

K: Hello Jade. Thanks so much for agreeing to meet with me. First of all, I was wondering if you could tell me what happened this year at Ende Gelände?

Jade: In Ende Gelände a group of people identifying as queer feminists managed to block a coal train without thinking they are superheroes. But by being careful to each other, being in solidarity and singing “queer we go, queer we go, queer we go” while waving black and purple flags. Also, by being proud of doing this as queer feminist people. This gave us energy to achieve our direct action goal. And to actually escape police, because the police arrested us, but they all let us go in the end and nobody got arrested - so for us it was a successful action.

K: Thank you. Now, perhaps this might be obvious, but what do you see as the relationship between climate justice and patriarchy?

Jade: It's not that obvious because it's not easy to understand and I must say I'm not always clear about it. But I think basically it's the power structure of it and it is the way that historically power structures have been built. And if you read for example Silvia Federici who is an American ecofeminist historian she explains very well how at the same time between 16th and 17th century you see capitalism being organized and when capitalism organized it actually excluded from human society: nature, women and black people. It happened on different time schedules depending on which country, we should be more precise but basically the structure is that which leads us to today where we have a power structure, a capitalist power structure very much used on white privilege which is also basically a male privilege.

So the idea is that if you want to fight today against the destruction of climate and ecosystem in general you need to address the general power structure. So, the general power structure isn't only capitalism and industries and oil industry and of course it's fossil fuel industries, but when you look at them, fossil fuel industries are mostly run by white males, and exploiting, mostly, people of color. Of course it is very obvious in Africa and Latin America and the whole mining phenomenon and so this racist and patriarchal structures is very much part of the industries destroying the earth.

But what is difficult to understand is that it's not obvious, it's not put in front, it's sort of hidden. It's kind of a hidden logic within this structure and I think today it is very important to unveil this part of the structured. And perhaps the last element is and if you look at other western countries the US and France and other countries of course, among the communities that are the most affected by pollution and contamination and climate change - you find the poorest people and in those societies, in France it is obvious, the most poor the community the most colored people it has. So it isn't just a philosophical idea but it is also a very empirical observation of society.

K: Thank you, I really like this idea of the hidden logic and unveiling of it. Now, thinking a little bit about Ende Gelände, what do you see as the role of direct action in confronting these power structures that you just mentioned and how do you see that coming from a different place if it is constructed around ecofeminism.

Jade: I think it's very important to do direct action with these ideas because it's all about empowerment. It's very exciting because at Ende Gelände at the same time you fight the fossil fuel industry at the same time you fight patriarchy if you believe in those ideas I've just explained. I've been doing climate camps and anti-g8 and anti summits and for me it's the first time that I've found this space that has allowed me to connect very intimately to the fight. It doesn't change anything, I feel as strong as against fossil fuel industry as I felt against the as I did against the G8 or IMF in the beginning of the year 2000, but the difference is now is I do it from the queer-feminist perspective it is more intimate and I can authorize myself to do things that I wouldn't do in a normal summit. I'm not alone anymore.

I'm now realizing the anti-globalization movement in all its genius, in many ways was all about male power, doing direct action very often is all about male energy: about being really strong and about being the one who can run the fastest or jump the highest, it's physically challenging. It really puts pressure on you if you are a woman or not so athletic: "I'm not so athletic, I'll never be able to do that" sort of thing. For me what is really fascinating about the queer feminist finger from Ende Gelände this year is that from the beginning the people who worked on the finger, really tried to find ways to allow you as a woman and as a queer person who doesn't put strength as a high value, to really be able to do very difficult things. For example, there was a common understanding that we would try to do the action without running, we would do it walking. So that's the first difference, it's a long walk, it's very hot, you're carrying your bag: it's still physically challenging but you don't have to run. And that makes all the difference for someone who is really trained and really strong and someone who is less strong. So we could all do it and eventually we all made it to the rail tracks in the end.

Also, because we are queer feminist the idea of care is very important, so being careful to one another. I really notice that for the two days of action trying to take the tracks, my affinity group was at the back, we chose to be at the back and kind of in caring position, and the group that was just before- so we spent a lot of time together and it created very beautiful connections and each time we saw each other we would hug and kiss and "how are you" and for me it was a really honest feeling and really caring about each other. And another example that was really important, when we finally made it to the tracks we had to climb some kind of hill, like 5 or 6 meters and the cops were standing at the bottom of the hill so we needed to go through them and so we were coming in line and they were perpendicular to us, what happened was that in another situation maybe the first people there would have tried to run and get there and what happened was the first people turned and waited for everybody to be there, so they lost time actually. By the time the whole finger was at the bottom of the hill there were many more cops than at the beginning, but they waited for everyone to get there so we were en masse but we were all there and it was very transparent and the people 'leading the action' we were using the people's mike a lot and these people said aloud and the cops could hear us and the we said "We are going onto the tracks in a minute, be ready to walk on the tracks". So the Cops were extending their arms and being prepared also but the fact that they said that was very reassuring for all of us, we waited and walked a walked walked a bit more to try and get away a bit from the cops and at some point we made the sign "we are going on the tracks, we are going on the tracks" so it was very transported and that that gives us confidence to be so transparent,

and we all started to run and run through the cops literally and everyone managed to do it. And for me, the reason we were all able to do it was that we were all together.

The year before we were in the pink bloque and it was non mixed bloque so it only female, queer and intersex people. The queer finger this year was open, so there were also heterosexual cis men, they were a minority but they were welcome, and it created a very interesting and exciting atmosphere because they were in solidarity with the WF.... And it made me think that sometimes mixity is really good. I learned so much!

K: This is really wonderful and you just actually answered another question I had which was about the politics of care. Now I am wondering if you can think of another other example of where the group was embodying its politics?

J: Yes, another example is that the actions took place on the Friday and on the Saturday. On the Thursday there was the first general meeting of the queer-feminist finger. This meeting was very interesting because the organizers of the action had prepared a graphic showing the organization of the finger, so the finger tip (more about pushing through cops), people carrying flags, people carrying phones, people carrying megaphones; all the roles that you need in a finger of this kind. But for me what was user interesting and fascinating was it was very inclusive, all the strategic roles were still to be taken. So they said: For this action we need a fingertip, we need people carrying flags, we need people carrying phones we need people carrying megaphones we need medics and it was all open like "who wants to do what?" In comparison with other actions where other strategic roles are already taken, and I understand why, but usually the core strategic stuff was already taken but here it was super inclusive and for me that was part of the empowering process because even though you haven't been super involved in the preparation of the action you can still take a leadership kind of role. So to me this was very important.

Also, the way in which the meetings were facilitated: the facilitating team was amazing, super dynamic super open, you could very easily join the facilitation team. And they were very much careful on trying to find ways, not just asking people to say what they want to say, but to find short and easy games even if they don't feel so self assured. For example, walk around and now stop and take 5 minutes to talk to the people in front of you that you don't know and that allows people that are too shy to speak in front of a general audience to say what they want to say, and these kinds of things: very simple, very modest but they really helped to create a feeling of confidence.

Also, and I can remember the way we sang songs. It was kind of soft, it wasn't like chanting "Ende Gelände! Ende Gelände!" in a harsh voice, it was much more quiet. And I remember when we were on the tracks and the police were coming to take us one by one someone started this chant "stay calm, stay queer, the end of coal is near" So it was very soft, almost like a nursery rhyme and it became like a mantra and everyone was singing it and to sing it together was very reassuring and I could hear people being carried away singing it, and later people said they were singing it in their head.

K: When I was arrested at Flood Wall Street I was singing as they took me away. They kept taking people until there was just a few of us and even when I was taken away I was singing and I could still hear them singing. Its very hard to be afraid when you are singing. Before moving on, is there anything you would like to say about else about culture or ethics of care? I think it is quite crucial.

J: I think it is crucial yes. Well, in actions of this kind there is always solidarity. It also exists in non-queer-feminist situations but it's not so much about care but about "not taking yourself too serious". What happened when we arrived at the tracks was that very soon the police surrounded us and kettled us after just perhaps 30 minutes or an hour. So we spent many hours surrounded by cops on the tracks and at some moment some people had brought some small sound system and they started playing music, and they played disco music, like 70s disco music from studio 54 - super dancing music! And it was really fantastic, they played the music and started to dance and everyone started to dance. So the occupation of the trail tracks became like a street party and because of the adrenaline and the stress of the action people were high from the energy of the action and people were dancing like crazy on the tracks, and some other people brought makeup and also glitter so you had these crazy people dancing on the tracks, throwing glitter and putting making up on. And the cops were surrounding us and it was great because it really made the cops look ridiculous, like "What are you doing? These are just people dancing!" and I think it really helped decrease the fear of being arrested and the cherry on the cake was that one of the camp's kitchen sent us pizza. So hot warm freshly baked pizza arrived at the tracks - thanks to the help of an European MP actually - and we were dancing and eating pizza infant of the cops, and it was so absurd. To me it's part of this queer feminist thing of don't take yourself too seriously and you can dance to corny disco music. And people were even crowd-surfing! And to me it was all part of this queer-feminist spirit.

K: So with your more academic ecofeminist hat on. How would you talk about that party?

J: I think it was really about letting your sensibilities and feelings be expressed. For me, and perhaps I haven't said this yet, to me, ecofeminism is a lot about reconnecting yourself to the natural elements: water, earth, fire, air. In order to do that you need to forget your brain and you need to forget your intelligence and you need to let your physical feelings and your emotions express themselves and it's way you can try to reconnect to other forms of life. To me, that's how it connects, it's the part of actions where you stop thinking strategically and you stop thinking "oh my god I'm so afraid and I'm going to be arrested." You just forget and because you forget your fear decreases and you become more free, so that is the connection, it's the emotions.

Also to me it's the importance of being in a circle. Witches organizes convents. Just before coming to EG we were on the ZAD with Starhawk and we did a water ritual and trying to reconnect to the old spirits of la ZAD and the elements of La ZAD and try to unleash very primitive feelings and your grounding yourself and it's very much linked to letting expressions out of you. I was feeling that, I'm pretty sure that among the people who were dancing on the tracks they didn't have this in mind. I don't want to put theoretically ecofeminist interpretations

onto what happened it's what I felt, and it's what some others felt but probably it's not what others felt. It's not just what happened but a way you can connect to it.

K: Interesting, I've been thinking recently that we're always sitting in circles of meeting and it's so so similar to ceremony. But in one we are just talking to humans and in the other we open it up just a little bit more and let everything else in. But I really appreciate what you said because in direct action we use the phrase a lot of "Put your body on the line" and so this idea of body is actually really important. We aren't talking about "Putting your *mind* on the line." So you are putting your body on the line shouldn't you be in your body if you are doing this? So my next question is a bit different: Why do you think ecofeminism and ecofeminist organizing is strategic.

Jade: I think its strategic because, first, it can allow people who don't feel comfortable in direct action movements to be more comfortable: queer people, intersex people, women. Sometimes it's hard to feel comfortable in an activist atmosphere so I think we can creates spaces for these people and maybe new people to join, and also I think that, for many reasons, there are not so many people ready to join direct action for climate. Its very sad but I'm just observing that not so many people are ready to go on coal train tracks to stop them. and I'm thinking that it's very important that, as a climate justice movement to observe this, and if we want to attract more people we need to be about what they need and what they want. So it's not only about how we see climate change and capitalism, maybe for some people it's more important for them queer activism, and if we can created a sexy activist space where queer people feel ok and feminists feel really excited to come, I think that is really strategic as maybe we can gather more people.

Also, what I was saying before about empowerment: it's a more intimate way of creating empowerment, and I think in a longer term we will not put down the system that destroys climate if we only target capitalism because capitalism is such a super power that we need to attack it from different perspectives in a way. I think the queer feminist perspective is one, decolonial perspective is another very important one. When start to work around activists groups that are not about climate, you see there is a lot of energy for social change and that, for some people, this energy for social change is before climate. Before climate they want to tackle racism, and before climate they want to tackle patriarchy because that is what they endure in their daily life. And for the me the climate movement is too full of white people and I'm a white people so I'm not saying we shouldn't be there. What I'm saying is that the fact that we are so many white people and so few people of color is really a problem. To me it tells something and the point is not that "oh we have to find a way to seduce people of color", we have to find a way that we make more sense to people who are the most victims of the capitalist system that destroys climate. That's why it's so important, the techniques of struggle can maybe help us to broaden our perspective of understanding what the system destroying climate is about.

If you separate capitalism from racism and patriarchy, in a way some people still remain invisible. Feminism is very much torn apart in France about these issues because there is a very strong border between white women feminism and people of color feminism, and it's because the traditional French feminism has only cared about white issues, and has never really considered the importance of women who want to wear the veil and so in the end it's kind of a

bourgeois feminist and I don't want this to happen to the climate movement. That is why diversity is so important, it isn't just about being politically correct, it's a fundamental thing.

Kevin: I completely agree. To me diversity is one of those things that helps everybody; everyone gains from seeing this intersectional discourse. The more different people come the more different angles you have of working on an issue. And, I think you said this very well, the more ways we have to attack the structures. So my last question is a bit of a reflection: What have you learned from this experience and what do you see as the future for radical ecofeminist direct action organizing?

Jade: I think the future question is difficult, because it's like a political bet that some people are doing that this queer feminist approach of climate justice could attract more people. I think it could but I am not sure it would work because there are many obstacles on the way and it really depends on how people organize. So now, some people were saying we need to queer feminizes the CJ movement and I think it's a very nice way to put it but it's not clear to me how you would do that and it's not easy to do that. So it's more like a question mark. But on our personal Paris level, what I can tell you is that after Ende Gelände with some friends we had meetings already and we've said we would like to create a queer-feminist direct action climate group in Paris. So that is a very small thing that we are talking about but we would like to do it, so that's for our level. And I know that some young women here are organizing witch bloques in demonstrations and I think there are connections to make with those people. We demonstrated together recently in a demonstration against reforms of laws about working conditions.

I don't know how it will turn out, but I can see that there is a buzz on ecofeminism, each time we post something on Facebook it is being liked a lot. There is something exciting about it for younger people, I hope that we can use this energy to create something more. and if you ask me what I learned. Well I learned this: you can be effective, efficient in action without being too strong. I don't have a strong body, but if we are many and careful to each other well then you don't need a strong body to climb a hill and to pass through a blockade of cops and get to railroad tracks. And to me that is a very important lesson it gives me power it gives me confidence in myself and also it gave me friends. The connections between us are strong now. And that is beautiful.