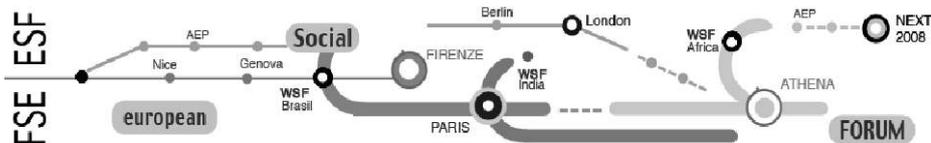


Report from the ESF

Joan Meredith reports from the fifth European Social Forum.



The fifth European Social Forum took place in Malmö, Sweden, from 17-21 September 2008. I attended on the last three days, so the first seminar I went to was *The Nakbar at 60*, asking what future is there for Palestine after 60 years of dispossession and 40 years of occupation? Dr. Barghouthi, an MP in Palestine and a former Minister of Information, reminded us that Palestine is the worst prison in the world and desperately needs international support. Unbelievably, Israel denies occupation. There is little support amongst Israelis for the Palestinian cause, although this is not the whole story as there are groups actively working in Israel for justice for Palestine.

The dreadful plight of Palestinian women and children in Israeli prisons was highlighted by a Danish lady who had visited Palestine, and all three speakers called for action all over the world in support of Palestine. The Palestinian people need help to stay in their own country. Just like Hamas today, the South African ANC, when struggling against Apartheid, was on the USA terrorist list.

In the evening, Rae Street from CND was the main speaker at the meeting *No to NATO; No to US bases and nuclear weapons in Europe*. It is clear that there must be resistance towards NATO. NATO has nothing to do with security. It is aggressive, war follows wherever it goes, and its worst crime

is the indiscriminate killing of civilians. The new nuclear missile base in Poland is linked with NATO, which continues to fight in Afghanistan, has now started a new front in Pakistan and has aggressively ringed Russia with military bases. It is without doubt a war machine.

Saturday saw a three hour long demonstration through the city by an estimated 15,000 people calling for 'Power to the People'. There were protesters from Cuba and many South American countries taking part. It was disappointing that the British-American contingent was not as strong as it had been two years ago in Athens.

On the last morning, I attended the seminar *Non-violence or Non-existence?* The speakers explored the role of non-violence within the movement for social change and they were inspirational. They were in no doubt that we CAN do it by peaceful means. They had evidence that within Europe, Palestine and South American countries, non-violence is achieving more than military action has ever done.

Malmö is certainly a friendly and interesting city. The highlight of the visit for me was meeting my friend Ulla Roder – one of the 'Trident Three' – who I hadn't seen for six years. As might be expected, she is carrying on her courageous campaign in her own country, Denmark.

Questioner's Garden Time

Whether you're already an enthusiastic organic gardener or have just thought idly about the potential delights of fresh, healthy, home-grown produce, take a look at this helpful and inspiring blog by Frances Laing. Frances talks about her gardening experiences since taking over a derelict allotment a couple of years or so ago, and the blog is full of gardening tips, recipes, useful links, chat and some lovely photos.

www.questionersgardentime.blogspot.com

Transition Chester Cooperatives

Cheryl Buxton

The Cooperatives Working Group of Transition Chester will explore and promote the idea of both housing and workers cooperatives within the city of Chester

A worker cooperative is one owned and democratically controlled by its employees. There are no outside or consumer owners; only the workers own shares of the business. For me, the attraction of a workers cooperative is that it has the objective of creating and maintaining sustainable jobs and creating livelihoods, in order to improve the quality of life of the worker-members, dignify human work, allow workers' democratic self-management and promote community and local development. Building strong local economies is essential to make a community resilient to the tumultuous effects of Peak Oil. My personal ideas for a cooperative include the idea of a café/shop selling locally grown produce possibly from some of the Transition community gardens that will be springing up within the city.

Housing cooperatives formed as a model for creating more sustainable communities and lifestyles are an obvious element in any transition culture and society. They provide an ideal structure for developing lower-carbon lifestyles. Car pooling, food growing and laundry facilities are just three examples of resource sharing that can be built into housing projects. Developments encourage social contact and a sense of neighbourhood and community. I also believe providing secure, decent and affordable housing for ourselves frees us to use our time in a meaningful and creative way.

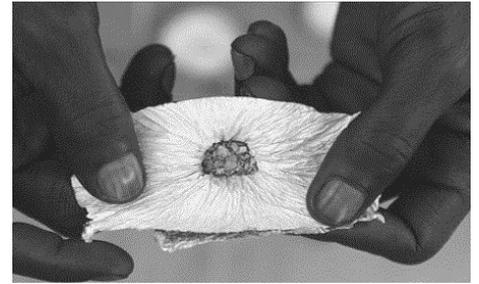
The first meeting of the group will be in February where we shall watch Eco Village Pioneers to inspire us about the possibilities of the collective. Venue to be confirmed. If you have any thoughts and ideas to share, or if you are inspired to donate a space or building to further our work please get in touch.

<http://transitiontowns.org/Chester>
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Unearth Justice

Zoe Jones

CAFOD's **Unearth Justice** campaign, which was launched two years ago, aims to shed light on the harm caused by gold mining. It is a campaign which has continued to grow and reach out to many communities affected by mining. Together with partners around the world, CAFOD is calling for changes to ensure that poor communities benefit from the natural wealth of the countries where they live, such as gold, oil and gas. Find out how you can get involved.



Mining and conflict

Gold is mined in many of the world's poorest countries, with three-quarters of our gold coming from developing countries. Globally, 13 million people work in small-scale mining, one million of them children. Yet, precious and valuable as it is, for many countries, sadly, gold has become a curse. The Democratic Republic of Congo is a tragic example. This vast country in central Africa has experienced how gold can help fuel bitter conflict in the country, as warring militias fight for control over mineral-rich land. Conflict over gold has cost thousands of lives in other developing countries too such as Indonesia, Ghana, Peru, Philippines and Guatemala.

Environmental destruction and dangerous pollution

As well as causing conflict in poor parts of the world, extractive industries also cause dangerous pollution and environmental destruction. Some opencast mines are so big they can be seen from outer space! The levels of pollution are highlighted in the shocking figures which show that globally, 40-70 per cent of small-scale gold miners suffer mercury poisoning and up to 47 per cent have a lifetime risk of silicosis. The situation in Honduras provides us with another example of this; the Honduran government has found dangerous levels of cyanide in the water supplies of people living close to the country's biggest gold mine. Rivers and streams close to mines in all countries can be polluted and hillsides and fields devastated, with damage lasting long after mines have closed. In addition to health risks and the destruction of their land, communities are often also forced from their lands and homes when new mines are developed.

In an age where energy and sustainability are at the forefront of everyone's minds, it is also worth considering that mining consumes up to ten per cent of the world's energy. CAFOD is calling on governments and mining companies to end this injustice, and give poor communities a greater say in whether mining is allowed, how it operates and who benefits, as well as working with local organisations which are supporting poor communities to stand up for their rights.

Campaign success

CAFOD began the campaign by calling on the gold industry to adopt an ethical social and environmental code of practice which respects the rights of local people, implements good labour standards and avoids the destruction of the natural environment. Recognising that consumers of gold in the UK have a vital role to play in ensuring that the gold we use doesn't damage poor communities, many supporters called on major high street gold jewellery retailers to sign up to the 'Golden Rules', and use their buying power to ensure that mining companies behave responsibly. More than 30,000 people signed gold pledges and petitions and campaigners presented gold chains to around 100 jewellery shops across England and Wales leading to over 25 major jewellery chains across the UK and America signing up to 12 Golden Rules for clean gold, promising to act to ensure that they are not using 'dirty gold' in their own gold supplies.

The next phase of CAFOD's *Unearth Justice* campaign focuses on the issue of community consent. Launched on 23 October, our hard-hitting media report *Kept in the Dark* highlights the case of Macambol in the Philippines. The world's largest mining company, BHP Billiton, is

planning a mine here worth US \$22 billion, yet the community feels that they haven't been able to have their say - that they have been excluded from decisions and kept in the dark about the proposed mine. The environment that the community relies on to make a living is under threat from the mining development. Although the community should have an informed say over mining on their lands, they claim that BHP Billiton hasn't informed them about potential impacts of the new mine and that its local partner has used bribery to buy support and silence opponents of mining.

What you can do

We're calling on BHP Billiton to show how it will prevent environmental damage and ensure that local people can make a genuine choice, based on independent information, about the proposed mine. We are therefore asking that you sign the petition and send a personal message of solidarity to the community today. Alongside this action we are also calling on people to join with CAFOD and FairPensions. UK pension funds invest millions of pounds of our money in mining companies, and the activities of some of these companies put poor people and the environment in danger. Mining projects like these are more likely to be disrupted or shut down, so can be a financial risk for your pension too. Almost all of us who are pension fund members have a stake in mining companies so we have the power to call for change. Please ask your pension fund to use its influence to stop mining companies harming people and the environment. To take part in either of these actions, or to find out more information, follow this link:

www.cafod.org.uk/campaigning
or contact CAFOD, 37 Kingsmills Rd, Wrexham LL13 8NH; 01978 355084.