

OPINION

AGIR 17

April 17 is the International Day of Peasant Struggle, commemorating the 1996 massacre of 19 members of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement by the Brazilian military police.

But this year, in France, it was also adopted as the third of a series of days of action against consumer capitalism, which are always held on the 17th of a given month. The first was on 17 June 2020 and the second on 17 November.

Agir17, as the movement is called, arose out of the widely shared feeling that the pandemic lockdown offered a glimpse of a lifestyle that was less economically frenetic, and more in harmony with the natural world. Their mission statement says:

"We have seen for the first time in our lives what is possible when the infernal machinery of capitalism grinds to a halt. We must now take concrete action to prevent it gathering speed again – resist the reintegration of the world."

The idea is to co-ordinate a large number of local actions against "pointless, toxic developments" on the same day, so that they obtain more collective force. Each of the three days has seen up to fifty different actions and occupations taking place. Among the targets have been distribution and logistics centres, industrial parks, factory farms, road and airport expansion schemes, golf courses, developments on allotments, 5G installations and ravages proposed in regional development plans (see photos opposite). Campaigns against each of these local threats are not just isolated sparks of resistance, but part of a worldwide movement to expose the fallacies of unbridled capitalism and the relentless pursuit of economic growth.

Action Not Fluff

Could something similar happen in Britain? From 18-26 September, the Climate Coalition are organising a Great Big Green Week in the run up to the COP Climate Conference in Glasgow in November. Local events around the country

"will celebrate how communities are taking action to tackle climate change. These will range from art installations, to concerts to community stalls, to climate cafes, and everything in between. National organisations, institutions, businesses and media outlets will join in, getting more people involved up and down the country, and putting pressure on the UK Government to up its game on climate change."



Other suggested activities include litter-picking – ie clearing up the mess that the plastics industry creates; and sowing seeds in an outdoor space. But no guerilla gardening please: "just make sure you have permission from the landowner first!"

Unfortunately there is no chance that this fluffy approach will persuade the government to "up its game on climate change". Confronted by the limited spectrum of activities that lies between art installations and climate cafés, Boris Johnson will simply adopt them as an endorsement of the leading role that he and his government claim they are taking in the fight against global warming.

The fact is that the Conservatives are only too happy to adopt the rhetoric of climate change, but are damned if they are going to do much about

it, other than outsource as many emissions as possible to other countries in return for our 'financial services'. Anyone who really wants the government to act needs to target the pointless, toxic developments that the government supports and subsidises – HS2, the road programme, the air industry, Trident, Amazon depots, supermarket distribution centres, factory farms, plastic producers, new office blocks, 5G and all the rest of these resource-hungry idiocies – expose them, harass them, occupy them and if possible destroy them.

The idea of co-ordinated local activities taking place in the run up to COP 26 is a good one. But let's take the fight against unsustainable development to the coal-face, rather than singing along to the government's tune in concert halls and climate cafés.

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<https://greatbiggreenweek.com>

<https://agir17.noblogs.org>

See also Andreas Malm, *How To Blow Up a Pipeline*, Verso 2021





Above: Inhabitants of Percy, a town near Grenoble, picnic in the road to protest against a 57 million euro scheme to streamline the local road network.



Above right: “Stop Amazon – not here, not anywhere”. Demonstrators occupy the Pont du Gard (a Roman aqueduct) to protest against construction of a giant new Amazon depot a few kilometres away.



Right: A socially distanced orchestra creates a wall of sound in a Lille shopping centre.

Below left : Guerilla roadworkers in Amboise, near Tours, manage to paint 60 metres of bicycle lane on the highway before they are stopped by the police.

Below right: Placard displayed as over 600 people march on a massive Sanders agri-feed factory in Morbihan, Brittany supplying the numerous factory farms in the region. The chicken is saying “I want some social distance too.”

