

Cre8 Summit Begins!

June 14, 2005

Cre8 Summit has begun, the community garden built on land where a much-contested motorway is planned through the Gorbals, an historic, low income community in Glasgow. The actions are finally underway. And it went beautifully!

At first the beginning seemed inauspicious. Saturday night the van carrying the kitchen for the garden got stopped by the police south of Glasgow. The driver got into the back of the police car to answer some questions and was whisked off without a word, leaving the van with no one to drive it. Sunday morning, June 12, dawned gray and drizzling. I declined to be on the team that got up at 5 AM to put up tents, but made my way down around 9:30, wondering what I would find.

The tents were up, and a few people were venturing out into the rain to continue to pick up garbage. The police had come by, and simply wished everybody luck. A seating circle of old tires had been made in a central area—a continuation of an area the neighborhood drinkers had already pioneered informally. Plants had been delivered, and a truckload of soil. We spent some time wandering around, trying to decide what should go where, while Rob drew up a map. We had advertised a 10 AM time for a community design process, but no one showed up, which didn't actually surprise me.

The organizers of the project deeply want to involve the community in the overall design, but my experience with such things has been that people get involved in actually doing things. An overall design seems very conceptual and overwhelming—building a raised bed or planting a flowerbed is fun and creative and that's how people feel a sense of agency and ownership. But around noon we all gathered, looked at the map and what was already on the ground, and came up with a plan that built on what was already there—paths that dog walkers had made, the seating circle, a small beginning of a community garden in a few bathtubs up front. These things were, in fact, the input of the community, writ upon the ground.

As the afternoon wore on, the sun came out, and more people joined in. The bike ride arrived at 2 pm, with the JAM74 group who are organizing to stop the motorway scheduled to go through this vacant lot. A reporter from a local paper came out, and a local artist arrived to lead a mosaic workshop. Two young women built an herb spiral out of 'urbanite'—broken up concrete. We filled tires with gravel and planted a few with ornamentals. We made a small vegetable garden in a big tub. A group of energetic men, joined by some of the neighborhood boys, attacked the high bank around the site with pickaxes and spades, and made a flat entranceway. Other neighbors came by to plant things or just to see what was going on.

The mood got brighter and brighter as the sun poked out of the clouds, then scurried back in periodically to let a few bursts of showers rain down. The garden grew! Abi

from Talamh came by and showed me how to weave a living willow lattice arch—a skill I've been longing to acquire! And by the end of the day, the missing kitchen had arrived. The piece of barren, toxic, trashed ground we started with had been transformed into the beginnings of the community gathering place the organizers had dreamed of creating. After all their hard work, frustration, overwhelm, and fears, they had done it! And the best news—we got word that the motorway construction has been put back to at least 2007! That gives the community more time to organize, and more time we can be assured that our garden will remain. It's a partial but important victory that contributes to the joyful mood as we continue to plant and beautify the waste ground.

-- *Starhawk*

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The G8, the annual agenda setting meeting of the heads of state of the eight most powerful countries in the world, will meet in Gleneagles, Scotland, July 6-8. For more information on the mobilizations, or to donate directly to the action, see:

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Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of *The Earth Path, Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising, The Fifth Sacred Thing* and other books on feminism, politics and earth-based spirituality. She teaches [Earth Activist Trainings](#) that combine permaculture design and activist skills, and works with the [RANT trainer's collective](#), that offers training and support for mobilizations around global justice and peace issues.