



Exit the system? Anarchist organisation in the British climate camps*

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Protest camps have proliferated in social movement practice globally in recent years. Research has started to address protest camps and this study aims to contribute to the emerging field, focusing in particular on their form of organisation. Protest camps appear to resonate with social movement activists because they combine characteristics of networks like fluidity and flexibility with certain elements of organisation, in particular the ability to create and pursue an alternative order. They do so, I argue, by pursuing organisation in space. In this way protest camps offer practical solutions to the question of how to achieve powerful challenges to the status quo while maintaining a prefigurative politics of social change. In particular elements of organisation like hierarchy, membership and rules are significantly altered when organisation is pursued in space. I argue that the history of the protest camp as an organisational form is best conceived as a series of experiments with alternative, anarchist organisation, where different innovative elements of organisation are invented, modified and adapted to locally specific needs. Two distinct forms of spatial organisation emerge across different camps, the creation of spatial antagonism and decentralisation. Pursuing spatial antagonism and decentralisation protest camps enable 'partial organisation', somewhere between network structures and full organisation.

Introduction

Protest camps have proliferated in social movement practice over the last 40 years and they have grown to global significance in the last 4 years with uprisings taking place from Wall Street to Central London, from Tahrir to Taksim. There has been – concurrently – an increasing interest in the study of protest camps (Feigenbaum et al., 2013; Frenzel et al., 2014; Halvorsen, 2012; Leidinger, 2011;

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Ramadan, 2013). A common thread in this emerging field of research has been the question whether historically and geographically diverse protest camps share characteristics and whether the analysis of these can increase our understanding of dissent and social action? This paper aims to contribute to this debate and offers an interpretation of the protest camp as a specific organisational form. In particular I focus on the features of protest camps that allow participants to experiment with alternative and more specifically anarchist organisation. Alternative organisation is often used to describe organisations that are neither business nor state. Anarchist organisation aims explicitly at the absence of domination of human beings over other human beings in a sociality based on mutual aid and care. This includes attempts at limiting bureaucracy and hierarchy and an orientation towards a prefigurative politics of radical social change.

The history of the protest camp as an organisational form is best conceived as a series of experiments with alternative and anarchist organisation, where different innovative elements of organisation are invented, modified and adapted to locally specific needs. The study of these elements in a specific empirical example leads to an evaluation of elements that work better and worse in achieving the aims of participants. To this end I discuss empirical material from the Camp for Climate Action (CFCA) that conducted a series of protest camps in Britain between 2006 and 2009.

The paper addresses – in a more general sense – the political question of organisation. Violence, coercion and repression characterise human organisation in much of its history, as well as in the contemporary capitalist order. Marxists, feminists and anarchists, among many others, have long pointed to the need to overcome this predicament. Whether through radical rupture or slow transformation, their aim is to transcend the existing order and to create new order characterised by the absence of violence, coercion and repression. The question of organisation emerges because such new order also needs to be organised. Indeed organisation is intrinsically linked to the creation of (new) order (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011). Furthermore the question is how to achieve new order against powerful defenders of the status quo. In particular there is debate over how to organise, in practical terms, political will and power to contest the status quo and to pursue alternatives. Classical modern answers inspired by Marxism aimed at the increase of power of the working classes through centralised, unified and hierarchical organisation, and in particular through the belabouring of state power. The inherent paradox (organising with violence, coercion and repression to overcome them) was never lost to anarchists who have long questioned this approach to politics and radical change. They emphasised instead the necessity to change politics not simply in content but also in form.

With theoretical interventions like the concept of pre-figurative politics (Breines, 1989), demands to ‘change the world without taking power’ (Holloway, 2002) and for a ‘post-capitalist politics’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006), recent decades have arguable shown something of a shift in the left towards the anarchist line. Concurrently these political ideas have been implemented in alternative organisational forms. Social movements have started to understand themselves as ‘networks’ or as ‘movement of movements’, comprised of a variety of diverse and heterogenic affinity groups and campaigns (Juris, 2008; Kingsnorth, 2003; Routledge et al., 2007). More recently, as horizontally inspired political movements have taken state power in several Latin American countries, the debate has perhaps seen a new shift. There is new emphasis on the weaknesses of networked politics and a stronger consideration of the potentialities to use state power or institutions (Hardt and Negri, 2009) to transform society. This has partly been motivated by new political concerns, including climate change, where the gravity of the problems demands, in the eyes of many, a resolute force if there is supposed to be a chance to tackle them at all. While the twists and turns in the ongoing debate over the question of organisation in the left are multiple, this contextual introduction shows that the question remains largely unanswered. There are however interesting learning effects and changes to observe, once we start paying attention to ways in which social movements experiment with organisational forms, what lessons are learned and what lessons are sometimes forgotten. I take a cue here from Cornell’s (2011) discussion of the Movement of a New Society (MNS) in which he traces the origin of procedural forms of horizontal decision making, an organisational feature of about 40 years of social movement organisation that has been made prominent by the Occupy movement.

In this paper the focus will be on protest camps and the employment of space as an organisational device. I show how spatial organisation enables protest camps to oscillate between more formal organisation and network character, seeking to combine advantages of both. In particular they seem to enable what Ahrne and Brunsson (2011) call ‘partial organisation’, forms of organisation that display some elements of organisation, but not all. The paper shows that protest camps are innovative, where they use different forms of spatial practice to achieve partial organisation. For example membership, a key element of organisation, is determined by physically being in place at the camp, and rules and sanctions only apply within the territory of the camp. Protest camps organise in space, rather than in time and/or procedure. Theoretically I contribute the insight that the concept of partial organisation is very useful for the study of protest camps, but that it needs to take into account the spatiality of organisation. Empirically I discuss the British Camp for Climate Action (CFCA). Following the first climate camp in Yorkshire in 2006, climate camps took place on a regular basis in

Britain, but were also copied in several other countries around the world. In 2009, the year of the climate conference COP15 in Copenhagen, at least 19 climate camps took place globally (Climate Camp NZ, 2009). In the UK, four camps and a broad range of further actions were organised. In 2011 CFCA decided to discontinue the mobilisation for climate camps amid internal critique over its practices and purpose. Research has pointed to some of the reasons why CFCA discontinued a national mobilisation after 2011 (Saunders and Price, 2009; Schlembach, 2011; Schlembach et al., 2012). Using the concepts of partial and spatial organisation, I discuss the history of the CFCA and its eventual demise offering new perspectives in this debate.

Outline

In the next section I discuss the question of organisation through the duality of network and organisation. I first point to the increasing rejection of formal organisation in social movements, new concepts and ideas about social movement formation and the emergence of the network paradigm. Against this backdrop I introduce the concept of partial organisation. In the second section I discuss protest camps as examples of partial organisation, whereby the focus will be on the emergence of this organisational form. Pointing to a few examples in the protest camp history I show how innovations in partial and spatial organisation were made and how they travelled (or not) to form an ever more sophisticated organisational form of the protest camp. In the last section, I review empirical material from the British climate-camps movement. The empirical part of the paper mainly draws upon the analysis of discourses as produced in and of the camp in a wide orbit, including both online and offline media and my own experience as a participant.

The question of organisation

The question of organisation is central to social movement activism. In the last 40 years or so an increasing rejection of formal social-movement organisations like trade unions and political parties and a trend to new, more loose and networked organisational forms can be observed. 'New' social movements are characterised by the search for new forms of organisation (Böhm et al., 2010; Calhoun, 1992; Crossley, 2003; Offe, 1987). Several factors have been identified as contributing to this development. The dramatic failure of state socialism, as established by communist parties in the Soviet Union and several other countries, to establish a communist order played an important role. In capitalist countries vibrant criticism of formal organisation since the 1970s also resulted from grievances with formal organisations in social-movement practice and

beyond. The reproduction of male-dominated gender relations and vertical hierarchies in trade unions and political parties on the left as well as their failure to account for the environmental degradation became a major issue of contestation for the emerging 'new left' since the 1960s. Sociological analysis tends to point to a variety of structural factors, like the demise of industrial labour and the rise of services industries which undermined classical union organisation (Lash and Urry, 1987).

A key concept to describe new social movement organisation since the 1970s is Breines' (1989) idea of 'prefigurative politics'. Prefigurative politics focuses on the *way* of doing politics, its *processes*. The means of progressive politics need to be aligned with its ends. This idea was not entirely new, as anarchist movements had long questioned and challenged both communist and socialist parties for their appraisal of structures of domination within their organisations as well as through the state. The new left in the 1970s took some inspiration from classical anarchism, but also showed greater awareness of the non-western traditions of dissent and protest. Emerging anti-nuclear and peace movements emphasised the development of new organisational forms, and new forms of decision-making, aligned with the political aspirations expressed in left-wing politics (Cornell, 2011). The emergence of horizontal decision-making and consensus as a procedure in movements across the US since the 1980s points to the ways in which new political movements increasingly attempted 'to change the world without taking power' (Holloway, 2002). The aim was to create new forms of organisation from the bottom up that could replace the existing capitalist and state structures. In terms of creating alternative organisational structures to capital, social movements concurrently also attempted a new approach to political economy, where social reproduction became a domain of political struggle (Federici, 2004). As Gibson-Graham (2006) argued in their call for a post-capitalist politics, this could be done by acknowledging the diversity of human forms of social reproduction existing despite and beyond capitalism.

Networks and organisation

Concurrently there has been an increasing use of the term 'network' to describe social movements (Castells, 1996; Routledge et al., 2007). To use the network metaphor was prompted by the huge influence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) on human organisation. ICTs enabled cheap, inclusive and non-hierarchical communication in large, and spatially distant groups. With the help of mailing lists, open publishing sites like Indymedia, and more recently social media social movements could now more easily mobilise, organise and even appear (and vanish) spontaneously and without having to rely on formal structures, leadership or centralisation. While

the role of ICTs in social movement practice is highly important, there has also been arguably some exaggeration of their influence. A tendency of techno-determinism sometimes prevailed according to which technological advance in ITCs comes with an automatic advance in democratic human organisation (Frenzel and Sullivan, 2009; Lovink, 2011). This operated through an extension of some characteristics of ICTs to the realm of social organisation. The social network metaphor promised social relations of a more horizontal character, lacking hierarchies and clear boundaries or identities. In social movement practice, however, the genuine, abstract network form never worked as a comprehensive alternative to organisation. New social movement networks did not simply occupy a 'new plane of immanence, replacing the plan of organisation' (cf. Deleuze in Rossiter, 2006: 201). Social movement 'networks' continued to result from organisational work (Cornell, 2011). In the global justice movement, where diverse groups and individuals attempted to co-operate on a global level, it became quickly obvious that organisation remained crucial to manage diversity in resources, backgrounds and political orientation (Featherstone, 2003; Routledge et al., 2007). Individuals and groups with more resources to travel and be present at global gatherings, for example, would tend to become more powerful in structures that did not formally organise to mitigate against such imbalances. In the absence of some structures of organisation, resource imbalances can lead to power imbalances and hidden hierarchies, often described and lamented in social movement literature (Freeman, 1982; Gordon, 2010).

From a theoretical perspective it is important to note the imprecision of the network concept in the ubiquitous application to political groups. Once it is accepted that really existing social movement 'networks' continue to be (transparently or not so transparently) organised, what is the difference between network and organisation and why does it matter? Ahrne and Brunsson (2011) propose a clear conceptual differentiation between networks and organisations. Accordingly networks are social forms without organisation. Unlike a network, organisation is 'not emergent, but the result of the intervention of individuals or formal organisations which can and do make decisions not only about their own, but also about the behavior and distinctions of others' (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011: 90). Organisation is defined as the attempt to create a specific (new) order, while networks describe existing orders. Conceptually networks don't have boundaries, while organisations do. 'In its genuine form, network is a form of interaction that is qualitatively different from organisation, and a network is often defined in terms of its informality, lack of boundaries and hierarchical relations, and is ascribed with qualities such as spontaneity and flexibility' (*ibid.*: 88). Reflecting on empirical forms that show evidence of both network and organisation characteristics, they introduce the concept of 'partial organisation'.

One could be tempted to question the usefulness of the concept, because in the real world many, perhaps most organisations qualify in some way as partially organised or partially networked. Ahrne and Brunsson's proposal however enables us to operationalise and investigate specific aspects of partial organisation. They argue that organisation consists of elements, which they define as: 'membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanction' (*ibid.*: 86). Formal or full organisations have to decide about all these elements, whereas in partial organisations only some elements are adopted. In partial organisation some elements of organisation exist while others don't.

To the question of organisation an analysis of social movements based on the concept of partial organisation seems helpful. Considering the aspirations of anarchist organisations to prefigure the desired alternative order in their own organisation, could some elements of formal organisation like hierarchy be disposed of without abandoning organisation altogether? Could network characteristics of fluidity and openness be maintained without the need to give up on the desire to aggregate political will into unified demands and to pursue new order? For social movements these are very practical questions. As early as the 1970s, it was obvious to many activists that, despite their rejection of formal organisations, they had to deal with organisation in some way if they were to effectively pursue the alternative social order they had in mind. In building what was called 'counter-institutions', groups often experimented with new forms of organisation, but rarely rejected all elements of organisation (Cornell, 2011). In these attempts trust, social capital, reciprocity and other characteristics of networks (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011) remained in place, while elements of organisation were selectively added. But how precisely did this partial organisation take place? Looking at the emergence of protest camps as a new form of social-movement organisation, I'd like to show how partial organisation, relying on network characteristics as well as some elements of organisation was often pursued practically by employing an aspect of organisation that Ahrne and Brunsson overlook: spatial organisation.

Protest camps and spatial organisation

Pointing to the importance of spatial organisation for politics, David Graeber (2011: 230) describes two antique forms of protest, 'popular revolts in ancient Greece and the strategy of exodus typically pursued in Egypt and Mesopotamia'. He also points to a third strategy, a 'halfway point' between the other two, pursued by the Roman plebeians: 'the secession of the plebs, when commoners of the city abandoned their fields and workshops, camped outside the city and threatened mass defection'. Perhaps an early protest camp, the 'secession of the

plebs' points to the power of spatial organisation to undermine the political order of the status quo. Modern campers have for some time actively searched for a space outside the status quo. This was obvious for example, in the late 19th and early 20th century, when Scouts in Britain, the 'Wandervoegel Movement' ('wandering birds') in Germany and the US summer camps searched for a place outside the developing industrial cities, and by implication, outside civilisation. Soon, this new practice developed a political meaning for participants, who aspired to use the experience of camping for social change. In contrast to the politics associated with today's protest camps, these early campers often tended politically to the right (Frenzel, 2013; Giesecke, 1981; Mills, 2012; Smith, 2006). Withdrawing from the status quo, protest camps are themselves territorially (and often temporally) bound organisations. By physically occupying a certain physical space, protest camps mirror the spatial practice of the state.

This is evident to protest campers who have – in recent protest camp history – claimed to form independent republics, placed outside the political status quo. Examples range from the 'Pollok Free State' in Glasgow (Routledge, 1997), to the 'independent republic of Tahrir' (Keraitim and Mehrez, 2012) and to the Occupy Camp in London, where a graffito claimed that within the camp's territory the laws of the UK would be 'null and void'. Camps are sometimes constructed on squatted land, without consultation of the authorities. This results in the development of contested, guarded and highly policed boundaries of the camp. Boundary-crossing into protest camps often involves passing through proper checkpoints. Entering protest camps, protesters are often searched by the police; then, on the other side, they are welcomed by volunteers within the camp. This border crossing experience creates a tangible sense of entering new space. The boundaries are also symbolically dramatised. At the 2007 CFCA in London Heathrow, a big cardboard installation of an airplane featured at the main entrance. Above the open door of the plane that led into the camp, a slogan read: 'Exit the system'. Entering the camp, therefore, enables an outsider perspective on the 'system'. From here, 'the system' can be observed, evaluated and criticised at a distance. While such a symbolic distancing doesn't necessitate that all participants immediately identify with the protest camps and position themselves against the system, it enables a separation that is much harder to construct in non-spatially bound organisations. Protest camps enable a radical challenging of the status quo, because they carve out space within the social order to form their own political 'alternative space' (Dale and Burrell, 2008: 231). By carving out their own territory, protesters in the camp might feel to be no longer part of some pluralistic negotiation that takes place within the given society. Protest camps enable protesters to be 'uncivil' rather than civil society (Sullivan et al., 2011). Such use of territory is not the exclusive domain of protest camps. Anarchist organisers of social centres, squats, workplace organisation and other

counter-institutions often carve out their own bounded territory in order to challenge the status quo from outside its realm (Ince, 2012; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006).

Experiments in spatial organisation

The creation of bound political space outside the status quo has direct implications for the organisation of the camp. In the history of protest camps, we can see how protest campers learned, often incidentally, about the potential of this organisational form to solve some of the dilemmas associated with the desire for less formal and more fluid organisation. In the 1968 Resurrection City was established as a protest camp on the Washington Mall by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The camp was part of the poor peoples' campaign, initiated by Martin Luther King who was assassinated before Resurrection City started. It was an attempt to broaden the anti-racist work of the SCLC with a social justice focus. In Resurrection City poor people of all backgrounds from across the USA came together, invited and mobilised by the SCLC (Chase, 1998; Wiebenson, 1969). The SCLC leadership running the camp were not camping themselves, but were instead housed in a nearby hotel. There was no intention for the campers in Resurrection City to autonomously organise themselves. However in the five weeks of the existence of the camp, such autonomous organisation started to emerge nevertheless. A clear example, directly related to the organisation elements of rules, monitoring and sanctions, was the conflict in the camp between two security forces. One was put into place by the SCLC leadership, a second one created autonomously within the camp because the official one was rejected by the campers. Inside the camp, a strong solidarity grew among participants, and this solidarity enabled and eased autonomous organisation within the camp on a more horizontal, networked basis. The outside leadership was increasingly seen as unnecessary, if not unhelpful to the self-organisation of the camp (Chase, 1998).

A new wave of protest camps and site-occupations, emerged in Europe and the USA in the 1970s (Baer and Dellwo, 2012; Downey, 1986). Environmental activists used mass occupations of building sites of nuclear power plants and chemical factories as a direct action civil disobedience tactic. These site occupations were never meant to be protest camps in the contemporary sense, they really simply aimed at physically preventing the building works from going ahead. But in some cases like the occupation of Wyhl in Southern Germany in 1975, they became permanent protests, lasting several months. The occupiers had diverse backgrounds but lived together, with a high level of fluidity, eating, playing music and discussing energy policy. A veritable community of resistance grew, comprised of unlikely partners, including farmers, student activists,

bourgeois liberals, feminists, anarchists and members of the radical left. United in opposition to nuclear power and the state that was pursuing it with little to no consideration of popular opinion, the Wyhl occupation was organised not through formal structures and membership, but through a shared antagonism. Wyhl had no formal mechanisms for decision making but still – on a daily basis – many decisions were made. Many organisational tasks, including the social reproduction of daily life, were taken care of. While there were, without doubt, numerous conflicts and discussions about how the occupation was to be organised, Wyhl never needed to resort to formal organisation. The antagonism to the outside and the being together created a solid basis for partial organisation.

The next wave of transnational protest camps, initiated by the Greenham Common women's peace camp in 1982, exemplified one more time the power of a spatially expressed antagonism to achieve partial organisation. Pitching the camp as an alternative social space against the military, Greenham Common explicitly challenged the patriarchal status quo (Couldry, 1999; Cresswell, 1994). Occupying this space was necessary for the construction of the alternative world of Greenham Common. In the camp, an alternative order could be imagined and experimented with; it could be tested and designed (Feigenbaum, 2010; Roseneil, 1995; 2000). Greenham common prefigured another important element of spatial organisation, decentralisation. In Greenham, this was the accidental result of the need to blockade several gates at the same time. The women needed to camp at several different sites in quite some distance from another. The multiple gate camps developed their distinct identities, catering for different groups and political outlooks among the participants (Roseneil, 2000). Decentralisation with a high degree of autonomy for the different gates, allowed for difference in the camp to be managed. Picked up by the German women's peace camp in Hunsrück, decentralisation became established as the neighbourhood structure, created with the specific aim of devolving organisation to smaller scales, even within the camp, to enable diversity and localised decision making within the camp (Leidinger, 2011). The neighbourhood – or 'barrio' – structure travelled from German 'no-border' camps in the 1990s into the anti-summit-camps in the early 2000s where they became a regular organisational feature. Protest camps now featured not only a spatially organised antagonism, but also a spatially organised decentralisation.

The examples given here show how protest camps function as laboratories of anarchist organisation. Even if not intended as revolutionary in any way, protest camps potentially enact a secession from the status quo and prompt the creation of new order. This enables protest campers to realise aspirations for partial organisation, fluid but forceful, networked but cohesive, diverse but united. Protest camps allow protesters to become partially organised, however not as

Ahrne and Brunsson suggest by avoiding some elements of organisation. Rather the very character of several elements or organisation is transformed by spatial organisation. Decision-making in the camp is eased by the increased cohesion that results from the spatially expressed antagonism. Overall, members are likely to be less concerned with internal disputes, invisible hierarchies and their own autonomy when a clear-cut separation from the outside provides identity, and a reason to be together. At the same time membership is expressed through being in place. Territorial boundaries create membership without the need to resort to bureaucracy, for example by keeping a membership register. The rules in the camp, the monitoring of how they are kept and the sanctioning of members corresponds to elements of formal organisation. But in a political party, for example, these elements pertain to permanence, transcending locality. It is in such organisation that rules may be easily understood as arbitrary and alienating and their implementation and the sanctioning is more likely to necessitate violence, coercion and repression. In a protest camp the set of rules will apply only in the specific local context of the camp. Where they emerge remains traceable, applied to specific situations. As a result rules are less alienating to people. This is increased through the decentralisation in a neighbourhood system. It keeps centres of decision making close to the ground. Overall elements of organisation are kept in check because members yield significant power in spatial organisation. If they are unhappy with the camp it is fairly easy to leave.

The potential of protest camp and its multiple ‘discoveries’ of techniques for alternative and anarchist organisation have to date only been partially addressed in research. It is remarkable how new organisational ideas were sometimes carried from camp to camp, sometimes invented at different places without any connection, and other times plainly forgotten. Protest camps organisation is sometimes based on significant experience by some protest campers, in other cases the camps seem to emerge much more spontaneously. In the next section, I attempt to better understand the process in which a specific series of protest camps, the CFCA, implemented previous experiences of protest camping, to what extent it employed spatial organisation in specific contexts and how spatial organisation interplayed with other elements of organisation.

Year	Place	Participants (from climate camp webpage/media estimates)	Target
2005	Stirling Scotland ‘Horizone’ Camp	5000	G8 Protest Camp

2006	East Yorkshire-Drax Power Plant	600	Coal Power Plant
2007	London Heathrow Airport	2000	Heathrow 3rd runway
2008	Kent-Kingsnorth Power Plant	2000	Carbon Capture at Kingsnorth Power Plant
2009 (April)	London City, G20 conference	5000	European Climate Exchange/Carbon Trading
2009 (August)	London Blackheath Common	5000	no direct action focus
2010	Edinburgh	1500	Royal Bank of Scotlands for financing unconventional fossil fuel exploitation

Table 1: History of the largest UK climate camps and predecessors (Regional climate camps took place in Scotland and Wales in 2009, while climate camp also mobilised from separate mass events at a power station near Nottingham and for the climate summit in Copenhagen).

The camps for climate action

When the first Camp for Climate Action (CFCA) was organised, protesters took their direct inspiration from the ‘Horizone’ protest camp set up during the G8 in Scotland in 2005 (Schlembach, 2011). As Schlembach notes, the structural set up of the first and following CFCA camps, as well as many of their key organisational features, were carried on from the ‘Horizone’ Camp. Schlembach also points to some of the important differences between the Horizone camp and the first climate camp. The latter was actively promoted not only as base for direct action, but also as a place to enable education and movement-building. The CFCA advertised the climate camps explicitly as spaces of prefigurative politics. In particular, climate camps claimed to have four functions: enabling action; sustainable and democratic living; movement-building; and education (Schlembach, 2011). Prefigurative politics included not only questions of governance and political strategy. The climate camps were equally concerned with building sustainable living conditions, a ‘post-capitalist politics’ as discussed earlier. To this end sustainable energy sources, food supplies and waste management were pursued (Only Planet, 2007). All four aims were explicitly linked to the main goal of the climate camps: to create a comprehensive challenge to the continuation of the status quo, considered to be leading to

catastrophic climate change. Outside the actual camps CFCA was organised through regular national planning meetings and various working groups. Such meetings took place prior to the first climate camp and continued in the periods between the consecutive ones. After a national gathering in Manchester in 2010 and a retreat in Dorset in early 2011 it was decided to discontinue the mobilisation for a UK wide climate camp after five years (Climate Camp UK, 2011; Schlembach et al., 2012). What might seem obvious but needs emphasis is that the camp did not simply emerge, but was initiated and ended by a group of people. While this organising structure was always open to newcomers it attracted by far fewer people than the actual camps.

The internal organisation of the each of the camps was based on a system of neighbourhoods (roughly 10 in each of the camps) dotted around central workshop and entertainment and discussion areas. Neighbourhood boundaries were not clearly defined, and participants freely chose to be part of one. The neighbourhoods were, however, often nominally associated with UK regions (e.g. South West, Midlands, etc), and there was an implicit idea that protest camps should build on and enhance local political organisation before and after the camp. Neighbourhoods were set up around a kitchen marquee, which served as the main hub. Regular daily meetings took place here; these were aimed at organising the social reproduction of the neighbourhood, as well as enabling tactical and strategic deliberation around the aims of the protest camps and the issues arising from the relationship of the camp to its outside (often the police, but also media and local regulatory bodies). A variety of rotas (kitchen, site security, toilet-cleaning) had to be filled during the neighbourhood meetings. Camp-wide issues were discussed in a separate structure, the so-called 'spokes council'. Here, (rotating) delegates from each neighbourhood met daily, to report from the neighbourhoods. All decision-making and deliberation were based on a model of consensual, horizontal decision-making. Each camp took aim at a specific infrastructural project linked to high GHG emissions (see Table 1). Alongside the squatting of land to establish the camp, the opposition to these projects and the declared aim, in most of the camps, to shut them down, formed the basis of the antagonism in which each camp attempted to position itself outside the status quo. The interplay between spatial and other elements of organisation in the CFCA becomes particularly clear in two areas I will focus on. Firstly I address the changing relationship between the organisers (preparing the camps) and various people attending the camps and in particular newcomers and how this relates to rules as an element of organisation. Secondly I discuss the challenge of creating a spatial antagonism and how this relates to hierarchy as an element organisation.

Newcomers

In the literature on protest camps, for example in Roseneil (1995), differences between activists and newcomers have often been observed. But how do protest camps deal with newcomers in organisational terms? Conceptually speaking newcomers don't exist in networks, because there is no established organisation in the first place. In organisations, newcomers are dealt with in a defined procedure that manages their entry and puts them into certain places in the organisation. In spatial organisation, an organisation you can walk into, a crucial point for the accommodation of newcomers is the entry. Like in many other camps in the climate camps border crossing included intense police searches as well as a welcome tent. Maps guided participants to neighbourhoods and other locations on the campsite. Inside the camps newcomers were accommodated in informal settings, in chats with others who had attended more often, by watching things unfold, by learning and by being in place. In many protest camps there are also more formal ways of integrating newcomers. In the welcome tent at the climate camps, new arrivals could pick up a guidebook that described the way the protest camp worked. A guidebook sets out the rules of the camp, for example in respect of its governance structures. The existence of a guidebook points to a certain level of organisation: rules are established and codified.

The climate camp guidebooks, published for every climate camp from 2006 to 2010, changed significantly overtime. Through its five-year development, one discernible feature was their increasing sophistication and seriousness. They became more and more comprehensive, with more rules explained and codified. Their style also changed. In the CFCA in 2006 and 2007, the guidebooks were called 'Only Planet', mocking the popular Lonely Planet travel guidebook series in name and design (Only Planet, 2006; 2007). In 2008, 2009 and 2010 the guidebooks were designed more sincerely – without the ironic play of the previous editions. The ironic style of the first guidebooks may signify a certain unease among organisers about employing this more formal element of organisation. The more serious tone of the later rulebooks signifies a stronger and perhaps more unashamed emphasis on one element of organisation, namely rules, in achieving partial organisation in the camp. This change stands in close relation to the growth of climate camps over time. In the first climate camp in Yorkshire at Drax Power Station, about 600 people attended. Most of those were previously linked to anarchist networks in the UK and had protest camp experience. The next climate camp in Heathrow was attended by more than 2000 people and Kingsnorth in 2008 drew similar numbers. This was the result of several factors, including the proactive attempt by the organisers of the climate camp to make the camps more welcoming to newcomers. There were tangible changes that included advertising campaigns as well as an ever more sophisticated media policy which led to positive reporting and feedback for the camp.

A colonised space

But other factors also played a significant role in the increasing attention and visitors the camps got. In 2007 CFCA chose to dedicate the camp to the struggle against a third runway in London Heathrow. After a fairly remote location in Yorkshire, this time the camp mobilised very close to the capital city, enabling a whole range of newcomers and day visitors. Moreover the camp decided not to call for a shutdown Heathrow airport. At the first camp, the shutdown of Draw power station had been one of the aims of the camp. At Heathrow the antagonism focused on the opposition to an expansion of Heathrow. This was helpful in creating a broad coalition of support, but – despite heavy policing which could have indicated otherwise – did not produce an overtly radical challenge to the status quo. A new openness prevailed, perhaps most significantly expressed in that fact that the camp justified its calls for action against climate change on the supposedly neutral ground of science. The camp presented itself as a site of open debate in which the best ‘peer reviewed’ argument should win (Schlembach et al., 2012). However the debate soon followed less sanguine logics of the status quo. Leading figures of the UK mainstream environmental movement, including publicists like George Monbiot and a range of MPs, joined the climate camps in Heathrow. Their talks drew large numbers of camp participants – significantly more than other workshops and presentations – and their voices and opinions had high resonance in the camps. The politics they proposed in the context of the open-space deliberations in the camp can be subsumed under the concept of the ‘Green New Deal’, a set of policies of large-scale state investment in a variety of technologies, including nuclear power, to combat climate change and create employment (Monbiot, 2007). This resulted in an open confrontation between Monbiot and anarchists over the role of the state in fighting climate change (Saunders and Price, 2009). Some organisers felt alienated and expressed in the critique of too much openness:

While we recognise the importance of creating a welcoming and non-sectarian space, we feel that the camp risks losing contact with its anti-capitalist, antiauthoritarian roots and appearing as a gathering that lends its support to top-down, state-centred responses to the crisis that climate change and energy depletion pose for capitalism. (Shift Magazine and Dysophia, 2010: 6)

When interpreting these developments in terms of organisation, it is important to turn to the element of hierarchy. Hierarchy is ‘a right to oblige others to comply with central decisions’ (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011: 86). Prominent figures of public life could colonise the antagonistic space of the camp with debates from the status quo. Their voices didn’t simply add to all the other voices present in the camp, but actually carried more weight and garnered more

attention than those of others. This might be explained by their ability to charismatically convince others, a function of leadership prevalent in networks. It might also be argued that they were privileged, imbued not so much with charisma or convincing arguments, but with a sense of entitlement and power derived from their position within the status quo. Be that as it may, the power of these individuals in a protest camp that rejected hierarchies and installed a formalised process of horizontal decision-making to avoid hierarchies, led to a paradoxical situation. In appealing to the 'roots' of the protest camp – like the critics cited above – some camp organisers now resorted to the organisational element of hierarchy. They did not directly ask for power for certain people, but maintained that power should be in some way given to guardians of the 'roots' of the camp. This appearance of hierarchy as a defense of the 'roots' of the camp, points to the demise of a shared spatial antagonism of the camp. It seems paradox that it was precisely the anarchists who should appeal to the roots of the camp, but this came as a reaction to the colonisation of the antagonistic space by the status quo.

Discussion

It might not seem overly surprising that the climate camps became more formal in their organisation as they grew. This is a familiar transformation that can often be observed in social movements. In theoretical terms the greater number of people necessitate more bureaucratic organisation as network ties and shared identity diminish. Elements of organisation become more visible until, perhaps, partial organisation is replaced by full organisation. In the context of the CFCA the story applies in so far as the dual organisation structure and the annual repetition of the camp led to some level of professionalisation and institutionalisation. Increasingly a small number of organisers carried the burden of organisation, catering for newcomers that needed to be accommodated with ever more abstract elements of organisation like the more sophisticated guidebooks indicate. Another problem however was the diminishing power of the spatial antagonism chosen by the camps to symbolise and made tangible the position of the camp as outside of the status quo. I argued that spatial organisation can offset the need to employ elements of organisation. Employing spatial organisation protest camps functioned as laboratories of anarchist organisation. The way the climate camp space was colonised by the status quo indicates that the spatial antagonism the camp created was perhaps no longer radical enough. This is linked to the actual place of the camp, its atmosphere, its tangible difference to the status quo.

CFCA increasingly provided a space for open discussions about ways of tackling climate change. The attention the climate camps got from the British public goes some way to demonstrating the inability of the established political order to provide spaces for those discussions. Indeed, the mass media and politicians gathered at the camp, because here exciting deliberations and political debate – mostly absent from parliament and media – actually took place. For many of its key organisers, however, the climate camps were meant to do more than simply help to refresh liberal democracy by creating a new political forum. The climate camp was not meant to rejuvenate the political status quo. Rather, it was supposed to prefigure the change needed to tackle climate change by building a radically different and better society. In order to do so, the camp needed to adopt an antagonistic position vis-a-vis the status quo. When the CFCA decided to discontinue the organisation of climate camps, this might well have been because few camp organisers were motivated to provide space for deliberations that no longer fundamentally questioned the political status quo. Protest camps become political significant when they claim to be better places, occupying territories outside the status quo. As I have indicated, protest camps need to stress this claim, and perform it above and beyond their relationships with the outside. From an anarchist perspective there is no use for a camp within the status quo.

With elements of antagonistic spatial organisation diminishing, the camps had to resort increasingly to elements of organisation to achieve partial organisation. Not all elements of partial organisation derived from Ahrne and Brunsson could be discussed in this paper. I focused instead on the elements of rules and hierarchy. Further research could analyse other elements of organisation, in particular sanctioning and monitoring. I found that the increasing use of some elements of organisation in the context analysed here wasn't successful, but rather created new problems. The increasing sophistication of the guidebooks indicates an increasing bureaucratisation that does not necessarily bode well with social movement activists. More contested yet was the perceived need to make explicit hierarchies in the camp. As some organisers felt the need to assert their position as 'guardians of the roots' of the camps, contradictions between the ideal of creating horizontal alternatives and the reality of persistent hierarchy became undeniably obvious.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the organisational form of the protest camp, and pointed to its role in social movement organisation. It contested that protest camps have the capacity to radically challenge the status quo through spatial

organisation, and in particular through the creation of a spatial antagonism. Protest camps create alternative worlds based on networks by mirroring the spatial practice of the state. They (per)form alternative polities. This enables the experimentation with alternative and anarchist forms of organisation. In particular it enables to overcome the limits of the network form to produce alternative order through organisation. At the same time protest camps can avoid the problems of formal organisation, namely its tendency to develop hierarchies and abstract rules which often result in violence, coercion and repression as means of internal governance. The concept of partial organisation offered a helpful device to clarify the tension between network and organisation. According to Ahrne and Brunsson partial organisation means that some elements of organisation are employed but not all. The study of protest camps shows that partial organisation can also be achieved through spatial organisation. By organising in space, rather than for permanence, protest camps significantly change the meaning of elements of organisation like membership or rules. In general spatial organisation points to an organisation that is less abstract and more grounded.

By using spatial organisation through antagonism and decentralisation, protest campers have developed ways in which anarchist organisation might work in practice. But those techniques are not simply tools that can be taken from one context and applied to another. Indeed the genealogy of protest camps is crooked and non-linear, with techniques developed, forgotten, transformed and reinvented. Context is paramount to any understanding of the salience of the organisational form of the protest camp. The study of the CFCA showed how protest camps can become highly professional tools of organisation, able to attract broad attention and induce strong political impulses. The CFCA based its particular organisation on experiences of several previous protest camps, in the UK and beyond. It furthermore developed protest camps into an organisational device and social movement strategy. This process has led to increasing attention on the climate camps, and an ever-increasing diversity among the people and politics present in the camps. To some extent it is unsurprising that an increasing professionalisation and growing numbers of participants prompted the appearance of more formal elements of organisation. Beyond this problem, I argue that CFCA had a problem in formulating a spatially expressed antagonism to successfully occupy a place from which to radically challenge the status quo. Instead the status quo could increasingly colonise the space of the camp which undermined its ability to prefigure a radical alternative as hierarchy, the perhaps most un-anarchist of the elements of organisation, reappeared. The crafting of a viable antagonism remains the crucial challenge for anarchist organisation in as well as outside protest camps.

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