 2006). Indeed, Agyeman, Bulkeley and Nochur (2007) argue that an international climate justice movement has emerged and cite as evidence think tanks such as India's Centre for Science and the Environment; international activist networks such as Rising Tide; US-based policy groups such as EcoEquity; and Indigenous networks such as the US-based Indigenous Environmental Network. However, rather than a coherent climate justice "movement" we would argue that we are witnessing a range of overlapping, interacting, competing and differentially placed and resourced and often divergent networks concerned with issues of climate change (eg Juris 2008; Routledge and Cumbers 2009).

Examples of spatially extensive solidarities around issues related to climate justice would include, firstly, particular movements' participation in a range of translocal solidarity initiatives to support their placed struggles. For example, the Bangladesh

Krishok Federation (a member of LVC), the Asia Peasants Coalition, the South Asia Peasants Coalition, the People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty, all participated in the "From Trade to Climate" Caravan conducted prior to the Copenhagen mobilisations. Secondly, such solidarities are manifested in the range of networks that have emerged in the past few years that share the broad demands of climate justice articulated in Copenhagen including CJA; CJN!; the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance as well as networks in the Amazon and Niger Delta. Thirdly, such solidarities are also expressed during the articulated moments of climate justice antagonism, such as the mobilisations in Copenhagen, when a range of political actors—movements, NGOs, networks, autonomous groups—converge.

The importance of such solidarities to political strategies around climate justice and activism cannot be underestimated. This is because there have been important debates over how practices of localisation are to be envisioned as responses to climate change. Localisation is a contested process that can result in more inward-facing, parochial and isolationist responses as well as outward-facing, expansive and solidaristic responses, with shades of grey in between (North 2010). These different responses are structured by varying understandings of institutions and relations of power that shape practices of localisation (Trapeze 2008). What we are interested in here is more politically productive approaches to localisation which oppose dominant responses to climate change and practice solidaristic alternatives which develop a broader critique of the forces at play shaping localities. These strategies do not produce localisation in bounded or isolationist ways. Rather, they envision localisation as part of strategies to "trans-localise".¹² This opens up the possibility of political alternatives that are about engagements in particular sites, often through what could be termed militant particularisms, but where the politics of such strategies are envisioned or generated as part of translocal political networks.

"Climate justice solidarities" (Routledge 2011), refer to how shared "maps of grievance" are constructed which link different activists involved in struggles over climate change (Featherstone, forthcoming). They bring together geographically, culturally, economically and politically different and distant peoples and enable connections and alliances to be drawn that extend beyond the local and particular (Olesen 2005). Such solidarities can shape the terms of debate of climate justice politics in significant ways.

If a convergence event like Copenhagen did one thing, it allowed links of solidarity to be strengthened. The Kilimaforum, for example, forged connections and bonds of trust between activists that are the prelude to the building of solidarities around the issue of climate justice: not least through the articulation of the common ground exemplified by the Klimaforum Declaration discussed at the beginning of this paper. This declaration was signed by 466 civil society organisations (predominantly NGOs), and articulated a series of series of principles around which different campaigns concerned with issues of climate justice, representing a diversity of political perspectives, located in different local and national realities, could forge common ground as the basis for translocal solidarity and cooperation.

The Copenhagen mobilisations built upon connections forged during the alter-globalisation mobilisations, to develop new forms of solidarity, as activists from different countries and continents shared concerns, tactics and ideas for tackling

climate change on a trans-local terrain. For example, “red-green” campaigns have targeted the oil industry and the damage it has done to biodiversity commons, exemplified by the struggle of Environmental Rights Action (ERA) in Nigeria against Shell (Bond 2010b). A participant in the Copenhagen mobilisations, ERA’s leader Nimmo Bassey has also been active in the Oilwatch, PACJA and CJN! networks in attempts to link up different anti-oil and climate justice campaigns around the world.

Such events generate connections between movements in the “global North” and “global South” and vitiate against parochialism and chauvinism. Many of the struggles represented in Copenhagen were local struggles against exploitation, dispossession, industrial expansion rather than “climate” struggles per se. Climate justice, however, functioned a key discourse through which articulations were made between these diverse struggles. This was a productive process. Such articulations shaped the Reclaim Power action on the 16 December 2009, when a global day of action was organised to demand “system change not climate change”.

The action was the product of diverse groups and networks involved in the mobilisations (particularly CJA). It combed an innovative inside and outside strategy: the activists on the outside would attempt to enter the Bella Centre in order to reclaim the people’s power, while certain delegates on the inside (such as those from Bolivia and Tuvalu) would disrupt the UN sessions in protest at the injustice and inadequacy of the UN process, and meet the outside group in order to hold a “People’s Assembly” and provide a dramatic show of solidarity.

The terms on which such solidarities were brought together, however, were not uncontested. Tazio Mueller, of the Climate Justice Action network, and Naomi Klein were barracked at a rally of a few thousand activists in Christiania, the longstanding “autonomous area” in Copenhagen, for arguing for a non-violent approach to the “Reclaim Power” action. Klein and Mueller’s defence of non-violence depended though on a rather troubling mobilisation of activists from the “global South”. They argued that non-violent strategies were necessary to “protect” activists from the “global South” with more vulnerable visa privileges or juridical status. This spoke in significant ways to the terms in which solidarities and connections were constituted. This position acknowledged the differential conditions activists from the “global South” face in terms of unequal visa privileges. But it positioned such activists in paternalistic and unitary ways. “They” became “represented” in these debates rather than being allowed to shape the terms of discussion. Such geographical imaginaries of solidarity rework rather than challenge unequal geographies of power (Sundberg 2007).

In the event the action on a bitterly cold and snowy December morning was made up of a patchwork of activists, unionists and NGOs from across the world. There were activists from LVC, CJA and CJN; from NGOs such as Focus on the Global South, Friends of the Earth, Indigenous Environmental Network, and the Rainforest Action Group; and autonomous climate activists from Germany, Denmark, the USA and the UK. Banners read: “Reclaim power: fight the system”, “System change not climate change” and “Change the politics not the climate”.

What happened in practice was rather more humble, as huge numbers of police divided the protestors, arrested many, stopped delegates getting out of the conference compound, confiscated the truck and speakers and used police dogs,

tear gas and pepper spray to disperse the crowd. The conference delegates were prevented from joining the demonstration. The remaining nucleus of the Reclaim Power protest held a small People's Assembly, with activists from across the world taking turns to make demands for a response to climate change which also respected food sovereignty, indigenous rights and justice for the world's poor. As activist Olivier De Marcellus stated:

The critical point is that this Assembly was not a chance and fleeting moment. It marked a longer term convergence of different networks and political cultures: global networks of movements and progressive NGOs like Climate Justice Now and Our World Is Not For Sale, networks composed more of young northern activists like Climate Justice Action, the Climate Camps, old Peoples' Global Action hands, etc . . . since the Zapatistas called forth the anti-globalisation movement 13 years ago, there has never been such a broad alliance of organisations calling for 'system change' (De Marcellus 2010:).

De Marcellus's account signals the way the actions in Copenhagen were shaped by trajectories of opposition to neoliberal globalisation. These trajectories have opened up important possibilities for contesting dominant constructions of climate change politics. This emphasises how solidarities between diverse struggles have been integral to shaping antagonistic constructions of climate politics.

System Change not Climate Change

In the wake of the mobilisations in Copenhagen the terms on which climate justice and debt were constructed became the subject of intense debate. For Simons and Tonak climate justice was a tainted term which suggested forms of accommodationist politics. They argued that "Climate Debt" perpetuates a system that assigns economic and financial value to the biosphere, ecosystems and in this case a molecule of CO₂ (which, in reductionist science, readily translates into degrees Celsius). They contend that it is an "equalising dynamic" which "infects relations between the Global North and South with the same logic of commodification that is central to those markets on which carbon is traded upon" (Simons and Tonak 2010). For other commentators such as the influential UK-based activist Mark Lynas, climate justice sought to engage with inequalities which it is necessary to defer until after carbon emissions have been significantly reduced (Lynas 2010).

The understanding of climate justice set out in this paper as generated through logics of antagonism, solidarity and commoning seeks to move beyond this impasse. It intervenes in the contested terms through which climate justice is being articulated by diverse movements. Our position productively engages with the tensions which have surrounded the term in the wake of the Copenhagen mobilisations. In particular, locating climate justice as part of antagonistic claims and political trajectories unsettles reductive accounts which position climate justice as inevitably part of an accommodationist politics and which position emerging forms of climate politics as ineradicably post-political.

In this regard the mobilisations in Copenhagen were a key site in which attempts to rework and deepen neoliberal logics through responses to the financial crisis were contested. The financial crisis, and the accompanying questioning of the hegemony of neoliberalism, was invoked in diverse ways through the protests.

One of the iconic slogans of the protests was “if the climate was a bank it would be bailed out”. There was a keen sense of the political possibilities opened up by the failure of neoliberalism even on its own terms. The mobilisations also signal the importance of understanding the crisis in ways which challenge the marginalisation of environmental questions in dominant left responses and analyses of the crisis. They also challenge ways in which notions of austerity are being mobilised in ways which are dramatically excluding concerns with environmental politics from mainstream political debate.

We have been broadly sympathetic and supportive in this paper of those groups struggling for climate justice. We conclude by briefly flagging up areas that need further collaborative thought and action in order that this movement continues to flourish. Firstly, the terms on which connections between differently located climate struggles are articulated can be both productive and contested. The multiple articulations and solidarities forged through the mobilisations unsettle the rigid demarcations between global North and South reworked by Mueller and Klein. However, there remain significant unequal geographies of power which shape the terms on which such solidarities are constructed and practised.

Secondly, the often limited impact and extent of much extra-parliamentary action and autonomous organising that took place in Copenhagen needs acknowledging and using as a starting point for improving practice and strategic thinking. Key here is thinking about uneven access to resources between more resource-rich NGOs and resource-poor social movements and direct action groups, as well as the need to create more stable organisational entities. How more temporary and prefigurative political spaces can be extended beyond these protest moments without being co-opted is a crucial issue for movement building.

Thirdly, this limited impact may be partly related to the lifestylism, ghettoisation and separation of activist politics and the often counter-productive rifts that emerge between groups pursuing different action tactics. More work needs to be done in terms of assessing and integrating the broad repertoires of action that are needed to bring about climate justice encompassing legislative, judicial, advocacy, direct action and community work. This would involve broader discussions on politics, values and tactics amongst all those groups using the climate justice label.

Finally, there needs to be a sense of how the political trajectories formed between alter-globalisation movements and climate activism across the class, gender and racial fractures and inequalities of the global North and global South are being negotiated. This involves bringing activists together from very different political perspectives and traditions. There are differences of experience and political outlook that have the potential for undermining the possibilities of translocal solidarities. For example, different class and class-fractional positions exist within the various constituencies of global Northern and global Southern movements, such as the differential powers of certain Northern NGOs compared with Southern peasant farmers’ organisations. Moreover, future red-green alliances will require some trade unions to move away from narrow “workerist” positions that sideline or ignore militant NGOs, peasant movements, and informal, precarious labour. This also emphasises, however, the ways in which solidarity, rather than being a practice

which simply constructs relations between like actors, can be a much more generative and transformative process.

Through illustrating the ways in which climate justice politics weaves different elements of antagonisms, commons and solidarities we have sought to emphasise what is gained through thinking about these different practices in connection with each other. We have also suggested ways in which the efficacy of these connections can be developed and deepened. Engaging with these emergent forms of contentious politics suggests that “post-political” accounts of climate change politics are partly premature and risk marginalising the forms of antagonistic politics that are being crafted. Any “post-political” consensus is an active process achieved through the disciplining work of repressive policing and juridical frameworks and has to be resisted. Our contention here, in terms of both academic debates and political strategy, is that a climate justice politics which more clearly articulates the antagonistic relations of uneven capitalism can build a prefigurative commons and extend practices of north–south and interclass solidarity. This positions climate change activism directly in critical relation to ecological neo-colonialism and neoliberal globalisation.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the three reviewers for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper; Nik Heynen for his incisive editorial guidance; and Mike Shand for creating the map. Dave Featherstone would also like to acknowledge a grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland which facilitated the research on which his contribution to the paper draws. Paul Routledge acknowledges the support for part of this research from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland and the Urban Studies journal.

Endnotes

¹ The number could be closer to 40,000, although estimates also suggest that there might well have been 100,000 at the initial gathering site before the demonstration set off.

² Members include: Oilwatch; LVC; Focus on the Global South; the Durban Group for Climate Justice; Carbon Trade Watch; Third World Network.

³ The Copenhagen website discussed “The business of hope” as articulated by the Copenhagen sponsors Coca Cola; Siemens; and German software corporation SAP.

⁴ http://www.internetpirate.com/Greenhouse%20Gangsters%20vs_%20Climate%20Justice.htm

⁵ We are grateful to referee 3 for this point.

⁶ A network of over 160 organisations and networks (see <http://www.climate-justice-now.org>).

⁷ See <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/bali.pdf>; <http://www.climate-justice-now.org>; <http://www.durbanclimatejustice.org>; <http://www.climate-justice-action.org>; and <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/awglca10/eng/misc02.pdf>

⁸ These include the right to life and to exist; the right to water as a source of life; the right to clean air; the right to health; the right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste; and the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted.

⁹ We are indebted to Patrick Bond for these insights.

¹⁰ CAN-International has over 700 members in over 90 countries (see <http://www.climatenetwork.org>).

¹¹ For detailed reports see Danish Indymedia, <http://indymedia.dk/>

¹² We use the term translocal to refer to the connections, relations and campaigns between different placed-based (but not place-restricted) social movements and other grassroots

actors. This is in preference to the term “transnational” which elides the specificity of the particular places in, and from which, collective action emerges and operates.

References

- Agyeman J, Bulkeley H and Nochur A (2007) Climate justice. In J Isham and S Waage (eds) *Ignition: What You Can Do to Fight Global Warming and Spark a Movement* (pp 135–144) Washington DC: Island Press
- Blackburn R (2007) The subprime crisis. *New Left Review* 50:63–106
- Bond P (2010a) Copenhagen inside out. <http://www.counterpunch.org/bond01122010.html> (last accessed 2 March 2012)
- Bond P (2010b) Climate justice politics across space and scale. *Human Geography* 3(2):49–62
- Building Bridges Collective (2010) *Space for Movement*. Leeds: Footprint Worker’s Co-op
- Burton K (2011) “Performing alter-geopolitics: The Trade to Climate Caravan.” Unpublished paper presented at the Performing Geopolitics conference, Durham University 22 June 2011
- Climate Justice Action (2010) What does climate justice mean in Europe? <http://www.climate-justice-action.org/resources/documents/what-does-climate-justice-mean-in-europe/> (last accessed 13 September 2011)
- Cutter S (1995) Race, class and environmental justice. *Progress in Human Geography* 19(1):111–122
- De Angelis M (2003) Reflections on alternatives, commons and communities. *The Commoner* 1–14
- De Marcellus O (2009) Reclaiming power in Copenhagen. <http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=88> (last accessed 2 March 2012)
- Della Porta D, Andretta M, Mosca L and Reiter H (2006) *Globalization From Below*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Desmarais A (2007) *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*. London: Pluto
- Featherstone D J (2008) *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell
- Featherstone D J (2012) *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*. London: Zed
- Featherstone D J (forthcoming) The contested politics of climate change and the crisis of neoliberalism. *ACME*
- Franks B (2003) Direct action ethic. *Anarchist Studies* 11(1):13–41
- Free Association (2010) Antagonism, neoliberalism and movements: Six impossible things before breakfast. *Antipode* 42:1019–1033
- Gibson-Graham J-K (2006) *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Giddens A (2009) *The Politics of Climate Change*. Cambridge: Polity
- Gilroy P (2010) *Darker Than Blue: On The Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*. Cambridge: Belknap
- Hardt M and Negri A (2009) *Commonwealth*. London: Harvard University Press
- Harvey D (2011) The future of the commons. *Radical History Review* 109:101–107
- Holloway J (2010) *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto
- Hulme M (2009) *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Jubilee South (2009) Reparations for climate debt demanded from highly-industrialised countries. <http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/Climate%20Justice%20Press%20Release%20+5293.twl> (last accessed 18 May 2010)
- Juris J S (2008) *Networking Futures: The Movements Against Corporate Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Klein N (2009) The Seattle activists’ coming of age in Copenhagen will be very disobedient. *The Guardian* 12 November
- Linebaugh P (2008) *The Magna Carta Manifesto*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Lynas M (2010) Why it’s wrong to preach “climate justice”. *New Statesman* 14 January. <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2010/01/lynas-climate-carbon> (last accessed 16 May 2010)

- Martinez-Alier J (2002) *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar
- Martinez-Alier J and Temper L (2007) Oil and climate change: Voices from the South. *Economic and Political Weekly* 15 December
- Massey D (2007) *World City*. Cambridge: Polity
- Mouffe C (2005) *On the Political*. London: Routledge
- Muradian R and Martinez-Alier J (2001) Trade and the environment: From a “southern” perspective. *Ecological Economics* 36:281–297
- North P (2010) Eco-localisation as a progressive response to peak oil and climate change: A sympathetic critique. *Geoforum* 41(4):585–594
- Notes from Nowhere (eds) (2003) *We Are Everywhere*. London: Verso
- Olesen T (2005) *International Zapatismo*. London: Zed
- Panitch L and Gindin S (2011) Capitalist crises and the crisis this time. *Socialist Register* 1–21
- Pusey A and Russell B (2010) The climate crisis or the crisis of climate politics? <http://www.anarchiststudies.org/node/423> (last accessed 2 March 2012)
- Rhodes E L (2003) *Environmental Justice in America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
- Routledge P (2003a) Convergence space: Process geographies of grassroots globalization networks. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28:333–349
- Routledge P (2003b) Voices of the dammed: Discursive resistance amidst erasure in the Narmada Valley, India. *Political Geography* 22(3):243–270
- Routledge P (2011) Translocal climate justice solidarities. In J Dryzek, R Norgaard and D Schlosberg (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* (pp 384–398). Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Routledge P and Cumbers A (2009) *Global Justice Networks: Geographies of Transnational Solidarity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Schlosberg D (2007) *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements and Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Sen J (2010) On open space: Explorations towards a vocabulary of a more open politics. *Antipode* 42:994–1018
- Simons T and Tonak A (2010) The dead end of climate justice. <http://www.counterpunch.org/2010/01/08/the-dead-end-of-climate-justice/> (last accessed 2 March 2012)
- Sundberg J (2007) Reconfiguring North–South solidarity: Critical reflections on experiences of transnational resistance. *Antipode* 39(1):144–166
- Swyngedouw E (2007) Impossible “sustainability” and the post-political condition. In D Gibbs and R Krueger (eds) *The Sustainable Development Paradox: Urban Political Economy in the United States and Europe* (pp 13–40). New York: Guilford Press
- Swyngedouw E (2010) Apocalypse forever? Post-political populism and the spectre of climate change. *Theory, Culture and Society* 27(2–3):213–232
- Trapese (2008) *The Rocky Road to a Real Transition*. Leeds: Trapese Popular Education Collective
- Vasudevan A, McFarlane C and Jeffrey A (2008) Spaces of enclosure. *Geoforum* 39(5):1641–1646
- Via Campesina (2009) Climate: Time to change our way to consume and produce food. http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=793:climate-time-to-change-our-way-to-consume-and-produce-food&catid=48:-climate-change-and-agrofuels&Itemid=75 (last accessed 21 July 2010)
- White A (2009) The movement of movements: From resistance to climate justice. <http://www.stwr.org/the-un-people-politics/copenhagen-the-global-justice-movement-comes-of-age.html> (last accessed 4 December 2009)
- Wolford W (2010) *This Land Is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Žižek S (1999) Carl Schmitt in the age of post-politics. In C Mouffe (ed) *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (pp 18–37). London: Verso
- Žižek S (2005) Against the populist temptation. <http://www.lacan.com/zizpopulism.htm> (last accessed 18 May 2010)