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Environmentalism in Ireland: Ecological Modernisation versus Populist Rural Sentiment

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ABSTRACT

The recent phase of economic growth in the Republic of Ireland has led to an increase in industrial and infrastructural development across the island. One offshoot of this accelerated growth has been a rise in community based environmental movements, as environmentalists and concerned communities have come to mobilise campaigns to protect local communities and hinterlands. This paper examines the contestation of two forms of environmentalism, institutional ecomodernism versus a grassroots ecopopulism within the context of the ongoing dispute between a local community in the west of Ireland and both multinationals and the state, who are attempting to run gas pipelines from the Atlantic Corrib Field through the rural community's lands.

KEYWORDS

Ecological modernisation, ecopopulism, rural sentiment, anthropocentric, ecocentric

INTRODUCTION

The environmental philosopher John Barry has posited the question as to whether 'it would be an exaggeration to proclaim that we are all greens now' (Barry, 1999). However, ecological issues may entail more than the sum of their inherent philosophical debates; contemporary environmentalism can be said to be as much about the interpretation of competing forms of development between state supported industrial actors and local community movements, both of which compete for control of environmental destinies. Within this contestation, two competing forms of environmentalism have emerged; one based on a growth based form of *ecological modernisation* which has come to be challenged by grassroots movements inspired by a localised *rural sentiment*. This dichotomy between modernist and populist forms of environmentalism occurs within a wider context of ecologically derived debates which incorporate a series of motivations such as anthropological health risks, democratic deficit and political accountability and a range of attitudes towards everything from the role of the European Union to the anti-globalisation movement (Leonard, 2006). This paper will examine this debate within the context of the Irish case. Here, local communities have taken on the mantle of environmental protectors drawing on local heritage and beliefs in the process of resisting the onset of a technologically derived industrialisation which has been embraced by state and industry. The paper will also argue that the 'social ecology' of Murray Bookchin is now best exemplified by ecopopulist campaigners who place ecology and community above economic concerns. A further contextualisation will be provided through an examination of a civic environmental ethics put forward by Mick Smith (2005). Smith argues that environmental civic responses should go beyond contemporary understandings of what citizenship now entails and that a much wider concept of ecologically derived social capital (Leonard, 2006: 250) could be construed from 'culturally viable patterns of emotionally mediated responses' (Smith, 2005: 145) or sentiments borne from alternative forms of communication or expression.

In an editorial in *Environmental Values*, Alan Holland (2006) had cause to condemn this form of ecologically derived sentiment, which is perceived to be 'a cognitive stance that in turn generates inappropriate attitudes and emotional responses'... which 'bears a passing resemblance to idealism' (ibid.). While Holland goes on to make the distinction between 'technological sentimentality' and a more philosophically derived environmentalism, it may be that such principles need to be tempered by the ideological praxis of ecological political activism. This paper is divided into two sections, both of which examine one aspect of the two main competing principles of environmentalism in Ireland, which have been described as 'official' and 'populist' (Tovey, 1992). The official section of Irish environmentalism is made up of state agencies and advisory groups such as An Taisce (the Heritage Trust), while the populist section

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is populated by campaigners and movements with concerns that have ranged from nuclear power and toxic industry in the 1970s and 1980s through to more recent disputes about infrastructure such as roads and incinerators (Leonard, 2005, 2006). The first section explores the critical debates which surround the 'official' policy frameworks which emerge from the paradigms of ecological modernisation (Christoff, 1996) while considering the cyclical nature of Irish environmental policy formulation. Ecological modernisation emphasises the reforming aspect of technological innovations which occur in market friendly as well as eco-friendly contexts (Mol and Sonnefeld, 2000). The second looks at the defining principles of 'populist' environmental movements during the resource based 'Shell to Sea' campaign against a major gas pipeline which is running through a local rural community in the rural west of Ireland. The paper's conclusion will consider the overall influence of 'official' institutional initiatives on populist environmental values, while also exploring the 'rural sentiment' (Leonard, 2006) which lies behind many of the responses to environmental issues by Irish community groups.

BACKGROUND

With the advent of Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom in the 1990s it had become clear to all that new approaches were needed to deal with environmental problems. The state acknowledged this fact when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in 1992. However, while the agency had a wide remit in relation to the development of a regulatory regime aimed at establishing a system of integrated pollution control (IPC), the state still perceived environmental issues from a perspective which prioritised industrial development (Taylor, 2001). In addition, the many extraneous factors which shared an interest in the state's environmental performance held competing viewpoints on the issue. This wider political context included the European Union where Ireland was traditionally viewed as a 'laggard' state (Weale, 1992; Flynn, 2007), in addition to a series of internal interest groups such as the Irish Farmer's Association (IFA) and the Irish Business and Employer's Federation (IBEC), who each viewed the environment from an economic rather than an ecological perspective. In addition, increased rates of production and consumption were creating massive demands on resources and causing inordinate amounts of waste which, in turn, increased the strain on the nation's ecosystem. In the search for alternative approaches ideas began to emerge about creating a legislative framework which would bring together policy making, industrial planning and environmental concerns. For the Irish state, the philosophical mantra adopted in the pursuit of sustainable development was ecological modernisation (EM) which came to be seen as the best way to combine the requirements of economists and ecologists (Leonard, 2006).

This emerging ecomodernist approach to policy has been led by the 'official' sector of Irish environmentalism, in the absence of a comprehensive consultation process with local communities faced with development related infrastructural challenges. Furthermore, many environmental policy initiatives have been met in a hesitant, incremental manner, due in part to Ireland's neo- corporatist and clientelist political system. Even the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992 came about more from external EU pressure rather than any official concern for the environment, with these changes coming only after the Irish state's acceptance of the inevitable legal requirements of EU membership (Taylor, 2001).

ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION AND THE STATE

The increasing trend towards sustainable forms of development has led to a shift from 'end of pipe solutions' to the ongoing threat of pollution. Gradually, policy makers have come to accept the need for some form of in-built environmental standards to be included in any overall planning strategy. These shifts came in the wake of the Brundtland Report and the Rio World Summit which have shaped EU environmental policy. A central feature of this thinking is the theory of 'Ecological Modernisation' (EM). Some of the initial literature to deal with EM came from the theorists Janicke (1997), Weale (1992) and Hajer (1995), who each contributed to the conceptualisation of ecological modernisation as a feature of modern society. More recently, the impact of ecological modernisation on the UK, US, Germany and Norway has been analysed to reveal varying degrees of connectedness between ecopopulist movements and 'core state imperatives' in these states (Dryzek et al., 2003: 191). What becomes clear from this study is the degree to which local factors in each state influences the impact of EM on policy or the 'sub-politics' of environmental movements.

Environmental values and state imperatives reached congruence at various stages of each state's development of environmental policy frameworks and movement activism over recent decades, with EM becoming central to either wider acceptance of environmental initiatives in the case of Germany or becoming part of the ecomodernist versus ecopopulist divide in the case of the US, where 'an old fashioned stand-off between economy and environment' (ibid.) still exists. This dichotomy between the economically derived imperative of the state and the 'sub-politics' of ecopopulists exists in Ireland. This article will demonstrate that while the EM regulatory framework reflects a critical new positioning of the environmental debate, in the Irish case, the imposition of EM derived policies or infrastructure on rural communities has led to a competing form of populist environmental sentiment derived in part from green philosophies.

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ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION:

In recent years there has been a marked increase in trends towards the restructuring of Western economies with a view to improving environmental standards. Central to this strategy is the concept of EM, first identified by the German writers Janicke and Hajer in the early 1980s. Essentially, EM is based on the concepts of sustainable development becoming a central feature of the state's policy processes. For this to occur, ecological factors must become an integral part of social, cultural and industrial planning, with environmental efficiency and lifestyle benefits being highlighted as the ultimate rewards for embarking on new ecomodernist approaches to national and global problems. EM provides a dynamic aspect which can overcome the bureaucratic inertia which at times hinders ecological innovation within a market orientated context, in addition to its compatibility with the policy processes of the nation state through an emphasis on:

a favourable attitude towards the role of the market actors and dynamics in environmental reforms; a systems-theoretical and rather evolutionary perspective with a limited notion of human agency and social struggles; and an orientation towards analyses at the level of the nation state (Mol and Sonnefeld, 2000).

However, this approach to sustainable development has become the subject of criticism from many radical environmentalists who fear that EM has been used as an ecological 'catch-all' policy, while in reality many real issues on the environmental agenda remain unresolved. One result of this debate has been the spread of shifting ideologies within the movement, resulting in the 'light' and 'dark' green dichotomy. Within these new paradigms an accommodation of environmental concerns must be identified from the wide range of actors involved including those in wider society sympathetic to environmentalists' ideas and ultimately with the state agencies and corporate institutions who shape and act on environmental policy. For Smith, this paradigm incorporates what Rolston (1988) perceives as the inarticulate speech of anthropocentric rationality, creating a dichotomy between the ethics of the ecology and human justice movements (Smith, 2005: 145–146).

With this distinction in mind, ethically minded ecological activists argue that policy must be measured in relation to its impact on both local and global situations and that any action thereof must, as a result, keep these dual impacts in mind. If EM holds out the promise of a step forward from an existing ecological consciousness and as a determining factor within active society rather than as a peripheral player, it can only do so by confronting the dichotomy between these two apparently irreconcilable opposites. When the tendency towards policy leans towards technocrats the possibilities for EM diminish in direct proportion to its place in the inherent motivations of a consumerist fuelled society which demands ever increasing levels of growth despite the increased ecological damage this

growth inflicts. This outcome is far removed from the concerns of many of the original concepts of ecomodernism. From an Irish perspective, environmental policy can be seen as 'reactionary', a marginal issue in comparison to the core issue of economic growth where responses to ecological degradation or pollution often degenerate into 'a blame game' (Flynn, 2007: 19).

To begin with, Janicke's version of EM is dependent on the existence of a stable democracy. Stability is a vital condition of any environmental policy being successfully implemented and in particular, how non-institutional actors play a vital role in this scenario. Secondly, Hajer's environmental discourse is relative to institutional change, and central to our understanding of how EM works. Furthermore, Weale has outlined the significance of how new political approaches have grown around the ecological agenda. A response to these theories has been provided by Ulrich Beck, a writer who has led the re-examination of EM's role in the environmental movement. For Beck, EM is seen as the best way forward for environmentalists and society overall, in the advent of a new millennium which will certainly find the environmental crisis at the forefront of the political agenda for its duration, as we have witnessed with the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports (2007).

Ecological modernisation has been presented as an alternative, conceptual approach to what were previously seen as problems with the 'end of pipe' solutions. This is a more long term analysis which gives consideration to the costs and benefits of any affects on the environment and is presented as an integral part of the planning process. Any costs were shown to be beneficial as they would outweigh future costs of repairing the damage caused by pollution. This approach coincided with a tendency for multinationals to use *greenwash* as a form of ecologically orientated marketing as part of the industrial sector's response to the environmental concerns which emerged in the 1990s. At a policy level EM has been used to help forge new and co-ordinated approaches to what were previously seen as problems facing the differing strata of bureaucracy. Previous fractious and inefficient approaches to these problems had led to a crisis in legitimacy and regulatory failure. As a result the ecomodernist discourse has provided a fresh approach, or what Weale calls a 'new politics of pollution' (1992), aimed at harmonising previously competing approaches to environmental management across the member states of the European Union.

EM derived policies may challenge industry to create new markets from a reassessed vision of how business relates to the environment; it also 'turns the meaning of the ecological crisis upside-down: what appeared a threat to the system now becomes a vehicle for its very innovation' (Hajer, 1995: 32). However this understanding of ecomodern innovation has in the Irish case sometimes created further tensions between capitalists and the environmentalists. While ecomodernist guidelines create a situation where industries are now considered to be 'dealing with the problem', 'laggard' states such as Ireland which are slow to implement regulations and fines due to their economic imperative create an

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illusion of ecomodern progress while most industries now hire PR firms and consultants to present their latest versions of 'greenwash' in order to contest any particular issue surrounding environmental degradation. A further criticism of EM levelled by ecopopulist groups is that due to the strengthening of the relationship between administrative policy makers and industry in relation to the environment, the independence of the legislative and regulatory process has become compromised. This is evident in terms of how governments attract multinationals for the purpose of job creation. In the event of environmental regulations hampering the operation they may often be altered or overlooked and in the easing of conflicts of interests, the public is often caught up in a propaganda war over the merits of industrial progress as opposed to environmental protection. In addition, the ongoing democratic deficit in Ireland which is the result of a series of issues such as political corruption and the weakening of local authority decision making has further strengthened the cause of regional ecopopulists (Leonard, 2005, 2006).

This emphasis on a civic participatory response to the crisis of legitimacy experienced by Western governments is central to Janicke's views on 'World Environmental Capacity' in the face of regulatory failure. However, as we shall see, the standards set by ecopopulist groups are derived from a different set of values. Smith (2005: 146) reminds us of Rolston's (1988) call to seek 'values of a different kind, those found in nature itself'. In Ireland, one form of green philosophy is voiced by ecopopulists defending their hinterlands from ecomodernist development. Another, sometimes competing form of environmentalism is propagated by organised advocates of ecomodernism such as the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability (FEASTA), the Irish Coalition for Sustainability and even the Irish Green Party (Mullally, 2006: 150, 160). While the latter may have roots in both philosophical paradigms, the extraneous demands of institutional ecomodernism such as regulatory frameworks, policies and directives are sometimes removed from the local concerns and sentiment of ecopopulists.

THE PRINCIPLES OF POPULIST ENVIRONMENTALISM

'Thus even nature is not nature, but rather a concept, norm, memory, utopia, counter image' (Beck, 1995: 38)

A growing questioning of aspects of industrialised development and related patterns of consumption that have had a major impact on the environment has led to the rise of 'green politics' which have become characterised by localised protests and disputes, but which forms the basis of the modern environmental movement. In the Irish case, a form of 'ecopopulism' (Szasz, 1994) has emerged from a combination of local and nationalist 'rural sentiment' (Leonard, 2006).

While many writers question the authenticity of this form of ecopopulist response to development, Szasz argues that ecopopulism provides campaigns with the possibility to go 'beyond NIMBY', and represents a significant development in the development of a value system based on notions of environmental justice.

How can we locate this dichotomy within a wider context? For instance, does the Western liberal notion of humankind's 'natural' rights of freedom permit the type of environmental destruction currently happening throughout the world? Clearly, deep green and ecopopulist politics reject this. And as the rise in the politics of environmental protest show, many people have decided to question and reject current development models, in favour of an improved coexistence with the environment. Of course, like other political forms, environmentalism has areas of ideological overlapping in many paradigmatic areas, but the distinction between deep green radicalism and a 'shallow' compromise which tolerates high levels of pollution for profit can be clearly identified. The 'deep green' position, as articulated by Dobson (2000), argues for a 'limit to growth' and understands 'sustainable' to mean no unsustainable damage to the earth rather than the 'sustainable pollution' ethic found in the concept of ecological modernisation.

As such, deep green politics argues for an ecocentric society, which places an intrinsic value on the environment, above any consideration of profit or structural development. While this form of philosophical politics is rare in Ireland, the motivations of rural ecopopulists such as the 'Shell to Sea' protestors originated from a primordial concern for their local hinterlands. 'Deep green' philosophical responses are more likely to be found emerging from the indigenous subconsciousness of native populations such as those in rural North Mayo, as part of a community's subliminal relationship with its surroundings. For the 'Shell to Sea' protestors, their lives and the land reclaimed from the sea by their forbears are as one, forging a relationship that is as 'deep green' as it gets. While academics, industrialists and the state present themselves as 'environmentalists', it is the native wisdom of the rural community in Mayo which can be seen as truly eco-centric, due to their primary concern for 'the land'. This is borne out in the discussion of the issue presented during media interviews and in their recent book *The Rossport 5: Our Story* (2006).

We can understand this form of rural ecocentricism through an examination of 'rural sentiment' (Leonard, 2006). This concept has emerged from an analysis of existing studies of local environmentalism and rural change in the Irish case. Initial accounts of 'rural fundamentalism' (Commons, 1986) provided a basis for an understanding of the resistance to state sponsored rural development projects as Irish agriculture became scientised and industrialised in the years after Ireland joined the European Community (EEC) in 1973. Resistance to perceived interference from the state or Europe was derived from a localised sense of mutual dependency and embeddedness within the local hinterlands of rural Ireland. As modernisation and economic growth occurred, a concept of

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'rural discourse' was forwarded to describe local responses to the location of multinational factories in rural areas (Peace, 1997). However, this discourse was in itself a representation of a primordial or visceral 'rural sentiment' (Leonard, 2006) which became manifest at times of societal discord in rural Ireland, such as the 'Land Wars' of the late nineteenth century. Through time, this underlying sentiment becomes a discourse of fundamentalism in the face of external threats to local communities or landscapes which are etched within the subconsciousness of rural dwellers. When locals invoke the ancient battle cry and song '*the West's Awake*' during episodes of resistance to the degradation of outsiders, it is the landscape, hills and coastline of the west of Ireland that is alive for its inhabitants, in a manner that has parallels with aboriginal tribes globally. This primal response is the basis for understandings of 'rural sentiment', which can be seen as part of what Arne Naess (1972) originally called eco-centricism, the valuing of the hinterland over the self.

Eckersley (1992) expanded upon Naess' distinction between the eco-centric and anthropocentric spectrums of green politics. For Eckersley, this distinction meant the politics of ethical environmentalism which included 'resource conservation, human welfare ecology, preservationism, animal liberation and eco-centrism' (Eckersley, 1992: 34) was separate from the accommodation of 'sustainable' development which placed that development at a higher value than the environment itself. This argument is at the crux of the environmental debate and is central to the definition and public ownership of a shared understanding of what *environmentalism* actually means. We can understand this distinction within existing definitions of the 'chiasmus' or rhetorical conjunctions which exist between anthropocentric traditions of civic and political practice and an ecocentric form of environmental ethics (Smith, 2005: 146).

ANTHROPOCENTRIC/ECOCENTRIC APPROACHES

The dichotomy between a deep green ecopopulism derived of rural sentiment and ecomodernist paradigms can be understood through an examination of Eckersley's definition of an 'anthropocentric/ecocentric cleavage'. The distinction is made clear from the following quote:

The first approach is characterised by its concern to articulate an eco-political theory that offers new opportunities for human emancipation and fulfilment in an ecologically sustainable society. The second approach pursues the same goals in the context of a broader notion of emancipation that also recognises that moral standing of the non human world (Eckersley, 1992: 26).

While both approaches are concerned with the environment, it is the emphasis placed on 'human emancipation' over 'the non human world' which demarcates the anthropocentricism of the sustainable development culture from an eco-centric

perspective. Eckersley also cites the 'broadly similar distinctions found in the ecological theories of Naess ('shallow and deep ecology'), O'Riordan ('techno-centricism and eco-centrism'), the late Murray Bookchin ('environmentalism and social ecology') and so on. Equally, Dobson (2000) has shed light on the 'environmentalism versus ecologism' dichotomy. The positioning of humankind in relation to other species and ecosystems is pivotal in regard to this theoretical contextualisation of two main distinct features of current environmental thought. While not aligned with traditional political understandings of the left/right divide within political ideology, an ethical distinction between anthropocentric and eco-centric does have its basis in humankind's technical and industrial capabilities, which have become the basis for the type of environmental destruction evident in contemporary society. While traditionally the Left pinpointed control of the means of production as the crucial issue of political contestation, Smith (2005: 147) reminds us that environmental ethicality is concerned with the manner in which the means of production impacts upon the environment and to what extent positive responses emerge from a civil society that mobilises around hope and sentiment in the creation of new ethical meanalities and norms.

However, environmental ethics go beyond existing left wing attempts at 'controlling the means of production' or of deconstructing class systems and sets its point of origin before the era of revolution to the beginning of modernity and the age of Enlightenment. By questioning the concept of social order based on expansive development which had its roots in the Enlightenment project present day environmental protests have rejected the concept of a technologically driven modernity in itself, radically moving beyond the position of 'sustainable development' by questioning the validity of development from an ecocentric perspective. Bookchin spells out this premise with a view on these challenges of hierarchical systems of development:

Community movements implicitly assert that in order to replace social domination by self management a new type of civic self...must be restored...to challenge the all pervasive state apparatus (Bookchin, 1995: 15).

Beck claims that 'ecological protest is a matter, not of natural but of cultural fact; a phenomenon of cultural sensibility and of the attentiveness of institutions' (Beck, 1996: 49). This assertion has its basis in the argument which characterises environmental concern as a cultural rather than purely ecological expression. Essentially, the argument highlights the difficulty in explaining the inherent meanings underlying environmental discourses. Political protests, ecological or otherwise often follow from cultural rather than ideological grievances. This understanding is at the heart of the distinction between 'old' and 'new' social movements, with the movements of the 1960s counterculture embracing idealism and autonomy over the economics and formal politics of the mainstream. As Western culture has industrialised so too has a new emphasis been placed on protecting an environment once seen as the very impediment of human aspira-

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tions for development. In the case of Micheál and Caitlín Ó Seighin of 'Shell to Sea', this emphasis is articulated through a localised discourse which reflects underlying concerns for the hinterland:

I just love the place, the history of it, the people the songs, the stories and the way of life here...when I was growing up we were full of stories about our own area in particular...there is a means of connecting with this place through the Irish language...with Irish the entire area is a unity, whereby the place where things happen becomes part of the event itself...in telling anecdotes you find yourself spatially establishing them all the time...as a language that is not borrowed but indigenous, its idioms and dialectic difference have been honed to represent and describe a world always changing which has the effect of tying the people together (Garavan, 2006: 68).

ECOPOPULIST ETHICS IN THE IRISH CASE:

This contestation has become a recurring feature of environmental conflicts in Ireland, from the Raybestos Manhattan asbestos dump dispute in Cork in the 1980s to the campaign against incineration across the island in the 1990s or in the recent resource based 'Shell to Sea' campaign. These campaigns have come to represent the cutting edge of the ecomodernist versus ecopopulism debate. As the Irish state attempted to revive its ailing economy in the 1970s and 1980s, multinationals which were relocating due to regulations in the United States were invited to set up plants in Ireland, under a more relaxed regulatory framework. Many communities began to resist these heavily polluting industries, and local incidents of environmental protest began to be a feature of Irish society. By the 1990s, the economic growth characterised as 'the Celtic Tiger' led to a waste management crisis, leading to plans for regional incinerators which were also opposed by an increasingly environmentally conscious community sector. Ultimately the Irish case demonstrates that ecological modernisation as a discourse, while acknowledging the role of the citizen fails to address the social reality underpinning the politics of environmental protest, a reality which cast the modern protester in the role of an ecopopulist David opposing industrial Goliaths.

For ecopopulists, deep green ecologism represents the embracing of nature, as opposed to the centuries old Enlightenment process of repressing nature. It has at its root an overall concern with a sense of global cooperation and species ecumenism which go far beyond the compromising elements of ecological modernisation. Where nature was once 'wild' and in need of taming, deep green ecology places the environment as the equal, or more fundamentally, a more important entity than humankind. Of course, this places most deep green activists in opposition to the onset of a society enthralled by rapid accelera-

tion, over-consumption and environmental degradation in the name of profit. Moreover, while deep green ecologists may have been members of the larger environmental agencies, such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, many have come to reject the bureaucratic nature of such groups, working instead in small clusters of committed activists, protesting about specific environmental problems, such as the protestors around The Twyford Downs roads protest in the UK, or the like-minded Irish roads activists at the Glen of the Downs in Co. Wicklow, or at the ancient Tara site of the High Kings in Co. Meath, both of which have come under threat from the state's road building plans for the Dublin commuter belt (Leonard, 2006). By rejecting the constraints of consumer driven capitalist growth in order to protect the environment, ecopopulists have moved beyond the single issue that motivated local mobilisation, going beyond parochial fear in order to embrace a wider sentiment of ethically derived hope, and in the process becoming the environmentalists with '*feelings* for nature' (Smith, 2005: 146–148); embracing the role of 'denizens' (ibid.) who advocate for nature as a result of this ethical transformation. This position is articulated by Shell to Sea's Micheál Ó Seighin, who claims that local resistance goes beyond the economic and stems from deeper concerns about democratic deficit and degradation of place:

They (the multinationals) didn't even have to consider attempting to con us about jobs...they said you'll all be rich, but only in a general way...what they are having to do now, that is actually consider what people are saying to them, is something they haven't experienced for years and years...they didn't have to put the work in because the state and its leadership had become so subservient to the multinationals that they had stopped caring, had stopped being careful. So when the company came in here, they met with that political culture of dependency and facilitation (Garavan, 2006: 70).

It can also be argued that ecopopulist politics has provided a focus for the type of community-based protest movements that can address the democratic deficit created by over-bureaucratic and hierarchical administrations, at both the global and national level. By providing an outlet for social protest deep green environmental movements are addressing the onset of democratic deficit in society. In so doing, green politics has provided a basis for political movement rather than the type of entrenched ideological positions which have emanated from traditional left or right wing politics.

Moreover, as centrist and centre-right ideology have come to dominate the politics of Western Liberal democracies, many disparate elements of the old left have realigned themselves and their struggles with the agendas of deep green and eco-protest politics. This has been as much through necessity as ideological choice due to the lack of any real momentum in radical politics, outside of anti-globalisation protests, as seen in Seattle, Rome and Gleneagles or localised eco-protests such as Twyford Down or 'Shell to Sea'. These eco-activists

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have at their base elements of an anti-globalisation youth movement which is disaffected and disenchanted with liberal capitalism overall. As activists they also provide a platform for the expression of environmental concern and even anger in a way which the substantive body of mainstream politics cannot begin to represent, due to the embracing of models of liberal capitalist development by all shades of Western political expression.

Nonetheless, the debate about the future of *sustainability* has thrown up some interesting arguments. One of the core issues at the heart of this debate is the extent to which liberal democracies can embrace sustainable development. This acceptance of sustainability as a means of continued ecologically derived development is dependent on an interpretation of sustainability 'that respect liberal democratic values and institutions' (Barry and Wissenburg, 2001: 205). However, the outcomes of these conceptualisations of sustainability must take community values and local sentiments on board in order to be truly 'sustainable'. In the absence of an agreed understanding between communities, states and industrial interests, attempts to impose 'sustainable' initiatives without considering local relationships between communities and their hinterlands risks ongoing campaigns of opposition, something which has occurred in Ireland since the late 1970s (Leonard, 2006).

Here, the values which shape 'anti-authoritarianism and moral scepticism' (Barry and Wissenburg, 2001: 207) lie at the heart of liberal pluralistic democracy, as represented by the idealism of those who have over time answered the call of 'revolution', 'movement' or 'freedom' be they republican, socialist, feminist or environmentalist. At the heart of the great intangible of 'progress' lies a democratic impulse borne of localised desires for freedom from oppression or degradation through 'contentious repertoires' (Tilly, 2004) whereby understandings of local sentiments come to be replenished by continued opposition to the destruction of what is significant to a community within the context of the landscape which surrounds it.

As ecological management practices and sustainable development approaches become features of industrialism's compromise with a growing sense of ecological concern, the true nature of environmental protest has come to represent as much a challenge to established agencies of bureaucratic administration. In addition, this has led to the challenging of the infringement of industrialism on the environment of 'unspoilt nature'. The 'Shell to Sea' case examined in this article can be understood in the context of this wider contest between grassroots community campaigns and the technocratic alliance between industry and the state over the introduction of major projects or policies.

David Storey (2001) has created an understanding of how territorialism informs community responses to the perception of risk. These responses involve the mobilisation of 'rural sentiment' (Leonard, 2006) by advocates who wish to preserve local ways of life or environments. In the case of Irish environmentalism territory is defined by local discourse rather than boundaries except perhaps for

the county allegiance that has been developed as an integral part of the ideology of rural communities, creating social capital in the regions. When it comes to environmental disputes the mobilisation of territorial responses derived from traditional rural sentiment, or more recently formed local identities, represents the political articulation of progressive social capital as such local responses empower communities in an era of globalised economy and culture. And it is within this understanding that new sections of the population have been assimilated, with many providing wider networks and areas of expertise for campaigns which have allowed communities to challenge globalised corporate entities on a more equal footing. It is the utilisation of the internet and communication technologies that has underpinned this increased flow of expertise networks for campaigns, allowing them to move 'beyond NIMBY' Szasz (1994), or to emerge from their initial territorial response. For Storey, sub-state regional development is part of the hegemonic process of state dominance. Nonetheless, neo-corporatist exclusion provides a political opportunity for territorial campaigns to mobilise around environmental issues. Equally the inherent populism which characterises Irish politics provides leverage for campaigns at times of elections when the coalitions formed from necessity due to the returns of the Irish electoral system of proportional representation through the single transferable vote (PRSTV) can be undermined. This leverage is only temporary as the neo-corporatist core soon reasserts itself in the aftermath of post-election government formation.

As the Irish political model of neo-corporatism comes to represent the triumph of economically based sectional interests over others, territorial groups become more reliant on the input of new middle class professionals who become the entrepreneurs, or advocates, of environmental disputes. These advocates retain a degree of economic autonomy from the state's neo-corporatist plans despite or perhaps because they may be in the employ of the state as academics or researchers. In many cases the adversaries of the territorial advocate can be the technocratic advisor who creates a contest between competing sets of expertise, a forum which has provided equal footing for advocates who often outperform their technocratic opponents. Invariably, many territorial advocates are charismatic figures whereas the technocrat remains a largely secretive figure, hidden from public view. Thus, the entrepreneurial advocate can facilitate ecopopulist campaign development. This was certainly the case in the 'Shell to Sea' campaign in Mayo, where a longstanding dispute between the local community and multinationals over the location of an onshore gas pipeline has resulted in a movement which had gained significant national and international attention. This major dispute pitted multinationals against a local Irish speaking *Gaeltacht* community in County Mayo, to the west of the island.

This dispute centres on the location of an onshore gas pipeline, which has led to the imprisonment of local protesters in a conflict which gripped Irish society and won the support of Ken Saro Wiwa's brother, alongside other concerned activists from Nigeria, the UK and Norway (Leonard, 2006). The region includes

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a series of beaches and bogs which incorporates a Natural Heritage Area, a designated Area of Special Scenic Importance and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The area is surrounded by the Blue Stack Mountains to the north and Benbulbin to the east, with the heritage site at the Céide Fields, home to one of the world's earliest agricultural sites. The drinking water is drawn from local lakes, and the traditional fishing and farming communities have populated the area since prehistoric times (Connolly and Lynch, 2005). The local bay is home to whales, dolphins and other sea life. This sensitive ecosystem and traditional community are now threatened by the mass excavations and digging of the multinationals intent on exploiting the vast resources of natural gas off the Mayo coastline. However, locals want the gas to be processed offshore, reducing the environmental degradation and risk. In spite of this, the multinationals and the Irish state have proceeded with an onshore pipeline, citing excessive costs as the reason why an offshore plant has been rejected. In 2005, five local farmers were imprisoned for refusing to agree to an injunction which allowed the multinationals access to their land. The case became a major news story in Ireland and abroad. One of the men, Willie Corduff, was awarded an international Goldman Environmental Prize and received €92,000 in recognition of the environmental work he and his fellow campaigners have undertaken.

By using the tools of group culture such as political activism, a social reality is constructed which challenges and redefines our cultural expectations. The emergence of territorially derived group culture has come to define the campaigns of socio-political and culture resistance to the modernising projects of the state or industrial sector. Rural territorial campaigns have opened up a socio-cultural narrative at a key point of departure in Irish society, as that society moves into a post-consumerist phase, providing an integrity which is all too often lacking in the behaviour of prominent politicians and cabinet ministers. It is this 'rural sentiment' which provides community campaigns with their mobilising capacities, pitting locals against the interests of multinationals or the state in the defence of ecology, heritage and democratic values. There are many competing understandings surrounding community-based environmental disputes in Ireland with almost as many perspectives as there are participants or advocates, with the one constant being a concern for the hinterland.

Using the rationale underpinning consumption-based behaviour we can say that scientists, advocates and community activists adopt particular roles within the process of accepting change in the context of modernisation. And yet, the state or multinational, despite their array of technocrats, scientists and consultants often fails to recognise the unpopularity of the technology they are attempting to introduce, be it nuclear power, sewage treatment plants, incinerators or gas pipelines (Leonard, 2006). From the community perspective technology or infrastructure is understood in three stages. At the 'pre-issue' stage communities come to an understanding about the pros and cons of the technology being introduced. During the 'issue-acceptance' stage communities attempt to

comprehend the competing expertise provided by consultants in favour of, or advocates who oppose, technologies or infrastructure. At the 'post-issue' stage the functional performance of any new technology or infrastructure is assessed providing that technology or infrastructure is actually introduced. Environmental impacts are assessed at this stage and poor performance or results may lead to further mobilisation against the offending project. In this way we can see that the process whereby projects are introduced to (or imposed on) communities has become part of the culture of the modernising state. Segments of the community may then feel the need to resist modernisation at certain moments where technology or infrastructure is anticipated as too great a risk.

In the absence of the recognition of community concerns by the authorities advocates can mobilise grievance by establishing 'consensus' (Klandermans, 1989) built from symbolic understandings of local heritage with a nostalgic sentiment for an era characterised by understandings formed from local discourse. Once ignited, this 'rural sentiment' can be mobilised through collective activity which allows communities to share the experience of communal resistance to projects, leading to enhanced integration, communication and participation. By moving beyond the single issue surrounding the technology or infrastructure being challenged local campaigns can open up networks with global movements which provide expertise and data that can then be used to challenge the science of the state or multinational. And while projects are introduced to address a social need which the state has identified through its policy framework, the response of communities is based on a new set of needs that emerge in the pre-issue stage. These community based needs are constituted from within; in what one 'Shell to Sea' advocate has described as a 'visceral' response based on fear of large-scale projects (Leonard, 2006). This is a fear which scientists dismiss as irrational but one which may be better understood as natural when viewed from the perspective of members of the public who have grown up in an era where risk and toxicity have become a feature of popular culture, appearing in films, books and even cartoons with the classic 'good guy' advocate challenging the 'mad scientist' and the 'evil corporate entity'. The state, which is viewed with suspicion in an era of democratic deficit driven by successive corruption-based 'scandals', is seen as a compliant facilitator of multinational agendas.

All of this located 'rural sentiment' in the realm of emotionally derived ethically formulated ecopopulist responses to threats of degradation from multinationals or the state agencies who in spite of their embrace of ecomodernisation have failed to grasp the extent to which local communities are rooted in the very landscape threatened by the infrastructure of modernisation. For Smith, this emergence of a localised 'denizen' embedded in the emotion of the hinterland is the basis for 'a crossing from ethics into politics':

Why emotion? Well for many 'reasons': partly because of the role fear, anxiety, hope, anger have in motivating environmental concerns; partly because emotions *affect* our evaluations, partly because of the fundamental role that emotional

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responses play in creating a sense of community, however that community is 'imagined' or experienced; partly because such emotional responses are precisely what are deemed inadmissible to our current form of public being which draws a political and ethical boundary around its constituency on the basis of human (reason's) historical triumph over natural (emotion). (Smith, 2005: 147)

It follows, then, that environmental perspectives can be divided into two competing paradigms. One is dominated by a science-based positivistic rationale which holds that modern technology can provide a functional answer to existing social or ecological problems. The other perspective has emerged from an age of scepticism and takes a post-modern view which questions or interprets the material assumptions and grand narratives of science. Both perspectives are embedded in current socio-cultural thought and in that context community-based responses to large scale projects should be seen as one form of rationality rather than being dismissed for not conforming to another. As the state continues to exclude community-based environmental groups when introducing major projects social movement mobilisation becomes part of a conditional response to neo-corporatist exclusion. It is part of a process of socialised behaviour where each subsequent campaign draws on the existing knowledge of prior disputes to formulate their challenges. In many cases a community wishes to be seen to take a strong stance in defence of their territory so as not to be perceived as weak.

We can place this 'interpretivistic' (Solomon, 2002) contest within the concepts of structure and agency where deterministic understandings about social responses are formulated. Of course, individuals and communities are not constrained by the collective consciousness formed over the ages. Nonetheless, the social relationships of a region shape that region's perception of what is internal or external. The commonly-held structures which form community sentiment create an institutionalised, or learned, response when faced with external risks. The flow of knowledge becomes part of the associative process by which a community defines itself and formulates responses. By forming extended linkages with communities that have previously dealt with similar technological or infrastructural risk, a network of consensus can be built, transforming disparate campaigns into a movement. Community responses formed from interpretivistic sentiment are triggered by advocates or 'entrepreneurs' (Della Porta and Diani, 1999) who harvest the grievances held by rural communities in order to create the motivation for collective action. While some responses are more instinctively driven by the threat of whatever project is being imposed motivations for collective action are invariably driven by the advocate who manages such responses. This social process reveals the articulation of a transformative praxis whereby environmental ethics becomes 'an attempt to express our feelings for the natural world' (Smith, 2005: 148).

This shaping of community motivation is part of the agenda setting which occurs at the inception of a campaign and sets the tone for the initial phase of that action. The cognitive process where communities map out a response is a complex

one and the depth of collective identity built from adversity has underpinned much of the interpretative cognisance in the Irish case. We can understand the formation of this response as part of a hierarchy of basic grievances or concerns for communities. Ranging from the need for safety from risk and protection for domestic environments at the basic level through to the fulfilment of collective capacities by association with and mobilisation of community through moral framing the process of collective action can ultimately provide communities with significant levels of esteem and accomplishment in an age of contested legitimisation or democratic deficit. Ultimately, environmentally-based activism creates an important stratum of a pluralistic democracy allowing peripheral social groups to create evolutionary and political interaction with the core.

CONCLUSION

The grievances of rural communities which emerged from this perception of a loss of community have contributed to the growth of 'populist environmentalism' (Tovey, 1992: 283) in Ireland. Populist environmentalism has been manifested as part of the 'rural discourse' (Peace, 1997) which was a characteristic of anti-toxics and anti-multinational disputes during the pre-boom decades of the 1970s and 1980s. Populist sentiment was also a feature of many of the anti-mining and resource disputes which occurred during the same period. The re-emergence of rural populist discourse during the 'Shell to Sea' dispute about the Corrib gas pipeline, involving calls for local ownership of local resources, was combined with concerns about the risk posed by on-shore pipelines as part of the framing strategies of that campaign.

The existence of strong parochial, rural sentiment has been cited as a factor in the lack of acceptance of 'official environmental' organisations in country-based disputes (Tovey, 1992: 286), as communities attempted to mobilise grievance based on local understandings and relationships. However, this localism also left many populist environmental groups open to the accusation of being mere NIMBYists, as opposition to industrial or infrastructural projects in a community's 'backyard' is identified as the primary rallying point for campaign mobilisation. Further challenges for populist campaigns such as the problems of translating rural discourses as part of normal legal hearings have also been identified (Peace, 1997: 99).

Essentially, the well of grievance which provides much of the underlying discontent for populist campaigns to exploit is the basis for an understanding of exactly how the various environmental campaigns that have occurred over recent decades can be characterised as components of an overall social movement (Tovey, 2002: 147–148). While populist environmental campaigns may 'wax and wane' (ibid.), the significance of each campaign's contribution to an articulation of community grievance has created a movement of sorts, where

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outcomes can be measured through an understanding of the extent to which populist fundamentalism has come to be seen as the very basis for traditional rural identities in the post-consumption, post-modern era. This is an outcome that can be measured as part of the social capital of all rural and rural-suburban communities and which has far greater significance than the outcome measurement models which chart the impact of protest campaigns on policy implementation. The true measurement of the impact of rural populist discourse goes beyond moments of access to political opportunity structures and contributes to the shape and nature of the populist Irish political system itself. In this process, citizens become ethical 'denizens' (Smith, 2005) who articulate a concern for the natural world as their emotions come to be transformed into an expression of ethically charged environmental advocacy (ibid.). This transformation has been acknowledged by the award of the Goldman Environmental Prize to the 'Shell to Sea' campaigners, whose protest moved beyond its original inception by embracing wider concerns about local ecology and heritage, as well as political issues about democratic deficit in the process.

Over time, a pattern of ecopopulist resistance to the onset of globalised development becomes discernible in the Irish case. We can see that an overall combination of grievances around perceived threats to traditional processes and identities led to a growing sense of resistance which in many cases surfaced around environmentally-based contests and disputes. Moreover, at a time when the cycles of economic growth and recession sundered society through emigration and poverty in the pre-boom years or immigration and accelerated growth in the post 'Celtic Tiger' era, the values embedded in traditionalism, rural sentiment and concern for heritage became appealing and achievable for beleaguered communities when faced with the threat from 'outsiders', be they industrial or institutional. And while Irish ecopopulist perspectives may lack some of the conventional wisdom of the burgeoning globalised environmental movement, the mobilisation of rural sentiment by such groups remains a persuasive form of ecological protest on the contested landscapes of the 'Emerald Isle'.

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