GLOBAL RESISTANCE TO FRACKING

Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

Samuel Martin-Sosa Rodríguez (coord.)
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Anxela Iglesias, Jeanie le Roux, Ewa Suffin-Jacquemart,
Andy Gheorghiu, Maxime Combes, Maria Olteanu,
Kathryn Mcwhirter, Wenonah Hauter, Tom White,
Mariann Lloyd-Smith, Joanne Cipolla-Denis, Ínigo Leza,
Diana Daunheimer, Hamza Hamouchene,
Neuquén Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking,
Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament
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Authors: Samuel Martín-Sosa Rodríguez (coord.), Anxela Iglesias, Jeanie le Roux, Ewa Suffin-Jacquemart, Andy Gheorghiu, Maxime Combes, Maria Olteanu, Kathryn Mcwhirter, Wenonah Hauter, Tom White, Mariann Lloyd-Smith, Joanne Cipolla-Denis, Marilyn Lilley, Andy Gheorghiu, Diego Ortuzar, Gurutze Morado, Maxime Combes, Maria Olteanu, Kathryn Mcwhirter, Wenonah Hauter, Tom White, Mariann Lloyd-Smith, Jacqueline Balvet, Hamza Hamouchene, Yann Louvel, Karen Eldeinstein, Joanne Cipolla-Denis, Juliette Renaud, Diego di Risio, Íñigo Leza, Jhon Arbelaez, Dorothy Guerrero, Wenhong Xie, Gelu Irimea, Gabriel Tanasa, Tom Kucharz, Satoko Kishimoto, Rena Lau, Karen Hansen-Kuhn, Jim Harkness, Chee Yoke Ling, Yang Fugiang, Lorena Riffo, Carolina García, Alejandro Garay, Lisa Parr, Diana Daunheimer, Julienne du Toit, Chris Marais, Andrzej Bąk, Bboy Lee, Miguel Brieva, Paco Segura, Andrés Espinosa, Andrea Matamala, Olivier Sébart, Samuel Sébart, Eva Obregón, Nika Dyomina, Cindy de Poy, Hazel Morley, Claire Maloney, Katrin Deeg, Cristina López, Olga Albert, Camino Villanueva, José Bové, Rebecca Harms, Florent Marcellesi, Heike Leberle.

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Dedication

"Water is more important than gas."

This simple and telling phrase was the motto of Terry Greenwood. He was a rancher in Daisytown, Pennsylvania, a paradigmatic state like no other in the United States fracking boom. Terry died from a brain tumor in June 2014. For years he had revealed the effects fracking was having on his livestock and his yearly losses of thousands of dollars in pasture and cattle. His complaints that animals were born dead with blind, white eyes were not taken seriously by authorities.

The list of those affected by fracking is growing.

This book is dedicated to them.
This book aims, first and foremost, to be a source of inspiration for anti-fracking activism, a means to make the strength and determination of our struggle more visible and, in addition, a gesture of solidarity with those places in this world where activists have it hardest. It is also an attempt to bring together the actions and visions of people and movements who don’t know each other, but who all refuse to accept the inertia of the dominant dialectic, which sells us the idea that our society needs to continue to extract hydrocarbons to avoid economic collapse. Society is awakening and growing aware of the fact that it is precisely continuing along this path that will lead to its collapse.

In this book, we present a selection of 15 iconic struggles at very different levels. The majority of the stories are told by their protagonists, in the first person, and it could not have been any other way. There are personal battles in the courts, like that of the Lisa Parr family in Texas, or Diana Daunheimer in Canada; battles at the local level to secure the right to prohibit the practice, such as that in the town of Dryden in New York State. Romania and Poland inspire us with a stoic struggle by peaceful farmers against corporate power protected by a repressive government. We also find campaigns that sought an alliance of different sectors to form a united front, like in the account contributed by Neuquén Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking, in Argentina. Or initiatives that spread like wildfire, like the decision to ‘lock the gate to mining companies in Australia, the ‘Frack Free Municipalities’ campaign in Spain, and the Korbach Resolution in Germany. These and other iconic and inspiring battles are this book’s main contribution to global fracking resistance.

The stories have been chosen because they contribute something distinctive, something useful to other movements, or something special that deserves to be shared. Many other stories have been left out of this book. They are equally valuable stories full of courageous experiences that I hope will not be forgotten.
The book includes stories from Europe, North America, South America, Africa, and Oceania. Asia is the real missing element. I have tried everything to include a case of community resistance from China, a country with vast reserves that is already producing shale gas commercially. I have asked repeatedly, through about a dozen different contacts, of various individuals and NGOs working with China on a variety of projects related to energy and the environment. But all of my efforts have been to no avail. I have not managed to get in contact with any resistance movements because none of the people I asked are aware of the existence of any. Social resistance is not an easy topic in China, as we all know. However, the final conclusion at which I arrived was that in those rural areas over which this threat hovers, communities are more preoccupied with other, more visible concerns, and that as a result, this issue, at the moment, does not generate social alarm in that country. This is deeply troubling, and here I would like to invite the global anti-fracking movement to place China, and other countries where no mobilisation yet exists, on the political agenda. Only when we have a global fracking ban will we truly have won.

Global anti-fracking resistance is alive and well. The first chapter analyses how we have arrived at this point, the main achievements of the movement and its potential in today’s multi-crisis context.

This book also aims to be a breath of fresh air, which is essential to keep spirits up during the fight. Toward the end, we include a selection of anecdotes and curious facts that the unruly arrival of fracking is leaving us with.

In its final chapter, the book contains a simple pocket battlecard to remind those who question this resistance movement that there is no shortage of reasons to oppose fracking.
A timeline and some snapshots of the resistance

Samuel Martín-Sosa Rodríguez

*International Coordinator, Ecologistas en Acción*

“Dear friends, I am writing this email because I want to warn you about a threat we have here in France and that is probably happening silently in your country as well, although you may not know it. We have recently discovered that several oil and gas companies have plans to employ fracking in our country. This is a technique that makes deep cracks in the subsoil to release little bubbles of natural gas and oil that are trapped in shale formations. In the United States they have been doing this for years, and only now have the people begun to become aware of the dangers it entails …”

I am not quoting literally, but this was essentially the gist of an email I received from someone I didn’t know towards the end of 2010, the first time that I heard about fracking, or hydraulic fracturing. It sounded like science fiction. I asked my colleagues who were energy experts, but they knew nothing about it. Neither had the term itself, up until then, appeared in the Spanish press. Assuming it was a ‘conspiracy theory’, we put the whole thing aside without giving it any further thought. But in the following months, new alerts began to arrive.

Today, ‘fracking’ is a commonly heard term in the European media and in the rest of the world. In the streets, outside of directly affected areas, a lot of people have heard of it, even though they might not have a clear understanding of what it means. The fact that it has become campaign ammunition is telling of its ubiquity; political parties choose their words with great care when formulating their discourse on the
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fossil fuels, brandishing a resource eldorado that would usher us into an era of energy independence and job creation. It was a promise that came endorsed by its success in the United States, where the intensive and increasing mining of these kinds of fuels that had begun a little over a decade ago had turned into a wellspring of inexpensive, abundant energy, so much so that there was even room to fantasise about exporting it.

The fracking merchants were caught off guard by citizen mobilisation in Europe, which had ignited like wildfire, and by the time they tried to employ their all too well-known sales pitch, talking about best practices which would guarantee aquifer integrity, or about a supposed energy bridge between coal and renewable energy, which would put us on the road to meeting climate targets, or lower our energy bills, together with the rest of the ‘official’ arguments we have heard ad nauseam... by that time the citizen movements already had a substantial head start in getting informed. The links with activists and groups in the United States had already been established. Josh Fox’s Oscar–nominated film, Gasland, was being subtitled in several languages, and the scene where a man sets fire to the water coming out of his tap had already made the rounds on the Internet.

Thanks to them, those of us living in parts of the world where fracking had not yet arrived, found out that Drill, Baby, Drill, the slogan the Republicans had turned into a mantra during the 2008 US election, and which symbolised so well the euphoria of the feverish dash for unconventional fuels, was also towing behind it some dark, heavy ballast in the form of a growing body of evidence documenting cases of pollution, illnesses among people and cattle, and the loss of social harmony in rural areas. The denial about this evidence was palpable, enabled by confidentiality clauses (which prevent the owners affected by pollution cases from talking about it), a lack of baseline data prior to mining development (which makes it difficult to establish a causal relationship when contamination occurs), the lack of controls and effective intervention (to say nothing of direct obstruction) by...
regulatory bodies, and exemption from compliance with certain basic water protection laws.

Networks were also knitting together with other countries where the industry was already established or rapidly getting there. That was how we came to learn about cases in locations as far away as Canada, Australia and Argentina. We also began to become aware of our own power, particularly once we saw how popular pressure turned into moratoria or bans in some parts of the world. Certain parts of the world were turning into recurring points of reference and inspiration for the global movement against fracking. Places like Quebec, the state of New York, South Africa, and France, where barely a few months after the citizen mobilisation had taken form, they managed to achieve a legislative ban. These achievements have been a wake-up call for the entire movement, despite the fact that some of the moratoria have not been upheld and the rest are under tremendous pressure to be repealed. Each new ban or moratorium that we attained has been like a gulp of fresh air for the entire anti-fracking movement, which has celebrated each case as if it were their own victory, even though it may have been happening thousands of kilometres away.

**Climate in crisis, democracy in crisis**

The battle against fracking is eminently a battle fought by ordinary people. It is, first and foremost, a rebellion of ordinary people who are protecting their land, their water, their way of life. Although the environmental organisations have been, and continue to be involved in this battle, in general many opposed to fracking have come to the movement driven by their own circumstances, without necessarily having done any activism in the past. One example of this are the many farmers and ranchers in places as dissimilar as Australia, Romania, Poland, and the United States, who had never participated in civil society movements before, and who today are at the forefront of social resistance.

But one noteworthy and transcendental element of this movement is that, in many cases, it has gone much further than a typical NIMBY struggle and has opened a further-reaching global debate, deliberating over what fracking represents and where it is located in a multi-crisis landscape. The battle against fracking is therefore, secondly, the product of a maturation process of civil society, who has come to the conviction that the road we are on, in terms of energy and resource over-exploitation happening at the global level, is wrong. That is how the opposition to fracking has turned into a clear exponent of climate-related demands. Despite the industry’s efforts to confuse and governments’ tolerance of the industry, the public has come to understand, in large part, that fracking represents more of the same thing. This being, banking on a group of ‘extreme’ hydrocarbons, in which we can also include deepwater petroleum and oil sands, which are the ‘last drops’ of fossil fuel the planet has, the most expensive, the most polluting, of the worst quality.

It seems a widespread and accepted conclusion that to continue to back a fossil model which is headed for extinction would be prolonging the agony in the interest of an economic elite. This is in no way compatible with the radical, urgent changes climate science suggests are necessary. And this is manifest in the fact that this popular movement has not only condemned the problem, but also contributed part of the solution: the refrain ‘No to fracking, yes to renewable energy’ is also heard in many countries. In Spain, to not go far for an example, the formation of the anti-fracking movement has gone hand in hand with the creation of citizen groups in support of a new energy model.

One element which indicates that we are facing a qualitative shift, is the fact that a significant portion of the conflicts are happening in areas with a long oil-producing tradition, where people have coexisted for decades with traditional oil wells in relative normality, and where mining activity is directly linked to the means of subsistence for a large part of the population.

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3 NIMBY stands for ‘Not In My Back Yard’. This term is used in reference to popular movements organised to oppose a facility in their immediate environment but without questioning the activity itself.
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sector of the population. This is the case of Alberta, in Canada, or Texas, in the United States. In Texas, the residents of Denton supported a ban on fracking at the polls by a majority in November 2014. A stake straight through the heart of the beast.

And at the same time as the struggle against fracking symbolises the climate change crisis, it could also stand for our awakening to a crisis of democracy. The people have reacted, spurred on by proof that decisions are made for them and regardless of their opinion. In Germany, the Energy Transition (Energiewende), which aims to eliminate fossil fuels and nuclear energy in favour of an energy mix composed exclusively of renewable sources, has led to a groundswell in towns and cities, whose residents have voted to reclaim control over energy distribution where these utilities were in the hands of private companies. The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the rapid shift toward renewable energy will only be possible through processes of remunicipalisation or ‘local empowerment’, where the residents are able to decide from which energy sources to draw their supply, and how to use the obtained revenue.

The relationship between the climate and energy debate on the one hand, and popular demand for participation in it with real decision-making ability on the other, is a common element in both well-consolidated democracies and new, emerging ones, where the people hoped to share in these decisions. For example, after the fall of the Tunisian dictatorship in 2011, the people expected that the principles of democracy and dialogue should be taken into account, and many Tunisians have insisted on initiating a national debate about hydraulic fracturing, one that has not materialised.

In all of these societies, a feeling of outrage has built up, made worse by seeing the way in which what is clearly unwanted is imposed, and the way in which non-acceptance of hydraulic fracturing in particular is repressed.

If citizens express their disapproval, authorities fail to take it into consideration. In June 2013, the European Commission presented the results of a public consultation launched months before to find out what the public thought of unconventional fuel development in Europe. The results, weighted by population, were unequivocal. Sixty-four percent (64%) did not want hydraulic fracturing techniques to be used in the European Union under any circumstances. An additional 20% was of the opinion that there was no adequate regulatory framework in place, one that would protect both human health and the environment, for fracking development in Europe. The European Commission, which had discovered a significant number of regulatory loopholes regarding fracking in Europe through various reports, nevertheless cleared the way for energy companies by neglecting to make laws to close these legal gaps and limiting themselves to making some voluntary recommendations.

Sometimes, when laws that protect people from fracking are passed, authorities higher up see to it to enact others that render them useless. In response to social pressure, four regions (Cantabria, Rioja, Navarre, and Catalonia) of the 17 that make up Spain, ratified regional laws between 2013 and 2014 whose purpose was to prohibit fracking within their territory. The central government has responded by enacting higher-level changes regulating jurisdiction, which have allowed most of these laws to be repealed or upheld by the Constitutional Court. Similarly, although on a larger scale, free trade agreements

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4 In other cases, such as in Argentine Patagonia, where hydrocarbon extraction has also been going on for decades, the rejection of fracking is fuelled by a pre-existing social non-acceptance of the logic of extraction, in a general sense, which was already widely shared in this region.

5 http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/05/birthplace-fracking-boom-votes-ban-denton-texas

6 http://energytransition.de/


allow big energy corporations to go after sovereign decisions, such as fracking bans established by regions or countries, in arbitration courts outside their respective national legal system, if they understand that, in terms of the respective trade agreement, these measures affect their profit forecast.

And when, as a last resort, the public protests with the intent of making it clear that these companies lack the social licence to operate, the administration du jour responds with harsh repression. Over these years, we have seen the police turn their clubs on their own people in the United Kingdom, Argentina, Canada, and Romania.

Another way to intimidate anti-fracking activists is straight-up harassment. The furthest extreme is probably found in the Maghreb, where civil society is actually afraid of repression. In the summer of 2014, during a gathering in Paris, our counterparts from Tunisia and Algeria denounced, in addition to the difficulty of accessing information about the projects, structural corruption and a curtailing of civil rights, starting with obstacles to forming an association and ending with the risk of being arrested for the simple act of participating in a peaceful demonstration.

The use of psychological and surveillance tactics to control and try to break up anti-fracking groups is also well known. Sometimes we see published that energy sector companies hire personnel experienced in military psychological warfare tactics11 to divide up the communities that resist, treating them like insurgent movements. Spying on activists is a practice shared by places as distant and different as Poland12 and Pennsylvania 13.

Another technique that gets used is slander. In a move bordering on the ridiculous, a few months before leaving his post, the now former se-

cretary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Anders Fogh Rasmussen, accused14 the European anti-fracking movement of being Russian service agents, whom Russia was supposedly financing to try to consolidate its strategic position in the energy market by sustaining Europe’s deep dependence on Russia’s conventional natural gas. And although NATO had to distance itself, the story was swallowed by some political leaders and amplified by influential mass media outlets. This is a good indicator of both the strength of the movement and the pressures that it faces.

David gets respect

The struggles that confront citizens who are defending the environment from the industries that pollute it are usually seen as a battle between David and Goliath. Even though obviously industry is a powerful giant, the movement against fracking is stronger, global, tenacious, and has social recognition to spare. In large part, the sabotage tactics mentioned earlier can be explained by the real importance that the oil and gas industry perceives the anti-fracking movement to have in terms of posing an effective threat to their plans. The response movement is characterised in general by a unanimous opposition to the practice and the understanding that prohibition is the only possible answer, not regulation, no matter how adequate. Criticism of the lack of transparency in public debate has also been constant and the oil and gas industry tries to adapt its strategies to avoid repeating past mistakes.

The industry commissioned a report, “The Global Anti-Fracking Movement”15 from a consulting company called Global Risks, to figure out the organisation and strategies of the anti-fracking movement, which they label a ‘highly effective campaign’, and largely blame for

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The moratoria and bans established in different parts of the world. The report notes that industry has underestimated the social and political risks and that this battle must be won before trying for wider implementation. Similarly, a 2013 NATO report identified organised resistance as one of the key factors that would complicate mass extraction of shale gas in Europe.\(^16\)

Pro-fracking lobbies and energy corporations have been living a double life, showing one face to the public, assuring us that they support regulations and controls to guarantee sound practices, while behind the scenes they have put pressure on governments to slacken their environmental legislation.\(^17\) Nor have they been hesitant to file complaints or to use the courts against the population opposed to their plans, or to threaten them with property seizure, while at the same time launching an image campaign in which they pretend to defend the interests of the very same farmers they are suing. Lately these lobbies have been trying to get the debate out of the streets and onto dry, technical ground, well aware of the fact that they have already lost the public opinion debate.\(^18\)

Meanwhile, resistance to fracking becomes more global every day and continues to knit together networks based on solidarity. In 2012, in Marseille, during the Alternative World Water Forum\(^19\) groups from various countries signed a commitment to work together. A similar situation happened again at the Peoples’ Summit in Rio de Janeiro, in June of 2012, held in parallel with the (infamous) Rio+20 Conference. The latest sessions of the World Social Forum in Tunisia and the international climate movement gatherings in parallel to the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, have been occasions when these connections between movements have grown stronger. The Global Frackdown, held for the third time in 2014, is the clearest expression yet of the strength of these demands.\(^20\)

The network of solidarity is alive and well, and has demonstrated a surprising capacity to fight back. Towards the end of 2014, a group of American organisations addressed an open letter\(^21\) to the secretary of Energy under the Obama administration, Ernest Moniz, asking him not to take previously announced steps to allow the export of liquefied natural gas, an enticing goal for the fracking industry, which would so become able to look for markets that pay higher prices for this kind of fuel. The letter went around in record time and was signed by 114 organisations, of which more than 30 were from other countries. Similarly, the accusations of the ex-secretary general of NATO mentioned earlier made on 19 June 2014, received a rapid and harsh response in the form of an open letter signed by 126 European organisations on the very next day, 20 June.\(^22\)

Today, we can say that the global anti-fracking movement has achieved incredible results. In North America, moratoria and pressure campaigns have successfully kept fracking away in states like Vermont, Maryland, New York, in the US, and provinces like Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, in Canada. In the United States, a recent survey finds that those opposed to fracking number six percent more than those who support it.\(^23\) Local efforts in this country have already resulted in several counties in California and New Mexico to oppose fracking, as well as many American cities, including sizable ones in Colorado, Ohio or Texas. And the first legal battles are starting to be decided in favour of those who have been saying that fracking is destroying their health and their way of life. Such is the case of Lisa

\(^{16}\) http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/shale-boom-might-not-come-to-europe-says-report-for-nato
\(^{17}\) http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/foee-fracking-brussels-240714_1.pdf
\(^{18}\) http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/fracking-debate-cientifico-sociedad_6_290180990.html
\(^{19}\) http://www.fame2012.org/en/
\(^{20}\) http://www.globalfrackdown.org/
\(^{22}\) https://frackingfrei.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/openletterrasmussen.pdf
Parr and her family, whose story is included in this book, and we hope the same will soon be true of Diana Daunheimer, from Canada (also in this book), and Jessica Ernst, an incredibly courageous women who decided to take on Goliath to defend their life and their dignity.

On many occasions, the success of the movement has been closely tied to the call to create a broader front, in which sectors as diverse as labour unions, social and environmental organisations, agricultural organisations, landowners, dedicated scientists, artists and others have joined forces for a common cause. The participation of affected indigenous nations has been particularly noteworthy. Such has been the case of first nations like the Mi'kmaq in Canada, the Mapuche in Argentina, the Khoisan in South Africa, and the Yawuru in Australia, among others.

The connections forged in informal settings, sharing skills and knowledge mutually and independently between the fracking resistance movements, are fundamental to understanding that we are facing a global challenge, even though the more immediate and tangible dangers are much more local in nature. What is at stake here is our water, our environment, and our health. But what is in question is the whole model at the planetary level. There is no point in having a moratorium until 2017 in the Netherlands if Shell, a Dutch company, persists in its intention to drill in the Karoo in South Africa. Nor does a ban on the practice in France, if the French government itself, taking a clearly neo-colonialist position, uses its foreign policy apparatus to leverage the granting of licences to the French company Total in Algeria.

Nor is a ban in Quebec sufficient, if it can be challenged in arbitration courts under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). And at this moment, the same threat is looming over Europe, the United States, and Canada due to the TTIP and CETA agreements.

The amount of power transnational corporations have to decide what can and cannot be done – because national governments allow it – is embarrassing. Only one tenacious and united global citizenry can take

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The fight against fracking is therefore also a vehicle to initiate a serious debate about the type of society we want, engaging the participation of individuals, without the restraints imposed by the straitjacket of the marketplace and economic interests, placing the defence of life in the centre, and mending the bridges that connect us with nature, to which we belong. The fight against fracking will help to regain this awareness of ‘ecodependence’ we should never have lost.

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Diana Daunheimer and family
(Alberta, Canada)

It is with tears in my eyes that I am writing today. The fear, outrage and hopelessness that ended in defeated sobs, came from a phone call informing us Bellatrix, the oil and gas producer we have a legal action against, is drilling another gas well two kilometers north of our home. We can see the blinding bright lights from our bedroom windows, smell the diesel, feel and hear the grind of the rig boring into the earth from our front door. We will again endure the risk of our local aquifer being contaminated and are already breathing invisible but potent toxins, excessive harmful pollution that will last a lifetime and beyond.

Despite filing a legal action to prevent such activity near our home, we are powerless to stop the ruinous madness that came to our area many years ago. Today, there was nothing but tears, but tomorrow the fight will return, thanks to the incredible support and guidance given to us, helping us find the determination to continue to defend our home and educate our community.

Since 2008 we have had six wells drilled and hydraulically fractured within 500 meters of our home, two of them have been sour gas and crude oil wells, meaning our home is also surrounded by sour gas pipelines. This new well is in addition to dozens within a modest radius of our home, and just another of the hundreds in our community. This land has been fracked with manic haste in the past seven years and

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Sour gas and oil contain significant amounts of hydrogen sulfide (H2S). In addition to being toxic, hydrogen sulfide in the presence of water also damages piping and other equipment handling sour gas by sulfide stress cracking. Natural gas and oil typically contain several ppm (parts per million) of volatile sulfur compounds, but some wells in Canada may have H2S contents in the tens of percent range.
there is no end in sight. This has been agony for our family, tainting the very home and land we have adoringly nurtured, poisoning the beloved children we created and raised here and tarnishing our hopes and dreams of giving them a healthy, safe and peaceful life on land that is valuable.

The broken dream

Peaceful and safe, our home was blissfully so, for many years. Our 11-acre parcel of land was deemed an oasis by any and all that drove into the teardrop driveway lined with majestic towering spruce trees. We spent many years transforming an old farmhouse and overgrown property into a quaint palace of country comfort, filling it with organic gardens, a stunning greenhouse and adding chickens, goats, horses, bees and those two fabulous children. Leaving my position as an environmental coordinator in a nearby city, I chose to stay home, raise our children and tend our farm. At that time it felt that our life’s desires had come true; this was nearly perfection.

Then two workmen on all-terrain vehicles came in 2008 to survey what would be the first energy wells of an utter onslaught of industrial proportions. Naturally, my heart sank, but my husband had cautioned me long ago of this inevitable fate, living in Alberta, the premier province of petrochemicals, and now it was here in our yard. What would it be like?

At first, since the access to these first two wells was not directly by our home and the wells were sweet gas, the development was disruptive but not entirely devastating. We also knew little about fracturing, and such ignorance does lend some false sense of security and acceptance of the process.

Of course, we were assured by the company with each and every energy well, that regulations and safety protocols were strictly adhered to and there would be no impact or harm to our family. Either way, since the wells were not on our land, just very close to it, we had no say in the matter and just had to endure all that would come from the extraction and production of deep shale oil and gas using the controversial and dangerous practice of hydraulic fracturing.

Certainly the drilling and fracturing were unsettling to our life: the intense noise, lights, fumes and flaring. But this paled in comparison to the impacts of the sour crude oil well that was to come in 2010. This well would alter the very fabric of our lives, spewing dangerous poisons, that although the company was fully aware of, they criminally chose to falsify their public notifications, preventing our understanding of the true nature of emissions that would be harming our family for the following years, and also ensuring we did not have enough information to object to the project.

A non-compliant 19-day incineration, chronic sour gas venting, 15,000 liters of sour formation gas combusted monthly in the compressor station and a host of fugitive emissions, meant we lived amidst the chronic fumes and harm of innumerable chemicals, including sour gas. Our animals were sick and many died, our family was unusually unwell with migraines, headaches, sinus disease, dizziness, lymph gland swellings, visual disturbances and a very rare and invasive tumor began to grow in our beautiful daughter’s neck.

This lease site was a wasteland, used for the storage of oil field garbage, pipes and flare lines, with no containment for contamination. The once picturesque landscape where we used to walk and ride our bikes daily with our children, dogs and even the occasional cat, was now displeasing and continually venting potent neurological toxins. The company did not even have the decency to inform us of the risk. In spite of numerous complaints to the company regarding odors, waste, noise from the compressor and unending traffic, we were always rudely and carelessly ignored.

With no recourse to such matters, the company branded us radicals and intentionally obscured communications. The years went by and we would see another three wells surround our home, each time sinking us deeper into sorrow, adding to the cumulative emissions, deteriorating our health and depreciating the value and enjoyment of our home.
The day we decided to fight

A walk to a lease site in the fall of 2012 would change the trajectory of our lives, from victims of the industry to vigilantes. For some time we could see pits, otherwise known as sumps, dug into the ground, nearly submerged in the water table, so we felt compelled one day to investigate. After a minute walk into the field north of our home we crested the lease berm and could see and smell waste heavily contaminated with hydrocarbons. It had been there for months, off-gassing and leaching into the environment.

This obvious non-compliance would set off a chain reaction, starting a fire of indignation within me, which has continued to this day. We walked home and I called the regulatory agency. Then I began to read each and every piece of legislation, regulation and directive that was available to me and learned as much as I could about each and every aspect of hydraulic fracturing. I paid thousands of dollars and have spent years collecting records, calling for accountability, transparency and remediation, most of which has still not occurred.

It became readily apparent that nearly every well by our home was non-compliant on several levels, that the use and liberation of trillions of liters of carcinogenic and toxic chemicals were staggering, and the outright negligence and deceit of the company and regulator incomprehensible. Once we went public with our concerns in the summer of 2013, the original company Angle Energy promptly initiated a sale to Bellatrix Exploration, a common tactic to evade responsibility.

We simply could not allow this gross and deliberate harm to our family and community go unheard and unresolved. Since our regulator in Alberta is corrupt, being 100% funded by the industry and governed by legislation that protects the regulator from any and all legal action, we have become acutely aware of how at risk Albertans are. We have also come to realize that the negligence and collusion has so many levels: the fault lines are evident not only in the businesses and regulator, but our absent health department, our foolish banks, our greedy government, the biased media and bought scientists and even at times, unjustly, in our courts. All of these players plead impunity, creating an impenetrable wall of unaccountability.

Our only avenue for remediation and justice is the courts; we filed an action in December of 2013. I continue to look for suitable counsel for our case, but the culture and influence of fossil fuels in Alberta is so entrenched that access to justice in this province when one needs to mitigate oil and gas harm, is nearly impossible. After much rejection, intimidations and quotes of exorbitant costs, we chose to self-represent. Although it has been stressful and confounding at times, it has also been liberating and enlightening, not only to learn about how our legal system operates but to credibly and valiantly oppose this destructive and unethical industry. We have not withered under the tyranny but blossomed with activism, energized by the love of our family and the humane laws of our land.

Our drop in the bucket

We have been asked to share our story with the Global Anti-Fracking Movement to enlighten, educate and inspire other people in their fight against fracking. We are honored to have this opportunity, but conceding our experiences has been traumatic and demanding, fraught with deceptions, pollution and sickness. We certainly do not have the best answers for how to fight fracking but we do know that everyone must do their part to rise up against such a caustic and uncivil industry.

Not only should we insist on our rights to have clean water, land and air, we must also encourage our local municipalities and governments to divest from fossil fuels and support clean energy; this is the only long-term solution to end hydraulic fracturing. We can continue to fight, but this will not alleviate continued negative consequences. I fear the industry has many powerful weapons and unsavory soldiers. If we eliminate the need for fossil fuels, we need not fight; there will be peace and security, simply by allowing the sun, wind and water of Earth to fuel our needs.
We may just be one family fighting a crazed beast that consumes and pollutes everyone and everything in its path in hunger for profit, but as we join hearts and minds with others in the world, to preserve our planet and create sustainable sovereignty, the collective goodwill can overcome the oppression and destruction of dirty energy. We can end the fracturing of our earth, our communities and families and make the world whole and healthy again.

My best to you all.

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**Lock the gate!**

Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, National Toxics Network / IPEN *(Australia)*

For the past decade, the unconventional gas (UG) industry has marched across Australia, promising jobs and regional economic booms. UG companies, representing coal seam gas (CSG), shale and tight gas, have tried to move into residential areas, farms, indigenous peoples’ land and native wildlife areas. In a matter of years, fossil fuel leases covered more than 50% of Australia. But Australian communities are fighting back.

**The beginnings of the resistance**

By 2010, growing concern about the impacts of hydraulic fracturing and other UG activities on water quality and land access received national media attention in the ABC national broadcaster television documentary *The Gas Rush*. It highlighted issues of water equity, describing the lowering of the water table in dry agricultural regions of Queensland, where the industry was already established. The programme gave voice to farmers affected by UG and who were worried about impacts on their livestock and crops from the chemicals used in fracking.

The National Toxics Network, an Australian NGO, launched its report on ‘Hydraulic Fracturing in Coal Seam Gas Mining: The Risks to Our Health, Communities, Environment and Climate’ in early 2011. It revealed that Australian regulatory authorities had not even assessed fracking chemicals for their impacts on humans, agriculture or the environment. Meanwhile, the UG companies claimed that only minute

amounts of harmless chemicals made up their fracking fluid. Leaked company data revealed that up to 18 tonnes of chemicals could be used every time a CSG well was fracked, and only around 40% of the toxic mixture would be recovered.

There was also growing evidence of the industry’s effects on human health, particularly in the state of Queensland, where UG was first established. While governments and industry downplayed reports of adverse health impacts, Australians started to hear from communities living adjacent to gas fields, who were being forced to breathe contaminated air and were suffering health problems. Toxic volatile organic compounds were measured in the air surrounding their homes, some well above acceptable chronic exposure levels, and the symptoms residents experienced were consistent with the exposures. This was well documented by medical practitioner Dr Geralyn McCarron in her report ‘Symptomatology of a Gasfield’.29

**No social licence**

In those areas where the UG industry had a foothold, communities were divided and rural landscapes industrialised. In response, a national grassroots campaign blossomed to resist the gas invasion. Initiated in rural Queensland by long-term environmental campaigner and academic Drew Hutton, it brought together otherwise divergent groups into a powerful alliance including farmers, activists, indigenous peoples, resident groups and media personalities. The Lock The Gate (LTG) movement was born.

In Australia, landholders and communities have few rights when it comes to challenging mining interests. The Crown owns what’s under their land. Many farmers have been bullied into allowing gas companies onto their land, fearing legal action if they refused. Supported by the burgeoning grassroots movement, others determined to ‘lock their gates’ and refuse access to the gas companies. Despite all the threats of legal action none so far have been challenged in court.

Community resistance to the UG industry came in many forms and LTG encompassed people from all walks of life and different shades of politics. Rallies and concerts were supported by tens of thousands across the country while the ‘knitting nannas against gas’ and the ‘gals against gas’, in their supergirl outfits, supported the brave souls who undertook non-violent action, blockading with their bodies the drilling and fracking sites.

Communities across Australia joined forces to declare themselves ‘gas field free’ in a unique door-to-door democratic process that spread like wildfire. In Australia, the UG industry has the active support of major political parties and state governments. Nevertheless, community after community declared their road, street or village opposed to the industry, clearly demonstrating that despite all the regulatory permits and political support, the UG industry could never claim they had a social licence.

**Government takes sides**

The New South Wales state government responded by introducing a two kilometre CSG exclusion zone around residential areas and agricultural infrastructure in the hope of quelling opposition to the industry, but this did little to placate concerns and opposition continued to grow.

Government inquiries proliferated, yet these only served to show that, after nearly a decade in Australia, the UG industry still did not have effective ways to deal with either its waste water or its solid wastes, nor could it alleviate its impact on precious groundwater reserves. By 2012, the government’s own National Pollutant Inventory, which requires industry to report their hazardous emissions, showed that the UG industry could not control its toxic releases to air, which continued to rise at alarming rates.30


In New South Wales, a CSG project based in the Pilliga State Forest resulted in extensive contamination and environmental damage, which was documented by local environment groups. While the community and farmers were intent on interrupting further drilling, it was revealed through leaked secret documents that the company at the centre of the Pilliga gas mining, Santos, had polluted a local groundwater aquifer with a range of toxins including uranium at levels 20 times those considered safe for drinking, as a result of leaking wastewater storage.

The company was given a minimal fine of $1,500, whereas those arrested for taking part in non-violent civil disobedience received fines of over $3,000\(^\text{31}\).

In other areas, communities expressed their outrage that UG companies were allowed to store and use toxic radionuclides such as cesium-137. The release of information showing the detection of this radioactive substance in drinking water tanks from three residences adjacent to Queensland gas fields outraged many of those who had been ridiculed for their concern over the use and impact of radioactive materials.

### The unstoppable expansion of the movement

The LTG movement has flourished across the country including Western Australia, where there is exploration for shale gas. People in Australia’s remote desert centre have protested plans to frack near the sacred aboriginal area of Uluru while other indigenous groups have appealed to the UN’s special rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

By May 2014, growing opposition forced the New South Wales state government to rescind the approval of a licence from one UG company that was about to start drilling in the picturesque rural area of Bentley, in the state’s Northern Rivers region. Over 2,000 local community protestors were massed on the edge of the property to be drilled and many more were expected to arrive. The protectors who maintained the Bentley camp for three months represented all walks of life, including farmers, doctors, teachers, retired folk, local councillors, students, and even the local Church of England minister. The day before 1,000 riot police were expected to arrive to end the standoff, the government withdrew the company’s drilling approval stating that it had failed to consult adequately with the local community. The company took legal action against the state government.

Despite the overwhelming political and financial odds stacked against them, Australian communities are not dissuaded and have continued to engage in peaceful resistance against this multi-billion dollar industry. In many regions, campaigns are being spearheaded by local farmers, who have never been involved in protest action before. In some of the worst affected areas, individuals like Dayne Pratsky of The Frackman fame,\(^32\) worked to ensure at least six families’ properties were bought out at market price by the Queensland Gas Company, after years of experiencing pollution and health problems.

The social movement to ‘lock the gate’ and resist the gas invasion continues to grow. The ‘gas field free’ declarations now cover over three million hectares of agricultural land sending a clear message to government and industry. They have also fostered community spirit and stimulated cross-sector cooperation to an extent that has rarely been seen before. The Australian resistance now reaches out to help other organisations and communities across the globe to halt this destructive industry and effectively ‘lock their gate’ against unsustainable, unhealthy and environmentally damaging unconventional gas.

\(^{31}\) These figures refer to Australian dollars

\(^{32}\) http://frackmanthemovie.com
The cradle of European resistance

Maxime Combes, ATTAC France and AITEC (France)

According to the US Department of Energy, France has the second-highest quantity of shale gas in Europe for potential development. But the plans of the gas companies have not panned out as planned. In July 2011, France became the first country in the world to ban fracking. Here is a brief, deliberately incomplete, examination of the French battle between the huge citizens’ movement fighting against fracking and the pro-fracking companies and lobbies.

Citizens’ uprising to defeat fracking

In the autumn of 2010, very few in France had heard of ‘the shale gas revolution’. A little over a year later, few French people could say that they had never heard of it. In March 2010, the leading French daily newspaper *Le Monde* reported that the government of then president Nicolas Sarkozy had granted three licences for ‘liquid or gaseous hydrocarbons’ exploration in the south of France to the companies Total (the Montelimar permit) and Schuepbach (the Villeneuve-de-Berg and Nantes permits). Located in a region devoid of conventional gas and conventional oil, these permits have been called ‘shale gas permits’ while French law only recognises permits for ‘liquid or gaseous hydrocarbons’ exploration. At the time and until late 2010, very few articles had been published on the subject and only a few whistleblowers had been trying to alert citizens, associations and politicians to the potential risks.

33 http://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/pdf/fullreport.pdf
However, by late 2010, a huge citizens’ movement against shale gas and oil and against fracking began to form in France. The movement started with small citizens’ groups who organised public meetings and published information. But soon, the town hall meetings in potentially impacted communities were packed to overflowing; very often, there were more participants in these meetings than residents in the villages. The exploration permits – which had been granted without any public debate or real environmental investigation – created concerns in the community as a whole, not just among environmentalists. Farmers, hunters, fishermen, businesspeople, and ordinary citizens all joined the growing movement.

This process of educating, information sharing, debating and organising grew very quickly and by February 2011 more than 15,000 people were protesting against fracking in the small town of Villeneuve-de-Berg (whose usual population is less than 3,000). The film Gasland by Josh Fox was shown thousands of times in long, short or modified versions. Like elsewhere, the sincere and powerful images of this film provoked deep emotions and a desire to make sure that shale gas extraction did not happen in nearby regions. The scene in the film where landowner Mike Markham sets his tap water on fire with a cigarette lighter – showing how fracking had caused gas to leak into his water supply – is a far more effective argument against fracking than any report or speech.

The economic, technical and geological facts of the debate were disseminated and knowledge spread at an incredible speed. Today, many activists have become experts on extraction technologies, despite the lack of any background or training in that area. They now know all the arguments from scientific studies explaining the consequences of shale gas exploitation by heart.

**First law in the world that prohibits fracking**

The very broad anti-fracking alliance – made up of communities, local groups, environmental, health, and social organisations, and supported by national associations – forced many politicians from all sides of politics and from both the local and the national levels, to take clear positions against fracking and shale gas without waiting for instructions or decisions from their headquarters in Paris. The positions taken by local elected officials were transformed into pledges by local authorities. The Parisian establishment, both in government and in business, was surprised and overwhelmed. They proved incapable of countering the surging movement and its demands. When ministers began to call for a pause or moratorium on issuing permits, the local groups – assembled in their National Coordinating Council – were already demanding the cancellation of all existing permits.

While improving their knowledge on the subject and discovering the intricacies of mining legislation, local groups soon discovered that there were not 3 but 64 permits for ‘liquid or gaseous hydrocarbons’ exploration – many of them located in the Paris region. Unable to counter the immediate demands of the movement, the ministers and the government came up with misleading statements, such as ‘French-style fracking’, or resorted to rhetorical tricks, such as a ‘moratorium’ which wasn’t a true one, in an effort to avoid addressing the actual situation.

Members of Parliament, caught up in a debate they had not anticipated and didn’t really understand, ended up submitting four different bills to the Parliament. Once these passed through the legislative process, the final bill was considerably watered down compared to the expectations and demands of the movement (Law of 13 July 2011 which was confirmed in October 2013 by the Constitutional Council). The main problem is that although hydraulic fracturing has been banned, it has not been precisely defined, which leaves room for new interpretations. For example, the law leaves open the possibility for experimentation under the guise of scientific research and improving knowledge.

The citizens’ mobilisations were complemented by legal action challenging the methods of licensing, or their legal grounds, etc. Some of these legal actions clearly contributed to the cancellation of the first three permits and some of the following ones. This legal work on the
Global resistance to fracking

remaining permits continued, specifically focused on obtaining all the information necessary to have a comprehensive map of the existing permits and their weaknesses.

Towards an energy transition

After the success of the French campaign and legal processes, the next step was to tackle the larger questions of shifting to clean, safe and renewable energy, democratizing access to energy, and reducing energy consumption. The French movement against fracking has included an international dimension from the outset. Soon, the slogan “Neither Here Nor Anywhere” became widespread. The fact that this movement is not exclusively rooted in defending local territories was crucial to broadening the mobilisation towards the necessary energy transformation we need. But this step was neither easy nor obvious. This broadening of the debate has given rise to two different political orientations. One line remains focused more narrowly on shale gas and shale oil fracking, deepening the mobilisation and anchoring it more profoundly through dissemination, education, strengthening of groups, extension of the territorial presence, etc. Another line is focused more on proactive work to broaden the mobilisation to support global energy issues. Today, the tension between broadening and deepening is still there, but is being overcome because, when faced with reality, everyone is gradually realising that broadening and deepening can only be carried out together. This is especially because the battle is not over and the oil and gas lobbies will surely regroup, re-strategise, and return. And the anti-fracking groups won’t give up. *La lucha sigue.*

Occupy Chevron Poland: Squatters and farmers in the same trenches

Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart
(Żurawlów, Poland)

This is how it all began...

Żurawlów is a small village of no more than 100 inhabitants located in southeastern Poland. The neighbours first heard of shale gas in 2011. They began to investigate and learnt that shale gas wells were not entirely safe, so they became suspicious of Chevron. Early on, some of the homes in the area sustained cracks due to the seismic tests and two water wells were contaminated. Then, Chevron’s workers walked out at an informative meeting with the villagers of Żurawlów when they saw that the neighbours had invited members of the media and environmental organisations. This was on 19 January 2012. On 13 March, Chevron employees brought heavy machinery onto a leased field in Żurawlów in order to remove the soil and prepare the land on which the well was to be built. The neighbours called the police so that they would check the company’s documents. It turned out that the company did not have permission to drive a heavy vehicle on a local road; furthermore, the works could not be carried out between 1 March and 15 July because it was bird-breeding season. The works were interrupted for months.

Nevertheless, on 3 June 2013 more workers arrived to erect a fence, bringing eight security guards with them. The farmers objected. The women threw the rolls of chain-link fencing back in the truck from which the workers had unloaded them. Tractors entered and blocked the access road to Chevron’s field. The police arrived accompanied by
mediators sent in by the regional government. The neighbours checked Chevron’s licence: the company did not have permission to drill a well in Żurawlów, their licence only allowed for seismic testing, so it was not necessary for them to erect a fence. Furthermore, the boundaries of the plot of land were not formally defined, so what area would they fence off? This gave rise to a protest that lasted 400 days. In July 2014, Chevron announced that it was leaving Żurawlów.

**Fighting to protect the land and a way of life**

A tent was put in Chevron’s plot of land to house the security guards. Four guards worked in shifts day and night. The company hired 19 people at €1.40 per hour; these are the sort of jobs created by the shale gas industry. From the very first day, they also hired a camera operator in order to provoke the farmers and film their reactions.

In a neighbouring field, the protesters erected a military tent and an open-air kitchen. A road separated the two fields. Across the road lay the colourful prairies that are part of the Natura 2000 Network. After a few days, a banner reading ‘Occupy Chevron’ appeared; later gas masks were propped up on sticks and another sign appeared that read ‘Poland has the gas; the United States gets the benefits.’ A power generator also appeared, and an office with internet access was set up in the protesters’ tent with a camera that provided live coverage of the entrance to the field.

The first stage of the protest was used to acquire knowledge. Experts arrived, they organised documentary screenings with films about shale gas, about global capitalism, about dishonest people fighting for influence and trying to make a profit for major corporations, about an economy that is increasingly based on fossil fuels, about climate change, and about the species in danger of extinction and the various threats the environment is facing. The villagers soon learnt that water was a huge problem in Poland. A hydrology professor explained that their region lies over three very large and very clean major groundwater reservoirs. They compared a map of these major groundwater reservoirs with a map of shale gas licences issued and realised that the areas for which these permits had been issued largely coincided with the water reservoirs. Four of Chevron’s permits lay entirely within the area over the largest groundwater reservoir in the region of Lubelszczyzna. European Union directives specify that groundwater reservoirs are to be protected, but Poland has yet to draw up plans for managing these waters, and, because there are no protected areas, ‘the concessions were issued in accordance with the law.’ In all, 113 licences have been issued, covering almost a third of the country.

After they created a website for the campaign, support for the protest in Żurawlów poured in from all over the world. The website was set up in France. Documentary filmmaker Lech Kowalski soon came to Żurawlów with his camera, which, along with the webcam, became a protective shield for the protesting farmers. Lech’s wife, Odile Alliard, launched the site http://occupychevron.tumblr.com in three languages. Odile wrote accounts of the protests in French and English based on the stories that Lech told her every day. Someone in France translated the site into Polish. Soon, the site was taken over by Polish volunteers at an urban squat.

In fact, the first source of support for Żurawlów came from squatters in Warsaw, Lublin, Krakow, and Poznan. This compelled the villagers to become more open to ‘otherness’, accepting the squatters’ dreadlocks, nose rings, and strange clothes. It took some time to teach the local women to cook vegetarian meals. But these extraordinary young people soon won the villagers over with their politeness, effectiveness, and great commitment. Later, other visitors arrived. These were people from all over Poland, from all walks of life, of all ages, both men and women. All of this happened because Żurawlów had launched cry for help into the void. It was summertime, the farmers had to work the fields and shifts were set up to protest at the tent day and night. People slept on makeshift beds made of large bales of hay or in their own tents. There was always someone on guard. But, above all, there was a large hand-cranked siren. When the siren sounded, the entire village showed up within a few minutes.
Problems and problem solving

The first tent was damaged by a storm, but someone gave the protesters a new, larger tent. They hung a banner on it that read “Feed and Defend”. Then winter came and it became impossible to sleep in the tent, so an old mobile home was found and fitted with a small stove heater and Internet connection. The mobile home still stands today, along with nine flags from different countries left by various visitors.

By some miracle, the police did not intervene. There was pressure on them to do so, but the local mayor (wójt) found a perfect response to the warnings he received that ‘this would result in public disorder and physical scuffles’: let the police guard them. And so, for a month, day and night, a police car with two officers inside remained parked on the road in front of the tent.

Chevron took the residents of Żurawlów to court, bringing eight cases against 34 farmers, while at the same time running a massive PR campaign positioning itself as a responsible company that respects local communities and the environment.

Results

On 7 July 2014, at dawn, while the village was still asleep, Chevron gathered its equipment and people and left Żurawlów. The lease on the plot of land was cancelled.

Thanks to the protests, there was no drilling carried out in Żurawlów or in the vicinity. But the protests had also changed the people who took part in them. The community had gained cohesion and the villagers had acquired a great deal of knowledge, becoming true citizens who are now much more conscious of their right to decide their own fate. They also realised that they must use the knowledge and experience they have acquired to help other communities that are facing similar threats.
Global resistance to fracking

Joanne Cipolla-Denis
(Dryden, New York, USA)

If anyone were to tell me 8 years ago that at 52, I, a privileged American, would find myself unprotected from an industry that was taking my land and threatening my life, just to sell a product we know conclusively is accelerating the demise of the only planet we have, I would not have believed it possible.

Once I traveled around the country and saw what had already taken place, it would force me to question my government’s part in the orchestrated takeover of private property to secure corporate profits for a single industry that, if not stopped, will make living in America harmful to your health within one generation, no matter where one lives.

In the words of Calvin Tillman, former mayor of Dish, Texas, “Once you know, you can’t not know.” He was describing fracking, and how ultimately it forced him to leave his own home and town to avoid sickness. But I was, like most Americans, fast asleep at the wheel of a stolen car. America, the beautiful, the much-vaunted land of opportunity, is now facing sure collapse courtesy of a populous group of wealthy energy dynasties, both foreign and domestic, who own the oil, gas and coal. The kings of collapse would be, among others, George Stark, CEO of Cabot Oil and Gas, Aubrey McClendon, CEO of Chesapeake Energy, Tony Hayward, of BP, or Phillip Anschutz, of Anschutz Exploration, to name a few. Their interests fund voting restriction and control the mainstream media to defraud the public, who then plays a part in the demise of their own country, their health, and their quality of life.

As I learned about fracking, I discovered that these industries evade adhering to environmental regulations and place politicians in office to

Fracturing the American dream

Żurawlów today...

The Green Żurawlów Association (Stowarzyszenie Zielony Żurawlów) was founded and registered and is now helping to protect other areas, including the Roztocze region, located several dozen kilometres from their village. Roztocze is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, yet attempts have been made to transform it into an extractive industrial area and fill it with shale gas wells. The Green Żurawlów Association is supporting activists from Roztocze and advising them on how to organise and direct their movement.

Furthermore, the villagers of Żurawlów are convinced that shale gas is not a good solution for ensuring energy security and they want to prove that there are better alternatives. Żurawlów aims to manage energy resources cooperatively and based on renewable sources, like many municipalities in Germany are already doing. The village won a contest organised by Greenpeace, and have installed photovoltaic panels on the roof of the fire station, where they intend to create a ‘House of Good Energy’.

The protest has not been forgotten. From over 2,000 photographs taken by Andrzej Bąk, the 70 most emblematic were displayed at an exhibit called “Occupy Chevron – 400 Days of Protest in Żurawlów”, which opened on 13 November 2014 in Berlin. The exhibit will travel the world as a testimony of a local community struggling to secure its future and defend its environment.

At the start of 2015, Chevron announced that it would cease shale gas exploration in Poland, thus joining the exodus of other companies that have left the country, and contributing to the fading dream of Europe’s budding shale gas industry. However, the seed that was planted in Żurawlów still remains.
Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

Global resistance to fracking

“liberty and justice for all”. The American flag flew at our farm. I was raised in this atmosphere where we were taught the responsibility for love and defend our country.

Growing up on a dairy farm taught me at an early age that water is needed in all aspects of farming, and gives and sustains life. I knew how important water was to cows that had just given birth, for cleaning the farm's machinery, and to me, as I would watch my mother at the table in her apron, preparing meals with clean, abundant water. We knew the smell of the hay coming in from the fields to the loft was because it had water. The crispness of the cold winter air would bite our skin as we skated on the pond on moonlit nights. On spring and summer mornings, doing barn chores, we would see the dew dry quickly as the sun rose. All the animals would look for feed as they crowded into the barn, mooing to claim their spaces, drinking from their water bowls with a familiar slurping sound.

When I was 10 years old, it was my job to clean the water bowls and pet each cow, 35 on each side of the barn, as I went down the line. Life was simple then, not a care in the world. I never felt threatened growing up in rural New York.

In my twenties I spent time with the military serving as a civilian during Desert Storm, but I was in the dark about the process of fossil fuel production. Until I was 47 I simply used the power that coal, gas and oil gave me as a privileged person. Prior to my journey of discovery, anytime I wanted to turn on the lights, bake a cake, or heat my house, I turned on a switch without much thought to how it worked. Until fracking I knew virtually nothing about how we generate the electricity that brings me light, heat and comfort, who pays for it, or at what cost. I was part of middle-class America.

The petroleum in the air from compressor stations was unbearably and I began getting light-headed immediately. The fumes were permeating my clothing and I drove home in tears. As I approached my new house on 33 acres of pristine land, atop a plateau of Cayuga Lake, I cried harder. It was the beginning of the fight for my American dream and the sustainability of my country. For quite some time I had more questions than answers, but as the answers were revealed, I would discover the reality of the destruction and I would cry bitter tears for my country.

I grew up in a small farming community in upstate New York. My father was one of 16 children, the first generation born American. He proudly served in World War II in the US Army. My parents were very patriotic. They taught me that my father’s military service helped secure

Looking for answers

I am a simple farmer from upstate New York, and in the beginning I knew nothing about fracking. I devoted my own money to traveling in order to research it, and to meet the people who had already been exposed to its effects. My first trip was to Dimock, Pennsylvania, on March 6, 2009, while I was just finishing the home I was building for our retirement. I had some documentaries about the wells in Colorado, Wyoming and Texas, and I was already beginning to feel afraid, but I had to see, feel, hear, and taste fracking for myself. I knew that if I would have in my back yard what those states had endured, I would not finish my house and I would leave, so I made the trip to determine whether I could live in a fracking zone. I went to Dimock that day and visited three frack sites.

The day our life changed

One day, a young man passed in front of our house and said: “I’m going to make your day!” In a few days, the course of my life changed

remove any established regulations that protect resources like water, air and land, while placing public safety at unacceptable risk. The fossil fuel industry does not take national security into account in its mining activities and hydrocarbon exploitation.

New York, in the northeast, is home to important aquifers, and fracking, storing and using natural gas is pushing our food security to the limit.

Looking for answers

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forever; my health was under threat, and my assets at the whims of the 38th richest man in America, Phillip Anschutz, owner of Anschutz Exploration.

Takeover of my land by his company could end my mineral rights, ruin my water, make my new home uninhabitable and unsaleable, and force me to move and lose everything. My land was subject to laws my government had made to support this industry and help this multimillionaire take my land, water, and gas for his personal profit, even against my will.

In the following two years, my life went from happy and healthy, to terrified, exhausted, and short-tempered. My American dream became a nightmare both night and day; during two years I would dedicate every waking moment to get protection, and four more to keep it. With my neighbors and fellow Americans from 37 other states whose lives were also threatened by the fossil fuel industry, I spent countless nights without sleep, went to meetings with NGOs, hearings, and more meetings... We had to learn to speak in public or risk losing the lives we had established in a peaceful, healthy and thriving agricultural community, to preserve what we had worked so hard for.

Experienced lawyers paid by the industry were actually crafting state laws to take private property against the will of the owners. The state enacted the Law of Compulsory Integration, which involved use of the state's power to force the landowners to lease their property to a gas driller. And just so the landowners could not say their gas was being stolen, and their mineral rights violated, the state and the gas driller were to decide on a price they would pay the landowners for the gas.

*The Dryden Resources Awareness Coalition (DRAC)*

This situation led to the creation of our citizens' coalition: DRAC. DRAC was made up of ordinary folks who did not know each other until fracking came into their lives, who began to meet in kitchens and living rooms. The grassroots effort was led by ten retired teachers, farmers, professors, a builder and other neighbors who met twice a week, at least in the first two years, to collaborate on research.

Through thousands of hours, and reading millions of pages of documents, and seeing the documentaries about the stories of those living in what were known as the shale fields of Pennsylvania, DRAC understood conclusively that fracking is a cause and effect action which necessarily contaminates vast quantities of fresh water, and which pollutes the air with lethal and carcinogenic toxins. We understood that fracking kills people, animals and the planet, and it is an industry that cannot coexist with other industries like farming or tourism.

Many of us got the message after attending hearings organized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the people whose lives had been destroyed by fracking; many had gotten sick, or come to financial ruin; others had lost family members as a result of being exposed to shale gas exploitation activities. All of the people whose lives were impacted by fracking are documented on the list *The Harmed*34, which as of the end of 2014 included more than 7,500 cases, although there has been no shortage of effort to discredit it.

**Shocking testimony and regulatory inaction**

In Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, the EPA, a government agency whose job it is to protect the air, the water, and public health, held one hearing for four states to hear testimony on how fracking was affecting them and their communities. One by one, ordinary American citizens who had waited in line for hours came in, filling a hotel to its 1,200-person capacity for five hours of testimony. I listened and watched as grown men cried, women were so angry their bodies shook with rage, and farmers testified, one after another, about dying and dead farm animals.

I could clearly see the trauma and hear America crying. One farmer, Ron Gulla, who in the beginning had been supportive of fracking

34 [https://pennsylvaniaallianceforcleanwaterandair.wordpress.com/the-list/](https://pennsylvaniaallianceforcleanwaterandair.wordpress.com/the-list/)
but who had changed his position after his pond was ruined by the process of drilling, stood up to shout in outrage at Dr Paulson, a lead representative for EPA, that it was not worth dying from drinking a glass of water. He was joined by Mr Dennis Smitky from Pennsylvania, who approached the podium in farmer jeans and a ball cap, to say “I live alone. I have a small goat farm; those goats are my children, and I watched them all die.” And he walked away in silence.

A Mennonite35 woman from West Virginia, Marylyn Hunt, stood up with her straw hat with a flowered ribbon bow tied under her chin, her plain mid-length dress adorned by an apron. She approached the podium as testimony #21. She began a rant that would terrify those responsible for her misery. She unleashed a furious testimony, showing the same vehement disgust for the EPA and the drillers alike, as she explained what they had done to her farm, her health, her life, and to West Virginia. Marylyn Hunt matter of factly described living with unconscionable suffering, being terrified as her pond caught of fire in the idle of the night and how the only thing they could do was run from their home and let it burn out. She talked about the way fracking disrupted the social harmony of her community, recounting the increase in crime, prostitution, drugs that had taken place.

People continually reminded the EPA that they had made pleas for intervention for years, and yet the EPA had not responded, and that they had been without clean water for three years. The tension in the room ebbed and flowed as 120 people testified.

On another trip to Washington DC, I met Jenny Lsk, from Pennsylvania, who took her two dogs for walks on the road in her community. The roads were being sprayed with fracking brine, which has a high salt content and is loaded with antifreeze (glycols); it is sweet-tasting to animals. At that time she was unaware of the toxins in the brine, and as a result her dogs ingested it after licking their paws. The adults died, but before dying the female aborted her puppies.

The Dryden fracking ban

The faces of people so traumatized drove me to action to get our town, Dryden, to ban the process of gas development in accordance with our local law, Home Rule, which states that local municipalities have the right to decide their destiny and so they may determine what is done within their borders.

DRAC was able to convince people who had no idea what fracking was that if they did not learn and act they would be next. After a year of providing evidence in public forums that fracking would destroy Dryden, we got 1,600 people to sign a petition to establish protection through land use ordinances. We stated that fracking was not compatible with our comprehensive plan for the future and in fact would negatively affect Dryden and its residents. We presented our case to the town board and, in unanimous bipartisan vote, fracking was banned in the town of Dryden on August 2, 2011, two years after we first learned what it actually was.

Our town became the first in New York State to use Home Rule law to ban the practice of fracking. Starting then, other towns began to shift how they viewed fracking, and in less than a year, over 120 other towns had banned the extreme extractive mining practices, and 80 more established moratoriums.

The ban in Dryden stopped the most powerful and wealthiest industry on earth at the Pennsylvania border and declared that we would not support any new gas development via fracking. New York has changed governors three times since the initial leases were signed, and so far the people of New York have held off Goliath from winning all three lawsuits filed over the three years since the ban.

First, Anschutz Exploration sued Dryden, and lost. Then Norse Energy attempted to take the case on appeal and lost. On June 30, 2014 NYS Court of Appeals, the highest level of court in the state, ruled that the town of Dryden ban stands and that it cannot be overturned.

Our attorney, Deborah Goldberg, took on an entity that seemed to never lose, until it met with the people of Dryden, a small group of

35 Branch of the Christian Anabaptist movement
committed citizens who dared to change the world. Our town received over 20,000 comments from all over the world in support of this action to stop an industry infamous for causing destruction.

In November 2014 Denton, Texas, followed Dryden’s lead and voted for a ban on fracking, shutting down over 200 well pads within its town borders. The ordinary people of Dryden had shown that peaceful persistence, education, and love for one’s land and one another can achieve great things.

No country can survive without water. At barely 350 years old, the United States faces an internal threat steering it toward collapse; this is why Dryden continues to fight to get a national and global ban on the extreme extractive mining that is burdening our world with unconscionable effects: destroying already scarce fresh water, exposing our people and food sources to harmful chemicals, putting our farmland at risk, and accelerating climate change.

We need to protect the water, the air, our food, and our health; fossil fuels must be rapidly replaced in order to sustain life on the only planet we have. In America democracy is only heard and lived when the people demand it by being vigilant and present. We are awakening.

**Rural environmentalism: The fight for Pungești**

Maria Olteanu, Frack Free Group (Romania)

Pungești is a municipality in the northeast of Romania, belonging to the district of Vaslui, considered to be one of the poorest of the country. It is made up of nine villages, with a total population of just over 3,000 inhabitants, who are mainly self-sufficient small-scale farmers, producing mostly cereals and rearing animals. Due to the relatively large distance that separates the area from the nearest city, about an hour by car, the opportunities for work are in the most part scarce. The jobs available are, above all, unqualified positions at harvest time, and so young people tend to move to the big cities in search of opportunities. However, the older population is mostly made up of small farmers, making them dependent on the good condition of the water and land. They have always produced their own food, and because of their relative poverty, they have stayed isolated from the mechanisms of consumption and wastefulness, living a lifestyle above all in harmony with their surroundings, like the majority of rural Romania.

This place changed from being a lost village in the region of Moldavia, to become one of the hotspots in the environmentalist battle, and whose name was heard all over Romania and even abroad in 2013.

Preparing the first modern rural uprising

The fight against fracking in Romania first began when Bulgarian activists got in contact, through Facebook, with groups of Romanians involved in the struggle against the use of cyanide in mining, to warn them about Chevron’s plans to carry out hydraulic fracturing in Romania. The Bulgarians had been protesting for several months against
this technique in their own country, and had achieved, in 2012, its prohibition. In early 2012, almost nobody in Romania knew about shale gas or the fracking licences granted by the government to various companies.

From that moment on, an explosion of alarming information started to circulate on Facebook about fracking. People started to watch the documentary *Gasland* and to get organised until, soon after, in February 2012, the first protests were seen at the same time in Bucharest and in Barlad, not far from Pungești. The political party now in power, the Social Democratic Party, was then in the opposition, and adopted a very critical stance regarding this technology which was at that time backed by the party in power, the Democratic Liberal party. The support of the Socialists resulted in the organisation in Romania of the largest anti-fracking demonstrations seen, with protests which brought together between 3,000 and 10,000 people and which took place between March 2012 and September 2013 in the city of Barlad.

The huge movement in the region was, in fact, possible thanks to the team formed by the local elite with a leading orthodox priest, an unusual profile in Romania. A woman who had lived in Pittsburgh and had experienced first-hand the effects of fracking, also formed part of the group. The high profile of the priest allowed the message to be transmitted through the church, meaning it gained not only a local, but also a regional impact. This group held regular meetings and aimed to inform and mobilise the rural area in which it was foreseen that the fracking projects would be carried out. With the emergence on the scene of an NGO formed by young people of the area (VIRA) in the summer of 2012, the information campaign took on a much larger scale. Its members began to inform the inhabitants through leaflets and documentaries, which were shown during the afternoons in the church, followed by debates with the local population. Mobilising a community which had until then never confronted neither a company nor its own government was not an easy task. At that time, the government had already changed hands and the Social Democrats, who had first firmly opposed the technique, betrayed their campaign promises of late 2012 once they entered power.

Suffice to say that the inhabitants of Pungești, the same as, in general, the rest of the rural population of Romania, were completely unaware of any type of environmental fight when they began to hear about Chevron and about fracking. The environmental movement was at that time quite disorganised in Romania and based mainly in urban areas. At the beginning, the inhabitants of Pungești had no idea what to do, so they stayed inactive for another year until Chevron’s plans started to be finalised. In the summer of 2013, when the government started to increase the pressure on the local communities with its fracking plans, the Ministry of the Environment organised a ‘public debate’, which was carried out simultaneously in the three localities where the three main exploratory drilling towers were going to be raised. It was done this way to trick the opposition movement, on the assumption that the activists would gather in only one place.

When the Chevron representatives and the authorities arrived in Pungești to present the ‘benefits’ hydraulic fracturing would bring to the local community, they were surprised by the hostility of the local population who, already well informed and supported by the activists who had arrived from various cities in Romania, brought to light the lies.

Despite strong objections from part of the local community, Chevron’s proposal was approved on 3 October 2013 and, although no official date had been determined, it was predicted that the first exploratory drilling for shale gas in Romania would begin soon. People soon became very conscious of the fact that the platform was going to be a reality in a short time. So, on 14 October, the first arrival of heavy machinery on the exploration site did not catch the local population, who had been mentally preparing to fight, off guard. The authorities, conscious of the wave of opposition among the rural community, ensured that the first delivery of machinery to Pungești was accompanied by police presence.
Campsite against fracking

When news first came through about the arrival of heavy machinery to the area, 150 people quickly organised themselves and spontaneously blocked the road on 14 October 2013. Up until that moment, civil disobedience and non-violent direct action had been unheard of in the village. Soon after, activists from neighbouring villages began to arrive there, encouraging the inhabitants to resist. For two days, 14 and 15 October, the riot police activity was peaceful. After having blocked the road, kneeling down in front of the lorries, people formed a human chain. The police formed another chain opposite them. For two days the people took turns to keep the chain connected, and the situation remained static until 16 October, when the riot police received orders to use force to disperse the people who were blocking access to the perimeter, despite the presence of many children in the area. That day, 500 local peasants, who were joined by the people of the neighbouring communities and cities such as Iasi, Bucharest, Vaslui, and Barlad, moved to the location in a gesture of solidarity with the local population. The riot police, who appeared to be armed for war despite the fact that most of the protestors were elderly people, women and children, started hitting and pushing those who formed the human chain blocking the road into a ditch filled with water and mud, especially in places where there were no cameras. Many people were injured and were taken to the hospital.

That day more than 3,000 people took to the streets of Bucharest in solidarity with Pungești, facing up to the intimidation of the riot police. The media hardly covered the story. On 16 October, with the first improvised tent and an old trailer, the emergence was seen of the first permanent protest camp in Romania against fracking and the start of a massive wave of solidarity for Pungești, with donations of food and other useful items arriving from all corners of the country.

In addition, people from all over Romania, and even from abroad, started to show their solidarity and to join the camp. The local inhabitants organised shifts to keep the camp occupied and some children who slept in a covered horse cart refused to move from there. For a month and a half the presence of the anti-fracking camp, set up on private land opposite that leased by Chevron, prevented work from starting.

During the six weeks in which the camp existed, the inhabitants of Pungești attempted to talk with the local and regional authorities and to affirm their opposition to the project. But no one had bothered to listen to them. The mayor, in fact, was the one who leased the land to Chevron, land which had previously been obtained through controversial means. On 14 November, a convoy made up of more than a dozen horses and carts arrived in Vaslui, the district capital, in an attempt to demonstrate their opposition to the project (although not for the first time) to the president of the district board. His disdainful reaction went further than could have been imagined: “If your water is lost, well, don’t worry, drink vodka!” This astounding reaction made reference to one previously made by the President, that a handful of “drunk, lazy, and backwards country people are holding back progress in Romania.”

By late November, the Chevron project was well behind schedule and the company began to show signs of impatience. The government then put its faith behind a highly risky strategy: to dismantle the protest. From 4 a.m. on 2 December, protected by the darkness, the government sent more than 1,000 riot police to the site, armed to the teeth. Romanian law decrees that such interventions of the riot police must take place after 7 a.m.

However, information leaked the night before had already put the locals on their guard, and they had gone to bed with their clothes on. When the moment came and people began leaving their homes and heading towards the camp to join those already there, the riot police, with orders to quash any opposition with use of force, prevented them from leaving their homes and getting to the camp. The police agents began to hit everyone who crossed their path, including elderly people, women and children. The street lighting had been switched off, making it impossible to record what was happening. The occupants of the camp were arrested or violently removed from the private land, legally
The horrific abuses committed by the riot police in Pungeşti

After the camp had been evicted, a chain of riot policemen was established to prevent access, including the media, to Pungeşti. That same day, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced that in Pungeşti a ‘restricted zone’ had been established, due to ‘risks to public safety’. The main road was blocked and the traffic was restricted on the road by which Chevron had its base. A local shop was shut down, since it was considered a potential gathering place. Police cars followed groups of children in the streets, there were dozens of intelligence service cars parked in the streets, and the village was paralysed. Hundreds of riot policemen marched through the streets of the village, intimidating the local population. For many, 2 December marked the end of the fragile Romanian democracy.

Following a strong campaign on Facebook to bring to light these terrible abuses committed in Pungeşti on the part of the riot police, people from all over the country again went to congregate in the area. In the middle of great tension, the angry mob ended up toppling over the fence which had recently been erected around the Chevron site, which resulted in new arrests and more repression. After this incident, there were several days of violent repression in Pungeşti, with riot police chasing local people at night, beating them in the dark, and going into people’s houses to intimidate the population. People who were found without documentation were fined when they were in the countryside tending to their cows or had gone out to do some shopping, and a high number of excessive fines were given for ridiculous or imaginary ‘crimes’. During the week following 7 December nobody dared to go out after dark. The children were terrified by the presence of the riot police, who even dared go into the infant school so that the children would tell their parents not to go back to the anti-fracking camp. The school was also prohibited from organising its school party. The mayor, considered by the local population to be a traitor because he was the owner of the land where Chevron was building their platform, went so far as to hit, in front of other youngsters, a fourteen-year-old boy who, walking along the street, called him a traitor. The children were, in fact, one of the strongest and most memorable symbols of the fight of Pungeşti, inspiring everyone with their courage and strength to resist.

Meanwhile, the riot police definitively evicted and destroyed the camp on 7 December for ‘hygiene’ reasons. During the Christmas holidays, another camp, closer to the village, was set up, and a collective hunger strike was declared, inspired by that which had been started in Bucharest, on 21 December, by Alexandru Popescu, which lasted 22 days, during which he was sleeping in the open air in the centre of the Romanian capital in protest against the terrible human rights violations in Pungeşti. This second camp was also illegally dismantled by the riot police within a short time. The hunger strike by those in Pungeşti and Bucharest lasted almost two months, with more people joining it in Bucharest, sleeping out under heavy snow and with no interest from the media.

The protests in Pungeşti continued during the following months, including new camps which were always dismantled and new hunger strikes. Meanwhile, Chevron had installed its equipment and had started drilling work on 1 May 2014. This work took, as is generally the case, some 10 weeks.

During the time for which the drilling continued, the inhabitants were complaining about the terrible noise the equipment produced, especially during the night, and also about the heavy traffic and the high speed of the lorries which drove through in a manner that suggested they were trying to annoy people. They also complained about the thick smoke which from time to time was emitted from the drilling tower and about the dark water that, from the ditch that surrounded the Chevron complex, ran towards the village. Of course,
Global resistance to fracking

Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

And now, what?

As a consequence of what happened in Pungeşti, the movement against hydraulic fracturing in Romania has grown quickly, although people have understood that what happened there was an experiment of terror the government and Chevron used to make sure everyone gets their lesson learned in case they feel like rising up against hydraulic fracturing. Despite this, other communities took into account what had happened in Pungeşti and started to protest against the fracking projects which were threatening their land. The inhabitants of Pungeşti, despite not having been able to avoid the drilling being carried out, are seen as a source of inspiration for other communities and their story will continue inspiring the anti-fracking movement both within Romania and beyond its frontiers.

no analysis had been done to determine the quality of the water prior to starting the drilling work in Pungeşti. There was even a workplace accident on the site.

Protests stopped in the summer of 2014, at the same time as the work by Chevron finished. The company dismantled the drilling tower, sealed off the platform, and left. Chevron declared after a while that they were still analysing the results in the laboratory. But without making public such results, Chevron surprisingly announced in February 2015 its intention to pull out from the country.

The total amount of public money spent on the riot operations is unknown, although unofficial figures point at 60,000 euros per day of operation from the Romanian coffers, in those days in which there was a massive deployment of riot police. Of course, this money comes out of the public purse, although it was used by the state to defend a corporation against citizens who were only defending themselves, their water and their land which they desperately needed to survive. The riot police continued to be in charge of the site, even once the platform and machinery had been removed at the start of autumn 2014. This meant more than 10 months of occupation in Pungeşti by the riot police at the expenses of Romanian taxpayers. Moreover, reports from local authority employees, such as the traffic police and the environmental officers, show that they were instructed to look the other way whatever happened in Pungeşti.

Meanwhile, many of the criminal files opened on inhabitants of Pungeşti and activists were changed to ordinary files, which could be taken as a signal that the Romanian judicial system has not been totally corrupted, although none of the many legal cases which were opened to defend Pungeşti and other places from the drilling activities were successful. A whole community was taken hostage on its own land so that Chevron could work without interruption. Except for one, no Romanian politician has spoken about the terrible human rights violations which were carried out. Of course, nobody has paid for what happened in Pungeşti, although the Ministry of Home Affairs was replaced soon after.
Frack free municipalities

Íñigo Leza, Fracking Ez Araba
(Basque Country)

The Fracking Ez Araba Coalition came into being near the end of 2011 after Patxi López, then president of the Basque autonomous community on a visit to the United States, fired the parting shot announcing the start of fracking, promoting it with great fanfare as the solution to our big energy dependence issue. According to him, in Araba (one of the region's provinces) there was enough gas to last 60 years, the equivalent of covering the energy needs of Spain for five years. Even today, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which currently leads the Basque regional government, and processed the first fracking licences in 2006, admits that they do not have knowledge of the quantity of existing resources, and cite this as the reason for further exploration.

This magic word – exploration – is used as an appeal to the ‘right to know’ which positions groups opposed to fracking as also presumably opposing knowledge, because we are uninterested in finding out what’s there. And in spite of neither knowing then, nor now, the quantity or real existence of these reserves, Patxi López told us something very similar to what Obama said when he promised that with fracking, the US would have enough gas for 100 years. This is a strategy they have been using everywhere they have wanted to establish the use of this technique, and as recently as 2014, Daniel Poneman, deputy secretary of Energy under the Obama administration, stated that there is gas to last 400 years at Vaca Muerta (Argentina). Do I hear a higher bid? The same was said in Poland and Romania, where supposedly there were large reserves which were going to allow these countries

36 Autonomous community is a Spanish administrative division, equivalent to a region.
to free themselves from the villainous Russians, and which are, in the end, going nowhere, as the Romanian prime minister has recently admitted and as we are able to see for ourselves as we watch the drilling companies scatter in Poland.

But returning to Araba, the year 2012 was frenetically active, because the threat of drilling at the first wells was imminent. In January of 2012, after presenting a campaign of allegations against the ENARA 4 well, we gave our first talk in Bar 70, on Cuchillería Street, at Vitoria-Gasteiz. It would become the first of many and one of the pillars of the Frack free Municipalities campaign. From the beginning, it seemed incredibly important to include the towns that would be most directly affected by fracking in an effort to oppose this fossil fuel extraction technique. This was not a struggle that could belong to urban environmentalists, but would have to rely on the people who live where the companies intended, and still intend, to drill. The Frack Free Municipality campaign, with its informative talks, its institutional declaration, and its road signs at the various entry points to the towns has been very helpful in this sense, having achieved a high degree of active involvement on the part of the municipalities and their residents.

The birth of the idea

We got the idea during an anti-fracking coalitions’ assembly, when we saw that in two municipalities in Cantabria, Ruente and Cabuérniga, and one in Burgos, Vilviestre del Pinar, they had filed municipal motions in opposition to fracking. Also we remembered an initiative from the anti-nuclear movement where resolutions were approved by the town councils, declaring themselves a nuke-free zone. That was how the idea came up, and we prepared a press conference straight away. It was 29 February when we announced the campaign, which would have a great deal of media impact. Kuartango was the first town to declare itself ‘frack free’ and within less than a month and a half 11 more towns and one council had signed up. Over the following months, many more municipalities and councils joined, and some others, where initially a motion different from ours had been presented, ended up approving the original, and so we were able to colour in green the majority of the territory of Araba. With time, after we already had the greater part of the territory declared ‘frack-free,’ we stopped presenting motions ourselves, although we continue to incorporate the ones that had been approved on their own.

This initiative has had important repercussions in other territories. At first, it spread to areas close by, such as Cantabria, Bizkaia, Burgos, Gipuzkoa, and Nafarroa, but as time went on, and it hasn’t been that long, the idea has spread not only all over Spain, where there are now more than 400 frack free municipalities, but it has also reached the other side of the Atlantic to Argentina and Mexico, where sometimes they use the same road sign that we had designed for the initial campaign. At this moment, there are hundreds of town governments, provinces, and local councils that are frack free, so we can certainly say that the initiative we created almost three years ago continues to be successful and in our modest opinion continues to be a valuable tool in the fight against fracking.

Oftentimes we have heard that declaring a municipality “frack free” is not legally valid, that it doesn’t accomplish anything and is a waste of time. We have been told that one would have to refer to Madrid (where the national government is), which is where fracking could be banned, because that is where the supposed authority to do so resides. It is obvious to us that if a town clearly declares itself opposed to fracking, and this is backed up with an institutional declaration, this declaration becomes a very important asset. For example, the SAIA licence, which was approved towards the end of 2012, affects the provinces of Araba and Bizkaia. Starting then, we began a campaign of public talks followed by filing motions to declare the municipalities affected by this licence “frack free.” A few months later, word came through that they were going to start seismic testing, the purpose of which is to take an x-ray of the substratum, which would later be used to place the fracking wellbores. The municipal government of Orozko, which had declared itself ‘frack free’ and did not have the jurisdiction to refuse the seismic testing campaign, used all the administrative tools within its reach to extend the processing and, in doing so, delayed the
Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

Global resistance to fracking

The power of the pen

Earlier we spoke about the SAIA licence, which means ‘vulture’ in Euskera. As you can tell, the names of the licences Hidrocarburos de Euskadi (a government-owned company belonging to the Basque Energy Board) participates in are particularly ‘environmentally friendly’. Other licence names have included MIRUA (‘kite’), USOA (‘pigeon’), LORE (‘flower’), LURRA (‘earth’), ENARA (‘swallow’), USAPAL (‘dove’), SUSTRAIA (‘root’), and LANDARRE (very similar to the Basque word ‘landare’ which means ‘plant’). We can certainly be grateful that when it comes to destroying the environment, this is being done sustainably, at least as far as language is concerned. Bearing in mind that the Basque regional government is the primary driver of fracking within our territory, and seeing how as we had achieved a majority opposition among the municipalities of the region, we came up with the idea of presenting a citizens’ legislative initiative (CLI) that would ban fracking in the Basque autonomous community. We did this in early 2013 and although the first attempt was refused on procedural grounds, we have resubmitted a second CLI.

Throughout 2014, we worked hard on the CLI campaign. This campaign has helped us, the way the Frack Free Municipality campaign did in its time, to inform and mobilise the population, demonstrate our strength through signature gathering, the same way we did before with the towns, and to compel political parties to take a position on the issue. This is very important, since we need to remember again that it is the Basque regional government which is driving fracking development using public funds. In September 2014 we submitted more than 100,000 valid signatures and by the end of the year our petition was accepted for consideration by a unanimous vote. Now there is a deadline to submit amendments to the law, and afterward a parliamentary position will be decided which will consist of three possible options: 1) approve the CLI as it is; 2) amend it to meet the requirements of the Constitutional Court of Spain – which has already rejected as many as three regional laws intended to prohibit fracking on legal grounds; or 3) modify it so it is blurred beyond recognition and, in the end, any effect.

Pressure from the public has been the determining factor that has prevented fracking from establishing itself in our community so far and we need to continue working to keep it that way.

37 Euskera is the language of the Basque Country
38 A Citizens’ Legislative Initiative, or Citizens’ Initiative, is a mechanism of indirect democracy that refers to the right which Spanish Constitution protects, of persons present legislative initiatives without being elected representatives in their respective congress; these initiatives must be supported by a certain number of signatures to be taken into consideration by their respective legislative chamber.
Keeping ‘place of thirst’ safe

Jeanie le Roux
Director of Operations for Treasure Karoo Action Group (South Africa)

Early days

‘Fracking’ was first introduced to South Africans’ vocabulary in early 2011 when three applications to explore for shale gas became public through newspaper articles. Shell, Bundu (a subsidiary of Australian Challenger Energy) and Falcon (which recently partnered with Chevron for the proposed project) released their Environmental Management Plans (EMP) in early 2011 for public comments, coupled with public consultation meetings held in cities and towns in the vicinity of the application areas.

Applications span enormous areas of the Karoo (semi-desert region in South Africa), as well as most of the nine provinces, including the Free State, Eastern Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Northern Cape.

Applicants were met with fierce public opposition with some industry executives admitting that they were caught off guard.

The EMPs were inadequate on a number of critical issues with significant uncertainties and gaps in essential information and especially the public consultation process.

During the public meetings, questions from the public were avoided, not answered, and long, technical answers were provided missing the essence of questions that were posed to the representatives and consultants. This simply fuelled already frustrated and angry members of the public who had been at the meetings for hours without receiving answers to their questions. One of the executive members of Shell responded to a question around the potential negative environmental impacts by saying “We will leave the Karoo better than we found it.”
Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

**Civil opposition snowballing**

At that stage, the opposition movement had become more sophisticated. Landowners in the Eastern Cape Karoo had organised themselves and appointed an attorney, Derek Light, to represent them. By far the most distinguished organisation in opposition to shale gas is the Treasure Karoo Action Group (TKAG), founded in February 2011 by Jonathan Deal, photographer and author from the Karoo region. This group is still spearheading the legal opposition to shale gas in South Africa. The group is focused on enhancing public awareness, ensuring transparency, advocacy, scrutinising the process, holding stakeholders accountable, and going to court when necessary. Their position is that until it is proven that shale gas mining is safe and the right choice for South Africa, they will remain opposed to it. Other organisations that contribute to the movement include the Center for Environmental Rights, Wilderness Foundation, AfriForum, Groundwork, Southern Cape Land Committee, Earthlife, Natural Justice, WWF and Greenpeace.

**Achievements**

TKAG has, on a shoestring budget, managed to score a number of victories over the past few years and continues to lead the charge despite funding shortages. A detailed and substantial document was delivered in response to the draft EMPs, as well as to the South African government and the president which included the work and comments of several renowned scientists expressing concern and condemning the EMP documents.

Following concerted efforts and complaints submitted on the issue, in April 2011 the South African government announced a moratorium on shale gas and the formation of an interdisciplinary task team to investigate the matter.

The industry responded with a vigorous PR campaign riddled with the usual claims around the alleged safety of the fracking process – some advertisements and pamphlets stating that there are “no documented cases of groundwater contamination linked to fracking”. TKAG laid a formal complaint with the South African Advertising Standards Authority and Shell was ordered to withdraw their ‘misleading’ and ‘untruthful’ statements.

TKAG also wrote to the Department of Mineral Resources to acquire more information on the task team, its constitution, representation, and brief, but no information was offered. Eventually, after an application under PAIA (Public Access to Information Act) the department was ordered by the High Court to release the information to TKAG. The documents that were handed over revealed that the task team was highly disorganised, and the representation was skewed and inadequate. Business and mining oriented departments such as Trade and Industry, the Petroleum Agency of South Africa, the Department of Mineral Resources and a number of others were the main stakeholders in the group. Departments such as Health, Rural Development & Land Reform, Agriculture, Transport, Tourism, and many other key departments were not involved.

The task team report, not surprisingly, recommended that the moratorium be lifted and that exploration proceed. Draft technical regulations were published in October 2013 with final regulations expected to be finalised in 2015.

Shell has on three occasions promised their shareholders dates by which they would be in possession of their exploration rights – three times those dates have gone by without their promises being fulfilled. There remain significant complications, contradictions and challenges not only in the South African legal system, but also with regards to flawed public administration by the government and other challenges that could become major stumbling blocks to exploration licences being issued. TKAG and some other groups have vowed to oppose licences in court if exploration rights are issued under the current circumstances.

**International and local collaboration**

Collaboration is the name of the game. Through strategic alliances, partnerships or simply general cooperation between groups
on projects and campaigns, public awareness has been increased significantly; government bodies and the industry are aware of public opposition. TKAG maintains strategic partnerships with several organisations for different aspects of their campaigns. Civil rights organisation AfriForum, has partnered with TKAG on the legal and accountability programmes and is currently bankrolling those operations. General cooperation between different organisations also exists, including Groundwork, Centre for Environmental Rights, Southern Cape Land Committee, Endangered Wildlife Trust and Wilderness Foundation.

TKAG formed part of the 2013 Global/European anti-fracking strategic workshop and conference which took place in Beroun, Czech Republic. This conference aimed to facilitate and strengthen global cooperation between organisations and groups working on the issue of unconventional fossil fuel extraction and included fruitful relationships between different countries – such as France, Bulgaria, Denmark, Ukraine, Poland, South Africa, United States, and the Czech Republic. During the same time, TKAG was also working to establish better coordination with groups in Australia and the United States. The organisation also has Mark Ruffalo, ambassador for Water Defense, as a non-executive board member.

**Unique South African context: Environment and people**

The word ‘karoo’, a Khoisan (indigenous language) word meaning ‘place of thirst’, describes the reality of the semi-arid Karoo region very well, not only from a geographical point of view, but also from a social perspective. The region receives on average an annual rainfall of between 200 mm and 400 mm. One of many stark contrasts with regions in the USA where shale gas has been relatively feasible is that there are no significant permanent river systems in the Karoo and most water is obtained from underground aquifers. Therefore the tangible impact if water contamination is to occur, would be much more significant than in most regions of the USA. The region does not have adequate infrastructure to support a drilling industry. There are no existing gas pipelines, roads are not in a great condition and maintenance of infrastructure, especially water and sewerage, is a challenge. The unemployed of the region are mostly unskilled, many did not complete school. Due to the lack of water, it would be expensive for companies to truck water from outside the region. South Africa is a water-stressed country and surplus water is not a reality in most municipalities.

The main economic drivers of the hundred or so towns in the Karoo region are agriculture and tourism (as well as supporting industries). About 30% of South Africa’s meat is produced here (venison, lamb and mutton, beef and ostrich), as well as 60% of the world’s mohair.

The natural beauty of the Karoo, coupled with game viewing, unique architecture, unique cultural heritage - including its rock paintings and fossils -, the clear and magnificent night skies are all major drawing cards for tourists that seek a break from the busy city life.

The succulent Karoo biome is an internationally-recognised biodiversity hotspot.

The unique *koppies* (type of mountain/hill) are due to the prevalence of dolerite sills in the area. These dolerite intrusions are also of significance in the fracking debate, as dolerite could serve as a conduit for fluids to migrate to shallower depths and groundwater zones. In 1967, when Soekor (state-owned oil company) explored for oil in the eastern region of the Karoo, it experienced a total loss of drilling fluids and pressure at a depth of about 2,500 m. Six weeks later, 35 km further away, a farmer noticed a brown sediment in a spring on his farm and contacted Soekor. The drilling technician visited the farm and took a water sample. It was later confirmed that the fluid matched the drilling fluids used on the exploration well. The well was believed to have intersected dolerite.

One of the biggest challenges TKAG has faced in this campaign has been the lack of awareness and understanding of the issue by the public, notably people that reside in the Karoo. This illustrates the poor quality of the public consultation process of 2011. Many Karoo communities are poor, marginalised and/or do not have access to

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39 Mohair is the fiber made from the hair of the Angora goat.
media such as television and newspapers. Many of the families speak isiXhosa or Afrikaans as a home language, while the communication on shale gas has been done in English.

TKAG and other groups and organisations have launched several campaigns to create awareness and make information available to communities in an acceptable way, even though they believe that this is the duty of the government.

**Statu quo**

The South African government is expected to conduct public consultations on the proposed regulations for fracking, where after the regulations would be finalised, licence applications would be reviewed and exploration licences are likely to be issued. Licences will be appealed, under the current circumstances. A formal complaint has also been lodged with the public protector of South Africa for investigation.

Recently, in March 2015 Shell announced it would disassemble its shale gas team in South Africa to conserve resources due to declining international oil prices and due to the MPRDA (Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act) bill amendments in South Africa, which contain sections that could constrain the economic viability of shale gas in the country. Shell is still awaiting its exploration right, so formally this does not mean they are backing away at the moment, but the company is definitely reducing its current expenditure in this regard and monitoring legislative developments.

*A luta continua!*
Suppression of the peaceful farmers riot against Chevron’s plans in December 2013, in Pungești, Romania. (photo: Gabriel Tanasa, Vremea Noua)

‘NO Community Consent,’ reads the sign. Protest in the summer of 2013 opposing the drilling plans of Cuadrilla Resources in Balcombe, United Kingdom.

A campout in the summer of 2013 against the drilling plans of Cuadrilla Resources in Balcombe, in the south of England, in the United Kingdom.

Romanian police confront farmers bearing national flags in December 2014, Pungești, Romania. (photo: Gabriel Tanasa, Vremea Noua)
The idea of ‘locking the gate’ of one’s property to keep the Australian gas companies out soon extended to the highways along which trucks were supposed to pass, and then to entire regions which declared themselves ‘gasfield free.’ In this picture, the mayor of Kyogle gathers the resolutions of areas within her community which have declared themselves ‘gasfield free.’

The farmers of Żurawlów in Poland camped out for 400 days, from June 2013 to July 2014, resisting Chevron’s drilling plans. The camp was named ‘Occupy Chevron.’ (photo: Andrzej Bąk)

The sign of the “Lock the Gate!” campaign has become an icon of Australian resistance to fracking. This yellow triangle with the motto inside, present in many places across Australia, makes the communities’ rejection of fracking visible. This protest in the small town of Lismore, in April 2012, was attended by more than 8,000 people, almost a fourth of the municipality’s population.

A Romanian farmer sits in front of riot police during the December 2013 riots in Pungeşti, Romania. This image became a symbol of the resistance.
Enough with contempt, enough with marginalization’ reads the sign held by this child. Protests against fracking in southern Algeria reflect long-lasting underlying unrest due to the socioeconomic marginalization and exclusion from decision-making felt by the people of this area. (photo: BBOY Lee)

The ‘Frack Free Cities’ campaign, which already includes more than 400 Spanish municipalities, started in the Basque Country. This mass protest in Vitoria-Gasteiz in October of 2012 was attended by close to 13,000 people. The signs with the names of various municipalities that have declared themselves ‘frack free’ can be seen (photo: Miguel Muñoz).

The placard at the entrance of the ‘Occupy Chevron’ camp, in Żurawlów, Poland, reads ‘Shale gas = Death of Agriculture.’ Polish farmers won this battle; Chevron abandoned this site in July 2014 without having drilled. International solidarity was very important in keeping this campaign alive, as one can see from the flags of various countries stuck in the hay. (photo: Andrzej Bąk)

The fight against fracking in Algeria has reached a level of mass resistance since its start in 2015. Protests have taken place in various Algerian cities. This photo shows a protest against fracking in In Salah, Algeria, in January of 2015. (photo: BBOY Lee)
The biggest thing since the arrival of the railway

Kathryn McWhirter, Frack Free Balcombe Residents Association
(Balcombe, England)

We were on a train home from London when we noticed the article: ‘Oil and gas company Cuadrilla to frack in Balcombe.’ Fracking? In our village? It was December 2011 and we were still innocents.

Back home we googled tales from America and from the Fylde region of Lancashire, where a well had been fracked by Cuadrilla earlier that year, causing earthquakes. We gathered in TV rooms and watched Gasland. A village meeting in January 2012 bristled with fury. So many came that we opened side doors onto the freezing car park. Cuadrilla had asked to speak. It was the first contact they had made with us since planning permission had been quietly passed two years before.

After that angry meeting of 2012, our parish council held polite meetings with Cuadrilla, and distributed a soothing report. The village was splitting into three factions: the ‘pros’ (not many), the ‘antis’ (the majority) and the ‘anti-antis’ – those who disapproved of anyone who questioned authority. Why would anyone be pro? Balcombe is almost feudal, with farms, woodland and many houses belonging to the one family, and rented to their workers. That family had leased its field to Cuadrilla. Rifts developed between friends, even within families. The chair of our parish council called fracking ‘the biggest thing to have hit Balcombe since the arrival of the railway and the two world wars’.

But for a while, Cuadrilla seemed to have gone away. We held meetings. Environmental consultant Jessica Ernst came from Canada to tell of her fight against fracking firm Encana. Lech Kowalski came to show his film about the battle against Chevron in the Polish village of Żurawłów. A talk by Mariann Lloyd-Smith, Australian and UN toxicolo-
gist, effectively harnessed young Balcombe mothers, who have been so vital to the campaign. And why were our council never at these meetings? ‘Well,’ blustered the deputy chair, ‘I suppose we thought it was all propaganda.’

A year of silence from Cuadrilla… and then a letter dropped onto our doormats in May 2013. They would drill in June, but first they were inviting us to a ‘drop-in meeting’. Cuadrilla staff arrived by coach with a public relations posse. Camouflaged amongst the villagers was a couple from Greenpeace, who secretly recorded one PR executive admitting, ‘I know we are talking a load of bullshit but…’ He would be reminded of that indiscretion later in the summer.

... And the drilling rig arrived

On 10 June 2013, three enormous lorry loads of drilling rig arrived, from the nearby motorway junction, thundering past our primary school and homes to the drill site just south of the village, beside an ancient woodland, between the London-to-Brighton railway line and the country road with its wide green verges. Suddenly there were high fencing, guards, and the drill thrusting up and down above the trees. We organised protest picnics on the verge. Our aim was to delay the work – because Cuadrilla had arrived just four months from the end of their three-year permit. Time was very short.

It was Friends of the Earth who struck the first blow, pointing out that, before drilling, Cuadrilla needed mining waste and radioactive substance permits from the Environment Agency. Drilling stopped for a one-month public consultation. Normally the Environment Agency expects a handful of objections. This time they got 900, but nevertheless agreed the permit in days. By late July the drill was back in action.

One midnight, on the way home from the local restaurant where I work, there were camp fires on the verges. Villagers were drinking tea with new arrivals. Over subsequent days, the camp spread out along the verges, with kitchen, a children’s play area, and an information tent. Balcombe’s train station gave easy access.

School and university holidays had started, and families came, plus students, teachers, nurses, carpenters, all sorts of people, some of whom, like me, had never protested before. Others were old hands. The weekend brought anti-fracking groups from Wales, Lancashire, Scotland and Kent. We villagers slept in our beds, but went down to the camp whenever jobs permitted. We offered baths and showers, water, Wi-Fi and food.

Meanwhile in the village, the ‘anti-antis’ complained to each other and to the newspapers about ‘those dreadful people’ and accused us ‘antis’ of ‘bringing them in’. Eggs and nasty tweets were thrown at a village mother and child. Behind the high hedge fringing the verge, one metre from the camp, pig manure was sprayed, and gunfire disturbed campers day and night.

The drilling was so noisy that we villagers, getting no response from the company or the authorities, finally bought our own sound-testing equipment and forced the work to stop while sound baffling was installed. By August there were guard dogs, and the police presence had grown. Protesters (protectors, as we now called them) were slowly ‘walking in’ the lorries, and delaying deliveries by ‘locking on’ to gates and equipment. Police helicopters thrummed overhead. On the ground, police tactics got tougher. 126 arrests were made, the majority later thrown out of court. Police closed the road for long periods, blaming the protesters, fanning the ‘anti-antis’ fury. The police spent over £4m. They developed anti-protest tactics together with the County Council, and allowed Cuadrilla to lead their PR campaign.

The rail line that brought the protectors also delivered journalists. Balcombe has only one train per hour, but it’s an easy 45 minute ride from London, and only 10 minutes from Gatwick Airport. The foreign press conducted in-depth interviews. The British media, for the most part, focussed on a few wackier protesters, and ran interviews with our parish council and the ‘anti-antis’. We learnt to write press releases, talk to TV cameras and radio and run social media campaigns.
**Inspiring, uniting...**

The highlight of the summer was a march of thousands on a wonderful Sunday in late August. The procession snaked through the woods from Balcombe station to the drill site, accompanied by drums, dancing and passionate speeches. Then we linked hands around the site. The next day, with the site still closed on police advice, the UK’s only Green MP40, Caroline Lucas, was arrested for blocking the site entrance (a case later dismissed). That day the offices of Cuadrilla’s PR company were invaded, while over a loud PA system41 a recording was played of the company’s executive saying, ‘We know we are talking a load of bullshit…’

It all worked, campers and village in harmony – even if at the time we felt battered by the massive police presence and negative coverage in the British media. In September, with drilling and protest still going strong, some of us went to Brussels, to a conference organised by The Greens/EFA Alliance on ‘why shale gas should remain in the ground.’ We realised then with amazement that our little village was famous, that communities across Europe and beyond were ‘inspired’ by our fight! In Britain, we began to see that people now knew about fracking too, and were becoming aware that government had already allocated oil and gas licences for large swathes of the country, with more to come.

We also succeeded in stopping Cuadrilla. By late September, they had drilled their vertical and lateral well, but having run out of time to test-flow, they had to clear the site and reapply for permission. It was an eerily magical day at the end of September when we walked through the roadside gate and up the forbidden driveway to the inner gates.

All was not really over. Cuadrilla got new permission in April 2014, and Frack Free Balcombe Residents Association took the county planners to the High Court. Sadly we lost the November hearing, but at least we focussed yet more public and press attention on fracking. Cuadrilla is now free to return.

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**Battling onwards...**

Fracking still fills our days: studies and articles, links with groups around Britain and beyond. We travel in support for other protest camps and to give awareness-raising talks in other communities. We go to London university lectures and debates, and parliamentary committees in Westminster. We have presented evidence to enquiries. We have learnt to lobby. Some of us have given up our jobs. Together we wield a wealth of skills. We have lost some friends but have many new and better friends, with whom we share values.

We understand the opposition – the might and wealth of an oil and gas industry determined to prolong their dominion in the face of climate change. We have weathered misinformation in the right wing press, and propaganda from a misguided government heavily lobbied and influenced by the oil and gas industry. We now face new laws that will speed up and facilitate permits for industry, while removing individual and community rights; ‘regulators’ seemingly intent on pushing through government policy at all costs, ignoring the weight of public opinion; government and industry bribes to councils and communities of £100,000 per well, 1% share of profits; the right to keep local business taxes on oil exploitation for local use; poor regulations, self-monitoring by industry; a high rate of mishaps in the few UK wells already drilled.

Some will not get involved until the threat is local. But unconventional oil and gas operations are planned over two-thirds of Britain – shale gas and oil, coal bed methane, underground coal gasification just off-shore around the coast, wells on land every two miles, thousands of wells, promising a dreadful cumulative effect on environment, air and water and public health, and the splintering of our countryside.

Balcombe has been an example of public outrage and uprising, and of the power of publicity. We were lucky to live on a railway line, and Cuadrilla was oh, so foolish to pick on a community that was so accessible to the world’s press. It all began for us as a backyard Balcombe issue. ‘Have you won?’ people ask us at intervals. ‘It depends which war,’ we say. Because we are now out to defeat unconventional oil and gas worldwide. Only then shall we have won.

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40 Member of the parliament
41 Public address system
A battle against plundering, contamination and death

Neuquén Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking (Argentina)

In Argentina, the privatisation in the 1990s of the country’s two most important fossil fuel companies, YPF and Gas del Estado, and the continuity of the neoliberal model in the years that followed brought many related consequences. Among other problems, the indiscriminate exportation – and without any state control – of resources led the country to commence imports of gas, the main energy source in Argentina, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This crisis, in turn, produced a deficit in the trade balance and a hasty flight of dollars.

In the search for a solution to the crisis and relying on the collective imaginary of the formerly state-owned YPF, the national government proposed the Hydrocarbon Sovereignty Law to Congress. Passed in May 2012, it expropriated 51% of the Repsol-YPF shares, which came to be held by the state. However, the idea of YPF as a state-owned company remained an illusion, because the legal status of Public Limited Company means that a company is under no legal obligation to provide explanations to the public about any agreements, investments, or otherwise that it makes. Economic rationale continued to take precedence over policies of recovering energy self-reliance.

In the past decade, far from debating about the consequences of extractivism and plundering from the end of the twentieth century and an energy mix based mainly on fossil fuels, the state and the industry have looked for diverse ways to increase reserves and extend hydrocarbon borders. Thus, the current governor of the province of
Neuquén, Jorge Sapag, announced the discovery of unconventional fossil fuels (UFF) deposits in 2009.

Neuquén is one of the provinces which has known fossil fuel production for about a century, with the first deposit discovered in 1918 in the area where the towns of Cutral Co and Plaza Huincul are located today. Even though in many of its regions, the negative socio-environmental consequences of fossil fuel production are visible, it has traditionally been the main economic activity of the province. Due to this situation, the context of activism in the Neuquén province is fairly complex.

**Organising a united front**

However, in mid-2011, some organisations worked together to form a space that would allow for debate and to fight against the advance of UFF extraction. Faced with the indications provided by government announcements, these organisations promoted complaints related to the production of non-conventional gas and initiated the distribution of information materials among other organisations and institutions. In addition, they accompanied the actions of the Mapuche community Gelay Ko, in the centre of the Neuquén province, where the first pilot well was drilled using the hydraulic fracturing technique.

Some of these social and environmental organisations, which had been working on the problem of extractivism along with the Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén (COM), made a public call to constitute a multi-sectorial platform in 2013 to add depth to the debate and to fight the advance of the hydrocarbon industry in the province. From that time on, the Neuquén Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking was set up as a space of intersection, made up of different social, political, trade union, feminist and human rights organisations, and the COM. The initial objective was to draw attention to the environmental consequences of UFF extraction and to defend our shared resources and the land on which we live, producing a variety of interactions to resist the territorial appropriation strategies of the large extraction companies and the governments associated with them.

Our public political activity is based on a slogan that encompasses the different aspects of the problem we are fighting against: ‘No To Plundering, Death and Contamination’. Thus, we not only address the socio-environmental consequences of the extractivist model, but also the economic unfairness produced by the capitalist system.

**The Chevron-YPF agreement**

One of the events that opened the door to the production of UFF on a large scale in Argentina, and especially in the Neuquén province, was the agreement signed between YPF and Chevron. In spite of the demands of the entire opposing political spectrum, with numerous requests for reports and legal appeals to keep the agreement from being signed without first informing the entire population about it, the pact was upheld. Moreover, other legal norms were passed that facilitated agreements with foreign investors: presidential decree 929/13, provincial decree 1208/13 in Neuquén, the reform of the National Hydrocarbons Law, passed in October 2014 among others.

When in the provincial legislature of Neuquén, decree 1208/13 was supported, broadening the licence area to YPF S. A., extended the licence until 2048 and indirectly endorsed the Chevron-YPF agreement, numerous voices were raised in protest. The night before the approval, the Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking called a protest camp across from the premises and, along with other political organisations and trade unions, a march from the National University of Comahue to the provincial legislature on 28 August 2013. More than 7,000 Neuquén citizens marched to reject this law. We showed our strong rejection of the YPF S. A.-Chevron pact, fracking and UFF production. Shortly after the demonstration began, and when trying to cross the first police blockade, the column headed by the Multi-Sectorial Platform Against Fracking was repressed by the provincial police, who advanced with force in order to break up the entire demonstration. This brutal repression lasted more than six hours and ended with a teacher injured by a lead bullet.
Global resistance to fracking

Peaceful revolt on the Irish border

Tom White
(Northern Ireland)

Tamboran Resources, a small exploration company, acquired two licences, one in Northern Ireland and one in the Republic of Ireland, for the Lough Allen Basin. They were interested in shale gas, and should the project go ahead, between 3,000 and 9,000 wells were projected in the first stages. Tamboran had decided they would drill a stratigraphic borehole to get more information about the shale formations.

A number of opposition groups were created in the zone almost since the word got out that the licences had been granted. A huge amount of learning was required, along with lobbying politicians and attempting to get our viewpoint across in the media. When three years later the drilling threat was imminent, the community was already well aware.

On 21 July at about 5 a.m., a convoy accompanied by a large number of police made its way to the Cleggan quarry and immediately set about securing the area, with the construction of new gates, fencing and razor wire. That evening Donal O'Cofaigh – a Belcoo resident – called a protest at the gates. About 300 turned up – a large number given that the area is quite rural and considering the short notice.

An added complication in this conflict in Northern Ireland is the sectarian divide and long history of conflict in the area. Belcoo is a mainly nationalist area. The minister who granted the licence was from a unionist party. However, while initially the movement could have been interpreted as part of this stark divide – i.e. nationalists against fracking and unionists pro-fracking – Donal had run as a candidate in the local elections, and this had put fracking on the agenda. By the
time Tamboran arrived on site, some of the unionist parties, indeed virtually all of the political parties, had stated that they were against fracking. Of course, this borehole was just a scientific test, so semantics could be used, but it was clear to everyone that this was the first stage in shale gas exploration in Northern Ireland. Besides, the results of the borehole were also to be used by Tamboran to fulfil their work programme requirements at the other side of the border, and so this affected the Republic of Ireland as well.

**The community takes action**

A community meeting was held on Tuesday 22 in the Belcoo community centre. This time the hall was packed. People were angry. Tamboran had gone in early, the road had been blocked, and consultation consisted of Tamboran's agents posting letters and brochures through letterboxes and failing to engage in dialogue. A committee was formed. A mobilisation plan was put into action, as well as a community-watch action and a letter-writing campaign, while other subgroups prepared posters and placards, and organised a camp.

A daily protest was called for at 7 p.m. every evening. Local musicians would come and play. We wanted to have a situation where the protests would be family friendly – in fact, many children attended – and so we had to liaise with the police. Given Northern Ireland's legacy, this was a source of tension for us, but the reality is that one has to deal with the situation as presented. We imposed a code of conduct at the future drilling site and at the camp and other locations. Gazebos and barrel stoves, chairs and tables were all brought to the gates. There was keen media interest.

The nature of the protest was peaceful. There had been an incident during the very first protest. We were unprepared to some extent; we had a few speeches and an incident started that led to some heated moments. This was later to aid Tamboran in being granted an injunction. These ‘legal’ issues have the effect of keeping people away. The injunction targeted ‘unknown persons’ and also specifically a cross-community anti-fracking group – Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network –, the plan being to split the community along sectarian lines, and to make it seem that we were troublemakers. In fact, there were reports of sectarian abuse fed to the media. On weekday evenings between 200 and 400 people passed through the protest site – i.e. some would come at 7 p.m., others later. On Sundays a larger protest was organised, even though the local football team had a match at the same time. We had approximately 500 people turn up, with another crowd of 200–300 arriving after the game.

Other activities were planned. We held a tractor run, and even though we were competing with other events held that day, 170 vehicles (tractors, cattle trucks, pick-ups) drove into the local town. The news on Monday morning should have been about the local resistance to the project, but there was an incident with a petrol bomb on a security guard's house which grabbed the headlines. We spent the next few days working on damage control. Only the media linked the incident to the protest.

An important online and postal writing campaign was also in progress. Thousands of letters were being sent. The choice of the site for the well – a quarry where rock extraction had taken place without planning – would become the main topic. Tamboran's plans were predicated on not having to get planning permission on the site and being able to use 'permitted development' in order to drill the borehole. We lobbied through emails and letters and met with Minister Durkan, who ultimately would make the decision.

We also lobbied the local councils and, by the end of the second week, bans had been reaffirmed, and motions censuring Tamboran had been passed in five councils. The local assembly representative, Arlene Foster, from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), was also the minister in charge of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, but some of her party members on the Fermanagh district council started to change from being in favour of shale gas to being undecided or against it. We felt the tide of opinion was starting to support us.
**Resolving the conflict**

The strain was starting to show. Minister Durkan would make his decision on Monday 11 August 2014. Had it really only been three weeks? It sure felt longer. An ecumenical service with local choirs and the Letterbreen Silver Band was scheduled for Monday night. Thoughts of having to stop lorries and possible confrontations with the police and even militant protestors crossed my mind. Slowly the news started to leak out. Minister Durkan decided full planning permission was needed with an Environmental Impact Statement if Tamboran wanted to drill on the site. Alternatively they could attempt to use another site. The tension gave way to joy and the church service that night, instead of praying for things to not start, turned into a celebration. The protest was scaled back with the immediate danger being averted. The next campaign – to stop Minister Foster from granting Tamboran an extension to the licence – was underway the next day.

Tamboran refused to comment publically. The licence would automatically cease on 30 September 2014 unless the minister decided otherwise. We still couldn’t be sure that the minister would agree with us, even though we believed we had a good case. The minister met with another community group on 30 September in Enniskillen and told them of her decision to cease the licence before announcing it.

To date, Tamboran has applied for judicial reviews of the decisions made by both Minister Durkan and Minister Foster.

The campaign continues. We have stopped shale gas exploration here, but shale is present all over Northern Ireland and the Republic. The industry likes to start small and then build across the area. All campaigners have said not to allow them anywhere. We will use every legal and peaceful means possible to stop unconventional fossil fuel exploration and extraction on the island, but there is a long road ahead.

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**Shale gas in Algeria: Another form of energy colonialism**

Hamza Hamouchene  
*Co-founder of Algeria Solidarity Campaign (Algeria)*

Although France has banned Total and other companies from using fracking in its country, it is promoting it in its former colony Algeria. It is also likely that Total or GDF Suez will have a stake in exploiting shale gas in Algeria in the future. If that is not neocolonialism, I don’t know what is. This controversial issue was on the agenda during French President Hollande’s visit to Algeria in December 2012, as French companies have been granted permission to explore for shale gas. Upon returning from a trip to Algeria in June 2014, French Foreign Affairs Minister Laurent Fabius also declared his support to French companies exploring shale gas abroad.

Some Algerian observers and campaigners have compared this phenomenon to France’s nuclear testing in Reganne, a series of four nuclear tests conducted between 1960 and 1961 in the Algerian desert before independence in 1962, whose harmful environmental and health consequences we are still experiencing today. This time the slogan used by activists was ‘L’Algérie n’est pas une terre d’essais et d’expérimentation pour le gaz de schiste’ (translation: Algeria is not a land for shale gas testing and experimentation).

What is tragic about this situation is that the Algerian government

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is yet again showing its contempt for the environment\textsuperscript{43} and for the Algerian people while perpetuating Algeria’s ongoing dependence on hydrocarbons and condemning the economy to the cyclical rise and fall of oil and gas prices. Algeria’s hydrocarbon sector accounts for roughly 60\% of budget revenues, almost 30\% of GDP, and over 97\% of export earnings.

\textbf{Algeria as a key geostrategic ally}

The European Union considers Algeria a strategic partner because of its oil and gas resources. Thirty-eight percent of Algerian oil extraction is destined for the European market, but the biggest energy interdependence includes gas. Algeria is the third-largest source of gas imports to the EU, accounting for 14\% of gas imports and 10\% of total consumption. Three gas pipelines link Algeria to southern Europe, and a fourth is being developed with Italy. With North Sea gas reserves dwindling drastically, guaranteed access to Algerian gas has been identified as an economic and strategic priority for the EU, explaining why the country features heavily in the EU’s energy policy as well as the growing interest of Europe and multinationals in developing Algeria’s shale gas potential.\textsuperscript{44}

Algeria is thought to hold vast shale gas resources. According to a study sponsored by the US Energy Information Administration, in April 2011, Algeria had 231 trillion cubic feet (tcf) or 6,440 billion cubic metres (bcm) of technically recoverable shale gas resources. This was revised upwards recently by the US Department of Energy to suggest higher figures of 707 trillion cubic feet (19,800 bcm), which would mean that Algeria has the third-largest recoverable shale gas reserve after China and Argentina.\textsuperscript{45} In 2011, Eni and Sonatrach signed a cooperation agreement for the extraction of unconventional resources, with a particular focus on shale gas. Shell and ExxonMobil also held talks with Sonatrach about exploiting shale resources.\textsuperscript{46} However, exploratory work on Algeria’s unconventional reserves is still preliminary and technical challenges remain, particularly a lack of freshwater required for enhanced recovery techniques and hydraulic fracturing.

\textbf{Shale gas and the rentier system}

Algeria’s structural economic problems include astounding levels of corruption; heavy reliance on energy exports; the process of deindustrialisation that began in the 1980s, and a lack of serious government interest in developing the country’s agricultural potential. The rentier nature of the economy has made corruption the defining characteristic of Algerian affairs. The scale of this corruption means that, in order to operate in Algeria, multinationals and foreign companies often participate in these murky deals.\textsuperscript{47} It is in this context that the issue of shale gas exploitation should be addressed. Mehdi Bsikri, an Algerian journalist and anti-fracking activist, has commented that the Algerian government has the restricted vision of a regime lacking legitimacy and is only seeking a new rent to perpetuate its grip on power. This grip on power is strengthened by Western governments and companies looking to exploit shale gas. According to Bsikri, aquifers contain around 60,000 billion cubic metres of freshwater with low salt content. The use of more than 500 chemicals in the process of hydraulic fracturing seriously threatens water tables, because the wells are drilled across these water layers.\textsuperscript{48} Moreover, Algeria’s water basins are interconnected. Therefore, if In Salah is polluted, the chemical substances that seep into the water will spread and even reach Ouargla and Biskra, 600 to 900 km away respectively. The agricultural regions in southern

\textsuperscript{43} http://www.algeriasolidaritycampaign.com/summer-2012-forest-fires-whats-stirring-this-vast-damage/
\textsuperscript{44} http://platformlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Algeria_Briefing.pdf
\textsuperscript{45} http://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/
\textsuperscript{46} http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=ag
\textsuperscript{47} http://platformlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Algeria_Briefing.pdf
Some good news but the fight continues...

For campaigners, the latest disappointing round of oil and gas bids, which was launched in January 2014 with results announced on September 30, will be music to their ears: no bids were received for any of the 15 permits thought to have shale potential.\textsuperscript{50} Clearly, for international oil companies, Algeria’s fiscal terms were still unattractive despite financial incentives for shale exploitation introduced by amendments to the Hydrocarbon Law passed in March 2013. This is a game played by international oil companies in order to force more concessions from Algerian authorities as oil and gas production begins to dwindle. It is definitely a setback for the shortsighted and criminal ambitions of the Algerian government to tap supposedly abundant unconventional resources.

Resistance

Despite this good news, at the end of December 2014, Algerian authorities announced the drilling of the first pilot shale well in In Salah, in the Ahnet Basin, by a consortium of three companies: Sonatrach, Total and Partex.

In reaction to this announcement, since the start of 2015, Algerians have been protesting in tens of thousands all over the country (In Salah, Tamanrasset, Ouargla, Ghadaia, Illizi, Adrar, Timimoun, Bordj Bají Mokhtar, Algiers, Ain Beida, Oum El Bouaghi, Bejaia and Oran) to oppose the exploitation of shale gas in In Salah, an oasis-town in the heart of the Sahara desert and home of the largest dry gas joint-venture projects in the country (BP, Statoil and Sonatrach). The scale of public opposition took the government by surprise and threatens the future fracking plans of multinationals including Total and Shell.

It is very difficult to organise and to protest in Algeria due to the repressive and authoritarian regime that is ruling the country. Several laws in place restrict freedom of expression, assembly and trade unionism. The Algerian authorities are also known for their corruption and lack of transparency.

While the peaceful protests and marches in the Sahara were allowed to proceed, a sit-in in Algiers, planned to take place on Saturday January 17, 2015, in solidarity with the growing resistance movement, was suppressed and a dozen people were arrested.

At the time of writing this text, the huge protests that erupted in several towns in the Algerian Sahara and beyond have been ongoing for over several weeks without interruption and will foreseeably continue until such time as a moratorium has been imposed.\textsuperscript{51} The public is calling for a halt to all shale gas exploration operations as well as a national debate on the issue, something that should have happened before passing the amendments to the Hydrocarbon Law in January 2013 in a climate of full opacity.\textsuperscript{52} Economists, environmental specialists, technical experts, local communities, and civil society were not consulted prior to the introduction of this law in parliament.

This mass mobilisation in southern Algeria also reflects a deeper discontent with the ongoing exclusion of the Algerian people from decision-making, demonstrating, once again, the long-standing socioeconomic marginalisation of the inhabitants of the oil- and gas-rich Sahara, a region providing the bulk of Algeria’s resources and income.

This inspiring resistance drew international support from beyond Algeria’s borders when over 80 organisations from Europe, Africa and America issued a statement proclaiming their solidarity with the anti-fracking resistance movement in Algeria.

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\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Algeria Bid Round Flatters to Deceive, 3 October 2014. Middle East Petroleum and Economic Publications.


\textsuperscript{52} https://www.opendemocracy.net/hamza-hamouchene-amine-mouffok-meriem-ais-rachida-lamri/algerians-in-london-protest-against-shale-ga
International solidarity is crucial in order to end energy colonialism, to halt the ongoing dependency on fossil fuels and to ban fracking everywhere.

Lisa and the curse

Anxela Iglesias

This story has been constructed based on telephone conversations with Lisa Parr (Texas, USA)

The story of Lisa Parr could begin talking about a curse. Anyone could be forgiven for thinking that an evil eye bringing terrible consequences had attacked this woman and her husband, Bob. That could be the only explanation for everything that had happened to them after they married and moved to live in a village in the state of Texas. You need to read the story right to the end to understand that there was neither divine punishment nor any supernatural power working against them. In reality, they were victims of a more earthly malady.

Anyone looking at the first photos of Bob and Lisa together with Emma, Lisa’s daughter, give the impression that they are a typical family from the southern US, with their blonde locks and huge smiles, their cowboy hats and gas-guzzling pick-up trucks. But something in this image doesn’t fit with the preconceived notion when Lisa says that a short while ago a small wind generator had been installed in the garden, and solar panels on the roof; when she assures me that human health and that of the planet are to her more important than money or oil and gas, a thought that, even she admits, would not have passed through her mind some years ago.

At first, Lisa Parr’s voice seems shy, as if she finds it strange that someone on the other side of the world would be interested in her life. But shyness is taken over by strength as she tells her tales, which seem to come out of a thriller. Her voice takes on a tone of satisfaction when she recounts what she has achieved: won against a big company, Aruba Petroleum, in the courts and will receive compensation of almost three million dollars.

Before victory, however, came a great deal of fear, uncertainty and pain.
It seemed to be flu

Migraines, shaking, nausea, aching bones … these were the symptoms Lisa began to experience in 2008, a few months after moving into the home of her husband in Wise County. “It must be the flu,” she thought, “or maybe an allergy attack.”

But, without explanation, the state of her health continued to decline. Along came the episodes of momentary blindness, whistling in the ears, vomiting of white foam. There were moments when she couldn’t breathe and had to be taken to the emergency room.

As if all this wasn’t enough, the symptoms were starting to affect Bob and Emma. “Mum, I can see spots around my eyes,” said the seven-year old girl without understanding that she had serious vision problems. The little girl didn’t understand either why she had so many nosebleeds, sometimes at the same time as her step-dad Bob.

In fact, Lisa continued feeling so unwell that she preferred that Emma didn’t see her. She also didn’t feel strong enough to look after her, sending her to spend some time with her first husband, something that would in fact save Emma’s life.

The doctors couldn’t understand what was happening to the Parr family. Lisa and Bob went from one specialist to another and received conventional treatments to reduce the symptoms, but went on to become unwell again. Months passed. They spent a year and a half with constant visits to hospital and return journeys home.

Bob had built that cursed house in 2001, before meeting Lisa and when there were no neighbours. Since then, a number of homes had been constructed in the area and, additionally, 22 extraction wells belonging to Aruba Petroleum. Only 250 metres away from the Parr property was one of these wells, which caused the house to shake every time it was in use. Lisa recalls one Sunday when the shaking was so strong, and she was feeling so ill, that she approached the well to beg that the workers stop working. But she was rudely sent away.

A few days later, Bob went to visit some neighbours, who showed him the data from air and water quality control tests from a well located on their property, during the operations. The date and time at which the tests were carried out were indicated on these documents.

Lisa’s husband took the documentation and compared the medical highs and lows, including the records of admissions to the emergency room during the last few months. The days coincided.

The evidence seemed clear and Lisa’s state of health was now so worrying that she had to consult an environmental health specialist. At that point, Lisa was submitted to specific tests with clear results. In her blood and organs, traces were found of more than 20 neurotoxins and other chemical substances which are used in hydraulic fracturing activities.

Forty-eight hours
Leave your home within 48 hours

That was the recommendation made by the specialist upon opening the envelope containing the results of the analysis. And this was the start of the tour of the state of Texas and of the law courts, by Lisa and her family. It was also the start of her recovery.

They moved into Bob’s office in a different village. Lisa remembers how hard those days were, when she had to drive for an hour to take her daughter to school, for another two hours in order to receive specialist treatment in Dallas, and then make the return journey. However, in spite of being tired, she started to feel better.

She also remembers that they decided to go through the justice system, after trying in vain to get in touch with the directors of Aruba Petroleum. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality opened a case which was then investigated by the state’s Attorney General.

The Parr family was supported by their neighbours in the investigations and the search for evidence. But the same didn’t happen with the politicians. In Texas, “the parties receive a lot of money from the energy companies for their electoral campaigns,” explains Lisa.
The hearing was finally convened in 2014 and the members of the jury were in no doubt. The activities of the extraction wells had caused the family's health problems and anxiety; the Parr's house had lost its market value; the consequences continued for the family. And the company was ordered to pay around three million dollars.

First legal victory in the fight against fracking

It was both an economic and moral victory for Lisa and her loved ones, who were, soon after, happy to hear the news that the well nearest to the Parr's house was due to be closed. The news went all around the world, and thus became a victory which was celebrated throughout the anti-fracking community.

"Aruba Petroleum didn't apply even the minimum precautionary measures with relation to the waste fluids produced by fracking or to the atmospheric emissions," she explains over the phone. Because of this, they operated mainly during the weekend, so as to try to avoid their activities being noticed.

"Other companies take more care," Lisa admits. But this won't avoid risks or guarantee the good state of health of the people who live nearby. "If you ask me now, after reading so much about the subject and after suffering the consequences, I would say that there is no safe way to carry out hydraulic fracking," she explains.

The Parr family has returned home, because it is where they want to be. But their life is no longer the same. They are worried about the environment, because they know that they depend on it. Lisa gives interviews and conferences to inform people about possible symptoms, so they can avoid the threat.

There is progress, like that in the nearby town of Denton, where the inhabitants have decided by referendum to ban fracking. "But the problems continue," Lisa stresses. "A little while before you phoned me, I was watching the local news, which was talking about several seismic movements registered in the area during the last few days. It is caused by the fracking industry and I am going to continue telling people about it," she said.
From regional to international: Korbach Resolution, a grassroots guideline document

Andy Gheorghiu
Promoter of the Korbach Resolution (Germany)

On 4 and 5 May 2013, 25 German anti-fracking groups met with Food & Water Europe in Korbach, North-Hesse (Germany), to promote a stronger network and to exchange experience.

One of the main outcomes of this strategy meeting was the Korbach Resolution53, which helped to build a denser and stronger national and international anti-fracking network by articulating a common set of core demands.

Even before the meeting, the resolution had sparked a behind-the-scenes debate about both the form of the text and its contents. Some members of the German anti-fracking movement preferred a lengthy text of a more ideological nature with a strong socioecological note, while others argued for a shorter text with clearly stated demands, which might be more easily published by the media, more easily accepted by other organisations, and ultimately more easily enacted and put into place by political decision-makers.

Due to these differences, there was a build up of pressure before the meeting and the atmosphere was not very harmonious. Everyone knew that we would have to present some kind of resolution afterwards, and everyone was anxious to see the result. Because we were aware of the tensions and since we wanted to give ourselves the space to get

53 www.resolution-korbach.org
to know one another better, we made formulating the resolution the only item on the agenda for the second day. We also knew that we had to find a solution before midday since supraregional media had been invited and had already confirmed their participation.

Considering the overall circumstances, it was amazing to see how focused and constructive the participants were while working on the text of the Korbach Resolution. The overall accepted opinion was that any kind of fracking, whether for exploration or for further exploitation of fossil fuels, should be banned, and that in the 21st century, our political, social, economic, and ecological responsibility is clearly the implementation of the Energiewende or energy transition. Everyone involved in the meeting agreed that the anti-fracking movement is necessary to prevent the fossil fuel industry from torpedoing the continued improvement of energy awareness and efficiency, and the further development of renewable energy.

**Points of the agreement**

The Korbach Resolution reads:

We address the following demands to our governments and to the European Union:

An immediate ban, without any exemptions, on all types of fracking, including research, exploration, and exploitation of fossil energy sources. This ban should apply regardless of whether the fracturing occurs with or without chemicals, hydraulically, or in other ways.

A general import and trade ban on ‘fracked’ fossil energy sources.

A general ban on the injection of the flowback or the underground disposal of fluids and waste water.

A revision of the mining law. The revision must focus on ensuring the highest environmental standards and the participation rights of the public.

A consistent implementation of the political decision in favour of the Energiewende54, i.e. a move away from fossil energy sources, the development of renewable energy, and the improvement of energy efficiency.

Immediately after the demands were formulated, it was also decided that more signatures should be collected at all levels (regional, national, and international) in order to put more weight behind the demands and to provide a common resolution for the growing anti-fracking movement. Four columns were established for additional supporters/signers:

1. NGOs (non-governmental organisations) / Associations / Initiatives / Networks
2. Political parties / Political organisations
3. Companies
4. City / Borough / County

**The document garners international support**

On 5 September 2013, an important opportunity presented itself which served to strengthen the European anti-fracking movement and to promote our common goals. The Korbach Resolution was read aloud during the Unfracked conference55 at the European Parliament in Brussels56. This was a very decisive step during a very important meeting.

On the one hand, the participants of the various European anti-fracking groups had the opportunity to meet one another and to exchange ideas within an official political framework at EU level. On the other hand, the Korbach Resolution provided all the participants with a set of tangible, reasonable, short, and clear demands which could be considered a consensus among the groups and addressed

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54 Energiewende (German for ‘energy transition’) is the transition by Germany to an energy mix dominated by renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable development. The final goal is the abolition of coal and other non-renewable energy sources.
55 www.greens-efa.eu/de/unfracked-10219.html
56 www.gegen-gasbohren.de/2013/09/14/fracking-korbacher-resolution-im-eu-parlament-verlesen/
Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

The text was quickly accepted as a common set of core demands, reflecting the goals of the majority of the European anti-fracking movement, including NGOs, citizen coalitions, companies, and political parties. After the positive interpersonal exchange which was made possible during the Unfracked conference, the European anti-fracking network started to grow denser. Many participating groups became closer and started to promote the Korbach Resolution among other groups and organisations in their respective countries.

From 7 to 9 March 2014, representatives from grassroots groups and associations from 21 European and North African countries, nations and communities met in Saint-Christol-lès-Alès (Gard, SE France). The final statement of the EU-wide strategy meeting in southern France states:

“All of us are involved in the fight against the development of unconventional hydrocarbons in our own countries and communities, as well as opposing other resource extraction activities. We are all facing the same issues, and we believe it is essential to strengthen the links between our struggles. The Korbach Resolution formulates the key demands which unite us.”

In hindsight, it appears that what had started as an almost organic process a year earlier in Korbach, namely the building of stronger foundations for the European anti-fracking movement, was further improved and developed during the meeting in Saint-Christol-lès-Alès.

Meanwhile, the Korbach Resolution was translated into nine languages. Currently, over 300 signatures support the above-mentioned demands. And the number of supporters is steadily growing.

The story of the Korbach Resolution clearly shows that it is possible – at any time – to begin an initiative at a regional level which can grow and come to have a decisive impact at the international level. It also shows – again – that when people are united in a common movement, working closely together toward common goals, they can really make a difference. And only the pressure of their ‘joint weight’ can make political decision-makers at the national and European level move towards implementing the common demands of the anti-fracking movement, as formulated by the Korbach Resolution.

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57 Belgium, Bulgaria, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Morocco, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland, Republic of Ireland, Romania, Scotland, Spain & Catalonía, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, Wales.
59 Shale oil and gas and coal bed methane, oil shale and tar sands, tight oil and gas, etc.
On December 17, 2014, in a dramatic cabinet meeting, Governor Cuomo of New York announced that he would ban fracking in New York, the culmination of an over five-year effort to keep the dangerous practice out of the Empire State. The announcement came following testimony by the New York health commissioner, Howard Zucker, who found in a review of the health and scientific literature that the risks associated with fracking outweighed any benefit of moving forward.

This victory – the largest for the anti-fracking movement in the United States – is sure to change the political dynamics taking place both nationally and at the state level with regard to fracking. It positions Governor Cuomo as a national leader and opens up space for other elected officials in congress and at the state level to look at the science, listen to their increasingly organized constituents, and push for an end to this destructive process.

It is difficult in a short essay to capture every twist and turn of this multi-year campaign that was urgent from the start. Rather than presenting what occurred in the form of a timeline, it seems logical to highlight several things that have made the campaign work and contributed to its tremendous success. Hopefully, this will be helpful to others in the movement.

**A visionary grassroots movement**

The story of New York is the story of the foresight and power of the grassroots. Long before national organizations, including my organization – Food & Water Watch – became deeply involved in calling for a fracking ban in New York, grassroots groups and lead activists
sounded the alarm, citing concerns about water contamination and health. It is these groups – like Frack Action, Catskill Mountainkeeper, United for Action and others –, that were responsible for pushing a fracking moratorium through the legislature in 2010. While Governor Patterson vetoed this legislation, he imposed a moratorium pending an environmental review, opening the door for additional education and organizing for years to come.

The story of New York is the story of organizations and coalition building. After Governor Cuomo was elected in 2011, there was a lot of activity directed at the legislature, and at Cuomo, urging him to continue the Patterson moratorium. There was also co-ordination around public comment periods, but by the beginning of 2012, it was becoming clear that something more was needed. Cuomo had announced the establishment of a taskforce to draft model regulations that included some of the larger state-wide environmental groups, and it appeared he was moving in the direction of allowing fracking. The campaign needed to build more power and create a clearer structure.

Prohibition is the only answer

Food & Water Watch initiated conversations with leading organizational allies – including Frack Action, Catskill Mountainkeeper, United for Action, Working Families Party, and Citizen Action of New York – and in early 2012 these groups launched the state-wide coalition New Yorkers Against Fracking (NYAF), beginning with 50 state and local organizations. This created a forum for organizations to coordinate activities and provide a united front against fracking. At the time, there was no consensus in the environmental community about the need for a ban. Some environmental groups in the state were still talking about regulations. Launching a staffed coalition of organizations provided not only a mechanism to coordinate the work, but also a counterweight to those who said fracking could be regulated. It made banning fracking the center of discussion on the issue. Around the same time, Food & Water Watch released its report ‘The Case for a Ban on Fracking,’ and became the first national organization to call for a complete ban on fracking. This, coupled with the launch of NYAF, helped create the political space for a ban, and it helped to greatly shift the debate around fracking nationally and in New York. In the two and a half years since its launch, more than 200 additional groups have joined NYAF, and every environmental group in the state is united around the message of ‘Not One Well’ in New York.

The story of New York is also the story of brave, powerful and inspiring individuals. It is the story of biologist and Ithaca resident Sandra Steingraber, who has lent her inspirational voice and the proceeds of her Heinz Award to the cause. Sandra’s poetic and clear denunciations of fracking and its promoters, and the pledge of resistance she launched in 2012 have been central to the campaign. It is also the story of Craig Stevens, Ray Kemble, Vera Scroggins, Tammy Manning and others in Pennsylvania who have experienced fracking first hand, and led countless tours through their region for New York legislators, activists and the press.

Actor and activist Mark Ruffalo also lent his voice to the campaign from the beginning, using his star power to put the spotlight on Governor Cuomo and fracking. Natalie Merchant organized a concert to help launch the coalition with leading artists, which John Bowermaster later turned into a film called Dear Governor Cuomo. Josh Fox produced Gasland I and II, both of which powerfully told the story of fracking. And at a critical point in 2013, when a key comment period on regulations was up, Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon launched their own coalition, Artists Against Fracking, and joined with organizations to deliver over 200,000 comments – a record for New York by a large margin.

The story of New York is the story of focus – both on the target and with the message. It became clear early on that passing a ban through the legislature would not be possible given the pro-fracking Republicans who controlled it. The decision was in the hands of Governor Cuomo, and all of the coalition efforts have since been directed at convincing him to protect New York and listen to the science, and ban fracking. We have been cogniscant of his future political conside-
Communities rise up to fight climate crisis and democratic deficit

Global resistance to fracking

rations and national standing, placing ads in North Carolina during the Democratic National Convention, and in Iowa, an important early presidential caucus state.

The message – ‘Ban Fracking Now’ – has been clear and unambiguous. There is no room for pilot projects or sacrifice zones which were floated as trial balloons in 2012. All of New York deserves protection, and Governor Cuomo had the power and responsibility to do it. This clear message helped unite the state and put tremendous pressure on Cuomo as the decision-maker.

Local action was also critical to the growth of the movement. Hundreds of New York communities either banned fracking themselves or called for a state-wide ban. These local efforts educated people about the issue and engaged them in the larger movement, and added tremendously to the growing narrative that New Yorkers do not want fracking in the state. All of the local bans would have made it more difficult for the oil and gas industry to conduct business should Cuomo have lifted the moratorium, and local bans were highlighted in the discussion at the cabinet meeting when Cuomo announced his decision.

New York courts have ruled in favor of local restrictions on fracking constitutional thanks to the legal advocacy of Helen and David Slottje.

Furthermore, the local actions engaged elected officials in New York, who joined together to form Elected Officials to Protect New York. More than 850 local elected officials from 62 counties in New York signed on to a letter to Governor Cuomo outlining their concerns with fracking.

A very diverse coalition

The story of New York is also the story of broad constituencies and diverse allies coming together around a common goal – banning fracking in New York. Because of the wide-ranging impacts of fracking, NYAF has a diverse roster of groups, representing constituencies across New York. There are over 1000 businesses against fracking. Chefs and restaurants organized through Chefs for the Marcellus. Beer and Wine makers wrote opinion pieces and held events. Labor allies were involved, as well as the environmental justice community, and the faith against fracking effort brought in religious leaders from many denominations and gave a moral clarity to the campaign.

Concerned Health Professionals of New York was a very important constituency in the story of keeping fracking out of New York. Doctors and health professionals in the state came together to highlight both the science showing harm to air, water and public health, and the unknown long-term and cumulative risks associated with widespread drilling and fracking. The concerns about public health effects led to the governor requesting the formal health review, which resulted in the findings that fracking posed too many risks and should not be allowed in New York.

Last, but certainly not least, the story of New York is the story of the power of organizing. All of the above – building coalitions, organizing at the grassroots level, engaging diverse constituencies, having a strong message and messengers, and identifying a clear target – the person to fulfill a demand – are key aspects of organizing. And organizing a campaign of this scale requires organizers – full-time staff who can bring skills, time and organizational infrastructure resources to the effort.

New Yorkers Against Fracking has received the generous support from 11th Hour Project and Park Foundation, which has allowed us to hire – in addition to the staff at Food & Water Watch, Frack Action, and Citizen Action New York – field organizers in every part of the state. This has made it possible for the coalition to pull together mass actions with thousands of people each year in Albany, which have been increasingly powerful events as the years have gone by. It also gave the coalition a mechanism to connect the grassroots organizations working locally to the broader state-wide campaign.

Most importantly, staffing has allowed the coalition to organize people to show up at almost every public appearance Governor Cuomo held over the last two years, carrying the clear message: ‘Ban Fracking Now.’ Whether it involved hundreds of people outside a fundraiser in
New York City or a dozen people outside a policy meeting in the Adirondack Mountains, New York fractivists were there. Governor Cuomo was clearly being impacted by this effort – hiding his schedule, announcing events at the last minute, and even cancelling others. When people showed up outside his polling place in November 2014, Cuomo noted to the press that the anti-fracking movement was relentless, calling it the most powerful protest movement in the state.

The anti-fracking movement in New York is a beautiful, powerful and diverse movement that grew from a small number of grassroots activists into a state-wide powerhouse. The win in New York will need to be monitored and defended against industry attack, and the movement will continue to oppose various gas infrastructure projects in the state and push for federal representatives to push the ban nationally. And we need this tremendous success to spill over to other states like California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and others and across the world. Success in stopping fracking is important not just to protect local water, air and health, but also because of the significant climate impacts that will affect all of us and generations to come. Our collective future depends on it.

Samuel Martín-Sosa Rodríguez
International Coordinator, Ecologistas en Acción

Juggling terms

‘Fracking has been around for decades’. This is an often-heard mantra repeated by the oil and gas industry frequently. Although it is true that the process of hydraulic fracturing has existed since the late 1940s, when we talk about fracking today, we are talking about a process which combines high-volume, multi-stage hydraulic fracturing techniques with horizontal drilling using low-friction fluids, and with the gathering of wells in multi-well platforms. This combination of techniques is relatively recent, and it is what allows the generalised access to unconventional fossil fuels. The label ‘unconventional’ is used to identify the oil and gas which are stored in mineral forms such as shale (shale gas and shale oil), coal (coal bed methane) and sandstones (tight gas and tight oil). In Germany, the existence of a strong opposition movement to fracking has triggered reaction from the government, which has set up a law that proclaims the establishment of a series of prohibitions to fracking. Environmentalists and anti-fracking groups in the country are very critical, however. In their opinion, the legal proposal undertaken will provide a stable legal framework for fracking instead of limiting it. The scepticism is fed by the declared political intention that this law will not impede the extraction of tight gas through fracking, mainly in the Land of Lower Saxony. This has led to the ridiculous situation of trying to create the artificial term ‘conventional fracking’ – or what would be used to extract tight gas and tight oil from sandstones – to differentiate it from ‘non-conventional’ fracking – or what would be used in shale.
**Threat as a calling card**

The industry, which sells its friendlier side in its communications to the public, does not hesitate to threaten and intimidate when it considers it necessary. In the northern province of Burgos (Spain), BNK Spain – subsidiary of the Canadian company BNK Petroleum –, is the holder, among others, of the ‘Urraca’ hydrocarbons exploratory license. In May 2014, the company, through an attorney, presented a letter to a farmer who owned one of the plots of land where they wanted to drill. In it, they informed her, by surprise and without prior contact, of the almost imminent expropriation of her lands and of the company’s willingness to negotiate the best conditions for the woman and her family. It should be noted that BNK did not even have an authorisation to drill, and that only the state has the power to expropriate land, never companies. For BNK Petroleum, their maneuver worked against them. The woman denounced the pressure and declared that she was not willing to sell and endanger the water her animals drink. Moreover, this caused the town where the land is located, Villarcayo, to join other neighbouring towns that had already declared themselves “fracking-free”.

**Riot police against dangerous elderly people**

“Where are you going, Grandma? You can’t pass through here,” said the riot police. “I’m going to look for my death. If you are brutally attacking the people from my town down there, that’s where I want to be too.” The elderly Maria Dediu responded in this way, stick in hand, when at 4 a.m. on Monday 2 December 2013 she tried to enter the zone where hundreds of anti-riot police, brought from various zones of Romania, brutally and by surprise dismantled the resistance camp that the inhabitants of Pungeşti, in the northeast of the country, had set up on 16 October in opposition to beginning the drilling of a fracking well by the American company Chevron.

**An intrusive and corrosive activity**

In one of the many videos that circulate through the Internet, Christina Mills, resident of Ponder (Texas), tried to explain why someone like her, who began her career as an auditor of oil companies in Oklahoma, and who never viewed the industry negatively, becomes indignant when talking about fracking. “It is so … intrusive,” she says, holding back her emotion. For Mills, the difference is that “Here [the industry] did something personal, and that’s when I had a problem … they entered the back part of our neighbourhood, 90 metres from the rear wall of the house.” Mills describes how, in addition to living with the noise and smells, one morning she found a white sandy dust covering the car, and so she stopped at a car wash on the way home from work. “I went there to wash that stuff off, and the black paint on the car came off too,” she says, surprised. “It took the paint off my car,” she repeats, amazed.
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Global resistance to fracking

‘gag’ agreements are common between oil and gas companies and the residents of the areas where fracking operations are carried out. What was surprising about the case was the company’s insistence that the agreement also included the silence of the family’s seven- and ten-year-old children at that time. The price tag for this silence: 750,000 dollars. Only when the case became public did the company try to retract.

Another example, from 2014 when a man in Ohio rented two billboards in his town to warn his neighbours about the risk that could be involved in the drilled injection well in the community, which was to receive waste fracking fluid. The Texan company Buckeye Brine filed a suit against him, even though the name of the company appeared nowhere on the billboards.

Yet another case is the workers from the Pennsylvania Department of Health who denounced in the summer of the same year that they had received a list of 15-20 taboo words and phrases, among which were found ‘fracking’, ‘gas’, ‘soil contamination’. “If someone calls and any of these words entered the conversation, we were not allowed to talk to them,” they stated.

The long arm of the oil and gas lobby even reaches medical clinics. In Pennsylvania, Act 13 of 2012 obliges healthcare professionals to contract a ‘diffuse confidentiality agreement’ preventing them from having a completely honest dialogue with their patients. This law, known as the ‘gag rule’, prohibits doctors from going into detail about the health problems brought about by the use of chemicals during fracking. In summary: “Your health complaints have to do with what you breathe next to your house, but I can’t tell you that.”

Monsters and the inventor of lightning rods

When fracking began to be news in Spain, some journalists choked obstinately on the term. As a result, on many occasions the media talked about ‘frankin’, which in the collective imagination could very well evoke Frankenstein, lending the controversial technique an even more sinister interpretation. At other times, the word used was ‘franklin’, like the last name of the well-known American politician, scientist and inventor. In time, fracking unfortunately became so popular that we no longer hear these variations of the term.

Heated debate – a new form of energy?

The debate about the potential of shale and about fracking and its environmental effects is so intense that recently some researchers from the University of Texas waxed ironic about the possibility of converting the heated arguments presented in the debates and discussions about fracking into a source of clean and efficient energy with no carbon footprint as a way to combat global warming.

Squaring the circle or the scam of ‘green fracking’

The overwhelming and increasing evidence of cases of contamination makes the fracking industry look for new ways to combat public opposition. Thus, the companies in the sector try to advance toward new concepts like ‘green’ or ‘clean’ fracking. One of the wagers in this sense is to replace the fracturing fluid composed of water and chemicals with another one that does not need these ingredients, which would make it possible to avoid criticism about the use of water and the contamination by chemical substances, thus earning social acceptance. A well-known option is to use propane. However, this gas is highly inflammable, and manipulating large quantities of it can be very dangerous, especially in highly populated areas. Another alternative proposed, but not yet tested on a large scale, is substituting propane with heptafluoropropane, which reduces the risk of explosion. However, this is a gas with an enormous greenhouse effect potential (almost 3,000 times that of CO2), which is an unacceptable climate risk due to possible leaks. Meanwhile, ExxonMobil recently announced that it is developing some ‘non-toxic’ fluids to avoid possible fracking moratoria. The fact that the industry is planning to develop alternatives is the best evidence of the existence of undeniable risks associated with the fracturing fluid.
Pizza and soda

In February 2014, the rural community of Bobtown, Pennsylvania, was rudely awakened by the explosion of a fracking well of the Chevron company. A young worker died, and another person was injured. The fire took five days to put out, and no one knows what air pollutants the neighbours were exposed to during those days. The company decided to compensate them by giving them a voucher that could be exchanged for a pizza and a two-litre bottle of soda at a pizza shop in the town. The coupon was accompanied by a letter in which Chevron recognised the events and the effect it had in the community – did it occur to them to look the other way, whistling as if “it wasn’t me”? – and where they said that “they would continue to work to carry out operations without incidents” – which, as the neighbours would view with irony, is something to be grateful for. However, to avoid the greed of the local residents, the check was only valid for a pizza “Combo”, just in case they were thinking about asking for the “Supreme”. As someone ironically wrote at the time, it was ‘the least’ – literally – that Chevron could do.

Spying on activists

According to what was published by the Pittsburgh City Paper in October 2014, the Pennsylvania state police and the federal police form part of an information exchange network of the Marcellus Shale basin, with a special focus on anti-fracking activists. Along with the police, other members of the network are the FBI, oil and gas companies, and private security companies. Under the name of Marcellus Shale Operators’ Crime Committee (MSOCC), and operating since the beginning of 2012, the network circulates information to all the companies with activity in the Marcellus basin. Among the information distributed in this network are observation reports on activists who were protesting at the doors of an industry event, or visits made by local police to the homes of various activists in the area, which could have a clearly intimidating nature. Moreover, those opposing fracking in Poland denounced that they had been spied on by the industry, which would have informed the Polish government about the plans and strategies of the movement, according to the complaints filed.

They cook it, they eat it

The connivance between the oil and gas lobbies and certain governments becomes evident in cases like that of the ex-president of the British regulatory body, the Environmental Agency. Chris Smith, who directed this institution in charge of protecting the environment until 2014 and went on at the end of that year to lead a task force, financed by the industry, responsible for carrying out ‘independent and transparent’ investigations about shale gas. In some cases, the connivance also reaches the legal system. At the end of 2014, it became known that a geologist paid by Chevron had been named by the High Court of Iasi (Romania) as an ‘independent’ specialist in a case involving Chevron, to clarify essential questions for the judicial process.

A nimby CEO

The industry strongly defends that fracking is completely safe and will bring prosperity to those regions where it is carried out. However, if this is true, it is difficult to explain the fact that Rex Tillerson, director of the greatest producer of gas in the US, ExxonMobil, signed in a personal capacity a petition against the fracking plans of another company near his house in Texas. The complainants opposed the raising of a 50-metre high tower for the extraction of water necessary for fracking, due to the increase in noise and traffic that would stem from the activity.

60 As already explained in a previous footnote, NIMBY, stands for “Not In My Back Yard”, a term to describe the opposition by residents to a proposal for a new development because it is close to them, often with the connotation that such residents believe that the developments are needed in society but should be further away. Opposing residents themselves are sometimes called nimbies.
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Global resistance to fracking

Specialists in astroturfing

One of the most despicable strategies used by the fracking industry is astroturfing61. In other words, they promote image campaigns by pretending to be citizens or even ‘responsible’ environmentalists. There are some glaring examples, like the movie Truthland (as opposed to Gasland) – which supposedly narrates the search for the truth about fracking by a respected citizen in rural Pennsylvania. On her journey, she discovers that the existence of gas in the water is something normal, and that hydraulic fracturing in reality offers a promising future because the industry acts responsibly. The web domain of the movie, truthlandmovie.com, was registered by the company Chesapeake Energy, one of the large oil and gas companies, although it was later modified.

In 2012, coinciding with a key vote related to shale gas in the European Parliament, a so-called “Citizen Coalition for Responsible Energy”, arising from nothing and financed by Polish gas companies, held an exposition at the doors of the plenary auditorium, in violation of the norms of the institution, supporting an unregulated framework for the activity and denying its environmental impacts.

A Machiavellian twist in this practice is shown in the movie Promised Land, in which a member of the company Global pretends to be an environmentalist, not to sell the benefits of fracking, but to demonise it by using false evidence that the company later manages to reveal, thus damaging the public image and credibility of the environmental movement in general.

Dealing with the insurgency

In November 2011, the channel CNBC broadcast live some recordings obtained in secret during a meeting of the oil and gas industry. The purpose of the meeting was none other than to produce an exchange among communication professionals in this industry about the best strategies and communication tools to counteract the opposition to fracking by communities. In it, the communications director of Range Resources openly admitted that his company used psychological war tactics and contracted military personnel, among them veterans who had participated in operations in the Middle East, to combat social resistance.

In the same meeting, the manager of another company recommended that those in attendance download the Army Counterinsurgency Manual because “we are dealing with an insurgency,” he said.

Other participants emphasised the importance of data mining and of obtaining the largest amount of data about the opposition. Knowing who is who, the strengths and weaknesses of each actor and so on seems to be a fundamental task in carrying out an effective policy of ‘divide and conquer’.

Responsible peasants

The lack of shame in the industry’s PR campaigns has no limits. In 2013, Chevron carried out a shameful public image campaign in which various farmers and peasants, with a suspiciously Polish look, posed in front of their barns with posters in their hand, improvised on pieces of wood, on which they demanded safe natural gas with no risks. Under the photos, Chevron guaranteed their commitment to environmental safety in each well. This campaign took place at the same time that the company took various peasants to court for peacefully resisting their fracking plans in Żurawlów (Poland). One of the peasants was accused of entering the land rented by Chevron, even though the judge at the trial could tell that it was the first time in their lives the ‘supposed’ witnesses had seen the accused.

The fox that looks after the hens

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the regulating body in charge of guaranteeing the protection of the

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61 The term stems from a play on words in English. AstroTurf is a well-known brand of artificial grass. The term “grassroots” (literally “roots of grass”) movement is used to describe the movements of common citizens, rooted in the territory. Astroturfing refers, therefore, to those movements created artificially to imitate the authentic “grassroots”.
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environment and public health at the federal level. Since 2010, it has been working on a report about the risks fracking poses for drinking water. The report has been revised and reformed several times, as the industry has been allowed to influence its content, question the data and scientific tests and scrutinise the agency’s subcontracting.

“You guys are part of the team here … please write things in as you see fit,” said an EPA official by email to the Cheaspeake Energy company, in relation to one of the documents that feeds the report.

This everyday practice is portrayed in the more than 3,000 pages of emails and documentation exchanged between the industry and the EPA about the report. This secret documentation has been made public through open records requests.

**Who cleans up after the party?**

In less than a decade, the oil and gas industry has passed like a ghost through various rural areas in the United States. It has used up the subsoil and the companies have moved on to other unexploited areas, leaving a legacy of hissing holes that are a danger to the present and future. It does not seem clear that there are sufficient mechanisms to control these abandoned wells, and their monitoring and sealing, if done, will probably be carried out with public money. At the beginning of 2014, information was published that the number of abandoned extraction operations in the state of Wyoming surpassed 1200, and that several thousand would become orphans quite soon. The state governor promised to devote 3 million dollars to sealing the wells and repairing the lands.

The abandoned oil and gas wells can be the path through which methane, radon, brine or various types of hydrocarbons manage to migrate to shallow aquifers, to the homes of residents in the area or to the atmosphere. Recent studies by the University of Princeton show that some abandoned wells can be super-emitters of methane, with their leaks representing 10 percent of the anthropic methane in Pennsylvania. According to the University of Stanford in the US, there are nearly three million abandoned wells.

**After fracking, the next threat...**

We thought fracking was a nightmare, but the greed of the fossil fuel industry has no limits. One of the next threats on a global scale can be underground coal gasification (UCG). There are vast deposits of underground coal that, until now, were not accessible to traditional mining. The technique basically consists of burning the coal in the subsoil and trapping the released gases for their use as fuel. Although this technique has been known for decades, only now are the research projects multiplying, and they take place in such varied places as China, Australia, Canada or South Africa. This technological option coincides with the oxymoron of ‘clean coal’, a concept strongly promoted by the industry and that has followers in some governments who prefer to have blinders on and continue on a suicidal path.
Basic talking points from the trenches

Samuel Martín-Sosa Rodríguez
International Coordinator, Ecologistas en Acción

Many reports, studies and published news reports have discussed the risks, impacts and disadvantages of fracking from a climate, economic, democratic, energetic, environmental, or health-related perspective. Various books have also been written all over the world about the effects of this activity, and some exhaustive reviews and databases, especially in the area of pollution, make up a bibliographical treasure that offers arguments to oppose this threat.

Therefore, it would be pretentious to try here to list all the reasons to reject fracking. The purpose of this section is simply to provide a brief but convincing list of some of the most important arguments, leading the reader to the relevant sources that support them.

Water contamination

The body of scientific evidence pointing to a relationship between water contamination and fracking activities grows each year. Various studies have found high levels of arsenic and other heavy metals, ethylene glycol and butoxyethanol, ethanol and propane, or anthropogenic methane, in the water wells within a radius near the fracking sites. Likewise, the presence of hormone-disrupting activity has been detected, similar to that of some of the substances used in fracking, in surface and ground water around drilling sites.

Evidence has also been published of the presence of contaminants like strontium, benzene, or carcinogenic sub products, such as bromine.

62 All the references in this chapter can be found at the end of it.
and iodine derivatives, when the fracking flowback is treated in wastewater treatment plants, making the hydrological course, waters under the treatment plant, contaminated and not apt for human consumption.73,74.

In the USA in 2014, four states with a long oil and gas tradition (Texas, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania) confirmed cases of water pollution75, questioning the capacity of regulators, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to protect the water quality.76

**Air pollution**

Air pollution in the area of the drilling sites, caused by both the increase in traffic and machinery and, especially, by the volatilisation of contaminants present in the flowback, represents a serious threat to the health of the residents and workers. Coincidence in time has been demonstrated in the records – by regulating organisms and academic institutions – of high levels of benzene and other volatile organic compounds with carcinogenic and neurotoxic properties77, with testimonies of affected citizens about symptoms associated with these contaminants78,79. Various studies also related the high levels of tropospheric ozone detected, even during the winter80, to precursors of this contaminant, such as benzene, toluene or methane, which leak into the atmosphere during the operations81,82,83,84. High levels of particulate matter (PM) have also been detected in the interiors of houses in communities that co-exist with fracking85. Its effect on health is well known.

All of this occurs despite the fact that there is increasing evidence of the poor quality of controls by public regulators, indicating errors in the placement, frequency and duration of the measurements, in the lack of adequate consideration of the atmospheric conditions, in the type of chemical substances measured, etc., leading to false conclusions about the air quality and safety of the inhabitants in the area around the drilling sites86,87,88.

**Consequences for flora, fauna and habitats**

The fragmentation of the habitat caused by the network of wells, pipes and platforms limits the movements of the fauna and contributes to the propagation of invasive species89. Aquatic ecosystems can be at risk due to the excessive extraction of water to carry out the different tasks at the fracking site, causing the possible contamination of the water90,91. The cumulative effect of wells presents a high risk to biodiversity, especially during the production phase92.

**Earthquakes**

Many of the areas with high activity of fracking wells have seen a parallel increase in recent months and years in the number and intensity of earthquakes. Hydraulic fracturing activities can provoke small earthquakes; recently, the American Society of Seismology related these operations to the recent earthquakes in Ohio93. However, the greatest threat of seismicity has to do with the destination of the wastewater. As it is a highly toxic and difficult-to-treat waste, the option chosen in many cases is underground injection. When large amounts of fluid are extracted from or injected into a geologically unstable zone, there is a risk of activating fault lines. The larger the difference of fluid final volume with respect to the original volume, the larger the risk.94 It has been shown that the earthquakes in Oklahoma (5.7 on the Richter scale), and Colorado (5.3), which produced serious damage, were related to wastewater injection95,96. Likewise, the Kansas Geological Service recently linked the more than 120 earthquakes that occurred in 2014 to the injection of wastewater coming from fracking97.

**Radioactivity**

The process of hydraulic fracturing can release radioactive elements that are found naturally in the rocks in the subsoil, and that reach the surface with the flowback. If the fluid undergoes a wastewater
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Reserves and prices

The possibilities of maintaining the shale boom in the long term in those places that have bet strongly on this energy source, or of reproducing this situation in unexplored places in the world, are based on estimations that do not fit the reality. The overestimation of reserves to feed speculation is a common practice in the oil and gas sector, and many times these estimations end up being considerably downgraded. In the USA, 80-90% of the current production of shale oil and gas comes from a very small number of fields. Various studies indicate that the maximum level of production of all of these fields together will be reached before 2020. Unless abundant new discoveries are made, it is very unlikely that the production can be maintained after that year, and so a decline is inevitable. If natural gas production drops in the US, the great exportation plans will totter, and the countries that want to develop their own shale formations could reconsider. The extrapolations that make it possible to speculate with the maintenance of the long-term production in the USA are based on calculations of average productivity in overly large areas. However, recent calculations of the productivity of the main plays, with a much higher study resolution level, make it possible to dismantle these previsions and talk about the fracking fallacy. Furthermore, the high costs of fracking operations have caused many oil and gas companies to take on a lot of debt, and the drop in the price of crude oil may end up dragging many of them toward bankruptcy.

In fact, the oil rig count has heavily declined; the first months of 2015 saw the largest drop since it began keeping records in 1987.

Climate threat

The industry has always presented fracking as a climate solution, presenting shale gas as an energy bridge between the dirty coal of the past and the clean renewables of the future. This claim is based on the lower CO₂ emissions produced when burning gas, compared to burning coal. The truth, however, is that there is no strategic plan on the table to make this transition toward renewables; the worldwide production and consump-
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Global resistance to fracking means that for each unit of energy used in extracting the fuel, the number of units of energy obtained is low. The numbers vary a lot, but there are authors who talk about a return for shale oil that is 10 and 20 times less than conventional oil, which makes this fuel a marginal energy source. Although it seems that unconventional gas could have somewhat greater profitability, it also seems to be much lower than that of conventional gas. This confirms the absurdity of a long-term wager for this type of fossil fuels, which are the most expensive and least productive, at an incalculable environmental cost. Continuing on this path implies missing the opportunity to adapt to the inevitable end of the fossil fuel era, establishing the basis for a society that consumes much less energy and does so mainly with renewable sources.

Scant energetic profitability

The energy return on energy investment of unconventional fossil fuels is considerably less than that of conventional oil and gas. This means that for each unit of energy used in extracting the fuel, the number of units of energy obtained is low. The numbers vary a lot, but there are authors who talk about a return for shale oil that is 10 and 20 times less than conventional oil, which makes this fuel a marginal energy source. Although it seems that unconventional gas could have somewhat greater profitability, it also seems to be much lower than that of conventional gas. This confirms the absurdity of a long-term wager for this type of fossil fuels, which are the most expensive and least productive, at an incalculable environmental cost. Continuing on this path implies missing the opportunity to adapt to the inevitable end of the fossil fuel era, establishing the basis for a society that consumes much less energy and does so mainly with renewable sources.

Others

There are many other important reasons to oppose fracking, such as the excessive water consumption in areas of high water stress, occupational safety hazards, noise and traffic, light contamination, stress, flood risks, and risks for agriculture and farming, as well as decreases in soil quality, depreciation of property values, damage to transportation infrastructures.

The United States’ plans to export fracked gas in the form of liquid natural gas (LNG) are an additional handicap to the supposed climate advantages of fracking. The additional greenhouse gas emissions produced by the entire process of liquefaction, transport and regasification of the gas would seriously put into question the progress in the fight against climate change.


80 Tropospheric ozone is a secondary pollutant usually formed during the summer in the presence of abundant ultraviolet light. It causes important damages to health, vegetation and crops, besides being a greenhouse gas.


95 2011 Oklahoma Induced Earthquake May Have Triggered Larger Quake. 6/03/2014 U.S. Geological Survey http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3819#.Ux2Ivl4ltfI%C3%A7
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117 http://www.bakerhughes.com/rig-count


122 http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v514/n7523/full/nature13837.html


125 http://www.pnas.org/content/109/17/6435.full.pdf+html

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132 http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141209120400.htm


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156 http://ecowatch.com/2014/03/20/updated-fracking-vs-american-dream-resource-guide/


159 http://www.nofrackingway.us/2014/10/26/fracking-roads-at-the-publics-expense/


Epilogue

Rebecca Harms, José Bové and Florent Marcellesi
Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

This book gives an overview of citizen fights against shale gas all round the world. It shows clearly that there should be no place for shale gas in the 21st century and that to continue to explore for and consume it is to repeat the mistakes of the past: shale gas is a finite resource. Nevertheless, in the relentless drive for ever higher profits, a handful of multinationals are even aiming for short-term exploita-
tions - thereby compromising citizens’ interests, water quality, climate and the environment for an unsustainable way of life and the sake of profit for a few.

Betting everything on the shale gas card is risky and not sus-
tainable: Overall, two thirds of fossil fuels must stay in the ground if we are to remain under the 2°C global warming limit by 2050. Shale gas exploration is distracting energy firms and governments from investing in renewable sources of energy and is encouraging continued reliance on yet another fossil fuel - instead of a sustainable transformation of our economic system.

Shale gas does not provide us with a solution to our climate pro-
blems, the economic crisis, the democratic deficit or the widening chasm between rich and poor. A lot of energy is used to produce it and this book gives many examples of the risks of environmental po-
lution and their climate impacts, as well as the numerous outrageous occasions when democratic principles were twisted to allow for its exploitation.

The Greens/EFA group has been vigilant and active on the topic since the beginning, starting with the first resistances against shale gas in France. A first conference at European level was organised as early as 2011, to unite citizens’ movements, NGOs and activists at the
European Parliament. We have personally met many of the contributors to this book, not at least to join their fight and support their actions. With admiration for the work and dedication of national campaigners, the Greens/EFA group is actively involved and supports all the different national struggles in Europe and beyond. We have, among other actions, travelled to Poland in support of the Polish farmers of the village Zurawlow in their protests against Chevron, spoken at neighbourhood meetings in the UK and encouraged farmers in France to make their voice heard. A second European level conference was organised in 2013 to once again unite all the different activists and scientists, to exchange experiences and develop and distribute common campaign materials, as well as document certain national struggles on film. Just recently we hosted a special documentary on the developments in South America presented by the activists and NGOs involved, and this year will see the third edition of a shale gas conference in the European Parliament, in order to build on the former work and to prepare common positions for political struggles at European and international levels.

Citizen resistance and national struggles continue: Even though there was some good news with shale gas companies leaving from Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic, we will have to make sure they do not return, by continuing the struggles and increasing pressure at the political level. In other European countries and in other parts of the world shale gas activities continue. The UK is certainly at the forefront, while the harsh conflict at social and institutional levels in Spain continues. Beyond Europe, we hear worrying news from China, South Africa, South America and also from Algeria, especially concerning the violation of human and democratic rights such as participation and freedom of opinion. We will remain very vigilant of these developments and strengthen connections within the movements to put pressure on companies and governments.

This is all the more necessary, as alternatives exist. Reduction of energy consumption, renewable energy and energy efficiency policies are gaining more and more momentum. As small scale projects and renewable energy cooperatives show, citizen, villages or towns, even whole islands and regions can make their choices, produce their own energy and reduce their dependencies. Last but not least, this energy transition will create millions of jobs, not only in the renewable energy sector but also in building renovation, ecological agriculture, sustainable mobility, etc.

The Greens/EFA group is fighting for these policies in its daily work, not least during this year of the COP21 climate conference in Paris that will showcase that citizens are ready to do what it takes. Let’s make sure that our common message is heard!
The goal of this book is to be a source of inspiration for antifracking activism. It is a means to make the strength and determination of our fight visible, in addition to being a gesture of solidarity for the places on earth where the lives of activists are most difficult. This book is an attempt to bring together the actions and visions of the people and movements who have in common their resistance to a specific, prevailing dominant ideology, which dictates that— in order to keep the economy from collapsing—our society needs to continue extracting fossil fuels. Our society is waking up and realising that, in reality, following this path is exactly what will lead to our collapse.

Here we present 15 varying iconic struggles of resistance from around the world, all told in the first person. They show that the global fight against fracking is alive and well. This claim is proven by the number of bans, moratoria, as well as cases of companies pulling out from countries across continents. We hope these experiences will inspire others in their own fights.

The introduction analyses how we have reached where we are today, what the major achievements of the movement have been, and the potential of the movement in the current context of multi-crisis. This book also hopes to bring freshness to the topic, which is essential to maintaining motivation in this fight. For this reason, we have included a collection of anecdotes the unruly emergence of fracking has left. In the final section of this book, a simple pocket battlecard is provided in order to remind those who question this movement of the many reasons to oppose fracking.

The fight against fracking provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the debate regarding the type of society we want. The participation of people in this social debate will bring our collective values forth and allow us to realise that the interests of the oil and gas industry are clearly not in line with our interests as a society.