Outlines of a Common Theory of Change for 2020

These outlines of a common theory of change are taken from the <u>minutes of the 4th European strategy meeting</u> which took place in autumn of 2019. Below you'll find the reached consensus itself first and an elaboration of the very same consensus further down.

Consensus procedure about theories of change

All of the following statement were approved in a consent procedure, meaning that everyone actively supported it. Major concerns are taking up in the minutes, they are to be read as still supporting the consensus.

- **We MUST change for the upcoming period – if we do not reinvent (strategies, tactics, the language we use, ourselves), we risk losing impact in the longer run.**
- **Big numbers are perfect to increase impact, if you have a purpose for them. We are pretty good at mobilizing numbers at this point.**
    - Major concern 1: A few months in-between, expectations are there now, too much, too many, this is terrorizing ourselves : their is a risk of feeling of failure because they can't find capacities & energy to do in advance publicized days
    - Major concern 2: we cannot claim the wording of "we are good at mobilizing"
    - Major concern 3: big numbers can be a purpose per se
- **Simply doing something new/completely different can be radical.**
    - Major Concern 1: something new is not per se more radical, it's not the right wording
    - Major Concern 2 : we rather need something new (shared by three people)
    Major Concern 3: just something new without impact is not radical
- **Diversity in the sense of including marginalized groups is a tool to protect quality of democracy and the overall space for action, for everyone**.
    - Major concern 1: Diversity is more than only marginalized groups, but also other sectors of society like farmers, etc. (agreement in the plenary)
    - Major concern 2: Sounds paternalistic, let's be more humble, learn, what has happened , see it as an equal exchange (agreement in the plenary)
- **We must have the space for groups with different levels of radicality, for different groups to be able to take on the role of "friendly faces" and other groups as "mean faces" in a coordinated way that increases our collective impact.**
    - Major Concern 1: How can we do it? Mean demeanour do not show different levels, give space without losing the different levels of radicality
    - Major Concern 2 : Sometimes difficult to give space practically to different softer-radical actions
    - Major Concern 3 : respect for different methodics
- **We also must create space for personal/individual radicality - exposing ourselves, being personally radical, "polarizing" means that the majority cannot live in indifference, no matter how they react.**
    - Major Concern 1 : Do not like the word polarizing (agreement in the plenary)
- **Social justice must remain part of the movement, the goals, and the messaging.**
    - Major Concern: Social Justice is local & global social justice

<u>Immediate Responses/Thoughts</u>:
- Good summary but not an actual theory of change

- Missing element: recognition of different methods
- We should aim for a more animated exchange of experiences & viewpoints
- Differences in radicality & methods only (truly) powerful if employed in a coordinated manner
- Outward usage of the word "radical(ity)" should be cautious -> esp. if meant in a negative way
- "Social justice" cannot remain a trivial slogan, but should be approached with real commitment

Summary/Outlook:
- Some impact achieved in the autumn -> but not enough in view of the urgency of the climate crisis
- Normalization/main-streaming of climate activism shows the possibility of the system to accommodate protest
- Change & reinvention in the upcoming period is imperative -> otherwise risk of losing impact in the long run
- Numbers (of participants) are vital to heighten impact & open up spaces but there is no capacity to sustain growing numbers & use them to their full potential -> focus should be put on creating sustainable structures for training & on-boarding of newcomers
- Long term polarization is *not* our goal, although a radical approach might polarize the society around the issue of climate change
- Radicality should involve continuously shifting the window of acceptable discourse & language
- Simply doing something new/different can be radical (while that does not stand by itself as radical)
- Being radical challenges the system because it has to adapt in order to survive
- Diversity is key to extending the space of action -> Diversity can range from a diversity of tactics, messages within the narrative, creative alliances (e.g. firefighters, forest workers, tourism, labour unions) as well as the joining the struggle of other movements (e.g. justice, peace, human rights)
- Radicality and intersectionality (may be) more important for the next wave than raising of numbers
- Groups should aim to consciously occupy positions of "good cops" and "bad cops" while respecting one another in order to increase strategic complementarity, mutual growth & collective impact
- Space for individual & personal radicality in order to polarize discourse & disable positions of indifference

Elaboration of the outlines for a common Theory of Change

The following is an elaboration of the sentences on which a consensus was found on.

We have achieved some impact in the autumn wave. A lot of that impact was not equal to our expectations, the needs of the people and the urgency of the climate crisis.
Climate striking is becoming a trend, the activism we do is becoming normal. (That by itself is good but it enables the system to accommodate instead of change.)
We MUST change for the upcoming period – if we do not reinvent (strategies, tactics, the language we use, ourselves), we risk losing impact in the longer run.

Numbers of people we can mobilize, the radicality of actions and the diversity of the movement are all key to success.
Size of crowds matters – it creates space for us to do more things and safety for a diversity of groups and people to join in. **Big numbers are perfect to increase impact, if you have a purpose for them.**
We have this idea of growing to be better, but if we do not have the capacity to give tools to empower

those people to do something as follow up, we cannot use the crowds to their full potential. Size needs to be sustainable, it requires structures to keep it going, and it means an overall reduction of radicality with the masses.

We have mobilized 7.6 million people worldwide during the autumn climate strikes only. **We are pretty good at mobilizing numbers at this point** – the numbers are of relative size based on country, but equally important.

We are in agreement that we need some (up to a lot) increase in radicality. Radicality is not the same thing as extremism - although it can be perceived negatively by some parts of the public, it's necessary to increase impact. Long term polarization of society is NOT our goal, although a radical approach might polarize society around the issue of climate crisis. How we speak, what is ok to demand (Overton window), the language we use to shift the envelope can also be more or less radical. Radicality can take different forms, from changing the form to being more surprising, to changing tactics completely. In this sense, **Simply doing something new/completely different can be radical.*** Being radical changes the system because the system has to adapt radically and fast to survive.

Diversity is key to creating space for climate justice, not just climate action, and goes hand in hand with radicality. It can range from having a diversity of targets (governments, industry, finance, infrastructure), a diversity of messages within the narrative which are communicated by different groups, a diversity of creative alliances (firefighters, forest workers, tourism, labour unions). Diversity also means joining the struggle of other movements (justice, peace, human rights). **Diversity in the sense of including marginalized groups is a tool to protect quality of democracy and the overall space for action, for everyone**.

For the next wave, radicality and intersectionality are more important than further increasing numbers. For that to work, **we must have the space for groups with different levels of radicality, for different groups to be able to take on the role of "bad cops" and other groups as "good cops" in a coordinated way that increases our collective impact.** (Our goal is not to be liked - although the goal for some of us might be to take the majority with us.) **We also must create space for personal/individual radicality - exposing ourselves, being personally radical, "polarizing" means that the majority cannot live in indifference, no matter how they react.**
This diversity of approaches also applies to the messaging and the language we use. **However, social justice must remain part of the movement, the goals, and the messaging.**
Different groups and people will play different roles – but we have to accept each other and be prepared to combine the effect. If we focus on new things & more radical elements, while respecting each others' levels of radicality, we can grow together.

* Simply doing something new does not fulfil the definition of "radical".