Alternatiba in Bayonne, a successful mobilisation for climate justice

In the wake of the release of the 5th IPCC report 12000 people gathered in Bayonne, France on the 6th of October 2013, to present ways in which climate change can be combatted. This showed that it is indeed possible to raise awareness and interest about the challenges our climate faces, not only with activists, but also the general public.

Alternatiba showcases alternatives to climate change and the energy crisis, and which type of concrete means and solutions exist for reducing emissions here and now: smallscale agriculture; relocalisation of the economy; appropriate urban and rural planning; the development of alternatives to the unconstrained expansion of road traffic; frugal energy consumption; environmentally conscious habitation; regulation of financial markets; the ecological and social reconversion of economic production in all sectors; responsible consumption; redistribution of work and wealth; reciprocity; the reduction and recycling of waste; the protection of common goods like water, soil, forests, air, etc.

A great momentum

Conferences, exhibits, stands, workshops and practical demonstrations, as well as folk festivals, feasts, parades, song and dance – Alternatiba showed that there is a way out the crisis, and that real means exist to build a more solidary, more humane, more equitable, in short a more desirable society.

The fight against global warming does not have to be a painful process of adaptation of immense proportions, that exceeds our capacities. Rather, it provides a fantastic incentive, a welcome opportunity and an appealing prospect. It reveals a social horizon, where everyone can find their place. Aside from its quantitative success Alternatiba made a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of the people, and left behind a communal memory of positive energy and shared joy.
Towards the end of the day Christiane Hessel, married to the recently deceased author Stéphane Hessel, and the former director of Greenpeace-Spain, Juan Lopez de Uralde solemnly called for the creation of 10, 100, 1000 Alternatibas in Europe with regard to COP21 taking place in Paris in 2015. The goal is to: “call out our leaders on the dramatic consequences of the absence of a global, ambitious, efficient, binding, and fair climate treaty. We must mobilize populations to start the social, energy and environmental transition without delay, in order to avoid the point of no return, which will lead to irreversible climate change.” And also to: “bring together all of those who, by building alternatives or fighting for the struggle, are contributing to saving the climate, sometimes without even realizing it.”

The complete text is available in 25 languages here: [http://alternatiba.eu/projet/creons-10-100-1000-alternatiba/](http://alternatiba.eu/projet/creons-10-100-1000-alternatiba/)
A movement with promise

Since the 6th of October 2013 over a dozen Alternatiba-Initiatives have spontaneously been launched: Paris, Geneva, Brussels, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Rennes, Strasbourg, etc. Plans are in motion in Germany, Spain (Hego Euskal Herria), Austria, Romania... and even in Tahiti ! Many other initiatives will join them, setting in motion thousands of activists that are fighting for social and environmental justice.

We, Alternatiba Bayonne will, starting February 2014, put in place a process for the creation of multiple Alternatibas in France and Europe. To this end we have already taken the following steps:

– the dissemination of the „Call to create 10, 100, 1000 Alternatibas“ in 25 European languages. We will work at European level to make sure Alternatiba will not be limited to France but reaches out to Europe and the World. Our aim is to create Alternatibas in as many countries as possible.
– meetings with organisations and networks concerned with climate justice, to present them with the continuation of Alternatiba and to gather their ideas on establishment of the project (we met the Peasant Confederation, ATTAC, France Nature Environnement, the Nicolas Hulot Foundation, 4D, Friends of the Earth France, the coordinators of the World Social Forum and of the Local Social Forums, the Roosevelt Collective, the Collective for a Grassroots-based Transition, the International Trade Union Confederation, the Climate Action Network and the CRID (French platform for North-South solidarity)
– the dissemination of a 35 minute film subtitled in English, Spanish and German about the current climate challenge, the alternatives to climate change as well as the need to act now by creating more Alternatibas. It will be used to introduce public gatherings. We will organize 120 of these gatherings throughout 2014 and 2015.
– the compilation of the practical handbook „How to organize an Alternatiba, in your City, district or region“. This handbook describes how to organise an Alternatiba with a small group of people and a minimal budget
– the preparation of a tour through France and 6 European countries with a 4-seater bicycle, the symbol of Alternatiba (it symbolizes solidarity, group effort as well as the ecological and energetic transition). This tour will serve to network and strengthen the various local Alternatiba groups and to proclaim the movement and its message. It will serve to call attention to the various Alternatibas and to the coming COP21. Connecting over 90 different territories, the definite route will be announced in September 2014. Organizing this tour is an opportunity to strengthen the motivation of
potential volunteers to organise small or big Alternatiba events on their own and which would be located on the route of the tour. Starting October 2014 the exact stages and places of this 5000 km route will be promoted through a big media campaign. The tour will start on the World Environment Day, 5th of June 2015 in Bayonne and finish on the 26th of September 2015 in Paris, on the occasion of Alternatiba Ile-de-France. The media campaign on the tour is in fact a massive climate mobilisation. It aims at informing the public on Alternatiba and its message and at putting the spotlight on the grassroots mobilisation around the COP 21.

In a context where anything and everything is sold as solutions to climate change (geo-engineering, agro-fuels, nuclear energy, etc.), we will insist that genuine solutions are those that promote a social and ecological transition. As for the mobilisation around COP 21 in Paris, we will defend a 100% non-violent strategy.

- the creation of a European Alternatiba-coordination group, on the 22nd of February 2014. Composed of representatives of the various Alternatiba initiatives, its aims are to attend to common interests and concerns, facilitate information and ressource sharing, and kick-start further Alternatiba groups.

The continued development of Alternatibas between September 2014 and November 2051 represents the second phase of the Alternatiba movement. The widespread mobilisation of citizens that will unfold on the occasion of the COP 21 in Paris at the end of 2015, forms the third phase. How exactly it will look, will depend on the thousands of people who join the Europewide movement.

Documents

- the „Call to create 10, 100, 100 Alternatibas“ in 25 European languages: http://alternatiba.eu/projet/creons-10-100-1000-alternatiba/
- the practical handbook „How to organise an Alternatiba, in your City, district or region“ http://alternatiba.eu/ressources/kit-methodologique/ (soon available in English)
- a 5-minute video summary of the first Alternatiba in Bayonne, 6th of October 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eynsP0_md9w
- the open source Alternatiba film (35 minutes), subtitled in English, Spanish and German, which explains Alternatiba and that can be freely used for public screening: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP-IYAFyPfE