



Movement Strategies for Moving Mountains

Conversations with Activists Worldwide on
How to Use Latin America's COP to
Build Citizen Action on Climate

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Introduction

“What we most need to do as a movement is move the conversation and build power, not lobby global leaders.”

– Sean Sweeney

Mobilizing effective citizen action on the global climate crisis has never been more urgent or seemed more daunting. Across the world’s continents, due to drought, storms and fierce flooding, 2014 may well be remembered as the year when climate change became understood as a current reality instead of a distant projection. This is also the year in which, after stalled progress and dashed hopes, activist energies are turning once again to the demand for international action. September of this year will mark the start of an important three-step process to build international pressure for action, beginning with the special climate summit in New York called by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and ending with the key COP21 (Conference of the Parties) meeting in Paris in December 2015, the stated deadline for approval of a global agreement. In between those two events, and receiving far less attention, is the COP20 meeting scheduled for Lima, Peru in December of this year.

How can climate activists use the COP20 meeting as an opportunity to build citizen pressure for authentic action on the climate crisis and build momentum behind the larger systemic changes that are required? That is the question that the Democracy Center has posed to more than three dozen people from all corners of the climate movement over the past four months – campaigners, direct action activists, journalists, indigenous leaders, groups involved in climate education, and others across five continents. (A list of interviewees is included at the end of this document, and you can read selected quotes from some of those we spoke with alongside this text).

For more than two decades the Democracy Center has [worked with citizen activists across the world](#) to help make their efforts as strategic and powerful as they can be – immigrants in California, water activists in Bolivia, children’s rights campaigners in Uganda, and many more. Since 2009 a main focus of our work has been dedicated to citizen action on the climate crisis. We’ve produced [videos](#) to capture the realities of what the climate crisis means on the ground, published a set of [case studies](#) sharing the lessons of winning climate

campaigns across the world, done in-depth reports on issues such as [forest protection](#) and developed an educational curriculum on [Climate and Water](#).

To help the climate change movement look more strategically at how to make use of the COP gathering, we undertook a diverse set of exploratory one-on-one conversations. When you speak with people in this way, you not only benefit from the best of their thinking and analysis, you can also push them to think about things even more deeply than they may have before. Sometimes face-to-face, sometimes over Skype, expressed in different ways by different people, we found a strong collective wisdom about a potential set of COP20 strategies. This report offers our best effort to synthesize that wisdom into something people can rally around as planning gets underway for the COP in the Andes.

To be clear, opinions on the value and legitimacy of the UNFCCC process vary significantly among climate activists and organizations. Some say

that the process remains essential but direct criticism at a set of different actors and forces that are blocking progress. Others argue that the failures of the COP process have stripped it of its legitimacy and that it is extremely unlikely to produce any agreement that genuinely addresses the crisis at hand. While work inside the COP process has a place in the wider jigsaw puzzle of climate activism, the focus of this report has explicitly avoided the question of how to influence the negotiations in Lima, but rather points to something broader. The focus here is on how to use COP20 as an opportunity to build momentum behind global and local efforts for authentic action, to make use of its power as a magnet for both public attention and activism on the climate crisis. Sandwiched in between the two other important international meetings on the agenda (the September summit in New York and next year's meeting in Paris) the COP in Lima plays an essential role.

What came out of our conversations with climate activists and others were three basic strategies toward that end:

1. *Use COP20 to help change the public and the movement narrative on the climate crisis and what must be done:* This means talking about climate change in ways that people can relate to and that impact their lives directly. It means talking about the real causes of climate change, including the corporations and industries that are helping drive the crisis. This also requires that the movement talk about real solutions to climate change and contrasts those with the many false and inadequate solutions that dominate global negotiations.
2. *Use COP20 to strengthen the climate movement, in particular in the Global South:* This means making the COP in Lima the 'COP of the South', with a focus on the perspectives, voices, and leaders from the region that are so often crowded out by better-resourced groups in the North. Strengthening the movement also means creating spaces for serious strategy discussion among those headed to Lima, and connecting with the grassroots movements in Latin America - on indigenous rights, mining, water and other issues that are the source of genuine citizen power in the region.
3. *Use COP20 as an opportunity to weaken the forces blocking strong climate action:* There is a widespread desire among climate campaigners to use COP20 to 'call out' and

challenge these powerful interests: by putting a spotlight on the steady co-optation of the UNFCCC process, by naming the corporations that are blocking genuine action and the strategies they use to do so, and by drawing attention to the gap between the words and actions of national governments.

As Sun Tzu wrote in 'The Art of War': "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory and tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat." Our goal for this process and this report has been to help the climate change movement develop its strategic vision around COP20 before it leaps, as movements tend to do, into the thicket of tactics and the activities to implement them. During the series of conversations, however, many passionate and creative ideas have already come forward about what could be done in these three areas of strategy. We have included them here for what they are, not filtered or finalized proposals but a set of

brainstorming ideas coming from many different people and places. We hope that this process and this report will generate a deeper conversation in the climate movement about which ideas for action seem most strategic, powerful, viable and worth doing. The three strategic 'tracks' outlined above do, of course, also have an intrinsic and complementary relationship with one another, and we hope that this document can help spur thinking about action that will mutually fortify all three of these broad strategic aims.



I) Use COP20 to Change the Narrative on the Climate Crisis and What Must be Done

“We need to reclaim the narrative and take it out of the hands of the elites.”

– Anjali Appadurai

“Language can be used to oppress and marginalize so we also need to reclaim language and how we talk to each other about this situation.”

– Ruth Nyamburah

“We have to declimatize the climate debate.”

– Carlos Bedoya

How we talk about the climate crisis matters – a lot. Climate activism operates in the arena of democracy and democracy is about engaging and winning over broad audiences of people who are not already tuned into the climate crisis in the way that activists are, including those just developing their first ideas and opinions. One measure of the climate movement’s effectiveness in its actions around COP20 is whether it can use the meeting as a strategic opportunity to change the current dialog around climate issues.

As many we interviewed noted, when we talk about climate change in terms of temperature targets, greenhouse gas emissions, and parts per million, it moves the debate into the atmosphere, to a place that seems unreachable and disempowering. When the debate over climate action is bound up in technical jargon it becomes all the harder for people to be engaged. The task is to move the discussion about climate change and what must be done to the place where genuine democracy is possible, that place in-between jargon people don’t understand and slogans that carry no substance. We found an eagerness among activists to reclaim the narrative and to articulate a clearer, more compelling story about how the world got here, what is at stake, and what can and should be done. Getting there will require action simultaneously at different levels: in internal spaces within the movement, in communications aimed at the general public, and in actions targeted directly at the COP and other formal processes. Those we spoke with articulated three key themes for this narrative: causes, impacts and solutions.

1. Talk About the Root Causes of Climate Change

Many we spoke with expressed a strong desire to move the climate conversation beyond its typically limited focus to the larger, more systemic global forces behind the crisis. They described climate change as the new face of a historic struggle, as part of a wider crisis brought about by a fundamentally unsustainable relationship with nature and a world being

“*The struggle has been separated from the territories by taking it into the atmosphere; we have to territorialize the struggle and humanize the struggle.*”

- Lucia Ortiz

“*I do know that people hear stories of bad things going on and they just feel helpless – ‘what can we do?’ – and even for those who have to tell these stories it’s very tiresome to be telling the same story. This time around we can highlight stories of resistance and victories.*”

- Nnimmo Bassey

“*We can’t talk about the impacts unless the main message comes from the affected communities.*”

- Juan Carlos Soriano

wrapped ever more tightly in a net of corporate power. Some described this as ‘de-climatizing’ the climate debate.

While different people emphasized different aspects of this wider analysis, ranging from political and economic power structures to systematic forms of oppression such as racism and patriarchy, a common thread called for connecting these issues with local concerns in a way people can truly relate to.

One way of achieving this that activists we spoke with in South America particularly emphasized is to highlight the direct relationship between climate change and the resistance movements in the region over mining, land rights, trade agreements, and megaprojects such as dams. They talked about the importance of making clear the parallels between local, national and international struggles by making visible specific struggles at community or territory level.

People we spoke with also emphasized the importance of making it clear that the development model that generates these conflicts originates in the Global North, and that its true beneficiaries continue to be concentrated in the Global North – particularly multinational corporations. The challenge for Lima and beyond will be to lift up these voices and at the same time create a coherent public narrative that has the simplicity and focus needed to break through to the global media and the wider public audience.

2. Talk About the Impacts of Climate Change in a Way People can Relate To

We heard often that the climate movement’s narrative must be a ‘human narrative’ that speaks about people, all across the world, and what the choices before us mean in real and understandable ways. Many interviewees emphasized the opportunity that the COP in Peru offers to draw attention to the human impacts of climate change. The Andean region is one of the most vulnerable on the planet because of its geography (its high altitude combined with proximity to the equator is one key factor in the rapid melting of its glaciers), combined with a legacy of poverty left behind by colonization. Activists in the region want to use COP20 to demonstrate that climate change is an issue of survival, drawing global attention to how climate change impacts people differently in different

“*Climate change is causing a food crisis. We need to shift the narrative from polar bears and storms to food.*”

– Alex Rafalowicz

“*Food sovereignty is a unifying demand that enables movements to come together and has great strength.*”

– Rosa Guillén

“*The defense of territories and the struggle against megaprojects should be the central message from Latin America.*”

– Cristian Guerrero

territories in the region – drought, threats to food, deadly flooding, glacier melt, and more. Food and water security are huge among these threats, thereby offering a strong unifying potential.

Another vision of how to shift the narrative on impacts is to shine a light on the ‘triple impacts’ that vulnerable communities often face. They sit on the frontlines of damage caused by the drivers of climate change (extractive industries and others); they suffer some of the most dire effects of climate change and are often forced to take on more disempowering debt for adaptation and disaster recovery; and they are the test labs for false climate solutions that are responsible for a rising wave of privatizations and displacements. Interviewees emphasized how this way of talking about impacts also reinforces the message that climate change is a systemic issue that cannot be dealt with in isolation from these other broader concerns. The challenge will be to amplify stories from communities to an international level and to put those stories at the forefront of the conversation in Lima.

COP20 also presents an important opportunity to talk about climate in another way that brings it home to where people can relate to it, not just in South America but globally – reframing climate change as the fundamental children’s issue

5 key themes that narratives around COP20 should focus on:

1. Food sovereignty as a unifying theme
2. Making grassroots resistance to megaprojects more visible
3. Linking this to territorial struggles
4. Alternative proposals from Latin America
5. Corporate power

of our time. Latin America is one of the youngest regions on the planet, in a culture known for the ways in which it puts family at the center. Meanwhile official discourses around climate change do very little to seriously acknowledge the multiple threats it poses to the wellbeing of today’s children,

“*Convergence among movements in favor of the true solutions must be built on the basis of what the movements defend and implement in the territories.*”

– Martín Drago

“*It would be very important to create a collective process to work on a document that systematizes the proposals from the grassroots, to accompany the declaration. This would strengthen the convergence process around an agenda of positive demands and also generate a serious and proactive image of the movement.*”

– Alberto Arroyo

“*In the People’s Summit we have to reach agreement on proposals for economic alternatives and alternative ways of living and show that they are feasible. We have to highlight the ancestral experiences and promote the idea that the engineers of the world should learn from the people.*”

– Rocio Valdeavellano

and those under 18 are themselves excluded from participating in formal spaces such as the COP. Putting children at the center of how we talk about climate, creating opportunities for young people to develop a critical understanding of climate change and helping empower them to have a clear voice in Lima is also an urgent strategy.

3. Talk About the Real Solutions to the Climate Crisis

There is an awareness among many of the activists we spoke with that we aren’t going to win real progress if the activism around COP20 just becomes one more collective expression of how bad things are and how evil the forces that oppose us. We found a strong desire to use COP20 as an opportunity to move towards a narrative that speaks about genuine solutions and the gap between those solutions and the ‘false solutions’ on the table in the COP process and more generally.

Activists we spoke with talked about the importance of demonstrating solutions that are local, accessible and driven by communities, using just transition and resilience as key concepts. These solutions address the impact of climate on food security (small scale ecological agriculture as opposed to agro-industry) and energy use (moving away from fossil fuels, tackling the big users, bringing in community-owned renewable energy). These solutions also speak more directly to the realities that people are living with on the ground, by putting forward alternative economic and governance models.

Latin America offers a wealth of proposals, including alternative development models and ancestral knowledge - especially in relation to agriculture and governance - that offer a source of inspiration for people across the globe. The COP in Lima presents a key opportunity to shine a spotlight on these solutions and share them with a global audience. Ensuring grassroots actors have the space and platforms to share these proposals needs to be part of the movement’s collective aim when it meets at COP20.

One goal is to use the public attention given the COP to share what genuine solutions to climate change mean by lifting up examples that are hopeful, inspiring and replicable. Another goal is to have a clear narrative that explains the gap be-

tween what the official COP negotiation process is proposing and what truly must be done, boosting the pressure for authentic rather than false action.



Brainstorming Ideas for Action: Changing the Narrative

1. Root Causes

- * Lift up personal testimonies of resistance struggles
- * Raise the profile of resistance struggles and victories in the region
- * Create a virtual bank of educative materials for changing the narrative
- * Expose and reinforce the connection between mining and climate
- * Highlight the links between climate and trade agreements such as the TPP
- * Connect failed neoliberal agenda in Latin America with austerity in the Global North

2. Impacts

- * Create storytelling spaces and resources for media on the triple impacts of climate change
- * Lift up women's voices as a challenge to patriarchy and unsustainability
- * Organize international solidarity exchanges between countries home to major polluters and affected communities
- * Develop talking points on children and climate change
- * Run educational activities and games for children in public parks

3. Real solutions

- * Systematize people's proposals through an international bottom-up process
- * Showcase solutions and share ancestral knowledge with a "caravana de experiencias"
- * Link to and amplify demands at parallel initiatives such as the 2014 International Year of Family Farming and the Rights of Mother Earth and Ethics Tribunal.
- * Call days of action based on key themes – inside, outside and parallel to the COP
- * Advocate for local, traditional and organic food through "comedores populares" (community restaurants)

II) Use COP20 to Strengthen the Climate Change Movement

“COP20 must be the COP of the South.”

– Juan Pedro Chang

“The COP in Lima is an opportunity to galvanize the Southern movements and talk to Southern peoples.”

– Lidy Nacpil

“Real people’s issues are not the ones that are prioritized for funding. The issues that become prioritized are the issues that those international NGOs identified as priority issues.”

– Makoma Lekalakala

A second objective that people described is to use the Lima meeting as an opportunity to strengthen the climate movement, particularly in the Global South. The activists we interviewed emphasized that to achieve this aim, the key will be to avoid getting sucked into the detail of the COP process itself. Instead the real task will be to effectively take advantage of the meeting as a magnet for attention and as a gathering of climate activists and social movements in one place. Lima represents an important opportunity to link the climate movements in the Global South with other social struggles and to raise their voices in the global arena, both towards COP21 in Paris and beyond that official process.

People we interviewed suggested three basic approaches for doing this:

1. Make Lima the COP of the Southern Movements

The New York and Paris meetings, because of their location alone, are likely to put the demands and actions of activists from the U.S. and Europe in the center. COP20 should be the moment in which activists in the Global South establish a more central position in the climate movement, building the bases to maintain this position in the future and using their own voice to do so. People living in the Global South are not only on the frontlines of climate change (its causes, effects and false solutions) but also have genuine and just solutions to offer to the multiple crises we are currently facing as a global community.

Allowing the alternative visions of human development and progress coming out of the South to be articulated to a global audience, and enabling the moral voices of these regions to be heard, would contribute distinct and missing perspectives to the debate and build the credibility of the global climate movement.

However, several Southern activists we interviewed warned about a habitual domination by Northern activists at the international organizing spaces that accompany COPs and

“*There’s a long history of powerful resistance in Latin America and a very active spirit here. The problem is nowadays people tend to look out for their own compartmentalized struggles. We need to unchain ourselves from an imposed colonialist paradigm of separation and individualism. This type of connection and collaboration will transform the movement.*”

– Lisa Abregu

“*It is necessary to make the link with territorial struggles and recognize that the traditional movements have been struggling for ages to defend their territories from the capitalist model which also results in climate change.*”

– Lucia Ortiz

other global meetings. Alongside stories of genuine South/North solidarity, we heard observations about meetings where Southern activists have had their voices suppressed, where proposals don’t relate to their reality, and where there is a lack of understanding that many from the Global South come with a radically different view of the world that doesn’t fit neatly into Northern boxes. These observations were combined with warnings that scarce financing and the influence it brings continues to flow to Northern organizations, not Southern, and that when funding does reach Southern organizations, it often imposes unhelpful cultures of division within movements.

The COP in Lima is an important opportunity for Southern groups to assume leadership and set the agenda, and for Northern groups to develop a deeper level of solidarity with Southern activists. Southern groups particularly called for much greater support in ensuring that funding goes to initiatives that will help to unite the movement, especially at the grassroots level.

2. Build Connections with the True Activist Strength in the Region: the Grassroots

The true engines of social change in the Global South, and in Latin America in particular, lie in the rich tradition of grassroots resistance and social movements. These struggles are not necessarily articulated in terms of climate change or the environment, but more often in terms of human rights. The power of these movements arises from their struggles for survival and their historic roots. The challenge and the opportunity for the activist community at COP20 is to respect these movements and to make the connections between these wider demands and climate issues. This can be done by emphasizing the common qualities between struggles at all levels: from local to national and international, as well as by focusing on issues close to people’s hearts such as territorial rights, food sovereignty, indigenous rights, and labor rights. Doing so offers a chance to build a broader and more powerful movement that puts a call for deep structural change at the heart of its response to climate change.

Building unity and making these linkages is not an easy task, given the diversity of political positions and cultures amongst

“*The negotiations don’t have an earth cable, they don’t consider the emergency and they don’t connect to real policies. For their part, the local struggles seem to be in compartmentalized spaces that don’t connect to this big issue that affects absolutely everything. One of the challenges is to connect the local struggles and demands with activism on climate change.*”

– Elizabeth Peredo Beltran

“*The added value of People’s Summits are the strategy spaces.*”

– Carlos Bedoya

“*Many of the Northern NGOs and even the bigger Southern ones are focusing too heavily on ‘patch-up work’ within the UNFCCC rather than doing the more transformative work we need to create real change. It’s a tendency that plays well into the agenda of major polluters and the global governments.*”

– Soumya Dutta

the different movements of the global South: for example indigenous and campesino as well as workers’ unions and other organizers. Activists told us that work toward this needs to happen not only in Lima during the COP, but well before the summit starts. This means reaching out to diverse groups through a two-way process, on the one hand ensuring that grassroots voices are present and heard in spaces around the COP, and, on the other, facilitating a flow of information back to grassroots communities. To build these connections in Lima, the People’s Summit should create spaces for debating the issues, identifying core values and convergence points (which can be used to generate powerful narratives), and developing complementary agendas for action.

3. Create Spaces Specifically for Movement-building and Strategy Beyond the COP

COP meetings bring together vast numbers of activists from diverse movements and countries, creating unique conditions for face-to-face strategy development. Rather than investing all our energy and time in planning actions directed at the COP itself, it would be much wiser to use this opportunity to discuss wider strategy in the movement.

Interviewees proposed that the People’s Summit should have a central focus on strategy for building the movement both towards COP21 in Paris and more widely, as well as creating opportunities for more specific strategy conversations going forward. One key theme here is to learn from each other, creating spaces where movements from both South and North can share the lessons learned from diverse struggles around privatizations, territorial rights, environmental protection, and more. Another is to discuss and debate strategies around climate issues specifically – on what moves the public, what mobilizes new allies, what thwarts the efforts of corporate adversaries, what presses governments to take action, and other challenges. A third opportunity is to have the chance to discuss more structural economic and social issues, from development models to corporate power, and how people are addressing those. The COP process, in Lima and beyond, offers important opportunities to share strategies, to connect different struggles, and to strengthen South-North solidarity.

Doing this will require adequate, accessible places where these conversations can happen (including across language barriers), agendas that are designed for genuine participation and collaboration, and a shift in focus towards concrete and practical strategies for action, avoiding the tendency for discussion that evaporates

into the air once the COP is over. Several interviewees also emphasized the importance of leaving aside institutional egos in these conversations, moving towards a more collective vision based on core values.



Brainstorming Ideas for Action: Strengthening the Movement

1. Southern movements

- * Make a call to action from Peruvian movements to the Global South
- * Organize indigenous and social movement marches to the COP
- * Organize hundreds of parallel events across the Global South
- * Develop a strong media strategy for social movement voices
- * Train social movement media articulators
- * Produce a series of Southern climate activist profiles
- * Ensure spaces are open, welcoming and culturally sensitive

2. Grassroots

- * Involve the Unions, "There are no jobs on a dead planet."
- * Create a global movement of key impacted groups such as fishermen or farmers
- * Map resistance struggles
- * Bring videos and testimonies from grassroots communities to the COP
- * Broadcast on local radio to make information accessible to the grassroots
- * Organize gatherings in resistance sites before and during the COP

3. Movement building and strategy at the COP

- * Hold teach-ins to share experiences of different resistance struggles
- * Convene a pre-COP Action Camp with a focus on strategy and training
- * Organize daily climate justice assemblies
- * Set up an autonomous alternative COP space
- * Create space to talk about strategy for COP21 in Paris
- * Build a coalition to delegitimize the role of fossil fuel industries toward Paris

III) Use COP20 to Weaken the Forces Blocking Strong Climate Action

“ Truth we continue to speak to power. So we use all the instruments, all the channels available to speak truth to power.”

– Godwin Ojo

“ It is worth going to the COP to contest the space. We need to go in with an offensive strategy and communicate the message that the negotiations are focusing on the wrong issues - the real solutions are about redesigning the economy.”

– Nathan Thanki

The third key strategy that emerged from our interviews involves taking better aim at the political and economic forces working to undermine strong action on the climate crisis - both within the COP process and more generally. A key step in this direction is to expose those forces and the strategies they are using. The UNFCCC has become increasingly a forum for those with privilege and power, throwing up hurdle after hurdle to keep grassroots voices excluded. All this helps produce negotiations tilted steeply toward inaction and is the reason why so many in the climate movement now consider the COP process to be corrupted beyond repair. To address these issues the people we spoke to identified three main tasks, for Lima and beyond:

1. Directly Call Out the Co-optation of the UNFCCC Process and the False Solutions on the Table

Despite the deep and very legitimate disappointment in the UNFCCC process, walking away completely risks giving free reign to powerful governments and corporations with no intention of seeking strong action. Interviewees called on the wider climate justice movement to call out the problems that have been corrupting the UNFCCC process, putting a light on the reasons why there is so little progress, and on the corporate and other actors that contribute to that deadlock. Building on the momentum of the COP19 walk-out, COP20 offers a chance to amplify those messages to a wider public, highlighting specifically and with evidence the ways in which the process assures inaction on climate and attention to the demands of powerful corporate interests.

As the climate movement does this, many activists we spoke to talked of the importance of ‘contesting the space’ at the COP, ensuring that the People’s spaces are not isolated and making movement building activities highly visible and confrontational. This means having an effective media strategy and using messaging that relates directly to the issues on the table inside the COP, highlighting the contrast between the

“*We have to dismantle the green economy, showing its true face and linking it to the daily lives of our peoples: water, forests, territory and the privatization of these natural goods.*”

– Carolina Amaya

“*The re-emergence of the anti-free trade movement in the global North is getting us to talk about fundamental issues like democracy, accountability, human and environmental rights. These are the same issues that underlie a just solution to climate change, and campaigners and activists on both issues need to make that link as clear as possible.*”

– Pascoe Sabido

“*It’s important to continue denouncing corporate control, but also showing that it is capture of the states, and linking it to the struggles at territory level.*”

– Lyda Fernanda

official policy debates and the Peoples’ proposals and solutions.

Interviewees told us that it is essential that the climate movement make a clear and understandable case about how the corporate-driven, market-based false solutions - on carbon reduction, on forest protection, and other issues – not only fail to address the structural issues at stake but also deepen those problems by encouraging the commodification of nature and spurring a new wave of human rights and environmental abuses. We were told that it is important to show up the direct link between false solutions and corporate power (lobbying for these approaches), privatization (appropriation of the commons) and debt (due to loans for projects), clearly demonstrating how these false solutions are just a new face of rejected neoliberalism.

In Latin America, these are not theoretical future threats but rather current realities, with communities from Central America to the Andes being displaced from their lands or forced into conflicts as a result of CDM (‘clean development’) and REDD (‘forest protection’) projects. Given the likely focus of COP20 on forests and the Amazon, Lima is an important opportunity to put a clear spotlight on these false solutions by making the Latin American experiences visible and exposing the truths that they reveal to a far wider public audience, using narratives that people can relate to.

2. Expose the Role of the Corporations

One issue around which there is widespread agreement amongst those interviewed is that there exists a powerful and methodical effort by a sector of global corporations working to undermine serious action on the climate crisis. Interviewees talked about the triple involvement of corporations around climate change: first, they are profiting from activities that cause climate change; second, they are lobbying at national and international level to ensure policies that benefit their interests; and third, they are profiting from the false solutions to climate change.

Activists we interviewed said the movement needs a more solid understanding of how corporations are flexing their muscles on climate, not just at the COP but at a national and

“If we show the presence of the corporate representatives in the official delegations we will succeed in putting the spotlight on the corporate capture of the UNFCCC and of the governments at the same time.”

– José Elosegui

“The fight for the climate is about us as people. It’s about people versus a small but very powerful elite - manifesting through the fossil fuel industry and the massive political influence they have.”

– Marco Cadena

“It is now, more than ever, necessary to move forward in the climate justice debate, to recognize that it is much more complicated than the simplification of the ‘fight between developed countries vs. developing countries’ and to start to recognize that the struggle against the capitalist system has to happen even in developing countries.”

– Martín Vilela

local level as well, to develop a clearer strategy about how to combat those corporate efforts. One way to do that is to draw real attention to the ways that corporations have infiltrated government delegations to COP and pretend to speak for ‘national interests’ when they are in fact speaking on behalf of corporate interest. Another is to put a spotlight on a handful of emblematic corporations who are most engaged in blocking climate action. The COP in Lima offers a special opportunity to show how the same corporations involved in the COP are also responsible for environmental decimation and social damage in Peru and the region. Many interviewees showed great interest in deepening this work of unmasking the corporate players and their strategies.

3. Call Out the Gaps Between the Words and Actions of National Governments

Several people we spoke with also emphasized the need to call out national governments, both North and South, for the wide gaps between their pro-environment public declarations and the reality behind the policies they are implementing at home. While affluent countries of the Global North are still the most dominant drivers of climate change, it is also clear that many governments in the South likewise talk one way in their pronouncements but walk another in their actions. In the Global North, this is typified by rhetoric in favor of firm action on climate, while continuing to expand dependence on fossil fuels. In the Global South, this is symbolized by elegant rhetoric about protecting Mother Earth, betrayed by ambitious domestic agendas of mineral and fossil fuel extraction, and other megaprojects that decimate local environments and indigenous communities, along with repression against those who challenge those policies.

One key strategy proposed by interviewees is to use Peru’s involvement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a hook to highlight the incompatibility of governments’ rhetoric in the COP process with their simultaneous pushing of a ‘Free Trade’ agenda. Another suggestion is to highlight specific government projects that cause significant social and environmental damage. Interviewees in Peru also emphasized the potential to use the COP in Lima to put pressure on the Peruvian government to improve its environmental record and push for a national climate law.

While it is important to recognize that the underlying development model behind these realities originated in the Global North, a number of interviewees are calling for the issue to be stat-

ed less and less in terms of “the North versus the South”, and instead more about the people at large versus small but powerful economic interests.



Brainstorming Ideas for Action: Weakening the Forces Blocking Strong Action

1. Call out UNFCCC & false solutions

- * Hold assemblies and other actions in public spaces
- * Organize People’s spaces in an accessible location, near the COP if possible
- * Spotlight the contrast between the People’s narrative and the official narrative
- * Target high profile individuals e.g. Christiana Figueres and Ban Ki Moon
- * Lift up testimonies from communities on the frontlines of false solutions
- * Connect the impacts of false solutions back to food and land rights
- * Call on the UNFCCC to dismantle rules that alienate and exclude youth and grassroots

2. Role of the corporations

- * Expand on and deepen the exposure of corporations involved in COP
- * Map power dynamics between corporations and both powerful and small governments
- * Expose and delegitimize delegates pushing the corporate agenda within COP
- * Name and shame emblematic corporations
- * Reveal the inconsistency between what corporations say at the COP and their practices on the ground in Peru
- * Boycott and divest from corporations infiltrating the COP
- * Organize photography exhibit of impacts of the corporations

3. Call out national governments

- * Show up inconsistency between government positions on trade and climate
- * Gather testimonies on government-led projects driving environmental destruction
- * Organize a letter campaign to demand transparency from governments
- * Develop a response to the criminalization of protest
- * Build a regional coalition of resistance to mega hydroelectric projects
- * Connect a global movement of groups resisting fracking

Conclusion

The climate change movement is made up of wildly diverse people and organizations coming from all manner of communities worldwide. It has no governing structure. It has no means of collective decision-making that binds people together on a common path. Each element of that movement is free to pursue the goals, strategies and tactics it wishes. That diversity gives the movement strength, but it is also useful to seek common paths that join people together with a common focus. Sound strategy in these circumstances means a pursuit of climate activism that is both effective and that possesses a certain natural magnetic power that draws people toward it.

Our goal through these interviews has been to search for such a strategic path, possessed of both effectiveness and magnetism, by talking to people across the movement. The three broad strategy areas defined above will not be new or surprising to anyone who works on these issues, but hopefully having them articulated here, with the added detail and perspective coming from this range of voices, is useful as a way of focusing and refining our collective ambitions in the coming months. These three strategic aims – of seeking a new narrative, of strengthening the climate movement, and of weakening those obstructing real change – are also intimately and intrinsically connected. The successful narrative will be the one that draws much larger numbers of people to join the movement for climate action, and by the same stroke builds pressure to take power away from those with vested interests in the status quo and transfer it to those who have real solutions to offer.

What needs to happen next is a discussion, a strategic one, in which many more climate

activists worldwide begin to look together at the specific opportunities for building international pressure and action. How can we, as a movement, make full use of the trilogy of global summits in the next eighteen months? How can we come out of this process stronger as a movement and with more forceful winds at our backs, pushing to do what is needed?

There are many places where this discussion can happen and will – in local gatherings, in planning meetings for New York, Lima and Paris, and via social media and other online tools. The Democracy Center will continue seeking to support that discussion among activists, and we hope people will continue to be in contact with us to join in that effort. We look forward to hearing people's reactions to this report and how to advance the objectives outlined here.

Climate change has an unprecedented urgency in terms of social struggles. We cannot afford to see another decade, or even another year go by, in which our actions do not take us forward as far as possible. It is urgent that the movement for climate action not only be passionate, but also smart and strategic, with a clear sense of its objectives and a clear-eyed analysis of what it will actually take to win them. We are in the middle of a very opportune moment right now to rejoin our international efforts and become a much more effective movement. The Democracy Center looks forward to continuing the conversation with climate activists and others in the coming months on how to achieve this.

Please write to us with suggestions and comments at: nicky@democracyctr.org

COP20 Strategy Project Interviewees List

Latin America

Lisa Abregu – [Saphichay](#)

Carolina Amaya – [Campaña Mesoamericana de Justicia Climática](#)

Alberto Arroyo – [Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio](#)

Carlos Bedoya – [Latindadd](#)

Frank Boeren and Alejandra Alayza – [Oxfam Peru](#)

Benito Calixto – Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas

Carmen Capriles – [Reacción Climática](#) and Women's Major Group

Juan Pedro Chang – [Cumbre de los Pueblos](#)

Martín Drago – [Amigos de la Tierra Internacional](#)

José Elosegui – [Radio Mundial Real](#)

Cristian Guerrero – [Caravana Climática](#)

Rosa Guillén – [Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres](#)

Lucia Ortiz - [Amigos da Terra Brasil](#)

Elizabeth Peredo Beltran – Bolivian author and social activist

Osver Polo – [Construyendo Puentes](#)

Catty Quispe – MOCICC, [TierrActiva Peru](#)

Ana Romero – [RedGE](#)

Juan Carlos Soriano– [350.org](#)

Rocio Valdeavellano –[MOCICC](#), [Grupo Peru COP20](#)

Martín Vilela – [Plataforma Boliviana Frente al Cambio Climático](#)

Antonio Zambrano - MOCICC, Grupo Peru COP20

North America

Anjali Appadurai – [Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice](#)

Tom Goldtooth – [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)

Andrew Schenkel – [The Tree](#)

Sean Sweeney – [Global Labor Institute](#)

Europe

Marco Cadena – [Push Europe](#)

Dan Collyns – [The Guardian](#) / independent journalist

Lyda Fernanda – [Transnational Institute](#)

Tom Kucharz – [Ecologistas en Acción](#)

Sophia McNab – [UK Youth Climate Coalition](#)

Pascoe Sabido – [Corporate Europe Observatory](#)

Nathan Thanki – [Earth in Brackets](#)

Africa and Middle East

Hoda Baraka - [350.org](#)

Nnimmo Bassey – [OilWatch](#) / [Health of Mother Earth Foundation Nigeria](#)

Wael Hmaidan – [CAN International](#)

Makoma Lekalakala and Dominique Doyle – [Earthlife South Africa](#)

Ruth Nyambura – [African Biodiversity Network](#)

Godwin Ojo – Environmental Rights Action ([Friends of the Earth Nigeria](#))

Bobby Peek – [groundWork](#)

Asia and Pacific

Gerry Arrances – [Philippine Movement for Climate Justice](#)

Liangyi Chang – [Taiwan Youth Climate Coalition](#)

Soumya Dutta – [Beyond Copenhagen Collective India](#)

Lidy Nacpil – [Jubilee South](#), Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice

Alex Rafalowicz – Equity & Ambition Group, [Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice](#)

Pablo Solon – [Focus on the Global South](#)

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