A weekend of events, debates and activities for grassroots and community activists

Teachers Club, 36 Parnell Square West, Dublin Friday June 27th - Sunday June 29th

activism opposing neo-liberalism in Ireland networking creating our own media workshops who pays for the environment? discussion report back from evian g8 protests skills the trees of the phoenix park walking tours what next for the grassroots gathering? poi monto walking tour practice theory and practice of grassroots organisation: how should we make decisions? theory feiced off? actions for ethical Investment action networking between movements: how are we doing? environment opposing the war: what next for the grassroots networks? physical activities is social partnership and direct action: the bins, the bombs, the boulders and the bunkers direct action space is the place: creating, sustaining and defending autonomous spaces yoga preparing for the world economic forum diversity defending & developing diversity revolution 5-a-side soccer community what kind of world do we need? seisiuns los piqueteros: from the frontlines of the argentinian social movements activism opposing neo-liberalism in Ireland networking creating our own media workshops who pays for the environment? discussion report back from evian g8 protests skills the trees of the phoenix park walking tours debate prisoner support solidarity getting beyond the usual suspects and building links to community groups videos whose progress? progress for who? nature, technology and humans massage co-counselling for activists struggle indian head massage anarchism direct action: the bins, the bombs, the boulders and the bunkers direct action space is the place: creating, sustaining and defending autonomous spaces yoga preparing for the world economic forum diversity defending & developing diversity revolution 5-a-side soccer community what kind of world do we need?

What is a Grassroots Gathering?
Grassroots Gatherings are weekends of debate and activity for activists which have been taking place in Ireland every few months for the last 2 years. The participants are aiming to create a network which would:

- Be based on the principle that people should control their own lives and work together as equals, as part of how we work as well as what we are working towards.
- Within the network this means rejecting top-down and state-centred forms of organisation (hierarchical, authoritarian, expert-based, Leninist etc.) We need a network that's open, decentralised, and really democratic.
- Call for solutions that involve ordinary people controlling their own lives and having the resources to do so: the abolition, not reform, of global bodies like the World Bank and WTO, and a challenge to underlying structures of power and inequality.
- Organise for the control of the workplace by those who work there and for the control of communities by the people who live there.
- Argue for a sustainable environmental, economic and social system, agreed by the people of the planet.
- Work together in ways which are accessible to ordinary people, particularly women and working-class people, rather than reproducing feelings of disempowerment and alienation within our own network.

What this fifth Gathering is for:

- Creating a bridge for non-hierarchical & direct action activism between the mobilisations against the war on Iraq in the spring and the mobilisations against the World Economic Forum in the autumn
- Encouraging networking between different movements, with workshops that encourage people to mix between different movements, rather than primarily "issue" based themes (we're basically keeping these till the Sunday morning for this reason)
- Developing diversity within the movement by inviting participants from different movements, particularly inviting named people to give 5-minute intros to each individual workshop

Things to bring:

- Yourself!
- A bit of energy, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, friendliness and interest in other people if you can manage it!
- Info about your own group, specially stuff to help make links with other groups and activists – most of the people at the Gathering will not be anonymous “punters” but busy activists.
- If you want to take part in the 5-a-side soccer tournament (all day Saturday + Sunday morning), try to bring a bike! (We’ll try to have bikes available too.)
- If you want to do the Indian Head Massage workshop (Saturday afternoon), bring a towel to cover the top of your body (unless it’s something you’d like to share with the rest of us!)
- Donations! The Gathering has no money at all, and it's costing about €750 - €1000 to run it.
- If you want to do the Yoga workshop bring a track suit / sports gear and a mat if possible.
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<th><strong>Friday 27th</strong></th>
<th><strong>red room</strong></th>
<th><strong>white room</strong></th>
<th><strong>green room (A &amp; B)</strong></th>
<th><strong>black room</strong></th>
<th><strong>v. room</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>7 - 8pm</td>
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<td>8 - 9pm</td>
<td>Introductions: What is Grassroots Gathering? Groups introduce themselves. Training session for facilitators</td>
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<td>9 - 10:30pm</td>
<td>Piquetera: Community puppet theatre from Argentina</td>
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<td>11:30 - 1pm</td>
<td>Action / Skills: Direct action, the bins, the bombs, the boulders and the bunkers...</td>
<td>Action / Skills: Building links to community groups,</td>
<td>Networking: Keeping going: dealing with defeat and burnout</td>
<td>Action / Skills: Space is the place: creating, sustaining and defending autonomous spaces</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
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<td>4:30 - 6pm</td>
<td>Argentina’s social upheaval: Road blocks, area assemblies and factory occupations: experiences from the grass-roots movements in Argentina</td>
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<td>videos</td>
<td>Activities: Indian head massage. Soccer.</td>
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<td>6:30 - 8pm</td>
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<td>A Gathering Storm. Benefit gig for Grassroots Gathering &amp; Shannon Prisoners (Gingerman pub)</td>
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<td>8pm - late</td>
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<td>Activities: Monto walking tour - The trees &amp; history of Phoenix Park - Soccer</td>
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<td>Activities: Poi workshop</td>
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<td>3:30 - 6:30pm</td>
<td>Plenary Session: Where to now? Preparing for the World Economic Forum, What next for the Grassroots Gathering?</td>
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Programme of events

Friday evening

7 pm - Registration
Welcomes, sorting out floor space for visitors

8 pm - Introduction & opening forum:
- What is the Grassroots Gathering?
- Groups introduce themselves
- 15-min. training session for facilitators (run by Aileen O’Carroll, Laurence Cox)

9 pm - Piquetera: community puppet theatre from Argentina
Graciela Monteagudo - Argentinian community artist and human rights activist

Graciela will give a unique puppet show portraying how workers have gone from regular jobs to picking up cardboard from the streets of Buenos Aires every night to sell it for a few pence. The show - which has already toured the two Americas with great success - tells of the local social movements that have grown to create a near insurrection. Over the last 2 years an incredible wave of social protest and action has engulfed Argentina. In the midst of the well-publicised economic collapse there have been massive street protests, numerous co-ordinated road blockades, over 200 factories under worker control, more than three hundred coordinated microenterprise cooperatives organized by unemployed women and men, countless neighborhood associations formed, and many other autonomous popular initiatives.

Saturday morning

10 am - Welcomes and opening circle:
"who are we and why are we here?"

11 am - Coffee!

11.30 am - First workshop session

1) Networking between movements: how are we doing? - networking workshop
Giancarlo (Community Exchange), Barry Finnegan (Irish Social Forum), Steve McConville (Belfast social movements), Paul Moloney (Independent Socialist Network).

Over the last few years there’s been an explosion in networking between social movements in Ireland and globally. A lot of this is part of the development of the global anti-capitalist movement, and more recently the anti-war movement, but similar networks have been developing on an Irish or local level around issues like community control of development, waste management issues or supporting volunteering. This workshop starts from what’s happened in different movement “sectors” and why, and will hopefully discuss what works and what doesn’t, and help us think about where the process is going and what we want to do to help.

2) Opposing the war: future anti-war activity - networking workshop
Antony (GNAW), Speaker from “Boycott TOP Oil” campaign
The Grassroots Network Against War (GNAW) developed out of the third Grassroots Gathering in Belfast as a radical forum for non-hierarchical opposition to war. Despite many difficulties, the GNAW put the issue of large-scale direct action on the public agenda in Ireland, perhaps for the first time since Carnsore Point. This workshop will be organised by GNAW and the campaign to boycott TOP Oil to discuss the current situation and future directions for anti-war activism in Ireland.

3) Is social partnership going anywhere? - discussion / debate workshop
Des Derwin (SIPTU), Patrick Bevan (Pavee Point), Unconfirmed speaker from Community Platform
Since the mid-1980s, “social partnership” has been an increasingly important strategy for the Irish state, progressively developing to include trade unions, community groups, the environment and development sectors. Often this has been something which (some) movement groups have actively pushed for, but what we got has not always turned out to be what we meant. This workshop looks at how partnership is working (or not working) in different sectors, and aims for a debate on whether there is (still) anything to be gained from being involved in it.

Robert Allen (An Talamh Glas / BlueGreenEarth), Chekov Feeney (Workers Solidarity Movement)
Different social movements have different traditional views about technological and industrial development. Some activists think that new technologies will save us, some that ecological disaster is round the corner, some that industrial development is crucial to meet human needs. These are central issues in relation to the environment, but also in relation to “sustainable development” in the majority world. This workshop aims to debate the issues involved and see if our views are really all that incompatible.

Physical activities:
- 5-a-side football tournament with Robert Allen, An Talamh Glas
- Games with Elinor, Traveller and Settled Solidarity

1 pm - Lunch!

2:30 pm - Second workshop session

5) Opposing neo-liberalism in Ireland - networking workshop
Donagh (Gluaiseacht), Speaker from Campaign for Free Education, Dermot Sreenan (Dublin Campaign Against the Bin Charges)

Neo-liberal economics, covered over by a package of social partnership, consultation and participation, has grown stronger and sharper in Ireland over the last five years. In areas as diverse as the trade unions, environmental campaigning, community activism and development work, activists have found themselves increasingly unhappy with the “partnership” that is offered and increasingly angry about the “big picture” of cuts, privatisation, deregulation and state “non-interference” as business interests reshape the world - and Ireland - to suit themselves. What do our different struggles look like? Are there ways we can work together more effectively? And do we stand a chance of winning?
6) Keeping going: dealing with defeat and burnout - networking workshop

Tracey (Shannon Peace Camp), Alan MacSimín (Workers Solidarity Movement), Christian Volkmann (Save the Glen of the Downs campaign)

All long-term activists have to deal with the experience of not winning, as well as cope with the risk of burnout when we invest heavily in urgent campaigns. How do we pick ourselves up and keep on going as individuals? How do we support other activists in hard times so defeat doesn't decimate our movements? This workshop is geared to sharing experiences, skills, problems and ideas between activists in different movements - both those of us who have survived and kept going, and those of us who are finding it hard to see any hope or find any enthusiasm for the next campaign.

7) Direct action, the bins, the bombs, the boulders and the bunkers... - skills workshop

Liz Curry & friends (just returned from anti-WTO protests in Evian), Marianne (The Good Bus), James McBarron (Free the Old Head of Kinsale Campaign). With input by activists from Reclaim the Streets, Grassroots Network Against War, Campaign Against the Bin Charges

While the protests at Shannon have put "direct action" on the public agenda in Ireland, there is also a long-standing tradition of direct action in this country going back decades if not centuries. How is direct action working at the moment in our different movements? What are the success stories, and what are the difficulties we're facing? Are we developing effective ways of working, and how can we share those with other activists?

8) Putting the roots back into grassroots: building links to community groups - action/skills workshop

Margaret Gillan (Community Media Network), Siobhán O'Donoghue (Community Workers Co-operative)

Along with trade unions, community activism is probably the single biggest social movement in Ireland, and one which shares a lot of values (bottom-up organising, non-hierarchical structures, a focus on issues of power and injustice) with many other social movements. But the gap between community groups and other movements often seems particularly hard to bridge. This workshop brings together people with experience in the area to talk about what it is that divides us, how we can respect each other's differences, and what the possibilities are for developing communication and even cooperation on shared issues.

9) Space is the place: creating, sustaining and defending autonomous spaces - action/skills workshop

Fergal Liddy (Spacecraft), Cathie Clinton (The Palace), With input by activists from Giro's, Cork Autonomous Zone, Garden of Delight (Dublin), Arran Quay squat

Controlling our own space is a crucial practical aspect of being able to organise, support each other, generate new projects and simply explore the experience of freedom. Right now, a number of free spaces on the island are under threat for one reason or another, while other projects are underway to create new ones. This workshop brings together people interested or involved in the area to talk about the practicalities as well as the broader issues.

Physical activities:

5-a-side football tournament with Robert Allen, An Talamh Glas
Yoga with Caitríona Kelly

4 pm - Coffee!
Sunday morning

10:45 am - Wakeup events!

Oral history walking tour – “the Monto” - meet at the Centra shop opposite Connolly Station, with Terry Fagan, North Inner City Folklore Project

The Monto (roughly the area between Talbot Street, N. Strand Road, Gardiner St. and Seán McDermott St.) is the old red light area of Dublin. Terry Fagan, who does the tour, is a local community activist who has been collecting people's memories in the area for the last 20 years. The tour covers 18th century planning corruption, 19th century brothels, the Dublin Lockout, 1920s gunfights between the IRA and Special Branch agents, how the Legion of Mary closed the Monto, and the drugs issue from the 1980s to the present. It celebrates the resistance, solidarity and survival of the people of the Monto – saints and sinners alike.

The history and trees of Phoenix Park - meet at main gate, Phoenix Park (Cunningham Rd.), with Fergal Leddy, Spacraft

Physical activities:

5-a-side football tournament - the final with Robert Allen, An Talamh Glas

Sunday afternoon

1.30 pm - Fourth workshop session

15) Report back from Evian protests - networking workshop Team from the Good Bus

Earlier this month activists travelled over from Ireland to take part in the protests against the G8 (group of 8 most economically powerful nations) summit in Evian. In this workshop participants will be discussing what happened at the protests and what we can learn for future actions.

16) Preventing and coping with burnout: co-counselling for activists - action / skills

Elinor (Traveller And Settled Solidarity)

Burnout and all its manifestations are issues that most if not all activists will face at one point or another. The challenge of bringing about change on a global scale can have huge costs for individuals: traumatic experiences of repression, the impact of encountering poverty, war and ecological destruction, working under pressure, trying to sustain groups…. This workshop offers an introduction to practical skills in preventing and coping with burnout.

17) FEICed off? Actions for ethical investment - action / skills

Foyle Ethical Investment Campaign

Foyle Ethical Investment Campaign [FEIC] are involved with campaigning on ethical and unethical investment, particularly in relation to arms company Raytheon. In this workshop they will be discussing some of the actions they have taken and encouraging other activists to share their own stories. The workshop includes a slideshow presented on “Jan's Contraption”, a projector made from reused materials.

6.30 pm – Road blocks, community assemblies and factory occupations: experiences from the grass-roots movements in Argentina

Neka Jara - Aníbal Veron Co-ordination of unemployed workers (Piqueteros movement)

Neka is coming to share her experience of the vast movement of occupations and grass-roots organising and resistance that has swept Argentina. Over the last 2 years an incredible wave of social protest and action has engulfed Argentina. In the midst of the well-publicised economic collapse there have been massive street protests, numerous co-ordinated road blockades, over 200 factories under workers control, more than three hundred coordinated microenterprise cooperatives organized by unemployed women and men, countless neighborhood associations formed, and many other autonomous popular initiatives. Yet, little is heard about this in this country. This event is part of the Argentina Autonomista Project tour, bringing news of the struggle in Argentina to Britain and Ireland, and aiming to make connections with people struggling for social justice here.

8.30 pm – late: Party / Benefit gig

“A Gathering Storm”

Benefit (€5 in) for the Grassroots Gathering and Anarchist Prisoner Support.

DJs: Dr Groove, Crossphader, DJ Oi!

Music: Punk, electro, eclectic, ska, reggae, mind-blowing music

Venue: The Gingerman, Fenian St. (near Westland Row)

4.30 - Third workshop session continued...

14) Who pays for the environment? - discussion / debate workshop

Michael Murray (researcher on incineration and democracy), Dermot Sreenan (Campaign Against Bin Charges)

The issue of waste management - dumps and incinerators, bin and water charges - has given rise to some major movements in recent years, mobilising local communities around environmental issues. If the Minister goes ahead with imposing incinerators around the country, there may be a real wave of opposition to the proposal. At times (as with opposition to dumps and incinerators) social movements have found themselves working together; at other times (such as bin and water charges) the issues have been a source of real tension. Underlying much of the conflict is the question "who should pay?"
18) **Criminalisation and prisoner support** - action / skills workshop  
*Swedish autonomist (EU summit protests, Gothenburg 2001), Johnny X (Anarchist Prisoner Support)*

After the experience of Reclaim the Streets and direct action against the war, grass-roots activists in Ireland have been facing a rising tide of police repression: the criminalisation of the right to protest and the right to dissent from the New World Order. This workshop looks at the issues involved and discusses the practicalities of prisoner support.

19) **What kind of world do we need?** - discussion / debate workshop  
*Andrew Flood (Workers Solidarity Movement), Speaker from Gluaiseacht, Laurence Cox (Grassroots Gathering)*

The times are (hopefully!) long gone when socialist, feminist and ecological visions of the future were seen as opposites by different social movements. Anarcha-feminism, social ecology, eco-feminism, eco-socialism and many different approaches have tried to bridge the gaps over the last quarter-century. At the same time, there are still many differences between activists' visions of the future, and we don't talk as much to each other about what we want as we might if we thought we were genuinely working together. This workshop looks at the kind of world we need, the kinds of worlds we are fighting for in our different movements, and asks if our visions can work together or not.

**Physical activities:**  
Poi workshop *with James Farrell*

**3 pm – Coffee!**

**3.30 pm - Plenary session: "where to now?"**

Preparing for the World Economic Forum
- Report back from WEF workshop  
- Barry Finnegan, Irish Social Forum  
- Andrew Flood, Workers Solidarity Movement  
- Karen Elliot, Reclaim the Streets

Reports from other workshops
- Workshops that wish to report back should let co-ordinators know by Sunday 3 pm

What next for the Grassroots Gathering? and Getting beyond “the usual suspects”
- Laurence Cox, Grassroots Gathering

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