

# We're having a climate camp in the City

by Red Pepper  
Sunday, 29 March 2009

Oscar Reyes interviews Matt Megarry about the upcoming Climate Camp in the City - what it's all about and what you can do

Why are you targeting the European Climate Exchange?

Because the system of carbon trading they oversee will be the billion dollar elephant in the room at international climate talks later this year in Copenhagen. We're in the middle of an economic crisis based on wild speculation and blind faith in the market. With the recent crash in the price of carbon price within the European Trading Scheme, the flaws inherent in this elaborate system of offsets have never been more exposed. If we want a viable future for everyone on this planet, we can't let city traders be the guardians of our climate system. In short: Carbon trading doesn't work.

What kind of actions will take place on 1 April? How do people get involved?

There'll be sorts of stuff going on: from debates on the alternatives and workshops on the finer points of the trading system. There might even be a bit of creative naughtiness and perhaps some direct action. People just need to show up in London on 1 April and get stuck in to whatever takes their fancy. Delicious vegan food for a small optional donation will be provided. Bring sleeping bags and tents if you have them - we're having a climate camp in the City!

The Daily Mail expects a riot - how do you respond to that kind of scaremongering?

The Daily Mail expects all sort of things. We've learned not to take too much notice. For me, one of the most inspiring moments of last year's camp was the sense of calm focus and togetherness that everyone showed in the face of outrageous police aggression. At the top gate, repeated police incursions were met with successive waves of climate campers peacefully resisting; sitting down, singing songs and telling stories, and demonstrating the power of collective action. We'll stand up for what we believe in, but we're not the mob the Daily Mail wants us to be.

What do you hope will be the outcome of 1 April action in the City?

I think it would be great if loads of new people turn up and imagine something different for the future. Hopefully that sentiment will travel far and wide, along with the message that world leaders have got their response to climate change very wrong indeed.

Why carbon trading? How does this relate to the previous climate camp actions at Drax, Heathrow and Kingsnorth?

Every time we've set up camp outside a major emitter, some big business or government spokesperson has always popped up and said "Don't worry! Carbon trading will sort it out!" It's widely accepted that the richer, carbon-heavy should be the ones to make drastic cuts in emissions. But plans for new runways and coal-fired power stations will make it impossible for countries in the north to do their fair share. NASA's Jim Hansen is now suggesting that we may be perilously close to the danger zone in terms of greenhouse gas concentrations. So we need to cut emissions and help with climate friendly measures in other parts of the world. It's not a choice: we have to do both.

Is this a one-off action, or part of a longer campaign focusing on carbon trading? Is this part of a build up to (or related to) other actions in the run up to the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December? If so, what will those be?

It's part of a longer campaign focusing on the current economic system and how it's got us into this mess. Carbon trading is just one part of that. Our summer camp will explore the economic crisis (and the system that caused it) and how it relates to climate change and other social justice issues. Carbon trading and free market dogma have dominated UN negotiations in recent years, so yes, we'll be taking action around the time of the Copenhagen Summit as well.

What form will these events and actions take?

As yet, those questions are largely unresolved. But anyone can turn up to one of our monthly national gatherings to answer them! See [www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk) for details.

What has the G20 got to do with climate change discussion and carbon trading?

The G20 focuses on efforts to kick-starting the economy, on getting people spending again and things like bailouts for the automotive industries. These are not futureproof plans. This is precisely the time we could be concentrating on creating jobs that will help stop the climate crisis. The G20 governments have been particularly blinkered by the neo-liberal discourse around false free market solutions to climate change. Their agenda is one of a future for business as usual. So we're camping on April Fools' Day, to show that that future is bleak.

Is the financial crisis good for the climate?

In terms of changes to investments and output, to various climate friendly and not so climate friendly projects, it's a bit of a mixed bag. But that's not really the point. The financial crisis could be an opportunity for renewal. For making the changes we need to tackle climate change and finally bringing some sense of equity to the world. But we can't just hope for change and we shouldn't rejoice in something that's bringing ever more suffering to millions in the here and now. For the crisis to really be good for the climate, we need to use it to expose the inherent contradictions in the financial system and empower people to imagine something new. The crisis certainly exposes the insanities of carbon trading to a whole new level.

Is this a re-run of older summit protests (like the J18 Carnival Against Capital in the City in 1999). What lessons have been learnt from the successes and failures of other counter-summit protests?

People who went to, and helped organise, the J18 Carnival will probably be involved again. And the way we're organising the 1 April day definitely draws upon the same model of open, consensus based meetings. Indeed, the idea for Climate Camp came out of the 'eco-village' that was set up at the G8 in Scotland a few years back. But I think after three summer camps, the Climate Camp has taken on an identity all of its own. Absolutely lessons have been learnt, but the camp in the City will be something new: expect pop-up tents on tarmac, workshops in bus stops and actions in the avenues of power!

Where to go/what to do ... Gather at noon, 1 April, at the European Climate Exchange, Hasilwood House, 62

Bishopsgate, EC2N 4AW. Bring a pop-up tent if you've got one, sleeping bag, wind turbine, mobile cinema, action plans and ideas ... let's imagine another world.

Matt Megarry was a participant in the Camps for Climate Action in the summers of 2007 and 2008, at Heathrow Airport and Kingsnorth coal-fired power station.

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