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## **‘Shell To Sea’ In Ireland: Building Social Movement Potency**

**Kat Salter  
Sian Sullivan**

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[www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa](http://www.lse.ac.uk/ngpa)  
tel +44 (0)20 7955 7205  
fax +44 (0)20 7955 6039  
email [ngpa@lse.ac.uk](mailto:ngpa@lse.ac.uk)

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Non-Governmental Public Action Programme  
c/o The Centre for Civil Society  
Department of Social Policy  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
Houghton Street  
London WC2A 2AE

Tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7205/6527 Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6038 Email: [ngpa@lse.ac.uk](mailto:ngpa@lse.ac.uk)

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## **Abstract**

In 1996 the Corrib gas field, holding over 1 trillion cubic feet of gas, was discovered by Enterprise Oil 83km off the North West coast of Ireland. Acquired by Shell in 2002, proposed extraction and processing is now a co-venture between several multinational energy corporations who aim to transport the gas some 90kms via pipeline to an onshore refinery site at Bellanaboy. Although heralded as a significant opportunity for development and employment by Shell and participating companies, local resistance to the proposals, on social and environmental grounds, has been sustained and effective. Mirroring global conflicts between the petrochemical industry and local people and lifeworlds, this resistance has elicited repressive responses, including the jailing of local landowners by the Irish state following their resistance to unprecedented compulsory land acquisition orders, and the taking out of a court injunction by Shell in 2005. Drawing on elements of contemporary social movement theory, and on both field research and analysis of campaign documents and media reports, this paper seeks to describe and reflect on the shape and spread of the social movement that has arisen in response to this development project. We focus on the 'Shell to Sea' campaign which has argued for the offshore, as opposed to the onshore, development of the gas field, and has garnered support from many other social movement groups and networks. In particular we consider the use of alternative media in strengthening shared networks of concern and in engaging critically with corporate media representations of both the project and the mobilisation. We conclude that social movement effectiveness and potency is in large part an outcome of collective and subjective commitments to intense work effort and the sharing of felt solidarity regarding environmental and social concerns; and we iterate the significance of affective and subjective dimensions of social movement activities alongside more conventional descriptions of work practices and structuring contexts.

## **Keywords**

Social movement theory; development; alternative media; Shell to Sea; solidarity; subjectivity; networking; affect; potency

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We are extremely grateful for the time offered to this research project by participants in the Shell to Sea movement, and for experiences shared during the course of this campaign. Zoe Young and Steffen Böhm made helpful comments on an earlier draft: needless to say, any remaining errors of judgement remain our own.

## **About the authors**

**Kat Salter** has recently completed an MSc in Environment and Development at the University of East Anglia. She has been campaigning on issues regarding sustainable development for a number of years with organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Banana Link.

**Sian Sullivan** has worked on and participated in the politics of biodiversity conservation under neo-liberalism in north-west Namibia, and social movements in the UK contesting the form of contemporary globalisation processes. She is a Lecturer in Environment and Development at Birkbeck College, University of London, and since 2003 has been involved with activist samba band Rhythms of Resistance. Much of her published work is available at [sian.sullivan.on.googlepages.com](http://sian.sullivan.on.googlepages.com). Sian also dances.

## Introduction

“Royal Dutch Shell has evacuated four oil facilities in Nigeria in response to a sudden intensification in the militia violence which plagues the western delta ... [the corporation] has been in a long-standing dispute with impoverished locals.” (Freeman and Agencies 2006, p. 1)

“The only way in which Shell will be able to build this refinery is by the constant deployment of ... state force. It will necessitate the permanent occupation of the Bellanaboy area by hundreds of Gardaí<sup>1</sup> for the next two to three years.... It is Shell to Sea's firm intention to continue and maintain the resistance at Bellanaboy. While the police are following orders, this community is fighting for its very existence.” (Shell to Sea 2006a, p. 2-3)

In 1996 the Corrib gas field, containing over 1 trillion cubic feet of gas, was discovered by Enterprise Oil 83km off the North West coast of Ireland. Acquired by Shell in 2002, the project of extraction and processing became a co-venture between Shell (45%), Statoil Exploration (Ireland), Limited (36.5%) and Marathon (18.5%). This consortium of companies, hereafter referred to by the principle shareholder, Shell, aims to process the gas onshore, transporting the gas 90km via a pipeline to the proposed refinery site at Bellanaboy. Shell have heralded the pipeline as a ‘fantastic opportunity’ that is ‘vital for Ireland’s future security of energy supply and security’; claiming that as ‘the largest ever inward investment in the Mayo area’ the project will bring important development and employment opportunities, including ‘up to 700 jobs in the construction phase’ with a further ‘50 permanent jobs at the Bellanaboy Bridge Terminal’ (Shell Enterprise Ltd 2006, p. 1).

In spite of Shell’s rhetoric the project is at the centre of controversy and conflict. As a result of local opposition and resistance, construction has been substantially delayed. The locally initiated Shell to Sea campaign dispute the development claims made by Shell, argue for the offshore, as opposed to onshore, development of the gas field, and raise concerns over the safety of the project in terms of potential adverse impacts on human and environmental health (Table 1).

Table 1. Areas of concern noted by the Shell to Sea campaign regarding the proposed construction of a gas pipeline and refinery on the coast of County Mayo, Ireland Shell. Source: Shell to Sea (2006).

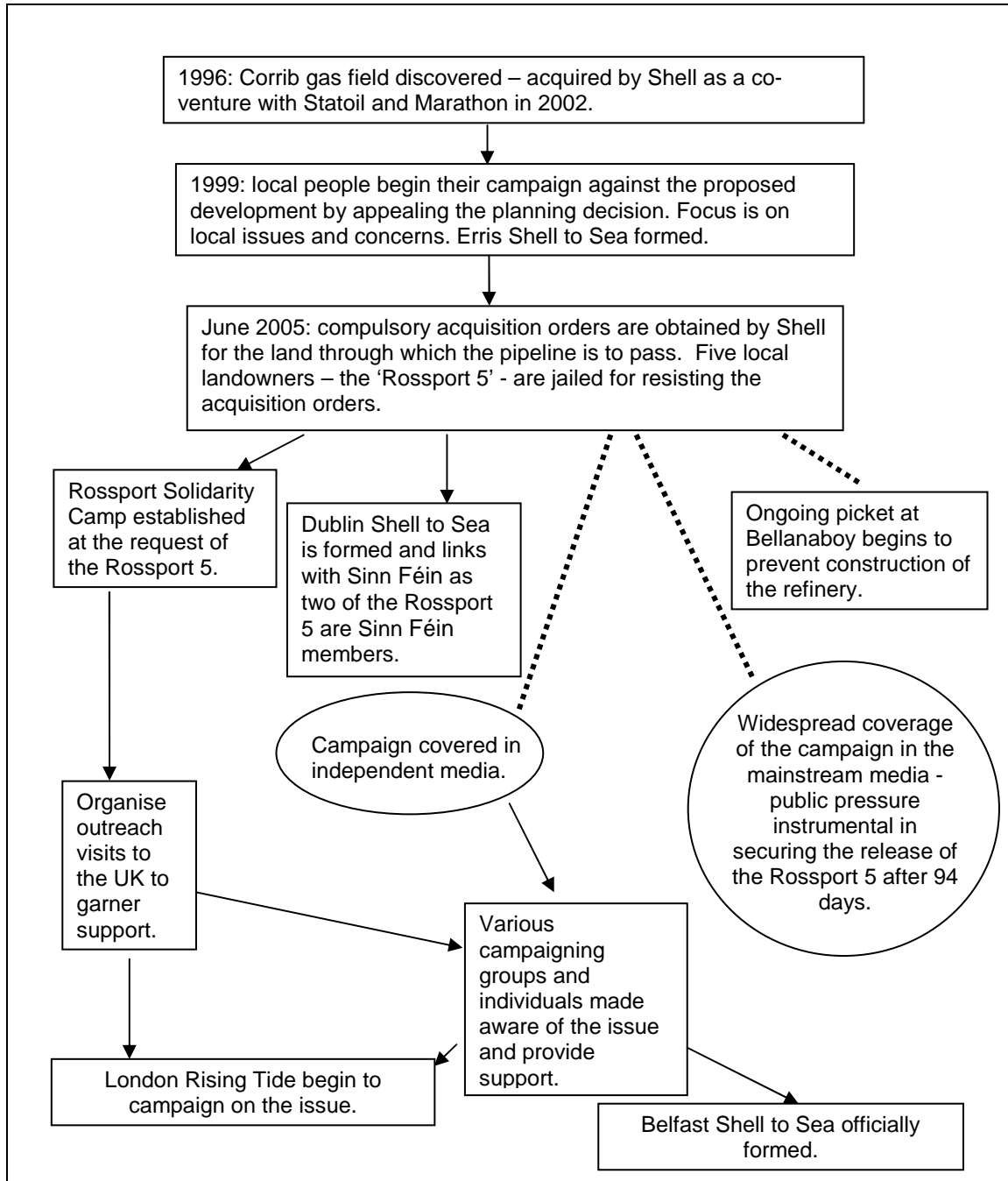
<p><b>1. Pipeline concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initially the pipeline was due to operate at 345 bar pressure. This has been reduced to 144 bar pressure, although part of the pipeline will continue to operate at 345 bar, four times the pressure than that of the other Bord Gais (the Irish supplier of gas and electricity) pipelines.</li><li>• The pipeline will pass within 70m of the nearest houses in Rosspport. According to the Health and Safety Authority, and even at 144 bar pressure, a rupture of the pipeline would cause any house within 80m to be burned.</li><li>• The pipeline will pass through areas of unstable peat bog with a history of landslides.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Toxic waste issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Toxic waste water from the refinery that is discharged back into the sea will remain in Broadhaven Bay, due to the tidal patterns in this area. This is an important breeding ground for whales, dolphins and porpoises.</li><li>• Runoff from the refinery site at Bellanaboy will contaminate Carrowmore Lake, the source of the regional public water supply. Carrowmore Lake is protected as a Natura 2000 site (i.e. a Special Area of Conservation) under the E.U. habitats directive.</li><li>• The refinery will release toxic levels of gases, including radon gas, oxides of nitrogen, methane, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide, causing air pollution. The health impacts for local communities living alongside refineries elsewhere have been well documented and include increased incidents of asthma, leukaemia and other cancers.</li></ul> <p><b>3. Risk of accident</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Highly flammable substances will be stored in large quantities near the refinery near to peat bog which, under certain conditions, also is flammable. These circumstances carry large risks of explosion in a remote area relatively far from the nearest emergency services.</li></ul> <p><b>4. Human rights abuses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compulsory acquisition orders were granted, the first time ever for a private company, and led to the jailing of the Rosspport 5 (see main text).</li><li>• Favourable tax breaks given to Shell mean that the project will be of little benefit to the broader Irish public.</li><li>• Shell have been responsible for human rights abuses across the world, notably against the Ogoni people in Nigeria.</li><li>• Overall there is little local consent for the project and many local people have been involved with intense campaign and protest activity in an attempt to prevent this development.</li></ul>
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From 1999 members of the local population have campaigned against the pipeline, predominantly on an independent basis through appeals to the planning process. In June 2005 the campaign dramatically increased its efforts and direct action was instigated. On June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2005, five local Rosspport landowners – the so-called ‘Rosspport 5’ – were jailed for an indefinite period through a court injunction requested



by Shell, for breaching compulsory land acquisition orders intended to accommodate the proposed pipeline route. Since then construction has been halted due to blockades and pickets at the proposed refinery sites. Solidarity actions have been carried out both nationally and internationally.<sup>2</sup> This ongoing campaign and emergent social movement has achieved a number of successes, including the early release of the Rosport 5, delaying pipeline construction, shaping the proposed pipeline route and reducing the bar pressure permitted for gas flows through the pipeline.

Figure 1. Key events, groups, and their interrelationships, and their use and interaction with different forms of media, in the Shell to Sea campaign, Ireland 1996-current. Arrows indicate temporal movement in the emergence of different groups and events and the relationships between them; dotted lines indicate the ongoing and dispersed coverages in mainstream and corporate media.



Drawing on 'observant participation' in solidarity with events associated with the spread of the Shell to Sea campaign, interview research with campaign participants in Ireland and London, and analysis of varied media representations of the campaign, in this paper we describe and review the trajectory of the campaign, drawing on elements of contemporary social movement theory to elucidate the shape and spread of resistance in this case. This campaign raises critical and globalising tensions: between corporate interests in global energy production and profit, and local social and environmental issues (cf. Howitt et al. 1996); and between diametrically opposed models for social, economic and environmental organisation and development. We thus aim additionally to iterate the ways in which coercion rapidly replaces dialogue and diplomacy in situations where the hegemony of contemporary corporate-state development interests is perturbed by social movements.

In pursuit of these aims we continue this introductory section with an outline of the conceptual influences we are working with, summarising the pool of social movement theories on which we are drawing, and moving to consider the significance of media production and representations for the strengthening of social movement networks and campaigns. Following a brief discussion of our methodologies, we then move to the main body of the paper, where we provide a brief description of the principle campaigning groups and networks comprising the broader Shell to Sea campaign, as well as highlighting the networking practices and media engagements of this campaign. In discussion we emphasise the emergent effectiveness or *potency* of this campaign. This is embodied in its shift from being an issue of local concern to one of national and international interest; as well as in its largely successful use of mainstream and alternative media forms in facilitating expansion of the movement. The increasing incidence of state and corporate repression also can be interpreted as a marker of movement potency. In conclusion we affirm the interlacing significance of affect – of *being moved to act* – in animating desires to participate in social movement work and collective action, and thereby to produce social movement potency.

## **1) Theorising new social movements: organisation, networking and media**

Social movements mobilising around issues other than labour and income have been the subject of intense participation and research since the 1960s. This in part is due to the upsurge of 'counter-cultural' politics which in the 'global north' animated and drew together movements for peace, the environment, the rights of indigenous peoples, and feminism (Roszak 1968). A range of theories have emerged to understand aspects of social movement formation and mobilisation. Conventionally these have iterated 'rational economic actor' assumptions regarding what drives peoples' motivations for participating in social movement organisations and activities. Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), for example, considers the resources, both tangible and intangible, that must be mobilised for social movements to form and sustain themselves; the ways in which actors weigh up the associated costs and rewards of different lines of action before deciding to join a social movement; and the ability of a movement to pool resources, and to develop and maintain linkages with other groups in order to garner external support and mobilise (e.g. Olson 1965; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983; Freeman 1988). Political Opportunity Theory (PO) similarly emphasises the structuring effects of broader contexts on the possibilities for social movement activities (Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1994). Thus, for example, it is considered that when political systems are open, weak assimilative strategies such as lobbying and the petitioning of Government bodies will be adopted. This framework views more confrontational strategies – including public demonstrations, direct action and acts of civil disobedience – as associated with relatively inert political systems in an attempt to provoke change outside of established policy channels (assuming, of course, that such channels actually exist).

Both these approaches have been criticised for a range of reasons: for assuming that actors engage in social movement activities primarily in pursuit of self-interest and guided by somewhat monological rationalities, rather than in the course of attempting to assert agency in relation to felt ethical or political values (Wall 1999, p. 42, Goodin 1992, p. 31-33); for emphasising that activities are dictated by context rather than by creativity and choice (Doherty 1999); for holding to rather static understandings of social movement participation, while down-playing the fluidity of continually negotiated

participation and affective identification with movement groups and concerns (Snow et al. 1986; Goodin 1992, p. 31-33; Plows 2002); and for their inability to encompass the recent emergence of 'new emotional movements', which are animated by displays of solidarity and compassion regarding specific shocking events (Walgrave and Verhulst 2006).

We share these criticisms, and celebrate recent moves in social movement theorisation towards affirming subjectively felt experiences of common concerns and emergent collective identities. These are potent both in drawing people into social movement activity, and in sustaining diverse and dynamic participation in groups, campaigns, actions and events. This growing 'new social movement school' brings into the frame the significance of 'alternative' collective identities and subjectivities (Roszak 1968; Melucci 1996) embracing 'post-material' values (Martin 2002). As such it owes much to feminist and post-structuralist critique of the essentialising and excluding assumptions of patriarchal 'rational actor' approaches (cf. Sullivan 2005a); as well as to a bringing into focus of the multiplicitous and fluid forces of power in producing both displacements and resistances at all times and in all places (cf. Foucault 1998 (1976); Deleuze and Guattari 1988 (1980)).

As Della Porta and Diani (2006: 92) assert, '[c]ollective action cannot occur in the absence of a "we" characterised by common traits and a specific solidarity'. Identity production thus is now viewed by theorists as an essential component of collective action, involving both a 'positive identification of those involved in the group' and 'a negative identification of those who are not only excluded but actively opposed' (Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 94). 'Frame alignment', whereby individual and social movement interpretive orientations become congruent and entrained, consolidates these processes of identification (Snow *et al.* 1986; Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 74). But to animate social movement engagement, such senses of self-identification also have to be consciously felt and experienced. Many 'participant-commentators' of contemporary social movements thus today are emphasising the roles of emotion and affect in producing a sense of solidarity and commitment to struggle (e.g. Goodwin et al. 2001; Drury 2003; Sullivan 2003, 2005a and b; Sawyer 2007). Struggles and movements thereby become a more systemic cultural politics regarding what it means to be and become human, weaving together superficially disparate and dislocated acts and experiences of collective action (Notes From Nowhere 2003). In this sense,

and from the US Beat generation of the 1950s to the Zapatistas of Chiapas and the UK anti-roads protests in the 1990s, social movements enable and encourage the production of alternative meanings, values and desires regarding what it means to be human, producing currently 'transgressive' forms and practices of organisation and self-representation. In terms of establishing and reproducing counter-hegemonic values in such movements, participation becomes not only a means to an end, but also *an end in itself* (North 1998).

Given these shifts in theorisations, an oft-cited definition of a new social movement by Diani (1992, p. 13) remains relevant, as 'engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity'. In this reading, and although also coming into being through sustained collective action against antagonists (Tarrow 1994, p. 5), social movements by definition are unconventional affective, as well as pragmatic, collaborations with fluid memberships and with no clear boundaries, which 'expand or shrink considerably over relatively short periods of time and exhibit phases of latency and visibility' (Van de Donk et al. 2004, p. 3), or 'biodegradability' (Plows 2002).

This brings us to our next conceptual layer, namely the organisational significances of open networks in facilitating contemporary movements of collective action (e.g. Castells 1996; Wall 1999, p. 42; Ghimire 2005; Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 115-117). With the internet giving rise to unprecedented new spaces for communication, recruitment and representation, and thereby providing a new medium for producing connectivity between people and groups, important possibilities for the production and iteration of collective concerns and solidarity have opened up. These are exploited by social movement participants as much as by other interests in society (e.g. Dery 1996; Bard and Söderqvist 2002; Chesters and Welsh 2006). Websites and e-mail facilitate more direct and rapid contact and have helped movements avoid 'official censorship or other forms of control before they are ready to reach the target audience' (Ghimire 2005)<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, websites, links, RSS feeds and e-mail/e-lists can increase an organisation's visibility, assist with the rapid and cheap dissemination of aims, concerns and activities, and provide new opportunities for rapid mobilisation and action (León et al. 2001, p. 127). Such possibilities for what philosophers Deleuze and Guattari famously describe as rhizomatic (dis)organisation (1988(1980)), amplify a sense that 'new glocal social movements' indeed are always 'a network of networks' (Van de Donk et al. 2004, p. 3) of people dynamically experiencing and acting upon

senses of solidarity and concern that are both locally emplaced and globally framed (Sullivan, 2008).

As well as possibly revolutionising the organisational forms of new social movements – such that the medium becomes the message, as media theorist Marshall McLuhan famously suggested (e.g. McLuhan 1964) – the onset (and onslaught?) of the internet has radically reconfigured the landscape of possibilities for media representation of social movement activities and concerns. While coverage of a campaign in the local, regional, national and if possible international corporate media remains an important route to networking and mobilisation (Jong et al. 2005, p. 7; also Molotch 1988, p. 77; Tarrow 1994, p. 23; Rootes 2000, p. 26), social movements frequently are only able to access representation in the corporate media if they adhere to criteria that make an issue newsworthy (Fowler 1991, p. 10; Rucht 2004, p. 55). The staging of spectacular or quirky events is one means of gaining access to mainstream media coverage (Jong et al. 2005, p. 7), but of course this does not guarantee that the coverage will be accurate, favourable or sympathetic.<sup>4</sup> The production of alternative media - from zines to the online network of news-sites that is 'Indymedia' – thus has always been central to social movement organisation and representation (Paterson 2000; Downing 2001; Atton 2002; Spencer 2005). As such, the production of 'alternative media' is both a means of making public the frequently subjugated and/or occluded voices of social movement campaigns and participants, *and* a social movement contesting conventional media-producing organisations and practices. This perhaps is particularly true for the global media network 'Indymedia' which effectively and proactively has combined three things: the radical open organisational potential of the internet; the possibilities for producing and proliferating media via the world wide web; and the resistant and globalising politics contesting and critiquing the conceptual and pragmatic enclosures of neoliberalism.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the production of alternative media is integral to the discursive means through which activist and campaign groups produce and reproduce identities and thereby 'become activist'. As Plows (2002, p. 269) states, 'fliers and leaflets are forms of activist discourse, used to promote and justify activist rationales and agendas'.

In summary, we have briefly presented a range of theoretical contributions that intend to explain the formation and structure of contemporary social movements, each with their own limitations and possibilities. In now turning to our case study of the Shell to

Sea campaign in Ireland and beyond, we aim to draw on these frames to elucidate the factors drawing people into this struggle, the ways in which this struggle changed over time through its networking and other activities, and the roles of various media forms in facilitating these changes and contributing to some notable successes for the campaign.

In terms of methods, this research and documentation project was conducted broadly in solidarity with many of the concerns of the Shell to Sea campaign, and draws on three main data sources.

### **1. 'Observant participation'**

One of us spent five days at the Rossport Solidarity Camp in May 2006 (this was in an overt research capacity), and one of us is an ongoing participant in London-based meetings and events regarding the Shell to Sea campaign.

### **2. Semi-structured interviews**

Six long semi-structured interviews were conducted by Salter with participants in the main campaigning groups involved in the movement. Interviewees were identified from the main 'Shell to Sea' website ([www.shelltosea.com](http://www.shelltosea.com)) as regional coordinators and spokespersons for the campaign, were present at the camp at the time of visit or, in the case of London Rising Tide (<http://www.londonrisingtide.org.uk/>), from contact details on the website. Four of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, both in Ireland and London (with two participants at the Rossport Solidarity Camp, with participants in the Dublin Shell to Sea campaign and London Rising Tide), while a further two were conducted via e-mail (with participants in the Erris and Belfast regional Shell to Sea campaigns). An informed consent procedure was followed<sup>6</sup>. Interviewees were invited to view interview transcripts prior to the submission of this work for publication.

### **3. Analysis of Indymedia documents**

In this paper we focus mainly on the Shell to Sea campaign's use of the online open-publishing news sites that constitute the global independent news media network 'Indymedia' ([www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)), as well as the websites of the different campaigning groups involved and printed material (fliers etc.) produced by the campaigns. We treat these as 'primary data': they are written by those witnessing and participating in the



events they describe, and also are produced from the explicit and engaged desire to build an effective campaign. The main source of primary documents was 'Indymedia.ie/mayo' ([www.indymedia.ie/mayo](http://www.indymedia.ie/mayo)), the Indymedia Ireland website onto which those involved in the campaign post news article, opinion pieces and event notices. News articles posted between March 2006-May 2006 were retrieved and analysed and an archive search was also conducted resulting in a database of over 75 articles. Each posting onto an Indymedia website is assigned a specific article number, and this numbering is retained here for ease of referencing. Thus 'Indymedia 74335' refers to <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74335>. The Indymedia articles from this dataset that are referred to in this paper are listed by article number in Table 2. We consider these in relation to representation of the campaign by the corporate media, as well as use of the corporate media by the campaign. Leaflets and tangible campaign resources were also collected, as were e-mails sent via subscription to the e-mail lists of the Rosspport Solidarity Camp and Shell to Sea.

Table 2. Indymedia.ie articles referred to in the text, from a sample of 75 articles posted to indymedia.ie between March and May 2006. The articles are listed here by ascending article number.

Full reference for indymedia.ie articles referred to in text	Article #
(2005). 'Shell in Mayo: Latest News and a Summary of the Issues', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=68991&amp;results_offset=30">http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=68991&amp;results_offset=30</a> (9 April 2006).	68991
(2005). 'The Rosspport Solidarity Camp', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=71391">http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=71391</a> (9 April 2006)	71391
(2005). 'Corrib comparisons by Shell', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/71524">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/71524</a> (21 April 2006).	71524
(2005). 'Corrib Truth – Overdue', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/71713">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/71713</a> (21 April 2006)	71713
(2005). 'Shell to Sea campaign goes to Norway', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/72057">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/72057</a> (10 May 2006)	72057
(2005). 'Rosspport Solidarity Camp: Now Recruiting for 2006', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/72740">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/72740</a> (10 May 2006).	72740
(2005). 'Report on Rosspport Solidarity Camp Speaking Tour of England', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/73164">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/73164</a> (10 May 2006).	73164

(2006). 'Dutch Ex-PM and other Shell executives try to exclude locals', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/73953">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/73953</a> (9 April 2006)	73953
(2006). 'Two successful Shell to Sea Meetings in Cork', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74335">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74335</a> (15 May 2006).	74335
(2006). 'Galway Shell to Sea activism today : a Harbinger for Shell's Summer of Discontent', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74343">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74343</a> (15 May 2006)	74343
(2006). 'Shell contaminate water in Mayo', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74344">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74344</a> (21 April 2006).	74344
(2006). 'Reopening of Rossport Resistance Resort Welcomed by Residents', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74533">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/74533</a> (15 May 2006).	74533
(2006). 'Rossport Five escape more time in prison', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75307">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75307</a> (9 April 2006)	75307
(2006). 'Bringing the Pipeline Back to Statoil - The Shell to Sea Campaign continues', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75308">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75308</a> (9 April 2006)	75308
(2006). 'Rossport Talk in Dingle/ Corca Dhuibhne', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75449">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75449</a> (15 May 2006).	75449
(2006). 'Shell Spin Means Nothing, The Struggle Continues', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75861">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/75861</a> (10 May 2006).	75861
(2006). 'Shell to Sea - press statement on intimidation...', On-line. <a href="http://www.indymedia.ie/article/79011">http://www.indymedia.ie/article/79011</a> (15 October 2006).	79011

We now move to a description and review of the recent social movement of 'Shell to Sea', focusing on the dynamic trajectory of emergent groups and networking practices, and the roles of various media in providing opportunities and constraints for building movement potency in this case.

## **2) 'Shell to Sea' in Ireland: documenting the emergence of a social movement**

### **3.1 Groups and networking**

This section explores the changing identities, concerns, tactics and networking practices for different groupings in the Shell to Sea campaign, focusing on three regional groups within the Shell to Sea Network (Erris Shell to Sea, Dublin Shell to Sea and Belfast Shell to Sea), the Rosspoint Solidarity Camp (RSC) and London Rising Tide (LRT). The information presented here derives from interviews with key informants and research of campaign websites.

#### *Shell to Sea*

Shell to Sea is a network of local groups made up of 'concerned citizens from all walks of life who seek to draw attention to the planned Corrib gas project' (Shell to Sea 2006a). The main website ([www.corribsos.com](http://www.corribsos.com)) forms the focal point and resource centre of the Shell to Sea network. In terms of networking the home page is laid out with links to recent articles, from Indymedia on the right, event postings in the left and central columns. Under the 'links and resources' section there is an extensive list, with links to websites of organisations who are supporting the campaign, as well as general links to those who campaign against 'corporate crimes'. A number of regional groups, active under the Shell to Sea banner, are listed under 'contacts' within this website, the main and most active being the Erris, Belfast and Dublin groups.

#### *Erris Shell to Sea*

This is the Shell to Sea group that has been established by those most directly affected by the proposed pipeline and refinery, i.e. the residents of Rosspoint and other local inhabitants. As such, it is at the heart of the broader Shell to Sea campaign. The group has been protesting against the planned project since 1999. For the main part, the group strategy has been to campaign 'within the system', for example, through 'making formal objections in the planning process, and after that issuing a legal challenge to the planning decision in the High Court' (Earth First! 2006a). Once it became clear that this use of legal and democratic processes had failed, however, the

campaign adopted more confrontational strategies such as public demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. From June 2005 to the time of writing (September 2007), for example, a picket at Bellanaboy, the proposed refinery site, has prevented construction work from taking place there. The pinnacle of the Erris Shell to Sea campaign was the jailing of the Rossport 5 - five local landowners who opposed the pipeline route (which would displace them via compulsory purchase orders) and against whom Shell brought a court injunction in September 2005. This sequence of events is similar to the campaign history of environmental protests in the UK in the 1990s, such as the anti-roads and airport expansion campaigns (e.g. Plows 2002). As Doherty (1998, p. 372, cited in Cathles 2000, p. 169) states, these protests were characterised by 'years of patient, energetic campaigning, lobbying and awareness-raising by dedicated locals' and it is usually 'when these have failed that direct action protestors set up protest camps.'

For the duration of the campaign the Erris Shell to Sea group has met weekly in a local community hall to discuss issues and strategy. Members also meet regularly on an informal basis at the picket at Bellanaboy. The campaign's website is one of the main ways that the local Shell to Sea group stays in contact with the wider network and disseminates the activities of the regional groups, while personal contacts are also stated as critical, especially with regards to building international solidarity. Thus the group has 'close ties with the Nigeria issue through contacts and visits to Ireland [from Nigeria] over the last few years<sup>7</sup>' (Erris Shell to Sea interview). As the pipeline will be built in close proximity to many of the local communities, the main concerns of the Erris Shell to Sea group are those related to local environmental impacts (e.g. pollution) and their consequent effects on health and safety (Table 1). The campaign also highlights systemic issues relating to the displacements effected as a result of the privatisation and development of natural resources by multinational corporations.

#### *Dublin Shell to Sea<sup>8</sup>*

The Dublin regional group are one of the most active within the Shell to Sea network and formed following the jailing of the Rossport 5 (see above). Initially the group was established by those involved with a number of grassroots organisations, mainly Dubliners interested in anarchist-inspired political engagement. While most of the individuals involved are independent of political parties and other organisations, two of

the Rossport 5 are members of Sinn Féin. Following their jailing Sinn Féin thus became actively involved in the campaign, particularly in providing logistical support and press contacts. The Dublin Shell to Sea group operates predominately on an independent basis to publicise the issues the campaign raises, with relatively little time spent on networking activities with the other Shell to Sea groups. Although part of the overall Shell to Sea network, the Dublin group thus highlight issues of the campaign which they feel are most relevant to the Dublin electorate, focusing especially on the privatisation of resources and the implications of this ruling for future projects within Ireland. Emphasis is placed on the fact that if this scheme and project is authorised 'then it opens the way for similar developments across Ireland' (Dublin Shell to Sea interview).

The involvement of political parties and their support is an interesting feature of this campaign as they also have a party political agenda and are trying to appeal to the electorate. As stated by the Dublin Shell to Sea interviewee, Sinn Féin are involved as they relate and agree with the six demands of the Shell to Sea campaign. However if these were to change they may have to withdraw and reassess their support. Despite this the involvement of political parties also has allowed the campaign to work within the democratic system, as the politicians are representing their interests and raising the issue within the formal political sphere. For instance, Sinn Féin has had 'ongoing contact with a number of Norwegian politicians regarding the role of the Norwegian company Statoil in the on-going Corrib gas dispute' and has 'raised this issue in the European Parliament on numerous occasions through speeches and questions to the European Commission' (Sinn Féin 2005, 2006). Independent Teachta Dála<sup>9</sup> (TD) Jerry Cowley travelled to Norway, as part of a party of five, to raise the issues of health and safety, the environment and to meet with groups such as Norwegian Friends of the Earth Trade Unions (Indymedia 72057). The involvement of political parties has therefore allowed access to a broader sector of the population through access to their members especially as the issue has been covered in political newsletters and media formats such as An Phoblacht.

### *Belfast Shell to Sea*

As with the Dublin Shell to Sea group, Belfast became involved in the campaign following the jailing of the Rossport 5 as 'for the most part people had not been aware

of the dispute leading up to [their] arrest' (Belfast Shell to Sea interview). Similarly the first protests were 'organised spontaneously by local activists' such as Students Against Poverty. The group itself was not formally established until 'Máire Ní Sheighin, daughter of Micheál Ó Seighin [one of the Rosspport 5], was in Belfast to talk about the situation at the time' (Belfast Shell to Sea interview). Her visit gave people the chance to learn more about the campaign from someone directly affected, and this inspired the organisation of further actions and the formation of a solidarity group. The group is not in close contact with other branches of the Shell to Sea network, but at the same time it 'wouldn't necessarily exist autonomously of the Shell to Sea network as a whole'. Contact is maintained predominantly via email, as well as occasional telephone conversations with members of the Shell to Sea group in Dublin: 'face-to-face meetings have only occurred if someone from the group in Belfast happened to be in Dublin or vice-versa' (Belfast Shell to Sea interview). The group have little contact with the local people involved in the campaign, but do mobilise around the issues raised by local people regarding justice, health, safety and environmental impacts, as well as focusing on privatisation and concerns over the manner in which the project was given the go-ahead. The loose network of regional informal groups has been successful to the extent that it 'has allowed for people in different regions to organise protests in their own areas at Shell stations in order to raise awareness of the issue' (Belfast Shell to Sea interview).

#### *Rosspport Solidarity Camp (RSC)*

It was in June 2005 that the first RSC was established at the request of the Rosspport 5 and other residents of Rosspport, and a solidarity weekend was held. The camp was located in the village of Rosspport, close to the proposed refinery site (Indymedia 71391). At this weekend the national wing of Shell to Sea was also initiated and mobilisation and networking began. The jailing of the Rosspport 5 followed shortly (on June 22<sup>nd</sup>), becoming an invaluable incentive for mobilisation. The RSC functions as part of the Shell to Sea campaign and aims to 'lend practical support to the local community's struggle and to provide a base for protestors who are not from the area' (Rosspport Solidarity Camp 2006). Approximately ten people reside at the camp at any one time, this number increasing dramatically during periods of high activity. The camp in Rosspport was closed during the winter months and reopened in February 2006 across the estuary. At the time of Salter's field visit in May 2006, the camp was

situated approximately 200 metres from the site where the pipeline would be brought ashore. Close contact is maintained between those at the camp and the Erris Shell to Sea group as members of the camp picket alongside local people at Bellanaboy and also attend the weekly local Shell to Sea campaign meeting.

The majority of non-locals who stay at the camp are involved more broadly in political activism regarding environmental and social justice issues, and heard of the camp through personal contacts in activist networks. They express concern over how they are represented and what impact this may have on the local campaign, and have tried to avoid the eco-radical 'crustie' image by careful wording on their leaflets and website to emphasise that while anyone is welcome, it 'it is not just a place to hang out' but 'involves a lot of commitment and hard work' (Rosspport Solidarity Camp 2006). These concerns also are reflected in their media policy (see Figure 2), and in their ban on alcohol and drugs on site. In terms of online networking, links on the RSC website (<http://www.struggle.ws/rsc/>) are provided to the main Shell to Sea website and also to Indymedia.ie as a source of further information. The issues which the camp concerns itself with, and advertises, are those of the local campaign, but with a greater emphasis placed on broader trans-national concerns regarding the privatisation of natural resources by a few powerful multinational corporations.

### *Rising Tide (RT)*

Rising Tide UK (<http://risingtide.org.uk/>) is a network of groups and individuals dedicated to taking local action and building a movement against climate change caused by fossil fuel consumption (Rising Tide 2006). Various groups within the network, notably London and Nottingham, have become involved in the Shell to Sea campaign. The issue has been reframed to form part of the RT 'Stop Shell Hell' campaign, which focuses on the detrimental practices of the industry as a whole, and particularly on climate change linked with fossil fuel consumption. On both the national rising tide website and London Rising Tide there are links to the RSC.

### *London Rising Tide (LRT)*

Members of London Rising Tide (LRT), and hence LRT as an organisation, became involved in the campaign through personal contacts. Contact also was made with those already campaigning on the issue through interaction with other activists at the

G8 demonstrations in Scotland in July 2005. While on their speaking tour of England and Scotland, two members of the RSC also spoke at the London Action Resource Centre (LARC), where LRT hold their meetings. Since the campaign began members of LRT have visited Ireland and stayed at the RSC. Contact is maintained primarily by personal contacts. It is important to note that as LRT campaigns on a range of issues not all members of LRT are involved in this issue. Similarly, people independent of other LRT projects are involved in the LRT/Shell to Sea campaign. This is beneficial to LRT as due to the nature of the organisation and the time constraints it is sometimes difficult to keep campaigns ongoing (LRT interview transcript).

#### *Other organisations and groups involved*

Although the interviews focused solely on the groups and organisations listed above, the campaign message has spread and received support from a number of other organisations and individuals. Earth First!<sup>10</sup> have carried out solidarity actions and consequently the Shell to Sea campaign features in a number of their action reports; Rhythms of Resistance<sup>11</sup> have visited the RSC and carried out a range of awareness-raising actions in Ireland and the UK; members of the Irish-based Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM)<sup>12</sup> are involved; and action reports are updated onto the Anarkismo network<sup>13</sup>. Members of Global Community Monitor have also visited the site and maintain information on their website<sup>14</sup>, and the campaign featured in the 25<sup>th</sup> newsletter of Corporate Watch<sup>15</sup> (with links to Indymedia and also Shell to Sea network).

#### *Wider networking practices*

Since June 2005 members of the Rossport 5 have attended and spoken at events detailing the campaign, their experiences and also links with other campaigns. In April 2006 Michael O' Seighen and Vincent McGrath spoke at an event in Dingle on the Ownership of Irelands Natural Resources (Indymedia 75449). Members of the RSC have also attended activist workshops to speak and encourage people to become involved in the campaign and in March 2006 a practical workshop was organised by RSC at the Anarchist Bookfair in Dublin (Anarchist Bookfair 2006). Events have been hosted, such as a 'South American Speaker visits Rossport' to share their experience on natural resource access issues with the local Mayo people. The West Cork Shell to Sea group hosted a meeting with talks by the Bantry Action Group, who are fighting



the building of invasive pylons beside their homes, and also Cork Harbour Area for A Safe Environment (CHASE) who are fighting the building of a toxic incinerator. Links are being drawn between these campaigns (Indymedia 74335).

One of the main forms of publicity and awareness raising was conducted by members of the RSC who undertook two speaker tours of England and Scotland in order to raise awareness of both the campaign and also to 'garner sufficient recruits and logistical support for the new "construction season" in the spring of 2006 when the camp reopens' (Indymedia 73164). A number of protest camps were visited alongside social centres to outline the campaign and distribute information leaflets, and it was felt that the tour had allowed the camp to 'make a lot of very useful contacts' (Indymedia 73164). In February 2006, before the camp was to be reopened, members of the RSC trawled the internet to find other groups who may be interested in the campaign. They were then e-mailed and asked for assistance and support, if not directly, then by adding links to the camp from their websites (RSC interview). A visit to the camp is an important and vital way of networking and building solidarity as it is through these visits that personal contact is made, concerns are reinforced and experiences, sometimes intense, are shared.

### **3.2 Media articulations and representations**

It is widely recognised that public support is integral to the success of this (and other) campaigns and that publicity is a key element. The campaign is advertised, both collectively, and by the individual groups involved in different ways. Coverage, preferably favourable, by the corporate media is seen as important in garnering awareness and support from wider publics, but under- and mis-reporting also generates a need for the production of 'independent media'. This takes both online and material forms. Below we consider the form and significance of each of these types of media for the emergence and success of the Shell to Sea campaign.

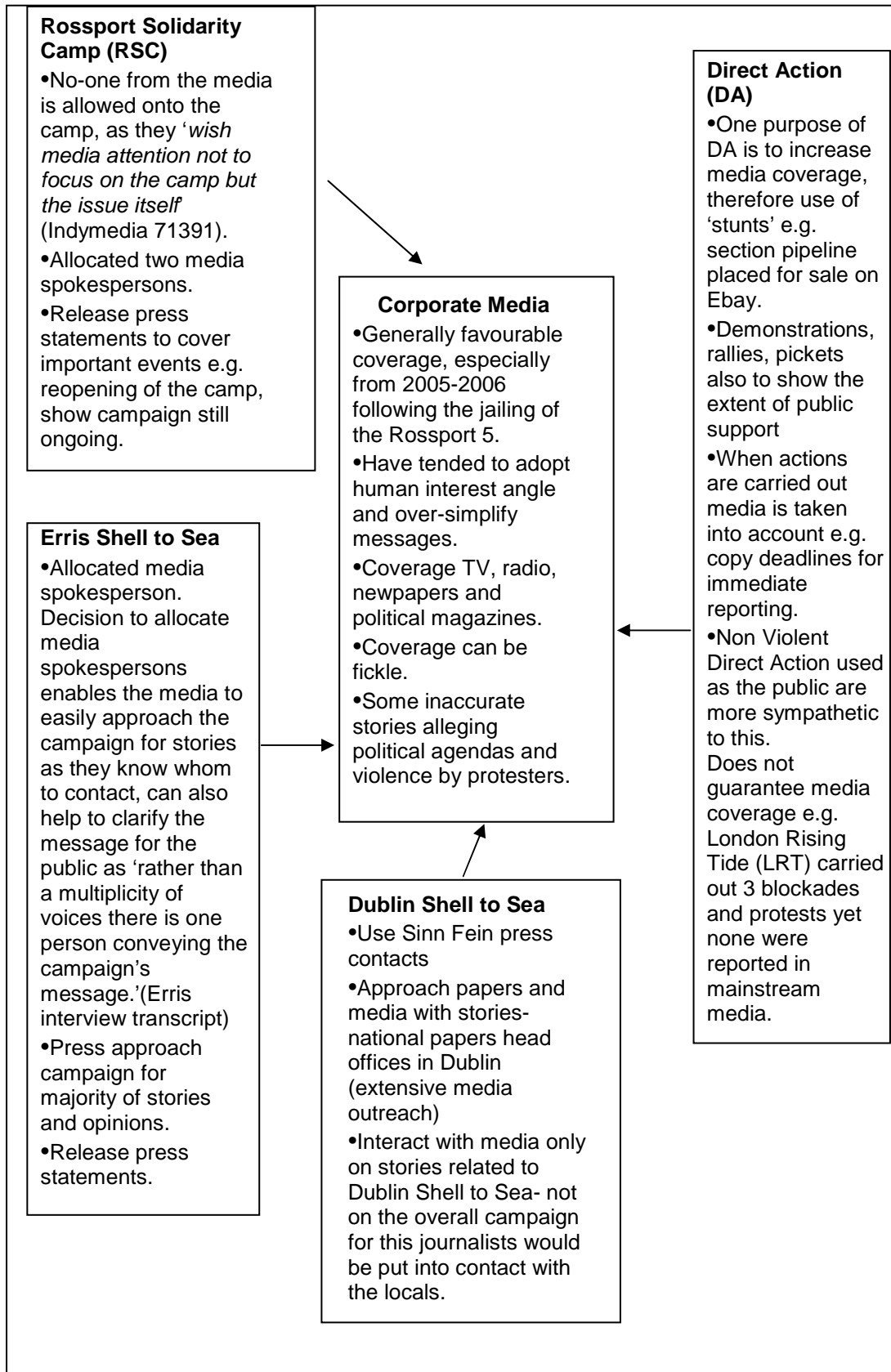
#### *Corporate media*

The Shell to Sea campaign has received widespread media attention with coverage on Irish television and radio and in Irish and English newspapers. A media frenzy followed the jailing of the Rosspoint 5, while other important events, such as the controversial publication in January 2006 of a 'safety review' for the Irish government on the proposed pipeline by the engineering consultancy firm Advantica<sup>16</sup>, retained a

prominent position in the mainstream media for some months. The Shell to Sea campaign also is covered with details of events placed in other national media outlets: for example *Village*, a weekly current affairs magazine that focuses on political issues and has a left-wing stance. Similarly the campaign is covered in *An Phoblacht*, a paper which 'offers a radical weekly commentary on the major news stories of the day and a republican analysis of all aspects of Irish Politics'. This paper achieves relatively high readership rates 'with up to 15,000 copies and 100,000 website hit each week' (An Phoblacht, 2006).

The organisations and groups involved in the Shell to Sea campaign interact with the corporate media in varied ways and to different extents. As part of their desire to achieve media coverage, for example, direct action and 'media stunts' sometimes are employed requiring an element of surprise as well as imagination and daring. Campaign groups also may designate individuals to act as 'spokespeople' for communication with mainstream journalists and media outlets, but are unlikely to freely welcome mainstream media journalists into 'campaign spaces' such as the RSC (cf. CounterSpin Collective 2005). These relationships are summarised in Figure 2. A clear desire to retain control over representation regarding this campaign also has generated a proliferation of online media reports on Indymedia, and it is to this that we now turn.

Figure 2. Interactions between various groups in the Shell to Sea campaign, direct action practices and the corporate media.



### Indymedia

Extensive use is made of Indymedia within the campaign with hundreds of postings stored within a separate archive section of the Ireland IMC, [www.indymedia.ie/mayo](http://www.indymedia.ie/mayo). Articles concerning the Shell campaign are stored under four main categories; 'environment', 'anti-capitalism', 'rights and freedom' and 'miscellaneous', and cover news releases, events and opinion pieces. The nature of the site means that the articles and pieces posted are written by people involved in the campaign and coverage thus is explicitly biased. There are no voices here from Shell or the politicians supporting the pipeline, other than in cases where specific claims are counteracted, as well as at times as the mocked and disidentified 'other' (see below). The language used in these articles and postings speaks to a classic polarisation of the locals as 'victims' and Shell, Statoil and the Irish government as 'villains'. The rhetoric is highly emotive in order to create a hard-hitting picture of the potential problems associated with the project. A selection of the phrases used in some of the postings, covering the principle concerns associated with the pipeline, is listed in Table 3.

Table 3. A selection of direct quotes taken from a sample of 75 articles posted to [indymedia.ie](http://indymedia.ie) between March and May 2006 to illustrate both the concerns, and the corresponding discourse of victims and villains, animating the Shell to Sea campaign during this time.

Quote from <a href="http://indymedia.ie">indymedia.ie</a>	Article #
What is being done in Erris is the suppression of human needs (health, safety, sustainable environment) in favour of capital.	72740
[T]he beauty of the coastline starkly underlines the environmental vandalism the state is trying to perpetrate here.	75861
[T]he five were imprisoned last year for three months, for refusing to obey his [the Judge's] order to cease protesting against the scheme by Shell and Statoil to install a dangerous, experimental, raw-gas pipeline through their village.	75307
Norwegians will get new schools, roads, hospitals and other infrastructure projects because of the money from the Irish gas, while the Irish taxpayer receives nothing, and the people of Mayo are asked to live with a dangerous experimental scheme which blights their community.	75308
The power will come from burning off the uncleaned gas condensate, full of chemical nasties.	68991

We are supposed to be a developed-world country and if the big corporations succeed here there is little hope for those in the developing world.	73953
This contemptuous pretence of concern for a community which has been ignored throughout the six years of this development.	75861
[T]his [the Advantica report, see endnote 16] is a report into the safety of the proposed pipeline commissioned by the government as a propaganda exercise after people power shut down construction last summer.	75861

As well as detailing information about the campaign, event notices, photos and coverage of actions are posted. Hyperlinks provide linkages between various article postings as well as linking to sites outside of Indymedia, for example RSC and Shell to Sea. In order to engage with and critique claims by Shell, technical data claims are often cited with links provided to the source of the information. Multiple media, including postings of texts, photos, video and audio, are included. These 'allow ... for a richer coverage of events than that which would be achieved by corporate media' (Mamadouh 2004). Thus photos from demonstrations, pickets and direct action are uploaded (e.g. see Figures 3 and 4), as well as images which demonstrate damage caused by Shell, for example effluent from the Bellanaboy site flowing offsite towards Carrowmore Lake, the local water source (see Figure 5). The release of the Rossport 5 from jail and the 'Bringing the Pipeline back to Statoil demonstration' were also covered in a video produced by the Revolt Video Collective (2006)<sup>17</sup>.

Figure 3. Protest by Galway Shell to Sea on Saturday 18 February 2006. They held an information store on William Street in the centre of Galway in addition to picketing a local Statoil Service Station. Source: Indymedia 74343.



Figure 4. 'Bringing the pipeline back to Statoil' protest. This protest took place on Friday 7 April 2006 by a group of protestors outside Statoil's Dublin office. The pipe was used to blockade the entrance to Statoil's office, to emphasise their opposition to Statoil's involvement in the extraction and processing of the Corrib gas field and to raise public awareness of the campaign. Source: Indymedia 75307.



Figure 5. Contaminated water running through the drains to the Bellanaboy river. Source: Indymedia 74344. This photo was taken at the refinery site to highlight the problem caused by aluminium pollution of the Bellanaboy river which flows off the refinery site into Carrowmore Lake, the local water supply. The photo was taken at the refinery site to highlight the concerns the locals have over potential health problems and to provide evidence as their concerns were not been taken seriously by Shell or the local authorities.



The interviewees of the main campaigning organisations all stressed the importance of Indymedia. RSC and Shell to Sea do not update articles and information about the campaign onto their own websites, they use hyperlinks to [Indymedia.ie/mayo](http://Indymedia.ie/mayo) and all of the organisations upload articles onto this media format. This practice is summarised by the interviewee for Belfast Shell to Sea as follows:

It gives space for people to raise awareness on issues that would not be covered in the corporate media, or if covered would be given a particular slant. It allows activists an avenue for debate and discussions on various campaigns and the best way to approach these campaigns. And it allows space for the advertising of events that people may not be able to find out about otherwise. (Belfast Shell to Sea interview)

An interesting new development regarding 'independent' social movement media representation is the growing use by activists of online corporate-owned media-sharing facilities such as 'You Tube' ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), a subsidiary of Google Inc. Whilst many such activists might otherwise be antagonistic towards the powerful corporations owning such media and social networking sites, it seems that the ease

and rapidity with which they permit the uploading of media is outweighing the ideological problems that such resources pose for many left-leaning activists. This is particularly true for video formats for which Indymedia, for example, has been a problematic platform. Thus a search under 'Shell to Sea' on You Tube on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2007 produced 25 uploaded videos for the Shell to Sea campaign in Ireland, out of 'about 243' search results.

#### *Printed alternative media resources*

Material resources such as leaflets, stickers, posters and badges have all been used to publicise both the issues of the campaign itself and events such as fundraisers and demonstrations. Two nights before a picket organised outside a Statoil station in Ushers Quay, for example, members of the Workers Solidarity Movement distributed 1000 leaflets in the area to advertise the picket, explaining its background and motivations (Anarkismo 2005a). Contact details and links to websites for more information were provided in the hope that once people read about the issues they will seek to become involved in the campaign. Resources such as these have been handed out at events such as pickets and protests, to members of the public and posters have been placed in prominent positions in large cities such as Dublin. Leaflets have been produced and distributed at events such as Anarchist bookfairs, student recruitment days for societies, in social centres, squats, at the World Social Forum, and as part of the RSC speaking tour at protest sites in the UK. Many of the different groups involved in the campaign have produced their own material, reflecting the diversity of uptake and translation of the issues raised by this campaign.



### 3) Reflection: on building social movement potency

[T]hought and the perceptions that guide action, along with the feelings and urges that constitute the motivation for such action, are inseparable aspects of one whole movement ... (Bohm 2004 (1996), p. 82)

Taken together, the dynamics and developments detailed above express a range of successes for the Shell to Sea campaign. Via the myriad networking practices and actions undertaken by involved individuals and groups, the campaign has grown from an issue of local concern to what might be considered a full-fledged social movement embedded in national and international networks of support. The campaign has received favourable coverage in the corporate media, and also successfully represented 'itself' in its varied forms via a range of alternative media forms. The scale of repression of the campaign, as well as of particular individuals within the campaign (e.g. the Rossport 5), is a measure of the movement's success in terms of perturbing the trajectory of this development project. And indicators of success also lie in the campaign's role in ensuring the early release of the Rossport 5, as well as in delaying pipeline construction, in shaping the proposed pipeline route and in reducing the degree of bar pressure for gas flows through the pipeline.

We will take each of these movement *potencies* in turn here and discuss their implications in relation to the contemporary social movement theoretical framings outlined in our opening to this paper.

#### 4.1 Becoming a social movement

For some years following discovery of the Corrib gas field in 1996 the resistant Shell to Sea campaign remained a predominantly local campaign highlighting a local social and environment issue. Arguably, the leap in organisational scale from local campaign to a broader and multi-faceted social movement came in spring 2005, and was precipitated by the granting of planning permission to Shell, the unprecedented issuing of compulsory land acquisition orders to local landowners, the jailing of the Rossport 5, and a general sense of imminence regarding construction of the pipeline and refinery. In agreement with Della Porta and Diani's (2006, p. 21-22) recent definition of a new social movement, the Shell to Sea campaign thus involves a large number of individuals and organisations that are in 'conflictual relations with clearly

defined opponents'; are linked by dense informal networks assisted, in particular, by use of the internet; and, whilst retaining their autonomy and independence, are engaged in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals.

The issues the campaign raises now range from local problems such as justice, health and safety and environmental concerns, to national concerns such as the use of compulsory land acquisition orders, and to international concerns relating this project to Shell's practices overseas and the broader privatisation of natural resources under neoliberalism. This multi-issue focus has enabled the campaign to reach a wide support base and to build national and international solidarity. As such, it has made possible a remarkable integration of frequently conflicting local 'NIMBYism'<sup>18</sup> with broader environmental or NOPE! – Not On Planet Earth - concerns. As stated by Griggs et al (1998, p. 367) determination by local people to 'protect their quality of life and material interests' can be in tension with environmentalist 'ideological commitment and altruistic desire to protect the environment'. A related assumption might be that activists from elsewhere on local protest camps and actions may adopt direct action tactics that will alienate and conflict with the methods adopted by local people<sup>19</sup>. These potential conflicts appear to have been avoided in the Shell to Sea campaign. The Rosspoint Solidarity Camp was established at the wish of residents in Rosspoint, and close contact is maintained with the camp supporting the local people and meeting regularly at the picket site at Bellanaboy and at weekly Shell to Sea meetings. Thus it was stated at the meeting to mark the reopening of the RSC in February 2006 that the 'RSC and the local Shell to Sea Campaign are one' and 'we look forward to another summer of cooperative resistance against the state and our mates in big business' (Indymedia 74533). This was also reflected in the interview with the Erris Shell to Sea representative who remarked that 'the camp volunteers are highly respected and regarded and have been an important support throughout' (Erris Shell to Sea interview).

The campaign did not begin as a response to a change in political opportunity structures, although it could be said that these structures indeed have acted 'as filters' between the mobilisation of the movement, its choice of strategies and capacity to change the social environment' (Kitschelt 1986, p. 59). Thus when the political system appeared to be open, assimilative strategies were adopted and appeals were made during the planning process. Once Shell was granted planning

permission and compulsory acquisition orders were issued, however, confrontational strategies were initiated. Indeed, and somewhat ironically, the tactics adopted by the authorities to control and incorporate the movement in some senses have enhanced the campaign. The jailing of the Rossport 5, for example, contributed to the spread and intensification of the campaign rather than its dissipation (cf. Foucault 1998 (1976)). The involvement of political parties and representatives within the campaign also has allowed the campaign to gain access to political channels which would otherwise have been closed. In this sense formal institutional contexts are affecting social movement strategies, as well as the ways in which the issues are framed and aligned.

In terms of Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), and unsurprisingly, all those involved in the campaign have sought to mobilise a dynamic range of tangible and intangible resources in order to spread the campaign message and encourage participation. Clearly, for the local population the costs of doing nothing were too high, given the unacceptable risks which they felt (and feel) accompany the pipeline. Beyond this, moral outrage, particularly with regard to the jailing of the Rossport 5, led to broader involvement with the campaign together with involvement in events and initiatives that for many might engender a disagreeable amount of discomfort (cf. Doherty 2000), including long-term camping, participation in potentially arrestible acts of civil disobedience, the possible experience of *gardai* violence on the picketline, etc.. There perhaps is a fine line between selfless sacrifice to a collective cause, and self-serving masochism in the production of a rather conservative victim identity that has been associated with left-leaning politics (discussed further in Sullivan 2005c). It seems clear here, however, that a resilient sense of collective concern and identity has characterised the campaign beyond the immediate diversity of its participants, leading to the creation of strong solidarity links and animating the popular desire for 'unity in diversity' proclaimed by many in the 'movement of movements' associated with counter-globalisation efforts more broadly. The multi-issue focus, for example, has enabled a diversity of people to identify with at least one issue raised by the campaign. The strong emotions and ethical concerns calling people to such sustained and potent, i.e. effective, social movement work tend to be rather occluded in conventional social movement theories (see below).

## **4.2 Media representation**

The corporate media were central to the spread of the campaign message. The imprisonment of the Rosspport 5 and sense of injustice that this brought created a media frenzy and the story was covered in all national mainstream media including radio, television and newspapers. This permitted the broader raising of local concerns, engendering public understanding regarding what had led five ordinary and respectable citizens, with no prior history or contacts with activism, to make such a dramatic refusal to cooperate with the state in its issuing of compulsory land acquisition orders. This sense of injustice and understanding of the pipeline project mobilised people to participate in direct action, especially grassroots environmental and social organisations. As theorised by Tarrow (1994: 23) and Rootes (2000) the corporate media therefore acted as an invaluable mobilisation, networking and educational resource and it was due to intense public pressure, reflected by the amount of direct action and numbers demonstrating during their jailing, that the Rosspport 5 were released from prison after only 94 days. Following their release, however, those involved in the campaign have found it increasingly difficult to gain further media coverage. Media stunts and a more proactive approach to the media thus have been adopted with media spokespersons allocated and press releases sent to the main media outlets within Ireland.

The use of alternative media and particularly Indymedia by the campaign has been central to its success. Indymedia, for example, acts not only as a source of information but also as a networking and mobilising tool. Hyperlinks connect articles as well as linking to organisations and sites outside of Indymedia. This orientation towards efficient networking and communication across temporal and spatial disjunctions in itself has facilitated the spread of the movement. The open-publishing software allows anyone to post articles and information thereby supporting wide and immediate coverage of all actions, and supplementation with photographs helps to reinforce a sense of collective identity, raise the spirit of participants and renew group solidarity (cf. Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 176). Similarly a number of event postings are listed informing people of events that they may otherwise have missed. The site allows activists and locals to raise the issues and aspects of the campaign which they feel are most important and their passionate concern is reflected in the use of emotive rhetoric. The limited readership and targeting solely of activists can be a limitation given a somewhat unavoidable element of 'preaching to the converted'.

Hence while Indymedia is an effective way of networking and mobilising within the activist community the use of other forms of alternative media such as posters, stickers, leaflets, etc. has helped with reaching out to other sectors of the population.

#### **4.3 Repression and resistance**

Much has already been said regarding the jailing of the Rosspoint 5 for their resistance to the compulsory land acquisition orders issued for their land by the state on behalf of Shell. A cursory viewing of the main online sites documenting this campaign, however, reveals a repetitive sequence of arrests and beatings of campaigners, camp residents and picketers by Gardai, throughout the lifetime of the campaign, and particularly since 2005<sup>20</sup>. Given the intractable and productive relationship between power and resistance (cf. Foucault 1998 (1976)), this in itself is suggestive of the success of the Shell to Sea campaign in perturbing the cosy corporate-state development trajectory in this instance. Indeed, and as elsewhere in social movement campaigns contesting neoliberal development initiatives, the extent of repression perhaps reveals the power of resistance rather than the other way round, begging the question of 'who really is resisting who?' in these dynamics.

#### **4.4 Affect and effect**

Movements are potent when they produce effects; and effects require the potency of *affect* – the felt and embodied desire which produces action. This is the link missing from much social movement theorisation and analysis (although see Goodwin et al. 2001; Drury 2003; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Sullivan 2005a and b; Trott 2007). People are moved to act when we both *feel* and articulate concern regarding contemporary development processes and inequalities. We coalesce and become entrained with others when we experience a sense of recognition – of solidarity - regarding these concerns. And this sense of solidarity is iterated and affirmed via the myriad and prosaic interactions that coalesce into social movement campaigns, events and collective experiences of success and joy, and also of failure.

As described in this case-study, the emergence of a specific campaign and its successful coalescence into an ongoing social movement requires the creating and capitalising of opportunities, the joining up of different groups and individuals, the mobilising of resources and the entraining of individual concerns into collective identification of problems and appropriate actions. But these fragmented aspects do

not in themselves constitute social movement. *Movement* requires the touching of a nerve, the lighting of a flame, the flicker of desire, the imagining of a different possibility. The social, environmental and political concerns raised by the ongoing Shell to Sea campaign have touched this nerve for many, drawing a diversity of people into sustained and arguably successful resistance work to contest the state and corporate power driving the onshore development of the Corrib gas-field. In connection with other social movements articulating similar concerns, the Shell to Sea campaign thereby becomes one vortex of potency among many in the movement of movements contesting the development logics of global capitalism.

## 4) Epilogue

The main period of research for this paper took place in early to mid-2006. Since then the Shell to Sea campaign has intensified with numerous actions, increasing connections with campaigns elsewhere, and a number of notable successes for the movement. The Shell to Sea network has grown with new groups forming in Ballina, Castlebar, Limerick and Dingle among others,<sup>21</sup> many of whom travel to the ongoing blockade at Bellanaboy as well as organising events such as fundraisers and pickets of local Shell stations. Support for the campaign has also developed in England with Shell petrol stations picketed in Islington, Tyneside, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, Nottingham and Bradford in November 2006 alone<sup>22</sup>. A range of blockades and other actions are ongoing, with almost daily confrontations between the protestors and Gardai. Shell Exploration and Production head offices in Dublin were closed on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2007 through a blockade by the Dublin Shell to Sea campaign (Dublin Shell to Sea 2007), for example, and a range of solidarity protests took place to mark the Shell AGM in the Hague on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2007 (Hands Off Iraqi Oil 2007; Indymedia UK 2007). A national day of action occurred at Bellanaboy on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007, drawing in hundreds of participants (Schnews 2007a). A similar turn-out, accompanied by solidarity actions elsewhere, is expected for a day of action at Bellanaboy called for November 9<sup>th</sup> 2007. The campaign also has sustained some notable successes. In particular on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007 the High Court ruled that the original pipeline route could not be used without landowners' consent and ordered Shell to pay the £1 million legal costs of the hearing (Schnews 2007b; Shell to Sea 2007).

During this period a shift in the character of reporting in the mainstream media has been noticeable. The escalating confrontations are now shown in a predominantly negative fashion with accusations that the campaigners are provoking violent clashes and that the campaign has been hijacked by violent agitators and Sinn Féin. This loss of media support has frustrated the Shell to Sea network who accuse the media of joining Shell and Statoil 'in attempting to force through this highly flawed gas project'<sup>23</sup> (Shell to Sea 2006b). Of course, the campaign(s) continue to counteract such portrayals through self-representation on Indymedia and via other alternative media outlets. Campaign websites and email lists reiterate that on the part of the protestors

the campaign remains peaceful 'despite deliberate provocation by Gardai' (Shell to sea 2006c). It also is emphasised that:

Shell to Sea does not engage in or condone intimidation. We are the property of no political party or no political ideology. We are grounded in our community and in those large numbers of people nationally and internationally who willingly support us (Indymedia 79011).

Such statements reaffirm collective local identity whilst emphasising the strong community ties and sense of solidarity that exist between members of the wider Shell to Sea network and those opposed to the scheme. At the same time divisions are apparent within the local community with some arguing that the proposed refinery and pipeline, as well as development of other offshore energy sources, will bring much-needed economic benefits (The Irish Times 2007).

The Shell to Sea campaign continues to provide a valuable case-study of how a local community can effectively mobilise local and international support in relation to a powerful multinational corporation. The conflict, however, appears to be increasingly recalcitrant with neither side willing to make any concessions and with no clear resolution in sight.



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## 6) Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Ireland's national police service.

<sup>2</sup> A full timeline of the discovery and proposed development of the Corrib gas fields, as well as the incidence of protest against this, can be find here:

<http://www.corribsos.com/index.php?id=704>.

<sup>3</sup> Although online organising and media producing sites also have been targeted for censorship and closure, as with the FBI seizure of Indymedia servers in the UK in October 2004 (Indymedia 2004).

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent consideration of the frequently tense relationships that social movements have with mainstream media, as well as the tensions that arise when movement activists attempt to engage with the formal media in order to gain at least some control over the way that the movements they are involved with are represented, see the CounterSpin Collective (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Indymedia is a dynamic global network of some 160 local autonomous Independent Media Centres (IMCs) offering 'grassroots, non-corporate coverage', and describing 'itself' as a 'democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth' (Indymedia 2006). The purpose of Indymedia is two-fold: 1. to present news and information from activists around the world and to provide alternative perspectives and voices; and 2. to serve as an organising tool within the activist communities to disseminate information about upcoming events and protests and to help activists to stay in touch with connected social movements and concerns worldwide (Coyer 2005, p. 172). Indymedia has a number of distinct characteristics which reflect the ideologies of activists and contributors to the sites. It is a participatory medium and operates by way of open publishing; this means that anyone can post information and comments. This relates directly to its purpose to 'empower the powerless, to enable individuals and groups to voice their opinions and to publicise their actions and opinions' (Mamadouh 2004). A light editorial policy is practiced which filters Indymedia and can 'hide' posts, adhering to local guidelines such as the removal of hate and racist speech. IMCs are staffed completely by volunteers and aim to be non-hierarchical in structure; the media sites and reporting are not funded by advertising or sources of payment other than private donations (Shumway 2002). As a network of local Indymedia sites, with each local site developed to 'address the unique needs of their local communities as they see

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appropriate' (Perlstein 2001), each IMC website is both different and the same; they have their own distinct local content yet they also share national and international articles and commentary (Shumway 2002). If an article appears on a local site which would be of international interest it can be re-posted on the global site. The network of sites and the networked identity of the collectives is maintained through the abundant use of hyperlinks connecting articles and sites together. Links may also be provided to other activist sites outside of the Indymedia network (Mamadouch 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See consent form at [http://alt-media-res.clearerchannel.org.uk/public/index.php?title=Consent\\_form](http://alt-media-res.clearerchannel.org.uk/public/index.php?title=Consent_form).

<sup>7</sup> As stated in the introduction, links with Shell's practices and human rights abuses across the world form one of the arguments in the Shell to Sea campaign, especially the plight of the Ogoni people in southern Nigeria. In 1995 Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight Ogoni colleagues were executed by the Nigerian state for campaigning against the devastation of the Niger Delta by oil companies including Shell. For more information on this situation and the continuing campaign visit <http://www.remembersarowiwa.com/>.

<sup>8</sup> The Dublin Shell to Sea interview was conducted with a member of Sinn Fein who also supports the campaign. The information presented here is thus likely to be flavoured with a Sinn Fein perspective.

<sup>9</sup> The equivalent of a member of parliament.

<sup>10</sup> Earth First! (e.g. <http://earthfirst.org.uk/>) is a network of eco-activists concerned with the dramatic environmental impacts associated with contemporary capitalism and committed to taking a proactive stance in contesting these impacts. Thus '[t]he general principles behind Earth First! are non-hierarchical organisation and the use of direct action to confront, stop and eventually reverse the forces that are responsible for the destruction of the Earth and its inhabitants. EF! is not a cohesive group or campaign, but a convenient banner for people who share similar philosophies to work under' (Earth First! 2006b).

<sup>11</sup> Rhythms of Resistance is a London based activist samba band, and growing network of samba bands, who participate in and organise protest and direct action to highlight environmental and social justice issues, as well as playing at varied local community events. See <http://www.rhythmsofresistance.co.uk/> for further information.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.wsm.ie/>

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.anarkismo.net/>.



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<sup>14</sup> E.g. see <http://www.gcmonitor.org/article.php?list=type&type=11>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=1870>.

<sup>16</sup> According to their website, Advantica are a 'global engineering consultancy, service and solution provider, supporting clients in the gas, oil, water and electric industries ... dedicated to enabling the owners and operators of energy and utility assets to plan and manage their network assets more successfully to achieve their business vision' (see <http://www.advantica.biz/>). The report was controversial partly because contrary to constituting an 'independent' review of the proposed pipeline, it was written by a company whose remit is to support 'a better return on assets', for those involved with the development of oil, gas and water.

<sup>17</sup> Revolt Video Collective is a 'video collective open to all!', whose goals include the 'physical and virtual distribution of Irish activist video.' See <http://revoltvideo.blogspot.com/>

<sup>18</sup> NIMBY = Not In My Back Yard.

<sup>19</sup> A similar assumption has been made regarding the relationships between 'bad' protesters who might engage in tactics involving the smashing of symbols of capitalism and defensive confrontation with police in protests, and 'good' protesters who are more likely to adhere to a tighter regime of 'Non-Violent Direct Action' or restrict participation only to state-sanctioned marches, i.e. that the tactics of the former are alienating and problematic for the interests of the latter. Such a division is most often noted by commentators rather than participators in protest events, however, with the latter seemingly more open to the complementary possibilities of myriad tactics and approaches (as discussed in Mueller 2004).

<sup>20</sup> As evidenced by video footage uploaded under 'Shell to Sea' on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

<sup>21</sup> For a full list of regional groups see <http://www.corribsos.com/index.php?id=4&type=page>

<sup>22</sup> For further details of these protests and UK activity see <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/>.

<sup>23</sup> Email received from Shell to Sea, 3/10/06.