



student action on world poverty and the environment

Forum 2006: Organisational Strategy 2006 – 2012

Overview

Introduction

This session was part of the process to develop a new organisational strategy to guide the direction and development of P&P over the next 6 years.

The forum was split randomly into 3 groups each focusing on 2 of the 6 focus questions which have been identified through initial consultation and SWOT analyses carried out between September 2005 and January 2006

1	What are the principles and values that should underpin our organisation and activities?	Group A
2	How can we be more financially secure and independent?	
3	Responding to Devolution – how can P&P work more effectively in Wales, Scotland and N.Ireland, whilst still maintaining a co-ordinated national campaigning network?	Group B
4	How can we improve the impact of our campaigning?	
5	Who should we try to include in the People & Planet network?	Group C
6	How can we raise our public profile and what kind of profile would we like to develop?	

We had just 1 hour 30 minutes for this session which meant that some groups were only able to focus on one of their questions or certain aspects of the questions.

What happens next?

- We are preparing a page for the website which will explain the objectives and process for developing an organisational strategy for 2006-2012.
- Everyone is encouraged to consider the key questions and submit any ideas or comments directly to Ian, P&P Director, at ian.leggett@peopleandplanet.org
- We will be carrying out further consultation based around the 6 key questions above between now and June 2006. If your group would like a chance to discuss one of these areas further, we can facilitate a session as part of our outreach to you in the summer term. Please let your contact at the Oxford Office know that you would like to get involved with this.

What is the overall timeline?

- A first draft of the strategy will be ready in September 2006. There will therefore be an opportunity for the network to input further at the Summer Gathering.
- The final version of the organisational strategy 2006-2012 will be approved by the Management Committee by December 2006. (this change in the timeline was requested by the Management Committee at their meeting on the 18th of March)

Forum 2006: Organisational Strategy 2006 – 2012

What are the principles and values that should underpin our organisation and activities?

Facilitators: James Lloyd, Katie Higgins

Summary

Most of the discussion that took place on principles and values focused on the aspects of P&P with which participants identified personally – either because they were in accordance with their own values or because they seemed to sum up their experience of being in a People & Planet group or a member of the network.

It was really difficult to move the discussion into a consideration of how to communicate what P&P is to those 'external' to it without using the ideas and terminology that participants were already familiar with. However, everyone seemed to enjoy sharing their ideas and perspectives about P&P and trying to understand our shared identity.

Key ideas that people seemed to agree with or feel to be important were:

- P&P is a large national network made up of autonomous groups of students
- P&P groups are autonomous in their organisational structure and the campaigns they choose to run
- P&P campaigns for a more just and sustainable world, focusing on issues of poverty, human rights and the environment
- P&P empowers students to
 - take action themselves
 - enable and encourage others to take action

Agenda

- **Initial go-round** of what participants think these are, based on their view/experience of P&P
- **A look at the 'mission statement'** contained in the strategic review '03-'06, and an explanation that we'd like something more 'snappy' and useful for communicating what P&P is to 'external' people/organisations
- **Open discussion** about our principles and values (existing or potential)
- **Elevator exercise:** participants split into groups of 2 or 3 and were asked to imagine they had run into one of 6 types of individuals 'external' to P&P in an elevator. They were asked to explain who and what P&P is in 1 minute to a politician/MP, a potential funder, a member of the public, another student, a member of the media or a member of another NGO.

Results of the go-round

- Student-lead
- democratic
- multiple approaches to campaigning
- not single-issue organisation/campaign
- people-power
- local and global dimensions within campaigns;
- lots of groups;
- network;
- provides a way of putting ideas and principles into action, instead of just talking
- about them;
- ethical, environmental;
- human rights and injustice focus;
- fun;
- a non-threatening way into activism; autonomous groups;
- allowing people to learn more about issues and then being able to pass on/share their knowledge with others around them;
- speak up for those with no voice in the global south or elsewhere

Comments on the existing principles and values outlined in the last strategic review

There was broad agreement and identification with the sentiments expressed in the mission statement, particularly with our focus on a just world, impact and empowerment.

However, almost without exception, nobody was aware of these or any other existing values and principles or the overall aims of P&P.

Everyone agreed we should communicate our overall aims better to groups to help people identify with and feel proud of P&P as an organisation and a network
People & Planets Old Mission and Values statement

People & Planet exists to help create a just and sustainable world. We do this by involving students in campaigns on issues of poverty, human rights and the environment. We aim to achieve both change in the world (i.e. impact) and change within individuals that enables them to put their ethics into action (i.e. empowerment).

People & Planet's identity will continue to be focused on a radical analysis of global problems (using the word "radical" to mean that we search for root causes) and on being an organisation which catalyses grassroots action.

Task

Each person was given 3 stars at the end of the session, which could be placed by the words or ideas people felt should be key principles or values within People & Planet's old Mission and Values statement.

The results were: "exist to help create a 'sustainable' world"	- 9 stars
"exist to help create a 'just' world"	- 7 stars
"change in individuals (empowerment)"	- 7 stars
"involves students"	- 6 stars
"campaigning on human rights"	- 6 stars
"campaigning on poverty"	- 4 stars
"campaigning on all these issues"	- 4 stars
"change in both"	- 4 stars
"campaigning on the environment"	- 3 stars
"radical"	- 2 stars
"change in the world (impact)"	- 1 star
"grassroots"	- 1 star

NB – this was a very rushed process and it was unclear precisely which words or concepts people were trying to highlight or 'prioritise'. We had no time to check this with the group, so the above results are my interpretation.

Open discussion about our principles and values

- People liked the idea of People & Planet having a shared overarching mission and set of values and thought it would be useful to help foster a sense of belonging to and shared identity with a national network.
- The autonomous nature of People & Planet groups was something everyone felt was really important – groups organise themselves in different ways, choose which campaigns they run, which tactics they use and in some cases identify their own 'principles and values'. People felt that whatever mission statement or principles and values P&P commits itself to shouldn't be too rigid or compromise this autonomy.
- There was a question raised about what our definition of a 'just' world is. One individual thought it was important to define this, as it affects our analysis and approach to campaigning. Time constraints meant we couldn't discuss this further.
- Some people were surprised that we seem to have no explicit commitment to a non-violent approach. Everyone thought that this should be a core value of P&P. It seemed that many groups already have a commitment to non-violence, and it was suggested that it is maybe something groups continue to decide upon autonomously (but nobody disagreed to it becoming a core principle).
- There was a question raised about the nature and/or extent of our 'radical' approach. A few people thought that it was really important we continue to have this, but questioned how consistent we are with it. The comment was made that P&P provides an *accessible* way into more radical activism. It was asked whether we take our 'radical analysis' approach further by encouraging 'radical thought', as part of our commitment to or understanding of empowerment. People generally seemed to think that there needed to be more clarity around the question 'how radical are we?'
- Another issue that a few people were unclear about was how 'grassroots' we are in terms of being student-lead. Can we be truly grassroots if we involve just students? And how do we remain grassroots in our campaigning if we involve other people? The facilitators suggested this is an issue that would be addressed in one of the other sessions.

Elevator Exercise

There were six small groups of 2 or three and each group carried out a one minute role-play whereby they communicated the core principles and values that identify P&P to a different key external individual. The key words used by each group were as follows:

- **MP:** P&P is a network of students, campaigning on human rights and the environment.
- **Potential funder:** P&P empowers a huge network of students and makes a huge difference in the world with very limited resources!
- **Member of the public:** P&P is a student-lead, inclusive, politically independent campaigning organisation.
- **Another student:** P&P is lots of fun, is made up of loads of students running lots of different campaigns together, we also have great parties!
- **A member of the media:** we empower students to act on issues such as (then give examples of the current campaigns we are running)
- **Someone from another NGO:** P&P is a large, awesome, grassroots student network campaigning on environmental and poverty issues with university and sixth form students.

Forum 2006: Organisational strategy 2006 - 2012 Responding to Devolution

This session was attended by 7 students. 3 from Scottish groups, 2 from Welsh groups and 2 from English groups.

The attendees brainstormed the issues involved, these have been separated into different categories for ease of use with some comments at the end that didn't fit into categories.

<i>Issue area</i>	<i>Issue</i>
Opportunities of devolution to regions	Many issues including environmental and development issues are devolved to Scotland, not so much to Wales
	Most NGOs have Scottish and Welsh branches so there are opportunities to work in coalition
	School systems are different in Scotland, for example people in 6 th year (Year 13) have very small workloads as they do most of their exams the year before
	Materials printed in gaelic could attract new audiences and funding, particularly in Wales
	There is room for much greater regional support of both Sixth form and Uni groups
	Greater emphasis on regional events
Funding opportunities	There is money sitting there for youth engagement not being spent, particularly in Scotland
	Trusts, statutory funds and EU grants are available to the regions and are not being tapped at present
Problems with current system	People & Planet events are too far away from regions which causes regional groups to invest greater time and money in getting to them
	There have been missed opportunities at the regional level to win campaigning victories
	Failure to ignore Welsh language alienates some potential recruits
Problems with devolution	Another level of bureaucracy
	It also takes time to travel internally, so for example people in the Midlands of England are better placed to support Aberystwyth than an office in Cardiff would be
	Regionally dominant groups such as Edinburgh in Scotland could become even more dominant

- Edinburgh group were surprised and didn't expect to be told they couldn't go ahead and set up their own support office- confusion over control of P&P as an entity. Does Oxford office have to okay groups setting up their own support offices?
- The students were in agreement this would be a pragmatic move to respond to the broader political context rather than it being for cultural reasons.
- Should England also be devolved, northern groups not represented by London.

The students were then asked to place themselves along a spectrum line of four options.

Option number	Option	Number of students who went for each option
1	Same as now	0
2	Separate regional officers supporting regions from Oxford in order to provide relevant policy advice	1
3	Separate support offices same legal entity	3-6
4	Lots of separate mini-P&Ps operating at the regional or even sub-regional level	0-3

N.B. 3 students were placed between the third and fourth option

Everyone in the group was happy to move forward to consider the third option on the basis of two caveats:

- Noting the differences between Scotland and Wales
- Small groups should still be able to participate with UK wide network

In discussing the third option the following challenges and solutions were discussed:

Challenges	Solutions
Dominant regional groups	Smaller regional groups would be better supported by a devolved office
Contribution to national campaigns	P&P should retain national policy, people can recognise the difference
Location of events	Varying location and regional meetings
Funding	No time to discuss
Legal entity	No time to discuss

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How can we improve the impact of our campaigning?

The group started by considering 2 key areas: Publicity & Campaign progress

Publicity	Campaign Progress
Need to consider our target audience	We want to achieve policy change
This needs a flexible framework	Transparency is important
Need to develop our profile outside Universities too, develop more connections	Should keep positive focus
Should focus on interesting, popular stunts	Resource packs are useful
Should be about more than students: - schools and other local groups - Action groups - local producers - correspondents	Communications between groups and with support office are important
Campaigns should be visual	National lobbying
Street theatre	Developing links with international groups
Benefit in joining with other societies	

The group then identified 4 key areas:

- Communications
- Image
- Tactics
- Fundraising

Some of the ideas generated in the subsequent discussion included:

Communications

- Good handover of resources & handover pack from one year to next
- Support office to keep network informed on campaigns
- Interns and others should be included on groups' email lists so they can keep up to date with campaign progress
- Each group should identify a member responsible for communications
- Web forum to facilitate links between groups
- Calender of key campaign dates
- Regional contact lists to facilitate communication within a region
- Review of email lists, who is on them and what are they for?
- Also need to focus on external communications
- Need to communicate with other like-minded groups

Image

- We should emphasise positive solutions, rather than doom and gloom
- Should be seen as accessible
- Image shouldn't be 'too lefty'
- Need to consider our marketing

Tactics

- Should focus on building awareness, impact and empowerment
- Should provide further information on campaign
- Focus on 'less is more' (keep campaign tactics simple)
- Should allow space for critical reflection

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- **Who should we try to include in the People & Planet Network?**
- **How can we raise our public profile and what kind of profile would we like to develop?**

This session was aiming to garner opinions on the two key questions of the strategic review above.

Due to time constraints, the group concentrated its time on the first of these two questions- in particular looking at the diversity of the P&P network at present, and the potential for increasing our diversity in the future. However, many of the issues raised in the discussions had direct relevance to the second question, particularly when the group considered how image affected membership profile.

What's our current profile?

After a brief introduction of the issues and an explanation of the aims of the session the participants were split into smaller groups to discuss the current profile of the P&P network. Following their discussions they fed back their observations to the wider group. Key observations on our profile are detailed below.

- Closely tied to demographics of the university- eg Teeside broadly working class backgrounds, LSE high number of international students
- Hard to recruit members from outside usual friendship groups
- Most groups reported that they had a predominantly white membership
- The groups were largely made up of British students
- Most groups reported that a majority of their members were undergraduates
- Mainly 'arty' types- humanities degree courses eg English/Sociology. Not many vocational courses represented.
- Some PG, but few 'mature' students

Why is this the case?

Following this feedback, the group chose to focus on four key areas of their previous discussions: Course, Age, Cultural and Racial, and Nationality diversity. For this exercise the group was split into four smaller groups, each focusing on a different area. They were asked to structure their discussion around three questions:

- What are the benefits of inclusion?
- What are the barriers to their inclusion?
- How can we overcome those barriers?

Subject/Course Diversity

Benefits of inclusion

- Skill sharing from different areas- eg management/marketing skills. Mutual benefits.
- Basic increase in manpower

Barriers to joining P&P

- Assumptions made about P&Pers- Hippies
- Lack of understanding of the reality of P&P and the issues it engages on

Solutions

- Increased promotion and engagement
- Empower them to run campaigns that interest them- link to subject areas
- Emphasise the openness and diversity of opinions within P&P

Age Diversity

Barriers to joining P&P

- Many older students have family commitments and so have difficulty attending meetings
- Often don't attend big recruitment events like Freshers Fair
- PG term times are often different to the UG year
- PG students have a higher workload and so don't have the same time to commit to activities
- The existing young profile of P&P may be intimidating to older prospective members

Solutions

- Vary the timing of meetings or events
- Develop other methods of interaction- eg web forum to make it easier for those with commitments to contribute

Cultural and Racial Diversity

Barriers to joining

- Perceptions that P&Pers are all hippies
- P&P can be viewed as a clique- close friends can be intimidating to try and involve yourself in their circle
- Viewed by some as a 'Christian' organisation, isolating those of other faiths

Solutions

- Societies specifically target distinct ethnic groups eg Afro/Caribbean society

International Student Diversity

Benefits of Inclusion

- We campaign on international issues and so should have an international membership
- The new ideas and perspectives of international students would bring a higher level of sophistication to our campaigns

Barriers to joining

- UK centric approach to campaigning- the NGOs involved, the campaign targets
- Terminology and language barriers
- Often in the UK for a short period of time which has a limiting effect on their level of involvement- eg can't join the committee

Solutions

- Allow international members to frame the debate, and develop issues which are relevant to them
- Hold committee elections at the start of new terms
- Forge links to other societies, particular international ones eg Chinese society
- Hold events highlighting international aspects of P&P's work such as a One World or Global Week
- Organise a social event to start the year including FT products and a meet and greet along with a talk introducing P&P

Who should we reach out to?

The discussion then moved on to focus on how P&P groups are predominantly based in 'red-brick' institutions. The participants brainstormed ideas on groups and organisations which P&P could expand to in the future.

Some of the more interesting ideas to arise from this section of the workshop are outlined below.

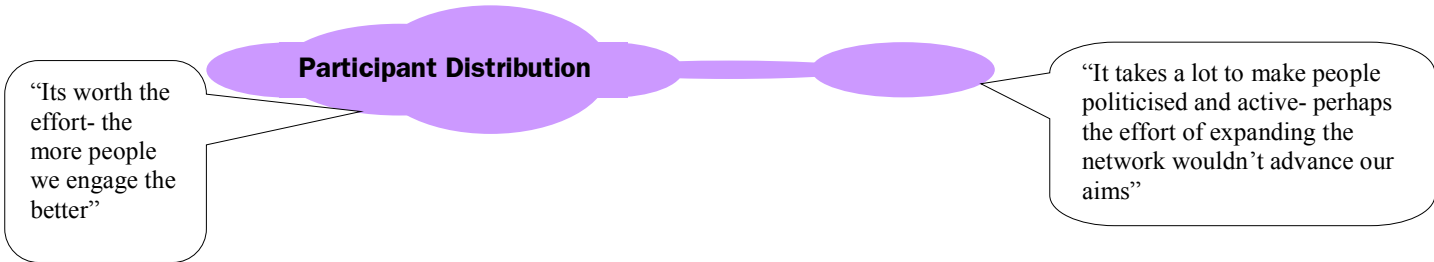
- Lecturers and other staff members particularly engaging specific departments such as Management or Politics schools
- Alumni from P&P groups could be involved in a number of ways- perhaps linking alumni to the P&P groups in the unis of the towns they move to after graduating.
- International links- with students who go on an exchange to another uni for a term, and to campaigning groups in other countries who run similar campaigns to our own.
- Professional organisations who have an interest in issues relevant to our work eg physiotherapists
- Build links to local groups outside the uni such as the town FT or Organic group
- Emphasise 6th form talks in schools which feed 'non-red brick' unis
- Begin activities in schools without 6th form colleges

Spectrum lines on key statements

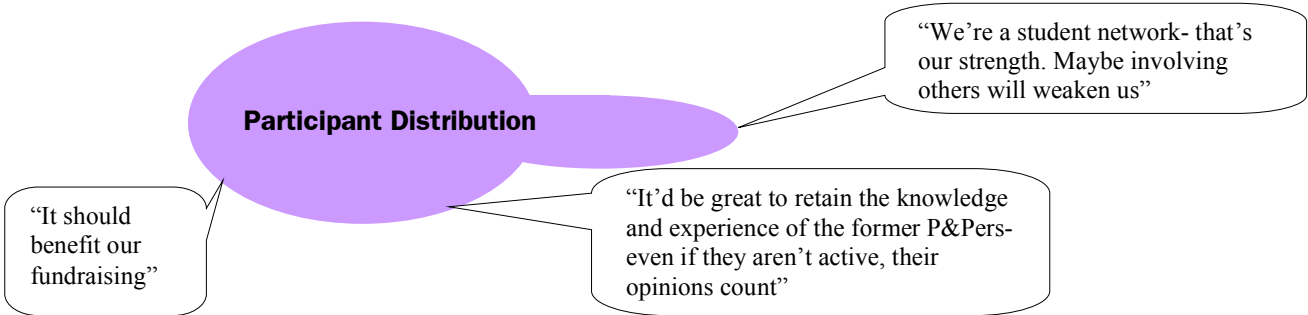
The final section of the workshop attempted to draw out the range of feelings in the group to a number of key statements related to the question of who we should try to include in the P&P network. This part of the workshop was facilitated using Spectrum Lines- asking the participants to stand where they felt their opinions lay on a line ranging from 'Agree' at one side of the room to 'Disagree' at the other. The findings of this activity and some key quotes from the group have been outlined in the diagram overleaf.



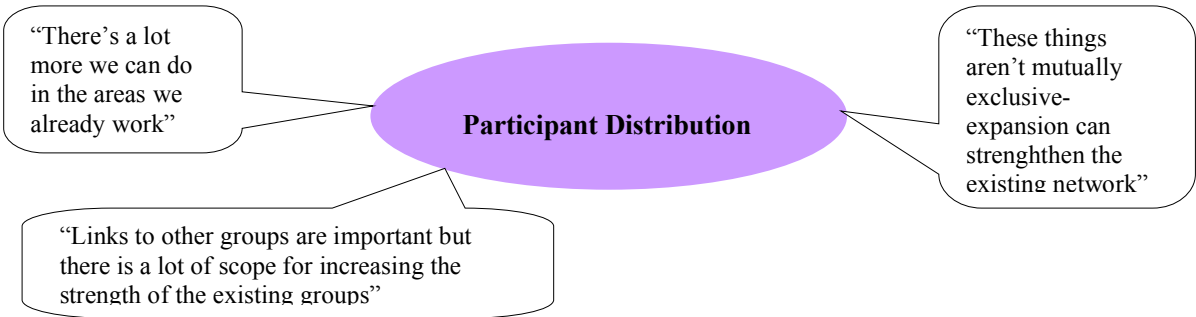
Expanding the network will help us to achieve our campaign objectives



Alumni should be encouraged to remain within the network



We should focus on improving the strength and diversity of the existing network rather than reaching out to new areas



The P&P network should remain exclusively 16 years old +

