

ASSIGNMENT 2:

Beyond the Technical Project: Re-figurative Politics and Structural Pacifism as a Peaceful Response to Manufactured Scarcity

Module: Positive Peace: Theory and Practice (HPPC7001)

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1. Introduction

When considering Global Peace, there is a “stark and constraining reality” faced by the marginalised (Lawler, 1989.p.29). On a global level, the vast scale of ideological, cultural, and political differences complicates any attempt at universal thinking (Lawler, 1989). This work examines the tension between the analytical scientist who maps objective facts through cold metric thinking when it conflicts with the ethical desire to do something when normative values identify the presence of preventable injustice in our social systems.

Johan Galtung, the principal theorist of Peace Research, attempts to resolve this problem of intent by moving his focus away from theories of power and exclusion; specifically, he utilises theories of social arrangements that physically and psychologically disempower vulnerable communities regardless of the authoritative power of political ideology. Therefore, instead of building a Peace Theory from a simple study of the end of war, Galtung defines ‘Peace’ as the opposite of violence. He defines violence as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual’ (Galtung 1969, p.168).

In the second section headed ‘Normative verses Analytical’, this essay examines how Galtung successfully addresses “universal thinking” (Lawler, 1988); by grounding his theory not in shifting political ideologies but instead points to a measured gap between what a human being ‘could’ be and what the system ‘allows’ them to be (Galtung, 1969, p. 168). Lawler (1988) argues that Galtung’s greatest strength, and his greatest weakness, is his attempt to present normative (value-

based) goals as if they were analytical (scientific) facts. Deconstruction of these concepts shows how the state moves and turns away from human suffering and instead turns towards a solvable 'technical' problem (Lawler, 1988, p. 29). This specifically addresses the perpetual tension between cold scientific analysis and normative values (Lawler, 1988, p. 40). Using Galtung's (1969, 1990) foundational Structural Violence Theory and later refinements by Farmer (2004), among others, this essay theoretically interrogates tensions that are present in the social sciences and therefore inherited by Peace Studies.

Section three unpicks 'Manufactured Scarcity' as social arrangements that systematically facilitate violence, and as manifest in the case study which proposedly makes violence visible, at least within the UK Voluntary Sector. Lived experiences, as situated in the Volunteer Sector are captured and exposed from this longitudinal case study.

The use of a case study, like Farmer's (2004, p.308) writing on his studies in Haiti, moves the theoretical explanations beyond being abstract theory. Inspired by Farmer, the case study provides observational analysis of how structural harm can operate under the guise of state policy (Farmer, 2004, p.307). In this way, for the purposes of this essay, and considering 'the gap' in the same way as Galtung (1969, p.168), the UK Voluntary Sector becomes a microcosm for applying Peace Studies. The UK Voluntary Sector provides a bounded environment, and the case study provides primary evidence using longitudinal observations and feedback gathered from a training project which the author delivered.

The Community Event Network project was a bespoke, participatory training programme which ran from around 2011 to 2013, and during the height of the initial post-2008 austerity cuts. In 2008 a multidimensional global financial crisis promoted the implementation of "socially unpopular cuts" in the UK (Rak, 2018.p.1). This period parallels plans to cut disability benefits, among other welfare provisions, by the current government. This year, *The Guardian* editorial explicitly argues these cuts are "austerity rebranded as reform"; while ministers claim these measures, totalling roughly six billion pounds, are to help people back to work. This was also the aim of the funding for the project that is case studied making this work timely and relevant.

From an "analytical verses normative" perspective, current welfare cuts represent a re-manifestation of the 'technical' project (Lawler, 1989. p.29) which prioritises fiscal metrics over social outcomes. Lawler (1989, p.31) traces the roots of the 'technical' project (Lawler, 1989, p. 29) back to Saint-Simon, who viewed positivist inquiry as the primary engine for the 'improvement of civilisation'. Writing 140 years before Galtung, Saint-Simon foreshadowed the peace researcher's role: a forensic hunt for the 'optimal social order' and a scientific roadmap to a realised Utopia. In

this vision, in contrast to the case studied in this essay, Saint-Simon's agents of change were 'savants', an elite class of great minds armed with the doctrine of 'industrialism'. It is interesting that this 'religion of Newton' was a technocratic dream of a society guided by a master science of social organisation. Therefore, Lawler says social sciences synthesise all knowledge intended to manufacture an enlightened 'industrial' state, so where does this leave the act of volunteering?

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It is relevant to revisit this case regarding the Voluntary Sector as current welfare cuts are described as a "crude fiscal exercise" similar to the 2010s (Guardian Editorial, 12 March 2025). Austerity can therefore be viewed as "deliberate deflation of domestic wages and prices through cuts to public spending" (Guardian Editorial, 12 March 2025) rather than helping the people being most affected by the crisis, these moves are said to be more intended to restore "business confidence" (Rak, 2018: 21).

Austerity, seen in this way, effectively functions as the first gear in a machine of manufactured scarcity; it is a structural choice that is unpicked in the third section to reveal the deliberate exclusionary practices that constitute 'visible violence' in the Galtungian sense. Observing this conflict then enables a re-envisioning of the potential for opportunity, identity, and recognition inherent within the voluntary sector, which is viewed here as a bounded community of vulnerable people. Individual transition of members of that community, such as those who achieved qualified social worker status, is however inseparable from the collective effort within the Voluntary Sector to dismantle the institutional violence of austerity.

The local landscape for the purpose of this study is defined by a "shared experience" of deprivation (Rak, 2018) by volunteers, whose free labour was incongruously situated within a jarring geographical paradox. Based in Boscombe, Bournemouth, the volunteers were from an area of extreme national deprivation yet existed literally 'in the shadow' of Sandbanks, home to some of the world's most expensive coastal real estate. This proximity of concentrated advantage and community events kept safe by those experiencing acute disadvantage serves as an additional visual indictment of the state's 'Technical Project' (Lawler, 1989. p.29).

The training and work experience across the conurbation of Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch additionally introduced new ethics and opportunities for the volunteers; they visited new places, made new friends and built personal and professional relationships. The work supported taking a holistic view, this also follows peace building as championed by Gill and Thompson. By fostering the theory of Gill and Thompson's, these 'mutually entangled' domains of the personal and the political (2017, Chapter 10) are visible through the work of the project which was more than a 'technical'

intervention (Lawler, 1989, p. 29). Through peace studies the case can be viewed as a proactive site of Structural Pacifism (Farmer, 2004).

Following Peace theory, the project utilised consultation and participation to address 'internal psychological damage'(Gill and Thompson, 2017 p.192). This Personal/Spiritual dimension of non-peacefulness was experienced by the volunteers, who despite their marginalised status reclaimed resource in the form of social capital. This acted in moving the peacebuilding of the project beyond the absence of conflict to the active dismantling of the social arrangements as an act of Structural Pacifism. Unlike traditional pacifism, which often focuses on individual non-violence, structural pacifism in this case is a 'practised' ethical refusal to accept state-manufactured scarcity as inevitable. The project identified the 'potential' within a community, and redistributed institutional and relational 'abundance' to peacefully close the gap between human possibility and the actual structural reality of deprivation.

Finally, the essay proposes how 'Structural Pacifism' (Farmer, 2004) and Muggeridge's (2025, Appendix/p.121)) concept of 'Re-figurative Politics' (are used in reclaiming the voluntary sector as a site of abundant social capital. In this context, social capital is defined as the collective 'wealth' of relationships, trust, and reciprocity that enables a community to function and repair itself (Muggeridge, 2025; Tsuruda, 2020).

To summarise, this essay considers the analytical and normative tensions in Peace Studies. Then, using the voluntary sector as a bounded environment so that the "gears" of structural harm might be observed in motion, this work moves the argument away from what 'could be' to what 'has been'.

The case study of the Community Event Network training project provides data as primary evidence to identify preventable harm and goes some way to measure the impact, scale and cost of the training which was disproportionately at the expenses of the volunteers compared with the effort put in by the state. This case study shows the lived experience of people existing in 'Galtung's Gap' (1969) being harmed by the Structural Violence that is the difference between human potential and actual realities.

Ultimately, this essay moves beyond a diagnosis of harm to propose a practised ethical cure. By applying Gill and Thompson's (2017) framework of 'mutually entangled' domains, the essay demonstrates how cultivating relational ethics and social bonds directly repairs 'internal psychological damage' (p.192). Specifically in this case, the spiritual and status-based anxiety was also inflicted on and simultaneously responded to by those marginalised by structural position. Individual transitions, such as participants achieving professional status, were previously framed as

inseparable from the broader society. Now, instead, these successes frame the actual dismantling of the institutional enforced violence of austerity.

The Community Event Network project, presented as an act of Structural Pacifism (Farmer, 2004) offers an actualisation of the theoretical with a deliberate act of redistribution of social capital that rejects state-manufactured scarcity in favor of a re-figurative abundance. By redefining social capital as the collective wealth of trust and reciprocity (Muggeridge, 2025. p.121; Tsuruda, 2020), this work argues that reclaiming the voluntary sector through Re-figurative Politics is the essential mechanism for closing the 'Galtungian Gap' between a community's stunted reality and its actualised human potential.

2. Normative Verses Analytical

Peace Studies is a 'super-multi-disciplinary design kit'; it is as much a forensic tool for observation and provides principles to follow in the design of intervention, as much as it is a theoretical field of study. Johan Galtung, the forefather of the discipline, provided the 'birth certificate' for the field in his foundational 1969 paper, giving rise to a massive and influential body of work. Galtung is recognised as the 'principal architect' of the peace project (Lawler, 1989, p. 8). By building upon the modernity of the social sciences, Galtung wove together threads from multiple disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and political science - all of which also suggested a proposal for the best way forward or how to best build Peace; by balancing the systematic aspects of scientific analytical approach with a foundational grounding of normative values.

Therefore, logic follows that having been 'born' out of the social sciences, Peace Studies would inherit the tensions within social science. This includes the friction between quantitative verses qualitative in analysis of data, ontological verses epistemological debates regarding the nature of reality and knowledge, and the issue of positionality as considered in the following, among others.

Because the field of Peace is built upon scholarship of those that came before, Peace Studies opportunities and challenges with the benefit of time, means the social sciences weaknesses can (and should) be continually reviewed and improved over time. Here is the potential of using the field of Peace Studies as a fertile testing ground. The theoretical basis of the unique paradox of Normative verses the analytical lies in the navigating of these inherited tensions. The case study below helps with the identification of the factors we see when this 'perpetual friction' is deconstructed, using both 'cold' scientific analysis and the necessary, ethical normative aspirations in an approach towards a better, more peaceful future.

Galtung-ised Peace Research is said by the man himself, to not be seen as a static academic subject, but as a "clinical" discipline, similar to medicine, that must move from diagnosis to prognosis *and finally*, to therapy as in practice (Galtung, 1996, p. 9). In this metaphor, Peace Studies must be normative, meaning living humanly as a person having a goal, like "health", rather than just a human 'being' an analyst, by just describing a disease without thinking at all about trying to cure it. Then referencing the epistemology and ontology challenges of the social scientists' past, traditionally the objection is seemingly overcome by objectivity; the "Scientist" is seen striving for Value-Neutrality. This is what Galtung described as observing a crime without intervening (1969, 1996). He argued that this "objectivity" is a form of Cultural Violence because it ignores human suffering.

On reading Lawler (1989), his reviewing Galtung's work does not disagree that Peace Studies is a multidisciplinary kit, but he warns that having and seeing the components of the kit is *dangerous* if future study does not acknowledge the harm by this emergent field with the 'social' and 'science' contradictions. Lawler says the progress of peace, by its multi-disciplinary nature in social science, requires a 'question of values'. Lawler goes as far as to accuse Galtung of hiding the truth behind a mask built by the labels written-out by 'the sciences' (1989, p. 13). Specifically, and a term key to this essay is the label of 'structural violence'; Lawler argues this phrasing itself implies the enactment of a moral judgement weaponised by words.

This additionally follows the contemporary progressive resolution of diversity and balance which might have previously been simplified as the 'numbers versus words' challenge / opportunity (Bryman, 2021, p. 565). The merits of analysis type, debated at length through the application and progression of the fields of social sciences present the same potential weakness of contextual values and cultural context that represent a foundational tension. It becomes a potential opportunity in the study of Peace. Of course, to best benefit from both quantitative and qualitative research analysis it is considered best to practise to blend the application of both (Bryman, 2021, p. 565). To demonstrate, the tension between analytical and normative peace studies can be exemplified in the health sciences. For example, consider Oliver's (1990) relatively more recent Social Model of Disability. This theory distinguishes between impairment, a physical or psychological condition, and disability, the barriers placed by a society that fails to accommodate that condition. In 1989 Lawler argued that when Galtung acts like a "Doctor," he is assuming he has the authority to define what a

"healthy" society looks like. Lawler asks (p.31): Who gave the Peace Researcher the license to prescribe the cure?

Galtung anticipates the specific criticism that he is playing 'God' or acting as an over-authoritative 'Doctor' ; consequently, he moves away from claiming external authority, directing focus instead toward 'Universal' human needs. The scientist's explanation further attempts to secure objectivity through neutrality. Yet, this purported value-neutrality is increasingly untenable given that the body of work now incorporates theories, such as the Social Model of Disability and other theories of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a framework used to understand how various social and political identities, such as race, gender, class, and disability, interact to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression. Rather than viewing discrimination through a 'single-axis' lens, intersectionality examines how these multiple identities combine in ways that cannot be separated or simply added together to precipitate disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1989). This 'matrix of domination' (Collins, 1990) reveals that the state's cold metrics often mask the interlocking systems of harm faced by marginalised cohorts; this also echoes the sentiment of "entangled domains" by Gill and Thompson discussed later. Therefore, the inclusion of 'positionality' within research helps address issues of bias, whether wilful or not, by acknowledging how different scientists from the same discipline may interpret the same data through different forensic lenses.

The concept of Positionality proves that there is no such thing as a 'Value-Neutral' scientist in Peace Studies. This logic is anchored by **Galtung (1990)**, who effectively closes the violence triangle by arguing that staying purely analytical, observing a system without intervening, is not a neutral act, but an act of **Cultural Violence**. To look 'coldly' at the metrics of deprivation while ignoring the human cost is to choose a position that legitimises the status quo. The theoretical aspects of Galtung's Structural Violence in Peace Studies balance off the Social Sciences aspects of both normative and analytical, and acknowledge positionality on the sides of his violence triangle. Positionality, literally pointing out where that particular researcher stands is important because whether they are acting as the "Analytical Scientist" or applying a "Normative Lens" when they acknowledge their view it helps scholars determine how to interpret what the researcher sees. This importance of Positionality, placed within the Analytical verses Normative debate moves the concept of Peace 'as studied' away from being seen as an abstract philosophical problem. In this way Direct Violence is born by the practical conflict in how humans value human effort. This is conceptualised by Tsuruda (2020) who says that volunteering also has two sides to consider, also expanded on in the following section.

From an analytical perspective, the state views the volunteer exchange through an 'economic face,' reducing human effort to a technical resource or a fiscal offset, a perspective that aligns with Lawler's 'Technical Project' (1989, p. 29). Conversely, a normative approach identifies the 'symbolic face' of the work, defined by Tsuruda as 'moral-cultural production.' This perspective recognises that volunteering generates intrinsic value and 'communitas' that cannot be captured by positivist metrics. This conflict, at the forensic heart of this paper, reveals how the state harvested the economic and emotional labour of Volunteers whilst systematically devaluing the moral-cultural wealth they produced. This position is very much agreed with by Farmer (2004). Farmers' depiction of Structural Violence is evidence from his case studies in Haiti. In his studies, he found that Violence is exerted systematically and indirectly by a social order that supports politicalised economies. He identifies that inequality constricts human agency, in other words life is less free for certain people. This makes contemporary critical studies crucial, 'inclusion' is more than being open to everyone, it means putting extra effort into considering voices not otherwise heard. Farmer (2004) puts it better,

"if our epistemic sense of relevance filters something out, is that appropriate, or is it rather an occasion for critiquing our filters?"

Farmer (2004) suggests that the only way to overcome these tensions is to 'out' them; researchers, as well as the research itself, benefit from reflecting on positionality and asking: what is being said, why is it being said, and whose voices are missing? The following section applies Farmer's methodology to a project run by the author who frames a response to Structural Violence as a structural intervention that is designed to dismantle the arrangements that cause suffering, this is the normative benefit of using the reflective case study. Farmer (2004) used case studies and documented how a dam that was built with funding from the United States "lit up" the wealthy but flooded the poor. This land in Cange was previously fertile and the farmers who were previously self-sufficient became refugees. Their hunger and sickness weren't due to 'bad luck,' but to a deliberate social arrangement that prioritised and advantaged the needs of the wealthy over the vulnerable.

3. Manufactured Scarcity

Shining a light on this type of structural injustice is achieved through the case study of the Community Event Network (CEN) volunteer training project. The case study follows the analytical aspects of Farmer's theory, viewing violence as exerted systematically and indirectly by a social order characterised by steep grades of inequality. This section unpicks 'Manufactured Scarcity' as the deliberate social arrangements that facilitates violence by physically and psychologically

disempowering vulnerable communities as explained below. The CEN project was a bespoke, participatory training programme running from about 2011 to 2013, during the height of post-2008 Austerity cuts. The project engaged a cohort of 130 individuals navigating recovery, mental health challenges, or long-term illness, collectively categorised by the European Social Fund (ESF) as "long-term unemployed". From an analytical perspective, these fiscal metrics, labelling human beings solely by their economic inactivity, is a manifestation of the 'Technical Project' (Lawler, 1989. p.29), which prioritises fiscal balance sheets over social outcomes.

Additionally relevant to this essay and to the current sociopolitical landscape is the "shared experience" of deprivation (Rak, 2018: 21). The project was based in Boscombe, Bournemouth and therefore presents a jarring geographical paradox. Boscombe was (and still is) ranked within the top 1% of the most deprived areas nationally (DCLG, 2015 & 2026). The project and its volunteers literally existed in the shadow of the Bournemouth 'Over Cliffs', including areas such as Southbourne Over Cliff and parts of West Cliff which typically fall into the least deprived deciles nationally. Most neighbourhoods along these Over Cliffs are categorized within Decile 9 or 10, placing them among the least deprived 10–20% of areas in England. Specific LSOA data for these Over Cliff areas indicates that certain neighbourhoods are less deprived than 81–83% of all neighbourhoods in the country. Following a significant local government reorganisation, Poole, alongside Christchurch, has been integrated into the Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Council, forming a single unitary authority. This amalgamation was designed to centralise governance and facilitate the pursuit of 'City Status' a technocratic move intended to align the region with central government funding models. By grouping these distinct areas into a single administrative block, the state can distribute funds based on aggregate population metrics rather than the specific, localised wealth of individual wards. This administrative shift effectively masks the 'stark and constraining reality' (Lawler, 1989.p.29) of the internal disparities between Boscombe, the Over Cliffs and in particular, Panorama Road in Sandbanks, Poole. Locally known as 'Millionaires Row', is officially recognised as the "world's most expensive coastal street" based on price-per-square-foot, exceeding values in Miami and Monte Carlo (Country Living, 2018; Time Out, 2023). The close proximity of Sandbanks, the world's most expensive coastal street, to the location of the community and council events that were produced resourcing free labour of volunteers themselves suffering the persistent systemic deprivation of Boscombe, serves as more than just a geographic outlier; it is a spatial manifestation of Cultural Violence (Galtung, 1990.p.291). By aggregating these polar extremes into a single BCP administrative block, the state utilises a 'technical' manoeuvre that 'masks' the suffering of the marginalised. This administrative erasure ensures that acute local deprivation remains invisible to the 'Analytical Scientist' who relies on aggregate population metrics,

thereby legitimising a status quo of manufactured scarcity. This shows up exactly the 'stark and constraining reality' that heightens the visibility of disparity (Lawler, 1989. p.29).

A central point of Structural Violence that is visible in this case is the 'Accreditation Trap'. While the aim of the training was to provide industry-standard training at NVQ Levels 2 and 3, a condition of funding was that accreditation for qualification was not obtainable. This funding training model enabled a substantial extraction of technical skills; volunteers maintained safety at council, community and commercial events during a period of state withdrawal of support services. This follows Rak's (2018) analysis of the extraction of commercialised value from the marginalised. It was at the cost of those volunteers that the state restored 'business confidence', as detailed in the introduction. From an analytical perspective, the case study records a substantial extraction of technical and emotional labour where volunteers maintained state functions cheaply during a period of state withdrawal. The central point of Structural Violence here is the manufactured scarcity in how volunteer potential was stunted by the accreditation for qualification being withheld as a condition of funding. By withholding this accreditation, the state manufactured a scarcity of professional mobility, this appears as a "Trap" designed to cause harm that is deliberately set within the voluntary sector.

Additionally, when considering Hochschild's (1983, cited by Spelman, 1985. p.375) concept of emotional labour and the "Commercialization of Human Feeling". The volunteers were subsequently forced to manage their internal anxiety and status-related stress to perform as competent event safety professionals. The state withheld the 'pay' of accreditation, so this emotive management was effectively commodified without recognition, turning a normative tool for self-worth into a 'Shadow welfare' extraction that ignored the human cost of the participants' psychological struggle. Feedback from participants identified this as deep-rooted structural and psychological barriers. For many, the transition to high-pressure work environments provided a source of acute anxiety. This internal damage is not an isolated individual issue but demonstrates how the community is "entangled" with institutional violence (Gill and Thompson, 2017.p.192). The 'Gap' observed here is not a result of 'bad luck,' but a deliberate social arrangement that advantaged the wealthy over the vulnerable.

It is acknowledged that whilst Rak's theory fits with the normative grounding of this paper, critics argue Rak ignored the genuine (if flawed) fiscal necessity felt by the state during a global financial crisis. By framing the actions of the state as a purely "technical" choice to harm the marginalised (Lawler, 1989. p. 29), it is possible to oversimplify the issues of very complex, competing pressures of international market demands that limit a government's agency.

4. Structural Pacifism and Re-figurative Politics

This case study deconstruction follows Farmer's theory: seeing violence as exerted systematically and indirectly by a social order characterised by steep grades of inequality.

Using Galtung's theory, the 'negative equity' felt by volunteers makes visible the avoidable gap between potential and actual realisation. There was no scarcity of talent, as some participants have since professionally qualified, two are currently practicing Social Workers and another qualified as an Accountant. However, the case is evidence of specific skill scarcity "manufactured" by structures withholding the accreditation for the vocational competence, in some cases, the new skills exceeded that of paid-for staff. The withholding of accreditation prevented that talent as volunteered from filling the need and persons from fulfilling their own potential in wider society. Poignantly, the participant who has since qualified as an accountant encountered barriers to professional occupation because of her structured position in society. She is a single mother with Special Education Needs (SEN) children, having only recently navigated a SpLD (Specific Learning Difficulty) for her daughter after about a decade of struggling to get recognition, plus an Autism diagnosis for herself; the barriers to her practicing professionally are evidently due to these significant intersecting social disadvantages. In Galtungian Peace Studies terms (1969.p.168), her actualised potential qualifying as an accountant, was stunted by the actual structural reality, intersecting barriers of SEN parenting and late-life diagnosis. This proves the "Gap" isn't just a theory; it's a measurable career-block caused by manufactured scarcity. The social disadvantage and the systemic violence here parallels the normative verses analytical tensions as discussed which have been made visible. This now avoidable gap, between what should have been, is the failure of actual realisation of that potential (Galtung, 1969).

The case study shows that there was no scarcity of talent or need (Boscombe's 1% deprivation) but there remains little evidence of what the analytics prove of improving social situations, either in theory or in practice. Most useful is using the actual words of the participants. One of whom (who has since qualified and is currently practising as a social worker) said himself at the time "the project enabled people to fulfil their potential".

The CEN project was intentionally designed to right the injustice of misrecognition. Peace Studies might consider this project as an act of Structural Pacifism: a deliberate dismantling of harmful social arrangements (Farmer, 2004.p.307). In response to structural and psychological barriers (Gill and Thompson. P.192) the project included workshops specialising in wellbeing and mindfulness where participants engaged in reclaiming self-worth. This reflects a deliberate ethical refusal to accept preventable harm as inevitable. By prioritising these internal/spiritual dimensions of peace,

the project directly countered the state's technical project (Lawler, 1989, p. 29), which views such human struggle as an administrative inconvenience rather than a site for restorative intervention. This re-recognition follows the theory of Muggeridge's Re-figurative Politics (2025, Appendix/p.121), framing the voluntary sector as a site of cultural production and ethical endeavour (p.130).

In his theory of Re-figurative Politics (2025, p. 121), Muggeridge, a director of the Green Gathering and mentor to this author, provides the normative grounding for explaining the volunteering return aspect of the CEN project. This framework explicitly rejects the state's 'technical' for-profit market model (Lawler, 1989, p. 29) and views the voluntary sector not as a mere 'gap-plugger' for austerity, but as a site of moral-cultural production and ethical endeavour (Muggeridge, 2025. p.130). By shifting the focus, and rewards, back to the volunteers, this approach treats their work as a 'rights-based entitlement' (p. 131) that allows a community to repair itself, prioritising normative human potential over fiscal analytics to build Positive Peace.

This re-figurative approach is further supported by Goetze and de Guevara (2014), who argue that state-led peacebuilding often fails because it treats complex social issues as technical problems to be solved through administrative management (Lawler, 1989. p. 29; Goetze & de Guevara, 2014. p.588). They suggest that true peacebuilding is not a mechanical 'fixing' of a broken system, but a deeply cultural and ethical endeavour (Goetze & de Guevara, 2014. p.588). By explicitly rejecting the state's technocratic, for-profit market model, the CEN project aligns with this critique; it moves away from seeing the community as a welfare problem to be repaired and instead treats the voluntary sector as a site of moral-cultural production (Muggeridge, 2025, Appendix/p.130). This perspective validates the use of Structural Pacifism as it recognises that healing a community requires the restoration of human agency and social capital, rather than the mere application of fiscal metrics.

This aligns with Gill and Thompson's (2017) work on Holistic Peacefulness, which identifies the links enabling personal transitions and greater agency in the wider political fight against austerity. They theorise that "Analysis without Norms is blind" (p.193) and follow the metaphor for describing a disease like Boscombe's deprivation without the normative intent to cure it.

However, following the critique of Galtung's 'Doctor' complex (Lawler, 1989, p. 31), any intervention risks being defined by external experts. To mitigate the risk of acting as an over-authoritarian 'savant', this investigation acknowledges the author's positionality: before securing the adult education contract, the author was in fact a member of that community. This insider status, combined with a rigorous process of gathering and acting on participant feedback, fundamentally reshaped the 'therapy' (Galtung, 1996). By ensuring the project was continuously reshaped by the

voices of the Boscombe cohort, the work shifted away from an external technical project (Lawler, 1989, p. 29) toward a genuinely collaborative act of Structural Pacifism (Farmer, 2004, p. 307).

While from a normative standpoint there is a clear line between austerity cuts and the (known) eight deaths in the cohort, the analytical side must acknowledge the complexity of pre-existing vulnerabilities in a marginalised cohort where early mortality is more likely. Sadly, two participants died suddenly in the year following their training. Three further participants, who remained stalwart volunteers throughout and after the project duration (admittedly attracted by the free festival admission) have also died: two were diagnosed with terminal cancer and died soon after approximately five years ago, and the other died suddenly under unknown circumstances. Within the last six months, one volunteer died from drug overuse, and news of another death, suspected to be drug-related, has been communicated for several sources but not confirmed. This demonstrates that while the state uses cold fiscal metrics (Lawler, 1989, p.29) these eight lives are the only available metrics that truly measures the depth of the Structural Violence in Boscombe.

A critic might argue that a bespoke project with about 130 participants in one seaside town is too small to prove national systemic failure. However, the qualitative analysis is best summarised in the participants' own words: the project enabled Volunteers to fulfil their potential where the state's technical project (Lawler, 1989, p. 29) had failed them. This proves that while the analytics of mortality are complex, the human testimony of structural failure remains a forensic certainty.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a balanced approach is required when considering Peace Studies normatively within analytical 'social' science. Funding distributed by the state was focused on fiscal metrics, driven by a genuine, if flawed, attempt to manage limited resources during a global financial crisis. While an analytical view prioritises "business confidence" and economic factors, a normative approach argues that 'business as usual' prioritises profits over human well-being. It must be acknowledged that the accuracy of long-term tracking of the visible 'negative equity', suggested by the number of volunteers who have since passed away, is problematic. A balanced view acknowledges that without a controlled clinical trial, linking these outcomes solely to 'structural violence' is a normative interpretation rather than a purely analytical certainty.

However, seeing the project as Structural Pacifism acknowledges the "Structure" as violent because statutory arrangements manufacture scarcity. The project countered this by manufacturing abundance in the form of knowledge, friendship, and social capital. Building social capital within the CEN project was not a secondary byproduct but a central mechanism of Structural Pacifism. In this framework, social capital is defined as the collective wealth of relationships, trust, and reciprocity

that enables a community to repair itself. There are further links between Re-figurative politics and peace studies that align with Goetze & de Guevara's argument that true peacebuilding is a "deeply cultural and ethical endeavor," not a technical one.

Tsuruda's (2020) observations fit with the voluntary sector being a site of "Opportunity, Identity, and Recognition," following Muggeridge's writing on the advantages of this network of relationships, trust, and reciprocity that enables "Potential Realisation". However, this reclamation must acknowledge the inherent tensions within the term 'social capital' itself. From a "Scientist" perspective, social capital is often reduced to "productive returns" or "human capital," a metric used to measure how efficiently the marginalised can be "plugged" back into the economy in a way that restores "business confidence". Conversely, the Normative Tension here, from an ethical standpoint, sees social capital as a "moral-cultural production" for the volunteers, who are not seen as tools for the state, and a "rights-based entitlement" that allows a community to repair itself. This normative stance, informed by Gill and Thompson (2019), sees this capital as the 'mutually entangled' relationships and trust that constitute Holistic Peacefulness.

Ultimately, this investigation utilises Muggeridge's theory of 'Re-figurative Politics' (2025, p121-2) to move beyond the state's technocratic extraction. By framing the voluntary workforce of the Green Gathering and CEN as a site of 'moral-cultural production', the sector is reclaimed as a space for productive ethical endeavour rather than being a mere 'gap-plugger' for austerity. By intentionally creating 'abundance' through new connections and networks, the project countered the state-manufactured scarcity that isolation breeds. Structural Violence, as Gill and Thompson (2017, p. 192) argue, occurs when the state reduces human relationships to 'neoliberal transactions'; this process systematically destroys the relational peace necessary for long-term stability. The remaining community of volunteers, whose 'actualised potential' remains stunted by the Technical Project, continues to suffer from internal and communal damage. This failure is physically and analytically reflected in the 'stark reality' of Boscombe's deprivation, which remains trapped within the top 1% nationally (DCLG, 2015; MHCLG, 2025), proving that Structural Harm persists unabated today.

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7. Appendix

GREEN FESTIVALS AND RE-FIGURATIVE POLITICS: COMMUNICATING RESILIENCE AND HOPE

Steve Muggeridge

This chapter reviews the evolution of a sector of the contemporary festival environment from popular celebration to social movement, as expressed through Green festivals. The perspective offered here is based on my personal involvement in such events over many years, from the Free festivals of the 1980s and as organiser of Green events and as a long-term director of the Green Gathering festivals.

This experience informs my conviction that Green festivals are important, though often overlooked for engaged community consciousness of the accelerating global ecological crisis, as well as potential responses to it. Such festivals, I argue, provide opportunities for communicating themes of community and ecology, from historic practices of sustainability to possible future pathways. And that this tradition of festivals has fostered and promoted a counter narrative to the manufactured consensus of consumerism promoted by mainstream media, a narrative considered subversive by successive governments who remain wedded to the pursuit of ecologically unsustainable economic growth and possessive materialism.

Green festivals are opportunities for individual and collective re-figurations. By 'collective re-figurations' I mean the opportunities for some groups of people to periodically come together, and through their participation

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in and enactment of 'creative-critical milieus', both express and deepen their attachment to utopian, that is alternative future-oriented ways of life and being. This can be contrasted to the usual notion of 'pre-figurative politics' which is often seen as the 'strategy to change society through an everyday conduct that fully reflects idealized notions of the Self and society' (Deflorian, 2021, p. 346). Though Green festivals are a temporary and periodic iteration of alternative values and ways of being, they can nonetheless be powerful incubators for communicating ideas and feelings for possible transitions to a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.

At a time of increasing digital social alienation and diminishing trust in the capacity of contemporary politics to respond to the growing ecological crisis, Green festivals perform a significant role. They provide opportunities for like-minded people to come together in re-figured relations and share, if only for a limited time, alternative ways of being in a mutually supportive social space. Green festivals should not be assumed to be largely exercises in commercial mass hedonism and the Green Gathering festivals I have been involved in for

many years have managed, unlike many other contemporary festivals, to not succumb to commercial interests and the corporate provision of 'mass entertainment'. Their popularity is increasing, and this is driven in part by the evident enthusiasm for identification and engagement with a sense of community that is often absent in everyday life and contemporary urban living. Green festivals offer a point of connection, with others, with nature, and with imagined futures that become even more necessary and urgent in a world confronting ecological collapse.

As their attraction grows in line with a more widespread awakening to environmental and ecological concerns from the local to the planetary, so they are also likely to incur increased hostility from entrenched political and commercial interests who remain resistant to change. As I review below, the Free/ Green festival movement has been subject to repressive and sometimes violent responses by powerholders over the years and as such, they have not only been incubators of collective hope but also forced bastions of dissent. Often confronting draconian attempts to crush and contain the perceived threat of free/ Green festivals, their supporters have had to find forms of collective resilience, and these have variously drawn upon earlier traditions of dissent.

With these broad ideas in mind, the discussion now turns to briefly address: (i) the historical rise of Green festivals, (ii) their underpinning philosophy and values in contrast to mainstream commercial festivals, (iii) their pioneering efforts in respect of promulgating green ideas and practices, (iv) green festivals and re-figurative politics 123

their importance in terms of community and re-figuration of politics, (v) their encounters with repression and forms of resilient response, and (vi) prospects and problems moving forward. The chapter concludes by re-stating the often-overlooked significance of Green festivals in providing a re-figurative space and opportunity to creatively explore and exchange ideas and practices, both past and present, but all future-oriented, that can help to build communities of hope and pathways of transition to an ecologically sustainable and socially just world.

The road to Green festivals

Festivals celebrating culture, religion and diverse events have an ancient provenance. Those that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, diverged from the commercial provision of entertainment to become 'Free Festivals'. Elements of the contemporary counter-culture took to the fields with a range of motivations, from permanent partying and hedonism to the adoption of alternative lifestyles and ideals for the foundation of an idealised society. A renewed philosophical social contract for community and environment was actively under exploration.

Without commercial resources to stage Free Festivals, a support network developed through these years. This expressed contemporary counter-cultural values including conscious attempts to develop alternative individual and collective identities. This re-forging of community identity, even on a temporary basis, involved large numbers of people and drew on historically preceding challenges to established political structures. The apex of the Free Festival movement was the Stonehenge Free Festivals from the late 1970s until 1984. By 1984, the festival was estimated to involve over 20,000 people for two to three weeks. The assembly of people ranged from pagan/druid groups, various 'Traveller' lifestyles, political visionaries and people of all classes and occupations gathering to celebrate the Summer Solstice.

Traveller groups encompassed traditional traveller ethnicities but also encompassed people seeking alternative semi-nomadic lifestyles who became termed by mainstream media as 'New Age Travellers'. Relationships between such allied groups extended beyond festival seasons and ultimately became a sustained core of networks that supported and initiated alternative and counter-cultural projects.

Direct communication between individuals and groups assisted the emergence of a unifying counter-narrative to mainstream socio-economic culture. 124 Steve Muggeridge

A distinct strand referenced folkloric traditions of festival assembly, celebration of nature and season, and the growing awareness of an ecological crisis brought about by contemporary consumer society. The emerging eco-consciousness reflected early growing environmental awareness in wider society, and this further helped seed environmental organisations and campaigns. Mainstream media was predictably hostile to any social experiments and produced lurid misrepresentations at this time. They tended to focus on negative impacts of festivals and the inevitable camp followers and festival people more motivated by unregulated partying, than conscious idealism. Hostility appears to have been based on common concern that widespread 're-figurations' of society, as embodied and exemplified in free festivals, would challenge the manufactured consensus of consumer society, its social structures and economic interests. Ironically perhaps, it was a consequence of the unbridled consumerism of capitalism in the 1980s that growing numbers of people were initially attracted to free festivals. Mainstream media nonetheless generally vilified so-called New Age Travellers and their lifestyle. Historically, there has been a traditional suspicion by authorities of large gatherings of people assembling without government or religious sanction, especially when espousing different values and aspirations to established governmental policies (Thompson, 1963, 1980). In historically turbulent times, the fear of insurrection and the nurturing of counter-narratives threatening established authority may have some foundation. Traditional rural festivals, for example, often inverted the established order of social hierarchy, while embracing nature and spring renewal as an eternal order eclipsing transitory temporal political power.

Past traditions also associated the stewardship of natural resources with just governance and the well-being of the people. Free Festivals and its supporting movement encompassed elements of these traditional celebrations. The increasing popularity of pagan spiritual ideas and customs also aligned with these earlier historic traditions, and together implicitly challenged mainstream ideas of social order and established hierarchy. Free festivals and Green gatherings often positioned themselves at ancient and traditional centres of spirituality and celebration – in particular ancient monuments. This further challenged the established view by heritage bodies of ownership, as did ideas of popular access as common wealth. Perhaps only a minority of people attending such festivals at this time however were motivated to develop counter-culture as an agency for political change. green festivals and re-figurative politics 125

By 1984 the Stonehenge Free Festival reflected the tensions in mainstream society of economic decline and political conflict, exemplified in the coal miners' strike, and the subsequent defeat of the miner's union. In addition, some of the original idealism of the New Age Traveller had been significantly darkened by the nihilism of young refugees from the economic depression of that time, many of whom were motivated less by idealism, than escape from bleak economic and urban environments. The change of festival zeitgeist at this time, combined with obstructions from local police forces and councils, resulted in no

post-festival clear-up that year. This was a 'gift' to a hostile media keen to report on the negative impact of free festivals on the rural environment and heritage sites.

Without practical social structures to support and guide the collective experiments in utopian community at this point, they proved unsustainable over any extended period of time. During the early 1980s, protest camps had been established at various military bases to protest against the deployment of US missiles. In 1984 New Age Travellers along with other protestors were evicted from the Molesworth peace camp, demonstrating the close affinity between festival goers and political activism. Collaboration and common cause between social and political movements with the increasing popularity of festivals in the 1980s soon became demonised in Margaret Thatcher's populist rhetoric of the 'enemy within'.

In June 1985, an attempt by convoys of Travellers and free festival supporters to establish the Stonehenge Free Festival was brutally suppressed. This soon became established in festival folklore as the 'The Battle of the Bean field' (Worthington 2005) and effectively marked the end of the free festival movement. In the following years, successive legislation further attempted to criminalise and end the New Age Traveller lifestyle.

Though free festivals had failed to establish themselves as a sustainable structure at this time, in collaboration with dissenting political movements they had challenged the political orthodoxy of the period. As the free festival movement waned, Green consciousness and environmental activism nonetheless continued to grow. Surviving elements of the festival movement became more politically aware and organised. By the early 1990s this was demonstrated in the protest movement against the ecological impact of an expanded road-building programme. This drew upon free festival veterans and Travellers who assisted the establishment of long-term protest camps. Cooperation between Green activists and the remaining free festival movement continued.

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Small gatherings began to appear, described as gatherings of varied 'Greens', and incorporating diverse social and political campaigns. The free festival had morphed into the Green festival, with the explicit objective of bringing together diverse elements of contemporary counter-culture, Green activism, alternative lifestyles and various belief traditions. In a period before the widespread use of the internet and mobile phones, communication between counter-cultural projects was by printed flyers, posters and word of mouth. Festivals

were represented negatively for the most part, as we have heard, in the narratives and news depictions of conventional media outlets. And the festival community, pre-internet and widely available mobile phones, did not have the ability or means to communicate positive perspectives to counter misrepresentation.

Green gatherings had been occurring as small camps throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Big Green Gathering (BGG) began in the early 1990s, as a celebration and gathering of Green activists and lifestyles. It soon became the largest opportunity for networking and incorporated varied counter-cultural tribes, environmental activists and folkloric traditions.

The road to Green Festivals, as described, has been complex and often contested. The

Free Festival evolved in the latter part of the twentieth century and provided alternative narratives to contemporary national economic and political life. Disparate groups of social and political campaigners motivated by ideas of social justice and environmental

awareness came together in festivals of community. They proved to be unsustainable and difficult to stage due to lack of structure and resources, as well as hostility by national and local authorities and negative media misrepresentations. Nonetheless, philosophies and traditions evolved and coalesced into a powerful legacy that still communicates across generations. This was the provenance of creative-critical thought and practices that flowed into the foundation of Green festivals.

Green festivals: Paradigm shifts

Green festivals are not defined by commercial contracts for profitability, but stewardship and development of the assembled community and diverse projects and causes. There are social and political objectives to this form of gathering beyond commerce and entertainment.

A shared philosophic focus on ecology and social justice had not hitherto been expressed so explicitly as a core objective for gathering as a festival. Definitions of a 'Green' festival may vary, though a number of elements prove green festivals and refigurative politics 127

common to festivals of such description. Green festivals primarily provide the platform for the exhibition, demonstration and discussion of 'Green' concepts and traditions, including alternative lifestyles, spirituality and philosophical pathways. Such a diverse environment has demonstrated a positive impact on the cross-fertilisation of concepts and practices to different groups and traditions. Rooted in ideas of ecology and social justice, diverse groups each pursuing their own pathways to personal and collective re-figuration gather in a collective exposition of politics and ways of shared being. They do so as a temporary community but sometimes extending beyond the gathering of festival. In providing opportunities at festival to collaborate and cross communicate experiences, traditions and philosophies, the framework of such events does not require or impose any overarching conceptual or philosophic orthodoxy. It does require, however, a commitment to act and inter-act mindful of ethical behaviour as commonly understood by the assembled community and defined in the Terms and Conditions of the festival. A gathering of people as a temporary Green community requires common acknowledgement of the varied philosophies represented, without necessarily endorsing any, and respecting divergencies of thoughts and belief. This guiding principle is often in stark contrast to the deliberate binary polarisation of positions, ideas and debates found and orchestrated in mainstream media.

Active participants at Green festivals include a wide range of causes, campaigns and traditions. Individual and group allegiances and identities often overlap, forming a consensus in diversity, and in counterpoint to conventional socio-economic narratives and structures. A collective identity founded in that consensus both shapes and is shaped by the festival community which, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.

Festivals that identify as Green, with social and economic objectives, are also distinct in recognising the value of folkloric, spiritual and cultural traditions as well as their continuing relevance in the contemporary world. Historic and traditional manifestations of eco-consciousness in gatherings have been associated with non-conformity or dissent. Green festivals have a heritage that confers continuity with their contemporary existential purpose, and a responsibility to communicate that tradition to future generations of festival participants. Communication between the festival and attending public raises and explores various responses and possible solutions to issues and challenges in the

unfolding ecological crisis, and these may draw upon historically grounded traditions that demonstrate the continuity of sources of wisdom and their resilience over time.

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Many established members of any festival community will identify both as members of a constituent group in producing the event and as members of the wider festival community, during and outside of the event. People attending perhaps for the first time, may be seeking to re-define their identity and societal role or join like-minded people in a liminal or 'time-out' experience.

Across the evolution of Green festivals, the focus has increasingly been on the impending ecological emergency. With the realisation that climate change is already unfolding and deepening, that focus is now being re-calibrated to one of resilience and adaption for changing environmental realities. Individual resilience and well-being are now seen as best secured in community support and response, rather than a continuation of the competitive individualism and incessant economic growth of consumer society.

Green festivals can best be conceived, then, as social enterprises that act as outliers from the wider mainstream conventional society. They have purpose and meaning in helping to prepare festival participants as well as wider society for some of the transitions now required in the face of climate change and other existential challenges. Green festivals communicate past traditions of environmental thought and wisdom to future gatherings and they create opportunities for individual and collective re-figuration in response to these. That is, they provide the means, albeit based on a temporary 'liminal' experience or 'time-out', of variously exploring longer-term lifestyle changes and ways thinking and being. In offering developmental pathways for adaptation, change and resilience, they can also be seen, and importantly experienced in community solidarity as incubators of hope.

Pioneers and progress

As we have heard, there is a legacy by Green festivals in preparing and communicating pathways for ecological change and adaption. An increase in environmental activism and awareness in the early 1990s was reflected with festivals inclusion of an environmental focus or content. The Big Green Gathering pioneered the format of an in-depth participatory festival, gathering together various counter-cultural groups as a festival of both activism and cultural expression and performances. Most Green festivals remain small to medium size events compared with some huge contemporary commercial festivals. The establishment of the Green Futures Field at the Glastonbury Festival in the 1990s further marked the arrival of Green awareness at large commercial festivals and continues to this day (Green Futures Field, 2023). green festivals and re-figurative politics

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By the early years of the twenty-first century, issues of ecology had moved from the fringes of popular concern to the mainstream. This trend has continued to increase, as has the general popularity of festivals, to the current festival scene. Few commercial events now do not claim engagement at some level with Green and environmental issues. The increase in awareness of environmental issues has coincided with the general elevation of the festival from fringe activity to mainstream social institution, many as large commercial events. The arrival of widespread social media assisted this development. Positive individual and informal festival experiences can be easily shared, by-passing the historically negative narrative of mainstream media. In an apparent

recognition of the changing popular fashion for festivals, mainstream media appears have now also changed their stance toward some festivals, and actively promote them. Though typically this concerns large commercial festivals based on conventional corporate objectives and the provision of popular entertainment. The currency of environmental awareness at festivals has at least been a partial success in communicating many of the complex challenges in transitioning to a sustainable way of life. In the context of increasing uncertainty and diminishing confidence in conventional social structures, refigurative politics has become for many, not just a choice, but necessary if we are to develop resilient communities capable of adapting to the consequences of climate and other ecological changes.

The establishment of sustainability across the festival industry can be seen as a positive development. In recent years there has been significant effort to reduce the environmental impact of producing and delivering such events. An initial focus on the carbon impact of events has developed to evaluate the impact of all areas of related production. In 2007, A Greener Festival (AGF) began a rigorous certification and awards scheme to help monitor, assess and improve festival green credentials. These ratings and awards are communicated to festival audiences, with any sustainability awards typically promoted as part of festival marketing profiles.

Mainstream festivals have developed from fringe activities to major commercial operations that annually engage significant numbers of people as a multi-billion-pound industry. The adoption of more sustainable production policies and the promotion at events of Green issues, have a wide reach, influencing public behaviour both during, and after the event. Post event participant feedback from Green Gatherings, for example, indicate that significant numbers of people attending the event change aspects of their behaviour in support of Green agendas. Younger festival audiences have been noticeably

enthusiastic in their engagement with festival themes and campaigns at the Green Gathering and the Green Futures Field at Glastonbury festival. This enduring attraction and growth of Green festivals and awareness across the festival spectrum is a cause for hope. However, the virtue-signalling of Green credentials by some commercial festivals through token tree planting as a carbon offset, or a few 'stalls' representing environmental NGOs, for example, can also demonstrate a commitment to profile rather than ecological concern. This legacy from pioneering Green events nonetheless is generally evidence of the success of the counter-cultural festival movement in communicating and promoting Green issues and campaigns. They have helped shape the contemporary festival industry's progress towards sustainability and social engagement. The transition of independent and Green festivals from relatively marginal standing and status to increased popularity and ecological standing, also reflects the rise of ecological awareness in general society. The communication of Green issues to audiences at Green and conventional commercial festivals is inter-active and inter-personal and can serve as an influencer beyond mass media. The rising popularity of festivals reflects, I suggest, an increasing search for alternative community identity and this is only likely to increase in the ecologically troubled years ahead.

Festival community and re-figuration

Green festivals have been effective as stewards of once marginal, alternative practices and concepts and by projecting them into mainstream festival culture and beyond. They also hold deep insights into the forms of organisation and practice that can sustain pathways to transition in wider society. These as described below, revolve around participation, trust, equity, community identity, organisational structure and sense of connectivity.

Many non-corporate festivals are social enterprises in which a critical aspect of financial viability is the engagement of volunteers and supporters. This is only possible when a community supporting a festival project can identify with both the objectives and delivery of the event. How festivals are planned and delivered therefore matters for the longer-term sustainability of the supporting community. That community needs to be participatory and involved with planning; it needs to identify itself with those objectives agreed as worthwhile. Engagement and agency as valued aspects of festival, increase trust in the event's management, and this lends collective authority to decisions made during the festival. green festivals and re-figurative politics 131

Without this confidence based on participation, trust and transparency, the disparate groups and identities that comprise 'Green' festivals have difficulty in coalescing into a greater collective identification for the pursuit of the festival common purpose. To deliver a festival, resources are needed for a number of different goals, interests and agendas. Allocation of festival resources with transparency and relative equity to content, therefore, also proves key. And this too serves as a possible template of use to others in a just transition to sustainability.

Festivals can encompass different social and political causes and express diverse traditions and beliefs, but they can also create a community of common cause and shared objectives – as we heard above. This unity in diversity, rather than multiple binaries of opposition that characterise wider society, provides a further template of wider relevance in the successful pursuit of sustainable pathways. The shared collective identity can also extend beyond the temporal-spatial festival setting and does so in an extended network of mutually supportive campaigns and loosely affiliated communities. Collaborative communities have greater resilience to climate challenges than vying vested interests or systems based on competitive individualism.

The collective re-figuration of festival community members can influence practices of adaptation in the immediate term as well as the longer term when participants form into ecologically conscious and relatively stable networks of mutuality and support. Sustainable sharing of resources within and between communities in confederation, can further enhance transparency and equitable outcomes. In respect of social hierarchy, the longer-term members of festival communities may acquire higher status within that community. But the acquisition of status and social mobility within festival community is not primarily driven by material wealth or the attributed status of 'success' as typically measured in mainstream society. Festival workers working in different roles often enjoy greater social status within the festival community, than their equivalents in the mainstream economy. Status in festival community tends to be accumulated over time, and is relative to a particular skill set and reputation gained from previous events. Status is not dependent, therefore, on organisational or social hierarchy conventionally conceived. This too provides a social template of possible use in processes of ecologically informed re-figuration in wider society and when

seeking mutually supportive and participatory ways of coming together to respond to growing climate and other challenges.

The rising popularity of festival gatherings, according to a number of industry surveys is based on the sense of belonging and participation in a

tangible community that serves as a counterpoint to the increasingly digital fragmentation of society. The experience of sharing open fires at festivals, as one of the most ancient forms of sociality, for example, offers connectivity not just to other people, but also to an elementally immersive experience. This lived and felt experience can communicate a deeper sense of presence and connectivity than virtual encounters mediated through social media networks. It is in and through these and other Green festival spaces/places, that a lived sense of connectivity and presence with nature and others becomes manifest. Green ideas and sensibilities in such moments and settings resonate with those of community, ecology and sustainability.

In the context of reduced social mobility and increasing wealth disparity in mainstream society today, re-figurative politics through participation in communities of resilience and support holds increased attraction for many. A spiritual or religious re-alignment for some may also be linked to a changed relationship with environment and community. The current increase in interest in Green festivals is partly driven by wider economic trajectories of decline and difficulty and the perception that fundamental societal change will be inevitable in the context of climate change. This will demand adaptation and changing skill sets designed for resilience.

The continuity of Green and alternative festivals over decades has seen multi-generational involvement. Established members of some festival communities may have multiple generations working together at events. Generational discovery and re-discovery of Green and other festivals has manifested in waves of interest and involvement over the decades, often in parallel with increased Green activism.

Governmental obstruction and suppression of gatherings deemed subversive has resulted in more organised and resilient festivals, morphing the utopian but unsustainable Free Festival movement to Green festivals that are now more focused on pathways of structured transition to a Greener society.

The focus of Green festivals on societal change is evident through its stated purposes and agreed charters of good practices, on-site campaigns, hosting of diverse workshops, speakers and discussions, and of course in and through many of its staged performances and music. Festival events such as these deliver encounters and experiences that are often at the forefront of Green practices and future imagining, whether 'from permaculture to peddle power, from sustainability to solar power' (Green Futures Field, 2023). Or, as the latest Green Gathering website describes itself: 'The original off-grid, non-profit fes

tival: we're powered by sun, wind, people and passion for change' and 'Join us green festivals and re-figurative politics

for four days of low-impact living' and 'This festival's impact lasts longer than a weekend' (Green Gathering, 2024).

In all these different expressions of re-figurative politics, templates of good practice point to the ways in which the distinctive community ethos and organisational practices of Green festivals could yet also register in wider pathways of transition and as the climate and ecological crises continue to deepen and compound each other as now seems to be unavoidable. Tested templates for participation, trust, equity, community identity, organisational structure and a developed sense of connectivity are all requisite to

successfully forging and building communities of common practice and shared concern. Wider society may have much to learn of use from the experience and ethos of Green festivals.

Repression and resilience

The successful perpetuation of eco-consciousness, ideas and culture over a period of decades has not been without struggles, opposition and costs. Gatherings, especially unauthorised assemblies, have been viewed with suspicion by authorities of all eras. Repressive policies by various government administrations and political parties through the agencies of police, local councils, ministerial departments, mainstream media and public order legislation, have ranged from obstruction to suppression. As Green activism became more wide spread and prominent, so did the perceived challenge. Periods of repression have required both resilience and re-invention, as we have already heard. The very existence of the Free festival was subversive to the normative values of individual and collective success and well-being, promoted by the economic agenda of the early 1980s. As a stark counterpoint to the aggressive policies of individualism and privatisation of that period, opportunities for people to gather and explore alternative lifestyles and values was often taken as a particular threat to the new economic orthodoxy. In the context of the suppression of organised labour with the miner's strikes in 1984, the suppression of alternative poles of thought and activity continued with government demonisation of the Traveller and Free festival community.

The iconic Stonehenge Free Festival was suppressed in the so-called 'Battle of the Beanfield', as mentioned. This suppression of both the festival and the free festival movement was endorsed and promoted by much of the pre internet media, that acted as a distorting mirror to the actual experience of 134 Steve Muggerridge

many attending festivals. Demonisation and the misrepresentation of activist and counter-cultural groups thereafter, it seems, became the default policy of media portrayal of future environmental campaign groups.

Collective activism became prominent again in the early 1990s with the emergence of the road protest movement in reaction to a road expansion programme. Actions often took the form of extended occupations of proposed development sites, with protest camps.

Free

festival, traveller and environmental activist communities became mutually supportive in establishing and sustaining such protest camps. Opportunities for re-figuration, individually and collectively, at this time became more explicitly allied with ecology and protests. They also became increasingly visible within mainstream media and routinely portrayed as a threat to the established social and political order by much of it. After protest camps were dispersed, activist groups and campaigns continued to evolve with an increasing cross-over of activists and festivals.

Land ownership has historically impacted on environmental sustainability, access to resources and the well-being of local populations. Over many centuries, access to the 'land' as a common resource has been systematically restricted by private ownership, promoting short-term exploitation rather than sustainability and commonwealth. The control of access to spaces for gatherings of people, especially unauthorised, was and is, a key tool for the suppression of assemblies. This control of access means that festivals and gatherings of any significant number of people are entirely conditional. This conditionality is enacted and enforced through various public order legislation to the

Licensing legislation for regulating public events. Any assemblies not authorised by such means are unlawful and deemed rebellious simply by their existence. The default but often disingenuous reason cited for suppression of un-Licensed events is 'public safety', as defined by the same licensing authorities.

Permissions by regulating authorities can be seen as a form of repressive control. They require an organisational hierarchy under the guise of public safety interests, where named organisers can be held to account for the conduct and impact of a festival. Compliance with legislation for festivals and sustainable financial management also requires the formation of financial entities as companies or cooperatives. This can produce greater financial sustainability for festivals but also increased vulnerability to constructive bankruptcy by financial sanction – as was the case with the Big Green Gathering.

The Big Green Gathering (BGG) was established in the early 1990s as an off-grid Green festival and had grown by 2007 to an event of more than 20,000 activists and supporters. The event supported the Climate Camp, an green festivals and re-figurative politics 135

activist campaign to change national energy policy and close coal-fired power stations. The campaign had been infiltrated by one of the many secret police placed within environmental groups at that time. A combination of police and licensing authority pressure forced the festival to cancel, on pain of forced dispersal and arrest (Vidal, 2009). This was clearly linked to the event's support of activists. The constructive bankruptcy of the festival production company also had serious collateral damage to the many local businesses that had invested in trading at the event. It was only by resilient determination that the event was re-founded as the Green Gathering in 2011. Though a smaller festival than BGG, it remains an annual event in 2023, and has attracted international recognition and awards as a pioneering Green event.

Festival production is thus a careful balance between nurturing crucibles of creativity and campaigns and managing imposed structures of regulation and control. Green and independent festivals have evolved as we have heard in response to repressive state responses and governments restrictions as well as changing popular perspectives on ecology and social justice. Creativity and resilience continue to define festival communities to this day, who must comply with restrictive conditions to avoid suppression whilst continuing to communicate alternative narratives to new generations.

Prospects and problems

With the impacts of climate change now beginning to become an everyday reality, Green festivals are increasingly recognised as an important advocate for finding pathways to a more sustainable society. Mainstream commercial festivals though now engaged with reducing their own environmental impacts and communicating environmental issues to their audiences, are not known for promoting radical social and economic agendas required for a deeper Green transition.

Gatherings enable direct communication between diverse people with common objectives. In the current media environment, there is ever increasing information and misinformation and decreasing trust in sources. Inter-personal contact and communication at festivals is a counterpoint to the discussion and distortions of mainstream and digital media. The attraction of personal interaction appears to have increased interest in festivals for people and communities

exploring re-figurative pathways and adaption to climate changes. The future role of such gatherings would seem positive, with increasing participation
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and recognition of their value in developing a consensus for change. Green festivals serve a common good, advocating Green lifestyle changes and challenging those commercial and governmental interests benefiting from today's ecologically unsustainable status quo. However, as the impacts of climate and other ecological crises continue to accelerate and deepen, affecting everyday lives, so we may witness increasing political fragmentation and polarisation as well as calls for fundamental societal change. In such times Green festivals along with ecological activists can anticipate on the basis of previous decades increased forms of repression and attempted political control.

The direction in the UK at the time of writing is to increasingly criminalise expressions of concern and activism communicated through public gatherings. The evidence of recent legislation in the UK confirms that governments and vested interests unable or unwilling to engage in meaningful changes for a just transition, are choosing policies of repression, rather than reform. The experience of the Free and Green festivals in resilient morphing for continuity described above, maintains the hope that their tradition will continue with future generations of festival, despite any attempts at marginalisation or suppression. In the event of a substantial breakdown of current social structures, the legacies of Green festivals may yet prove beneficial in assisting the development of re-figured sustainable communities.

Other structural challenges however pose further problematic dynamics that will need to be addressed. The transitory structures and hierarchical responsibilities required by Licensed, 'approved' festivals and events, already mentioned, are sustainable only for limited duration. The balance of tensions between required structure from external authorities, and progressive discussion and inter-action in free association, requires continuous enterprise and ingenuity. Even so, there are grounds for optimism for the continuation of Green festivals.

The increasing interest and participation by young people in Green festivals in recent years is encouraging, not least because a younger generation of festival organisers will need to continue the tradition of Green and alternative festivals in the decades ahead. The experience of organisers that have been part of the journey from Free to Green festivals is also a legacy of hope and resilience and can be passed on to the next generation of organisers who will need to respond, no doubt, to new legislative attempts to restrict and control gatherings. There is hope and evidence, with a recent significant increase in attendance by the 18–24 generation at the Green Gathering and Glastonbury Green Fields, that a renewed generational interest will both populate and green festivals and re-figurative politics 137

organise future incarnations of festival as transformative events of community. This counterpoint to conventional societal and media narratives will only become more necessary in a world-in-crisis over the years ahead.

Conclusion

The legacy of the Free festival and currency of contemporary Green festivals continues to manifest through the creative expressions and collective critique of like-minded people, who periodically come together to challenge those ecologically destructive priorities of a world

wedded to incessant economic growth, and which has brought us to a world of deepening crises. Green festivals

represent a continuity of counter-cultural dissent, communicated through popular gatherings of performance and music, Green activism and alternative lifestyles. They serve to focus on traditions of environmental stewardship and project forward potential future iterations of resilient and sustainable society. The existence of Green festivals challenges policies of ecocide through their existence as gathered networks of campaigners for sustainable society in direct communication with each other and attending publics. Their history of resilience,

despite attempts at suppression, and transition to recognised pioneers in the festival industry, suggests that they will continue to serve as incubators of collective action and hope. They are an important if often overlooked site of re-figurative politics where diverse groups of people take time-out to come together to creatively share and explore Green ideas and practices as lived experience and, importantly, future imagining.

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