

MEDIATIZED CULTURAL ACTIVISM

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'LEGO: EVERYTHING IS NOT AWESOME!'

A CONVERSATION ABOUT MEDIATIZED ACTIVISM, GREENPEACE, LEGO, AND SHELL

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KEYWORDS

Greenpeace, LEGO, Shell, mediatization, activism, participation, mobilization, virality, humor, clicktivism, ethical economy.

ABSTRACT

This article is a conversation between Birgitte Lesanner and Camilla Møhring Reestorff, who have a shared interest in mediatized activism, participation, and social change. The conversation focuses on the mediatized activist practices that Greenpeace engaged in in their Save the Arctic campaign and their efforts to end the collaboration between Lego and Shell through the campaign *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* (Greenpeace, 2014). Our discussion starts with the concept of mediatization and how Greenpeace accommodates media logics and fosters online spreadability. We focus on the importance of popular culture in creating recognizability as well as the utilization of humor and culture jamming. The conversation then explores the relation between these mediatized practices and mobilization and tackles questions of activist participation – from online clicktivism to offline campaign at oil drilling sites. Wrapping up, the conversation dives into the consequences of the campaign and asks what kind of sustainable future Greenpeace envisions.

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GREENPEACE, SAVE THE ARTIC, LEGO, AND SHELL

CMR: The Arctic is heavily affected by climate change; “ice shelves in West Antarctica are not stable but are thinning rapidly” (Pritchard et al., 2012), and the decline of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet accelerates (Steig et al., 2012). This and the potential sea level rise have severe consequences now and in the future, not only for Arctic species that depend on the sea ice for survival and for the Arctic peoples whose ways of life depend on the animals and the ice, but also for the more than 600 million people, who live in low elevation coastal areas less than 10 meters above sea level (McGranahan et al., 2007), and the approximately 150 million people, who live within 1 meter of high tide (Lichter et al., 2011). Greenpeace’s campaign to halt climate change and stop the oil rush in the Arctic includes participation in international summits, publications, lobby work, and media campaigns. In our conversation we focus on Greenpeace’s media campaign while keeping in mind that these are inherently interwoven with Greenpeace’s other activities. We use the video *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* (Greenpeace, 2014) as an outset for discussing Greenpeace’s media strategies and engagement in the Arctic. *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* is targeted at LEGO’s collaboration with Shell, criticizing Shell’s oil drilling in the Arctic. It is the most viral video in Greenpeace’s history. It has 7,030,843 views on YouTube (March 16, 2015), and on Facebook it has 24,215 likes and has been shared 99,947 times (March 16, 2015). On YouTube the video is followed by a piece of text, which, while it acknowledges the love for LEGO, encourages people to act to stop LEGO’s collaboration with Shell: “We love LEGO. You love LEGO. Everyone loves LEGO. But when LEGO’s halo effect is being used to sell propaganda to children, especially by an unethical corporation who are busy destroying the natural world our children will inherit, we have to do something. [...] Greenpeace is calling on LEGO to end its partnership with Shell to Save the Arctic” (Greenpeace, 2014). The campaign was successful in that LEGO announced that it is not renewing its contract with Shell.



Figure 1: Oil is polluting (Greenpeace, 2014) Figure 2: Ice bear seeks refuge on the ice claimed by Shell

CMR: Birgitte Lesanner, you are campaign manager of Greenpeace Denmark and communication manager for Greenpeace's Nordic division. You have extensive knowledge of and experience with not only this campaign, but also generally about working with activist and activist campaigns. What do you consider the most important aspects of the Save the Arctic campaign's success in making LEGO forgo its collaboration with Shell?

BL: *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* is the campaign in which Greenpeace were able to mobilize a lot of people at the fastest rate. We have never before been able to obtain that many signatures so quickly, and we also very quickly reached more than 4,000,000 views on YouTube. The rapid spread of the video was new to us. But this is not only a result of the video being good and of us knowing our seeding strategy. It is also because the campaign relies on our previous work. It is something that we have built over time. We have 6,700,000 supporters of the Arctic campaign, and through our previous campaigns we have built a strong network of supporters. The more supporters we have in our network, the faster a campaign will spread. It is like a muscle that has grown really big, and we can flex this muscle in different campaigns. Ever since our Nestlé campaign, we have been adding more and more layers to our online network. This makes it easier to reach an extensive audience, and after the LEGO and Shell campaign, the muscle has grown even bigger, making it easier to mobilize support in our next campaign. So that is a part of the success.

MEDIATIZED ACTIVISM

CMR: You mention your previous campaign against Nestlé. In this campaign you, asked Nestlé to stop using products such as palm oil from companies that are trashing Indonesian rainforests, and you used the slogan “have a break, have a KitKat” against them.



Figure 3: *Hair and blood in a KitKat* (Greenpeace, 2010) Figure 4: *The orangutans' trees are being cut down*

The campaign visualized the threat towards the rainforest by equating the rainforest with the orang-utan. In one of the videos – *Have a Break* (Greenpeace, 2010) – blood

and hair from an orang-utan bleed out of a KitKat, thus underlining the connection between the rainforest and Nestlé. It is the orang-utan and the rainforest and not we – in the video personified by everyday office workers – that need a break. There seems to be a direct line between this campaign and *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* in regard to the mediatized logics of these campaigns. Both videos target a company by turning that company's recognizable slogan upside down. In the Nestlé campaign, Greenpeace points out that it is the orang-utan that needs to “have a break” and in the LEGO-campaign it is emphasized that contrary to the claim made in *The Lego Movie*, “everything is not awesome”. The videos appear to be two examples of mediatized activism in which both online and offline activities are adapted to symbols or mechanisms created by the media (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 31). While media logics and what counts as having appeal in broadcast and online social media are constantly changing and the development is not easy to predict, “designing protests events to capitalize on their media appeal [...] seems to be the only option” (Day, 2011, p. 155). I was wondering about the importance of the numerous remixes and references to popular culture, e.g. through hybrid mixes of genres, forms, and styles, and more generally about your experiences in regard to adapting the activist practices to media logics?

BL: One aspect of the success of the *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* campaign is our use of media solutions. The video utilizes references not only to LEGO and *The Lego Movie*'s theme song, *Everything is awesome* by Tegan and Sarah, but also to *Game of Thrones*, Santa Claus, and *Harry Potter*. The reference to *Harry Potter* is interesting because it is filtered through *The Lego Movie*. In *The Lego Movie*, the villain is named ‘Lord Business’ referencing Lord Voldemort from *Harry Potter*. In *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome*, Lord Business is a grinning, cigar-smoking oil tycoon from Shell. Our seeding strategy worked well because the video feeds into other environments around, for instance, *Game of Thrones* and *Harry Potter*. This ensures that the video is recognizable for a large audience, and we enter into environments in which there is already a lot of online



Figure 5: Lord Business as Shell CEO (referencing *The Lego Movie* and *Harry Potter*) Figure 6: John Snow, his direwolf Ghost and Ygritte (characters in *Game of Thrones*) drown in Oil

activity and where people are discussing with each other whether Hedwig [Harry Potter's owl] is this or that kind of owl.



Figure 7: Santa Claus and his helper drown in oil Figure 8: Emmet and Wyldstyle from *The Lego Movie* drown in oil

CMR: Your emphasis on the importance of pre-existing communities makes me wonder if LEGO was chosen as a target because there is already a strong online and offline LEGO community that taps into notions of playfulness and can provide a vantage point for the campaign to go viral?

BL: It is definitely important that LEGO has a huge online and offline community. At the time we launched the campaign, LEGO had the 9th best brand reputation in the world. This year they have been ranked number one, and the brand scores highly on a wide variety of measures such as familiarity, loyalty, promotion, staff satisfaction, and corporate reputation (BrandFinance, 2015). Their brand value definitely had an impact on the video going viral. But it is really important for me to make it clear that this was not the reason why we chose to target LEGO. We would have preferred it if LEGO from the beginning had realized that Shell and Arctic drilling are not cool. But they didn't, and so we made our campaign.

HUMOR, DISSENT, AND CULTURE JAMMING

CMR: Since LEGO did not choose to distance themselves from Shell and Arctic drilling voluntarily, you chose a strategy that simultaneously envisioned a dystopian world and made use of humor. This is a part of the mediatized strategy that I find intriguing. On the one hand it is obvious that there is a dystopian element in the video. The soundtrack is the soundtrack from *The LEGO Movie*, but in a slow version, and the "Arctic Lego diorama and all its cute inhabitants and animals, drown in oil. It was Lego all right, but not how the world knew it" (Polisano, 2014). Yet, on the other hand, and despite the dystopian imaginary, the activist practice is embedded with humor. This is interesting because it potentially captures the attention that has not already been granted, and because it con-

siders that “the potential pleasure that particular stunts may afford their viewers is a key concern in their design, a pleasure often conceptualized in opposition to the potential displeasure of the straightforward didactic” (Day, 2011, p. 148). The use of humor can thus be efficient because it makes the dystopia lucid and considers the pleasure of the target group. For me the kind of humor you utilize in the campaign is closely related to what has been known as culture jamming. Culture jamming is often understood as a practice that uses forms of mass culture against itself through tactics like parody and irony and that wages war against commodity culture. It is the practice of “[i]ntruding on the intruders, they invest ads, newscast, and other media artifacts with subversive meanings; simultaneously, they decrypt them, rendering their seductions impotent” (Dery, 2004). Do you consider the campaign to be a sort of culture jamming?

BL: We don't use the concept of culture jamming, we call it brand bashing, but I think it covers something similar. We are very inspired, for instance, by The Yes Men and the company Don't Panic that do these kinds of campaigns and produced the video. For instance, they have created an amazing video that you must see. It is about Google claiming to be Irish and not paying their taxes in the UK. Don't Panic dressed up as movers and entered the Google office with huge letters spelling O'Google, claiming that Google would have to embrace their Irish identity. They even instructed people at Google to say O'Google when answering the phone. This kind of humor and play with a brand is very efficient. And the market for these kinds of campaigns has not been extended yet. These kinds of campaigns are very recognizable and easy for the audience to relate to. In



Figure 9: LEGO's logo merged with shell

the LEGO campaign, we also made a version of LEGO's logo in which the name Shell was included. Your eyes immediately make the connection, and then you only need one sentence to make people act or seek further information, for instance "if you want to read more go to..." The idea of playing with visual identity is so appealing.

CMR: Culture jamming and the utilization of popular and remix culture can certainly be efficient, but it has also raised questions regarding the impact of the video. Some commentators have asked for a didactic and pedagogical form of communication and claimed that the video is too biased or that its mediatized strategy is damaging for Greenpeace's macro political position. Martin Breum, for instance, argues that it is unclear why the collaboration with LEGO would increase Shell's endeavors to seek out oil in the Arctic. He claims that Greenpeace has not documented a direct connection between the LEGO collaboration and Shell's Arctic projects and plans, and that ending the collaboration will not have any impact in the Arctic (Breum, 2014). How do you consider the relation between the pedagogical elements and the more entertaining and humorous aspects of the campaign?

BL: In Greenpeace we have a toolbox of five tools. It spells IDEAL – that is the way I remember it – investigation, documentation, exposure, action, and liaison. Every good campaign strategy includes all of these elements. We will never proceed with a venture without having thorough documentation. We will never post a video of a cat with a banjo just to get a lot of clicks. Our material will always be grounded in extensive campaign efforts that we have prepared by engaging researchers, companies, relevant politicians, and local communities.

However, if you want to reach a broad audience, the solution is to use humor and put forward one sharp and recognizable argument. If I want to reach the critics who ask to be informed, I write letters to the editor. But I also reach that segment because they get so annoyed with the silly video that they actively seek out information about our goals and aims. I don't think we are pushing away the segment of people who want pedagogical information, because they can find extensive material on our webpage, our blogs, our long interviews in *The Guardian*, and in all of our other communicative efforts. We have made pedagogical videos – and I like them – but if you want to reach a broad audience, the pedagogical videos don't work. For instance, we had a Belgium company make a video, and we had the Danish actor and writer Sebastian Klein do the voice-over, and it was great, but the video hasn't had that many views (Greenpeace, 2015).

CMR: The video with Sebastian Klein explains climate change issues really well. But even though its narration is pedagogical and the drawings are great, it does, as you mentioned, not have many views. Humor seems to be an excellent way to capture the attention that has not already been granted. But humor is obviously not a universal or always

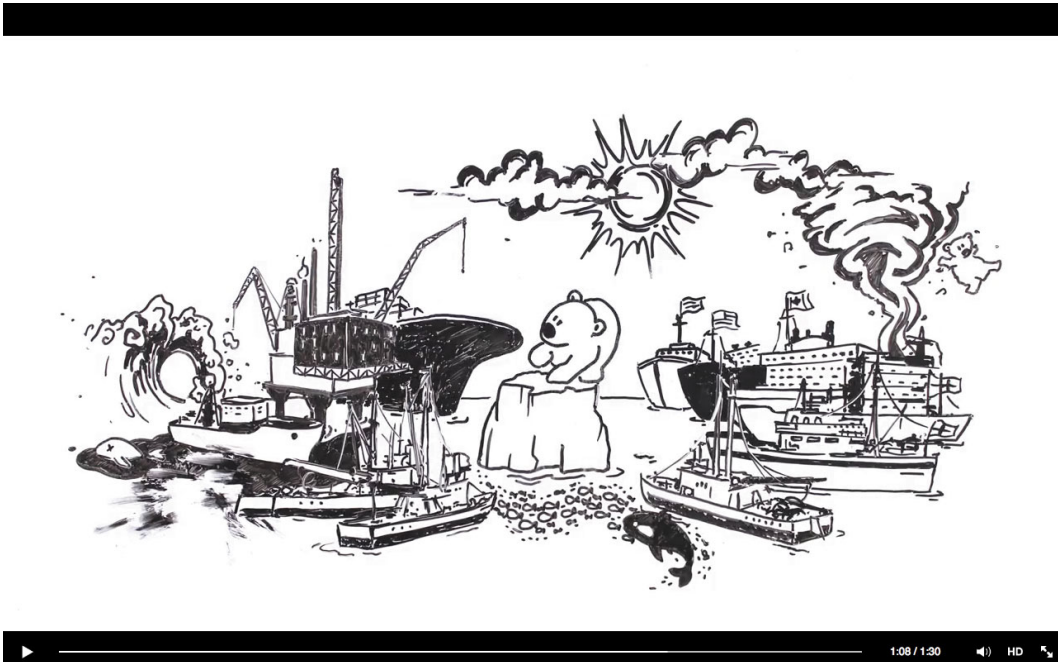


Figure 10. Sebastian Klein explains climate change in the Arctic (Greenpeace, 2015)

efficient solution. From your perspective, what are the limitations in using humor as a crucial aspect of the campaign effort?

BL: A great picture always works! But the use of humor also has limitations. Humor is not global. It is evident that *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* is produced in the UK. For the most part, people in Northern Europe and the US understand the humor, but there is a huge market that we do not reach with this kind of humor. We have had a lot of examples of this. For instance, (former) Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen claimed that Russia had infiltrated the anti-fracking movement and Greenpeace as a part of their effort to sell their gas. Everybody in Greenpeace was puzzled. It was just crazy. The first person from Greenpeace who was asked to respond to the claim was from our UK office, and he made a joke: “The idea we’re puppets of Putin is so preposterous that you have to wonder what they’re smoking over at Nato HQ” (Harvey, 2014). And we were laughing and figuring that that would be the end of it. But in Russia it gave way to a crisis, because the media did not get the joke. And this resulted in a conflict. We think of ourselves as global, but humor is also shaped locally. We don’t, for instance, reach China with this kind of video. It will be interesting to see if in ten years we will have developed a more global sense of humor.

PLAYFUL PARTICIPATION

CMR: LEGO has a strong emphasis on playfulness in their company ethos. They write: “Children and children’s play is a cornerstone in everything that we do. We are determined to contribute in a positive manner to the society and the world children will inherit. Our unique contribution, in that regard, is to inspire and develop children all over the world through creative playful experiences. A co-promotion contract as the one we have with Shell is one of a number of ways in which we can bring LEGO to more children and thus fulfill our promise about creative play” (Knudstorp, 2014). LEGO’s emphasis on playfulness and the co-promotion contract with Shell as a means to bring about creative playfulness is one of the reasons why I asked about culture jamming earlier. It appears to me that it is that kind of playfulness that Greenpeace utilizes in their campaign, when you argue that Shell is destroying children’s imagination. In one of your blog posts (Lesanner, 2014), you emphasize that the intervention in Legoland, which launched the campaign, was one of your personal highlights. Because the activists that conducted the campaign had fun playing with LEGO? in the days before the intervention. This leads me to ask what is it – from your perspective – that playfulness can provide an activist practice?

BL: Playfulness is for me closely related to the use of humor. In relation to LEGO, it is important because of their brand’s use of playfulness. The use of play in this context becomes a strategy of what you call culture jamming and I refer to as brand bashing. When we play, it becomes so closely related to LEGO’s aim that it becomes a humorous remark. It was something that we did a lot in this campaign. For instance, we had a demonstration in front of Shell’s headquarters where we built Arctic LEGO landscapes. But playfulness is also essential in our general practice because we have to engage in creative processes all the time. So we also try to have a playful organization. Otherwise you can’t think creatively and design the necessary campaigns.

CMR: The campaign also used children both in a YouTube video and in offline interventions primarily in the UK, where children playfully protested outside Shell’s headquarters in London by building their favorite Arctic animals out of oversized LEGO bricks. This is obviously a playful strategy, but what does the involvement of children bring to a campaign?

BL: This was also a part of the culture jamming strategy. Fifty children playing outside Shell’s headquarters is efficient, because who wants to be the one to stop children from playing with LEGO. But there are differences between the countries in this regard. Whereas Greenpeace in the UK had several actions involving kids, Greenpeace Denmark has a policy that stipulates that participants have to be over the age of 18. For me it is

important that participants are adults and capable of making their own choices regarding their participation. But in the UK there is a large Greenpeace community that also includes children.

PREDICTING SPREADABILITY

CMR: As already mentioned, *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* is the most viral video in Greenpeace's history. What you are saying about humor not being global and that it sets some restrictions on the reach of the video makes me wonder about the question of spreadability – what is it that makes some videos spreadable while other are overlooked? On the one hand, spreadability “refers to the technical resources that make it easier to circulate some kinds of content than others”, but it also refers to “the attributes of media text that might appeal to a community's motivation for sharing material, and the social networks that link people through the exchange of meaningful bytes” (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2013, p. 4). Is there something that you know works well when it comes to motivating sharing?

BL: We have already discussed parts of this, but it works when you are feeding into something that people are already talking about. The debate about oil is on-going online, and this debate is easy to feed into. Then there are the tricks we talked about. Don't Panic, the London based PR company that made the video, made calculated and unbridled use of characters from other universes – *Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones* etc. – to ensure that the campaign would feed into the already existing online communities. Furthermore, it is also a topic that is easy for people to comprehend. But despite the campaign being sharable, there were some aspects that argued against it being spreadable and that it would become such a rapid viral success – the time of the launch, for instance. We launched the campaign on the 1st of July. Normally there is less online activity at that time. The World Cup was in full swing, as I recall, and it is the Northern European summer holiday where people are not online to the same extent. The timing of the launch actually worked against it being a viral success, but the other parameters outweighed these issues.

CMR: You have already mentioned your seeding strategy and that the time of launch was not optimal. What did you do to ensure media circulation despite these obstacles?

BL: A part of our seeding strategy was to only post the video in one place when it was first launched. We are a big organization, so we could have posted it on multiple platforms and accounts e.g. on Facebook, but we chose to focus on one platform. But then YouTube took down the video, and then we posted it on as many platforms as possible: Facebook, Vimeo, and so on. But the single platform launch indicates a strong kind of ownership, and it works well to focus the attention.

CMR: You emphasize the importance of social media in ensuring the spreadability of the campaign. It makes me wonder about the role of traditional news media, and how your media strategy has evolved during your time working with Greenpeace?

BL: Today we read, I think, 95% of our news online. It doesn't mean that news are not produced as traditional news media, but they are online and they are fed to us through e.g. Facebook and Twitter. Therefore, we have to design campaigns that can be circulated through these channels. In that sense, we are more independent of traditional media. Just five years ago at Greenpeace we would have thought about timing our actions to take place at 6.30 in the morning, so that we could make it into the news bulletin at 7. We used to take the traditional media and their production processes into account. When we design campaigns today, we think a lot more about integrating something cool or fun that people can share on Facebook and about providing links to articles where you can get further information. So, rather than considering the production process of media, we consider what will make people share our content. It doesn't have to be a cute cat that plays the banjo! People also share what they find interesting. The process is turned upside down. We saw that in the news coverage of the campaign in Denmark. The news angle was "shut up, a million signatures so fast" (Hannestad, 2014).

CMR: I wonder if your argument is that the traditional news media cover what people do online rather than being first movers in relation to covering Greenpeace's campaign.

BL: To some extent yes. But we also launched the campaign in news media. We started out posting letters to the editor and ads in Danish newspapers, and in that sense we had a double strategy.

But we primarily consider online media when we are designing campaigns, because we know that this is a major aspect in the way people consume news. After LEGO decided to abandon the collaboration with Shell, we gave the story to *The Guardian* and to the Danish newspaper *Politiken*. So even though we design the campaigns to reach social media, we also consider traditional newspapers and TV broadcast news.

The campaign is built to accommodate online social media, but it doesn't mean that we do not consider traditional news media, but it is no longer the primary focus.

MOBILIZING GREENPEACE ACTIVISTS

CMR: Considering the importance of the online distribution of your content, I wonder about strategies for mobilizing support and activists. In new social movements theory, it has been argued that identity and interpersonal relations incentivize actors to be involved in a social movement. Scholars, such as Leah Lievrouw (2011), have argued that contemporary activist are not mobilized through clearly defined top-down organizational

structures or by recourse mobilization. Rather than acting on the basis of need or marginalization, contemporary activists act based on questions of identity, and they are often skilled knowledge workers. This appears to pose a very difficult task, because how do you mobilize people who have very different reasons for participating and have very different understandings of what activism is and how it ought to be conducted? And how do you simultaneously mobilize creative knowledge workers and the general public who might not be interested in participating in activist events themselves?

BL: The field of participants is definitely diverse, and in Greenpeace we talk about a ladder of engagement. You still have 'not-in-my-backyard movements' in which people are motivated by their own local circumstances, e.g. "there can't be a windmill here, because if the wing falls it will hit the school". These kinds of local circumstances motivate us all. But there is also a group of people who are looking to invest their identities in activist campaigns. In relation to skilled knowledge workers there are definitely also cases of issues that become fashionable. We have made analyses and tried to categorize people. There is a large group of people who seek to personally benefit from their participation. Their identity requires a boost, and they want to look cool by participating. Some people want gadgets. We generally don't like that due to environmental issues, but it can also just be a PicBadge on the Facebook profile picture showing support of the case. There is a large group of people that you normally wouldn't consider activists. But they are just motivated in different ways. For them it is not just about personal suffering or concern for others who suffer. In relation to this group, you have to choose a different starting point. You have to start out by identifying possible forms of actions, which can prompt them to become emotionally attached and invest their identity in the cause. Personally, I can be motivated by the attempts to reach these people. I need to be able to consider different groups.

CMR: You talk about different groups that need to be mobilized differently, and you mention your ladder of engagement. There is a huge difference between the various activist activities in campaigns such as Save the Arctic. There is a big difference between spreading Greenpeace's content, making a peaceful intervention in Legoland, and demonstrating at sea at an oil-drilling platform – and these different activities are bound to attract different kinds of activists. Some of the activists are literally risking their own safety and bodies. What do you think mobilizes the type of activists that are willing to risk their own safety? To what extent is it a question of identity, and to what extent do they want to impact the overall campaign effort?

BL: I can only talk about the activists that we engage with in Greenpeace. In my experience, the people who are placing themselves in front of a drilling platform are very firm in their beliefs. Yet, a lot of them are not interested in communicating with the media.

They want to act, but a lot of them say, “I want to do this, but you have to make sure that I will not be in charge of communicating with the media”. They have personal strengths and drives that prompt them to become engaged, and they find their motivation in the relation to others – for instance, climate refugees. Their strength is that they know how to transform something really abstract that might be going on at the opposite site of the planet to something concrete that they can act on. They take some huge leaps. But of course there is also a lot of identity work going on in these kinds of engagements, because the activists take on the role of being someone who acts.

CMR: The strength and personal engagement that you emphasize remind me of the activists in the Femen movement, which I have previously studied (Reestorff, 2014). Personal engagement for these activists and for some of the Greenpeace activists appears to rely on bodily presence and on situating the activist body in a situation of conflict. The protesters in the Femen movement notoriously stage their protests in order to ensure “photogenic situations of conflict” in which the protesting girls are framed as vulnerable yet brave bodies (Reestorff, 2014). I think this staging of the activist body as vulnerable but brave is important, not only because it is a mediatized figure – it is an activist imaginary that is spreadable – but also because it provides an entrance point for the activist to invest their bodies in their political framework. To me it seems like a way in which the activists – also in Greenpeace – simultaneously invest their affective and bodily registers and produce a certain type of identity as “someone willing to invest their body”.

BL: Yes. And it is really interesting to see how the journalists respond to these bodies. Some journalists go far in portraying the activists as heroes, and others are creating stories about the horrible the situation they are in. Journalists have difficulties grasping the complexity. It is of course horrible for the activists if they end up in prison, but they are also really strong. And they choose to engage in the activist practice fully aware of the risk. Portraying them as victims removes their agency. But it is always fun to see how the journalists choose to portray the activists as either victims or heroes. It is part of their toolkit to reduce the complexity.

CMR: Another aspect of mobilization is Greenpeace’s notorious status as an NGO that does not accept funding from governments, corporations, or political parties, and often tests various legal boundaries through its activist actions. In *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* it was the copyright laws that were put to the test. Greenpeace is – I would argue – thriving from being unruly, rude, cheeky, and constantly testing the boundaries. Furthermore, this might appeal to the activists that thrive on risk. This might be of relevance in relation to the effects of YouTube removing the video. Do you think it might be an advantage for you that YouTube took down the video?

BL: It is correct that we are testing the boundaries. It is an important aspect of Greenpeace's DNA. I do not even think we would be able to do it differently. In relation to the videos being removed, it is a bit trickier. Sometimes it works. In the Nestlé campaign, it was a huge boost for us that they removed the video from YouTube. The follow up – “this is the video you are not allowed to see” – worked really well. But in *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome*, it was not an advantage at that point in the campaign, because we had something good going on. Sometimes it can be an advantage and a huge ‘catch’ because people are thinking, “hey, what is going on with them” and “I have to see this video”. But in this instance it did not give us that kind of boost. But it is of course not a smart move by Warner Bros, who I think were the ones who had it removed, even though it has not been confirmed. I think that people are getting a bit immune. They are used to videos being uploaded and taken down all the time. It does not yield the same kind of buzz anymore.

ENABLING PARTICIPATION

CMR: In our talk about mediatization and mobilization so far we have implied but not articulated that mobilization is obviously related to questions of participation, and in relation to the mobilization of different groups and types of activists you even mentioned that you operate according to a ladder of engagement that describes the engagement of various kinds of activists. In an article about the campaign in *The Guardian*, Eliana Polisano – from Greenpeace UK – emphasizes the importance of co-creation. She writes: “We invited our supporters and allies to shape the campaign with us. We started a mini-figure backlash by sneaking into Legoland in Windsor to set up pocket-sized banners on the models of Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower. We distributed 5,000 mini figures to dozens of local groups to take to Lego stores and engage the public in mini protests. And we launched a competition asking our supporters, the Arctic needs your imagination, what would you build to save it?” (Polisano, 2014). A similar protest was made in Legoland in Billund, Denmark. These kinds of events seem to tap into the ethos of many contemporary activists groups. An ethos that “is explicitly do-it-yourself, organized around openly participatory methods and a belief that ‘new movements don’t need charismatic leaders; any small group of people can create change themselves’ (Shepard and Hayduk, 2002, p. 201)” (Day, 2011, p. 157). As we discussed earlier, it is challenging to mobilize a very diverse set of activists and supporters, not least if the supporters have to partake in shaping the outcome of the campaign. How do you facilitate participation among supporters and activists?

BL: When you run a campaign you will potentially have a lot of people who are willing to click or share content, a few who will place themselves in front of an oil-drilling platform,

and quite a lot of people in between. You have to find ways in which all three groups can participate in meaningful ways.

CMR: We have already extensively discussed the activists, who are willing to put themselves in front on an oil-drilling platform, but I really like your point that the two other groups also need to be empowered and that empowerment and action can take very different forms. This corresponds with scholars such as Christopher Kelty et al. who define participation as something which “concerns collective actions that form something larger so that those involved become part of and share in the entity created” (Kelty et al., 2013, p. 5). To evaluate the potential of a participatory practice, they outline several dimensions – including, for instance, access to decision-making, voice, and the collective, affective experience of participation. This is useful in order to understand that the participants in a Greenpeace campaign do not necessarily have to have access to, for instance, resource control, because they might be motivated differently. Furthermore, it underlines that people can participate in multiple ways, not just by participating in a demonstration.

BL: The people that we consider as activists are the ones who have chosen to volunteer for Greenpeace. They provide ideas and develop projects, and they participate in goal setting etc. But there is also a large group of people, who click and want to do more. They do not necessarily need or want resource control, but they might want to participate in some of the campaigns that we have planned – for instance, building a Greenpeace ship in LEGO and placing it in Legoland. We need to keep giving people opportunities to engage and act. There are plenty of people in the suburbs who want to act, but who aren't young anymore and are bound by all sorts of things. Participation works on so many different levels. People also participate in sports clubs, but even here there are limits. I, for instance, cannot spend every Wednesday on the board of a football club, because I have children I need to take care of. But despite different life circumstances and opportunities, people always find ways to participate and be empowered. In continuation of this, it would be ridiculous if Greenpeace did not utilize the potential for a variety of participatory practices, including online mobilization and support.

CMR: What you are saying makes sense, also in relation to the debate about clicktivism that often tends to neglect that these practices are parts of larger campaign efforts. It seems to be a way to reinvest online participation with significance.

BL: I actually have some significant statistics regarding clicktivism. If you give people opportunities to act beyond the 'click', it is very likely that they will. It is also a way to empower people who are bound to their home, for instance because of family obligations. You provide these people with an opportunity to act. *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* was a huge success, because we saw that clicktivism actually works. It worked, because

within very few days LEGO received more than one million emails in their inbox. They knew that this was only the first phase and that we had prepared for a long campaign effort. If this campaign had taken place ten years ago, it would have been much harder to prompt people to write to LEGO's CEO and let him know that the company's actions are crap. So I do not believe that clicktivism is insignificant, and we are not just click hunters. It actually works when it gives people the opportunity to take action.

CMR: You mentioned earlier that the activists who volunteer at Greenpeace very much impact decision-making and goal setting, but so far our conversation has primarily concerned three different groups of people who collaborate with Greenpeace in a manner in which their participation to a large degree is facilitated by Greenpeace. Do you consider forms of participation that are not facilitated by Greenpeace to be fruitful for Greenpeace?

BL: We are constantly toying with participation, but we do not have a formula. We suggest activities that people can do. For instance, you can bike for the Arctic, and you can place LEGO figures around the world and have us make collages of the pictures. You can also make paper hearts that are delivered to the Arctic Council. But sometimes people also contribute with material more or less independently of our facilitation. Sometimes people send us their own remixes of LEGO and Shell or even completely new ideas and approaches to the Save the Arctic campaign. People get inspired and do things by themselves. It happens rather often here at our office in Denmark that we receive something that people have made, for example a CD with a song or a video. People are spontaneously creative, and sometimes they share their products with us, even if they are not something that we have facilitated. And that is fantastic.

ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

CMR: So far we have been discussing Greenpeace's mediatized campaign strategies and the way in which these engage and mobilize participants. Maybe it is time we take a step back and discuss what changes you and Greenpeace want to facilitate by means of your campaigns?

BL: Our goal is to create a sustainable world. In Denmark, for instance, we consume three times the available resources on the planet – depending on which measurement you use. Since we only have one planet available, we need to stop this development and learn to live in a sustainable manner with the planet. We need to reduce our global footprints. This is Greenpeace's goal, and it is a huge goal. But it is our task to push for changes and green policies. A lot of analyses have already identified the largest global challenges. For instance, we are about to empty the oceans of fish. The problem is that we may reach the point where the stocks of fish have become so weak that they cannot recreate themselves.

A lot of stocks have already been overfished to the point of extinction, and we obviously need to stop that development. Greenpeace takes up these kinds of global challenges and insists on policies that facilitate sustainable ways of living.

CMR: In the context of our discussion, it is important to understand this goal in relation to LEGO. In some news reports it has been questioned why LEGO was the target and whether or not ending the connection between LEGO and Shell's Arctic projects will have any impact in the Arctic (Breum, 2014). This argument 'blames' Greenpeace for singling out LEGO for the sake of visibility and not impact and for not engaging in practical political negotiations.

BL: We need to make large-scale changes to keep up with the environmental challenges. Our strategies are often controversial. Some people want us to be more like the World Wildlife Fund. WWF is polite and meets with the companies. Greenpeace also meets with corporations, but we also realize the limits of these meetings, and therefore we apply strategies that force the companies to change. This strategy has worked with LEGO as well as with Nestlé and other companies. Because of our campaigns, these huge companies make changes and take huge leaps instead of small steps.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CMR: I am interested in companies and their role in ensuring a sustainable future. LEGO, for instance, emphasizes their responsibility as World Wildlife Fund partner, to windmill production, sustainable boxes, and safe products, and they focus on children, creativity, and the future world: "The world has changed since the first LEGO® brick was created in 1958, but we have not changed our fundamental belief that children have the right to creative, fun, safe, and high-quality play experiences in a healthy and safe world" (LEGO responsible business conduct). LEGO has these goals of being environmentally and socially responsible, but nevertheless collaborate with Shell. Is LEGO simply mobilizing the ethical consumer (Lewis and Potter, 2011) while simultaneously ignoring questions of sustainability and thus engaging in greenwashing?

BL: I do not think that LEGO's corporate social responsibility is greenwashing. LEGO is doing some really cool stuff. Since we talked with them in 2010 or 2011, they have reached their goal of 100% FSC certified print and packaging, and they are pursuing sustainable raw materials and zero waste in production. They have also set a goal of 100% renewable energy by 2020, and by 2030 their goal is to have replaced the oil in the plastic. Earlier this year, they announced that they would invest one billion DKK in research, development, and implementation of sustainable materials (Prazs, 2015). Of course they are smart and place their windmill park in Germany where they will get the most fund-

ing. But they are ambitious and actually do something about the environmental challenges. Most companies wait for laws to be implemented, but LEGO's corporate social responsibility strategy is actually doing what it promises. And they are ambitious. They have concrete ambitious goals, and they set out to reach those goals.

CMR: The fact that LEGO actually recognizes and acts on their social and environmental responsibility obviously raises questions regarding their collaboration with Shell. This collaboration seems to contradict their overall ethics and corporate social responsibility.

BL: In this case, the LEGO brand provided Shell with a social license to drill. But I do not think they had thought about it like that. A lot of companies do not consider the backing they give other companies. But they have to consider that, because we are no longer in a situation in which companies can ignore the responsibility they have and the brand value they might give to other companies. Our goal was therefore to stop the social license to drill that LEGO gave Shell.

CMR: Shell actually also has a strategy for corporate social responsibility. As a part of their strategy concerning environment and society, they write: "Our approach to sustainability starts with running a safe, efficient, responsible and profitable business. We also work to share benefits with the communities where we operate. And we're helping to shape a more sustainable energy future, by investing in low-carbon technologies and collaborating with others on global energy challenges" (Shell). They also have an eco-marathon in which student teams from around the world are challenged to design energy-efficient vehicles and participate in a race. I find it interesting that even Shell, as an energy and petrochemicals company, find it necessary to take the ethical consumer into consideration. It seems to confirm that the figure of the ethical consumer has become normalized (Lewis and Potter, 2011, p. 8). Yet, it also indicates that "marketers and advertisers have been quick to jump on the green bandwagon, increasingly embracing the language of corporate social responsibility and incorporating green rhetoric and imaginary into media-making strategies" (Lewis and Potter, 2011, p. 7), even when this might merely be a case of greenwashing.

BL: Shell is definitely not doing a bean. They are engaging in greenwashing. For instance, Shell's eco-marathon gets a lot of publicity. But the eco-marathon is nothing compared to the damage of Shell's other activities. In this case, the language of corporate social responsibility is simply blurring a negative environmental impact and the amount of publicity is highly problematic. *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* is based on years of work and research. We realized that the only way to target Shell, now that they were not drilling because it went so awfully wrong previously, was to hit them where it hurts – at the level of the board of directors. We couldn't strike Shell on their brand, because it is not very strong. It is not an iconic brand. It's just a place where you stop on the highway.

We needed to target their social license to drill, and in that their collaboration with LEGO was key.

PRACTICAL POLITICS, MICRO STEPS, AND MEDIATIZED LARGE-SCALE STEPS

CMR: Earlier you mentioned the need to take huge steps in order to accomplish the necessary environmental changes. This emphasis on large-scale steps seems to indicate a break both with the notion posited by some critics that it is necessary to act within the institutional systems of practical politics and with the notion of micro steps posited by, for instance, David Gauntlett and Amy Twigger Holroyd. They write, “*any* small step can be a good and powerful step! I mean, where a person is taking a small step into the world of creating and making and sharing, rather than being just a consumer of stuff” (Gauntlett and Holroyd, 2014, p. 2). How do you consider these small steps in relation to Greenpeace’s work?

BL: Of course it is our personal obligation to reduce our footprints and consume in a sustainable manner. But we have reached a point where we need to aim for massive changes. For instance, we need to reconfigure the policy of fishing. We need to reorganize fishing so that we preserve 40% of the ocean. Then we will still have healthy fish stocks and we can keep eating fish. These kinds of huge transformations are necessary, but they are also difficult, and they require large-scale policy making. Of course we also need to take sustainability into consideration when making personal choices. For instance, I would never buy eel or tuna, but this kind of action is not what is going to change the world. The way to change, for instance, overfishing is to change how politicians and corporations administer our oceans.

CMR: This is interesting in relation to the new forms of shared economy in which people are connecting and collaborating in new ways. On the one hand, what you argue is that there are potentials in new forms of participatory culture and new economies, but on the other hand, these kinds of practices do not appear to be enough if we are to make large-scale changes. J.K. Gibson-Graham has talked about “a politics of the subject” and argued that if “to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and if that relationship is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one, but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies” (Gibson-Graham-Graham, 2006, p. xvi). Are you arguing that there is potential in this “politics of the subject”, but only insofar as the subject is tied to a larger community?

BL: There are huge potentials in participatory culture and new economies. And the potential lies in us acting together. I think shared initiatives are more important than individual initiatives, such as me remembering to turn off the light. The potential lies in

the ways in which we find new solutions and create new communities. Initiatives such as the fancy forms of recycling that we currently witness in Copenhagen and new forms of organic living do not change the world tomorrow, but they are fundamental for making a difference. However, I think that it would be wrong for Greenpeace to have that kind of focus, because we need to pursue huge transformations. In relation to the climate, we need massive changes in the international administration and political decision-making. Therefore we do not do campaigns targeted at the individual and his or her everyday life. This is not where the large change will happen. I do not mean to sound arrogant. All the small steps are important. But in Greenpeace we need to utilize our size and international reach to take global responsibility. We have an obligation to push for large-scale changes.

CMR: I find it interesting that you use mediatized activism as a way not necessarily to engage with either “the politics of the subject” or the practical politics of corporations and governments, but as a strategy to mobilize participants and thus push for large-scale changes. This intersection between your mediatized activism and the people who participate in online or offline protests is interesting, because it seems to imply that even though Greenpeace does not facilitate the individual micro steps of everyday life, it fosters the participants’ engagement and belief that take they can partake and contribute to bringing about the required large-scale changes.

BL: There definitely is an exchange. People often call us to ask for help to live in a more sustainable manner, and we are obviously inspired by many of the initiatives. But most importantly, the exchange concerns some of the same mechanisms that we have discussed earlier. Not all people have the opportunity or desire to participate, for instance, in a demonstration, but they might still have the right to demand changes towards a sustainable world. It is important that people have the opportunity to act. In campaigns, such as *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome*, we provide an opportunity for people to be a part of and help answer the demand for large-scale changes, and through this community Greenpeace can demand policy changes from corporations and the international community. As the success of *LEGO: Everything is NOT awesome* shows, this is a powerful strategy that actually can result in large-scale changes.

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