

## By 2020 We Rise Up

# Narrative for the first wave

## Autumn 2019

*This document reached consensus during a European conference.*

At the last By2020WeRiseUp strategy meeting close to Vienna, the participating groups worked on defining key points and a narrative for the first wave of disruptive action within the By2020 campaign. The facilitation team collected the results, did temperature checks for central questions and received a mandate to compile and streamline the content worked out by the participants.

The following text is the result of this process. It is split into two sections: The narrative part, that aims to inspire and empower, not to dictate strategies or put pressure on your movements. This is reflected in the narrative style we chose. And a list of framing points that aims at giving a quick overview of central ideas worked out at the strategy meeting and the resonance they found within the groups.



## Narrative

This is the year 2019. It's been decades since we first heard of the climate crisis. The lack of action is astounding. We are scared. What seemed like a far-off problem has developed into an emergency over decades of willful ignorance.

But something happened over the last year: something was in the air, for the first time. A breeze of power and hope was catching our mood and imagination. You wouldn't be able to put your finger on it, but something was different. Throughout the autumn of 2018 we came together around marches and meetings, we looked around us and saw new faces, more than ever before. Change was coming. Following a scorching summer, climate change made it to the top of the news. Scientists' cries became ever more urgent with every passing year and were finally starting to be heard. Even some officials started telling the truth. New movements were springing up; people who had never demonstrated before would bring their kids and parents to climate marches. The young and the old looked at each other, and there was a spark of recognition, a thought: we are all in this together. We can be complementary. We are the ones we've been waiting for. Now, let's plan to win this fight.

For several months, groups and people talked to one another. Bridged long-standing gaps. Wrapped their heads around questions of strategy and coordination. We understood that our diversity was the key to bring about real change, not just a new cosmetic adjustment within the old exploitative system. We called; we met; we sat together; we agreed; we disagreed: we planned.

At first, we thought we would have to push for a turning point to happen in 2020, for we thought we would never be ready in 2019. But through the first months of this very same year, we realized that it would be too late if we took yet another 12 months. We no longer had the luxury of time. And then a question formed at the back of our minds: did we even need that kind of time? Or were we actually, finally, ... ready? Ready with experience, ready in numbers, ready with determination and resolve. Would we be more ready, stronger within a year? No, we wouldn't. We would only be taking a major risk: missing what felt like a turning point in numbers, consciousness and action. Decades of work had brought us to that point. It felt time to turn this hard-won experience and strength into a winning strategy.

That's when the idea of the waves took shape. Because, so far, a single day or week hadn't proven to be enough. We had tried demonstrations, petitions, mass actions... but the system had always been able to ignore our cry for justice and life and keep going with "business as usual". The factory farms, the luxury cruises, the Black Fridays... all were left untouched. So we had to come up with a plan to scale up pressure, to ensure to the best of our capacities and intelligence that the system would come to a complete halt. And we have the power to do that because we are the ones who make the system work - not the political and economic decision-makers.

### The first wave

Wave 1 was thought around existing calls for actions, as an outcome of months of actions and mobilization already in the works: among others, from the 20th to the 27th of September, millions of young people across the world are going to raise their voices for climate justice, as they have been doing again and again over the last year. During this week, climate and social justice groups could support their call, amplify it and show solidarity in words and acts, in actions and media work. This might well be the biggest coordinated strike in the history of the world. But as we all know: even this will probably not be enough... if it has to stand for itself, isolated, not coordinated with all the rest of us fighting people. A global epiphany would have to take place, an epiphany for which lots of people have been fighting so long without reaching any substantial change. And only together and with mutual respect could we finally get there. "Mutual respect" does not mean "without disagreement". But rather than splitting into ever smaller groups, playing into the hands of

the system, we can stand together, question and refine each other's positions in a truly democratic approach. Face, in solidarity, what we have all been facing in isolation: global injustices and a global climate catastrophe threatening to eradicate all life on this planet.

Using the momentum built up during a week of strikes and actions, with all the pressure and legitimization that would stem from it, our protests could evolve into mass disruption within the following weeks. It would be the time to take our actions to the next level, in our diversity of tactics, histories and sensitivities.

We have some milestones to gather around and plan towards to unite our dynamics: another UN summit will take place on the 23rd of September. On the 8th of October, the IPCC's 1.5°C report will see its first anniversary. On the 17th and 18th of October, governments of the European Union will gather in Brussels to decide on the EU's emissions until 2030. So many of these symbolic and decision-making moments have failed us in the past; we therefore know that, unless the right and coordinated pressure is put, none of this would come anywhere near what is necessary to avoid climate catastrophe and to achieve real climate and social justice.

So we could come to stay, for several weeks. No group would be able to sustain effective disruption on its own for such a long period of time. But we know that we could help each other(.) and identify and disrupt strategical targets to make sure it would be impossible for business as usual to continue.

As European-based activists, it made sense for us to build up towards the EU summit. The EU countries hold a lot of power. Throughout history, they have been (and still are) responsible for a huge part of worldwide emissions and countless global injustices. So we thought: what if, after the 27th, we were to occupy or even shut down choking points of the system? Plan to stay, longer than ever before? And would then come together for a common ending – across borders and geographies, movements and people? Reclaiming power for good, making our own decisions and planning our comeback? For we know we can't go away this time; we are coming, fighting, resting, planning, coming back and starting all over again – until we secure climate justice.

We said that we wanted to start and end together – whether that would be in our narratives or over a joint period of time. This ending would be a moment of celebration! No matter how big it will be by then: we would have come together and taken the first step in a coordinated, strategic uprising. We would have empowered ourselves – realizing that change is not just necessary, but that it can happen. Through us, not anyone else. We wouldn't just have said: "no more!" We would have enacted it.

That's not to say that we will stop in Brussels; we could imagine that maybe the wave would have taken so much speed by then as to become impossible to stop. That over the week after Brussels, we would reclaim a democratic power by gathering in assemblies and laying out the steps to be followed to secure climate justice. And if we weren't there yet, that wouldn't matter in any way: assemblies and groups would democratically start planning the second wave of disruption in which we would cast ourselves in January 2020 – with determination and strategy again. But also with unstoppable joy, love and rage.

## **Framing points for the first wave**

### **Beginning**

It seems that the first wave will start with the mass actions of traditional organizations not directly working within the general By2020 framework. A temperature check indicated that all groups present at the strategy meeting in Vienna unanimously agreed on the 27th as the starting point of disruptive action, and two explicitly stated that the week before that should be used for education and press work. Working with NGOs was met with skepticism, with about 60% of the group having concerns about it. It was suggested to work with global majority representatives to find a strategy for dealing with NGOs.

### **Crest**

With the multitude of actions already in the pipeline it doesn't seem likely that we will see a coordinated Europe-wide peak. National peaks will likely be dictated by individual actions that draw the largest amounts of people and/or media attention. It has been suggested by one working group that not having a coordinated peak would avoid draining energies. Our diversity of local backgrounds doesn't allow for a coordinated climax. Targeting capital cities was met with about 80% agreement, but half the group was opposed to including this in the narrative.

### **Ending**

There was near-general agreement about a common ending as a narrative, as well as a consensus about framing the end of the first wave as "this is not the end, we will be coming back". As a symbolic action to end the first wave, a gathering at the EU summit in Brussels has been proposed. It's likely that this will be a provisional end point, whether or not we frame it as such. Though the EU summit was suggested by several working groups, the temperature check indicated less enthusiasm about using it (or any other date) as a fixed end date. Naming the summit as a provisional end date with the option of keeping disruption up after was almost unanimously endorsed. A separate temperature check was performed to check if participants would be willing to keep going after the summit given they have sufficient capacities left, and this proposal was met with about 70% agreement.

### **Common themes of the end point narrative were:**

- Celebration of achievements
- Rest and recuperation
- Commitment to continuing the fight, explicit announcement of 2nd wave
- Common ending
- Reclaiming the power

### **Tasks for the down period include:**

- Resting
- Negotiation
- Mobilization
- Action training
- Anti-repression work