

## COP 15

Jonathan Wiksten

*The climate summit in Copenhagen held in December 2009 might, in retrospect, seem like a grand failure. In many ways it certainly was. A good part of the hopes and efforts invested into the meeting were essentially wasted. Still, taking part in the demonstration in Copenhagen left me filled with hope.*

The protest in Copenhagen lasted for roughly a week with some 50 000 participants, at least according to rather sketchy rumours and an estimations of different figures from various newspapers. With those 50 000 people came a massive amount of zealousness and creativity. A Welsh dragon met partying carbon traders and South-East Asian vegetarians in animal costumes urging those around not to eat them. I have experienced the feeling of international companionship before from other events, like the huge Taizé meetings or WSCF conferences; but in a certain kind of international environment, when united by one goal, mindset or at least common acceptance, there can be a rather special atmosphere of openness and warmth. With the one exception when the Black Bloc walked past us I felt this special atmosphere in Copenhagen, and I think most of the people we met, shared and talked with shared my emotion.

Those who were participating at the negotiations in Copenhagen representing nations such as Bangladesh or Bolivia, who have already been plagued by the changes taking place, must have found the experience incredibly frustrating. Seeing the proposed treaty going down the drain must have been a nightmare for those who already encounter the devastating effects of global warming.

I felt a striking contrast. On the one hand, I saw thousands of optimistic, determined and angry activists and on the other, we heard very pessimistic reports of the negotiating politicians. In one aspect, I believe the difference in perspective to be equally different. For us when participating in protests, rallies or events, cost is not an important issue. We made an effort to attend and there was little risk involved in us attending. Whereas, the negotiators have to consider a lot of issues; they're under pressure from NGOs, corporations and national governments. In that position, worrying about the environment is probably not their top priority.

If we want real change I wonder where that change will come from and I find it hard to believe that politicians will find real motivation to change; especially since they also have to consider both the voices of climate sceptics, environmental activists as well as oil companies who in turn could be co-funders of their political campaigns. Growth is partly built on semi- or post-colonial structures and therefore the incentive to give developing countries real options is essentially missing. I wonder if the concept of 'us versus them', spurred by nationalism is the biggest obstacle towards the realisation that when facing a global problem there really is just one humanity and that the consequences could ultimately affect us all, regardless of the relative success of different nations.

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In the several thousand headstrong crowd of protesting people the notion of solidarity was probably felt and shared with much greater ease. It gave me the feeling that the possibility for change was there; rather than resting with the debating negotiators. Seeing that huge crowd made me think change really is possible and that hope isn't a naïve feeling but a realistic perspective. But if change is to come, the meeting in Copenhagen convinced me that it will not come from politicians facing an overpowering workload but rather it will come from the protesting crowd that has to make the change happen or one day pay the price for their indifference.

As believers we often have a shared experience of belonging to something bigger than the boundaries of our home-towns or even the nation-state. Many young religious people go abroad to meet with people of other their own faith, but from a different nationality. Some even meet with adherers of another religion to openly discover and enjoy the differences that make us all interesting and the similarities that make us all human. To meet with people united through the same goal of climate justice gives me the feeling that we have the possibility to mutually create the change that is so direly needed. As believers we share a multitude of stories of just that happening, people coming together, united by faith or common strife and changing something for the better. For one thing, think of the anti-slavery movement where religious people came together moved by their faith in the equal rights of all humans and ended one of its time's greatest atrocities. Apart from just having the collective experience of change we also have faith in something greater than quarrelling politicians, a good God with a want for what is right. With that in mind, how can one not feel hopeful towards the strife to stop global warming?

*Jonathan Wiksten is a student of Political Science. He lives in Gothenburg and has been involved in the Swedish SCM since 2009. Currently, he is a member of its board. He hopes to obtain a BA degree in Political Science and Arabic this year. Although his final goal is rather unclear, Jonathan thinks he would like to work on the issues concerning migration or interfaith dialogue. He is also involved in the fair trade movement and particularly, in the possible future of fair electronics.*