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**Movement for a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers and its Applicability to Other
Movements**

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Abstract

The Gasfield Free Northern Rivers campaign evolved into a broader social movement opposing unconventional gas extraction in the Northern Rivers, New South Wales, Australia. This movement manifested the Bentley blockade in which thousands of people collaborated to resist the invasive gas industry. This movement was successful in getting all gas exploration licenses in the region bought back by the NSW government, thus achieving the goal of keeping the Northern Rivers Gasfield Free.

In this study I investigate how the GFNR campaign reached the scale of the Bentley blockade, and what aspects of this campaign and the broader movement are applicable to other social or environmental movements. I chose to investigate this question to increase the likelihood of other environmental movements attaining the same level of success.

After receiving ethics approval from the local review board, I began to conduct background research. Prior to collecting data, I conducted extensive background research on activism, social movements, social networks, sustained commitments to the environmental cause, unconventional gas extraction in Australia, and the opposition to unconventional gas in the Northern Rivers specifically. Using this knowledge, I created an interview guide and electronic survey. I interviewed 11 people involved with the GFNR campaign or the movement more broadly, each signing an informed consent form prior to the interview. Twenty-seven environmental activists in the region took my electronic survey.

The interview data was coded for emergent themes that best answered my study question. The survey data was analyzed by calculating the proportions of responses and using this as supplementary data to support the emergent interview themes.

The interview and survey data indicate that the growth of this movement is attributed to personal communication and the tight focus of the GFNR campaign. There are several themes which are applicable to other movements. These include the necessity of leadership structure and the benefit of the coexistence of top-down and horizontal leadership, the contextualization of individuals' role within the greater social movement, the power of language and framing, the importance of intergenerational involvement to sustain the movement, and the necessity to adapt and resist to social movement conditions, rather than search for the exact formula for success.

I recommend further research on how complexity theory and its application to social movements can be made accessible to leaders of a variety of campaigns and social movements, in the hopes that improving its accessibility will quicken its application and thus empower more communities.

Key words

Social movements, non-violent direct action, leadership, environmentalism

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Abbreviations

UCG: Unconventional gas

CSG: Coal seam gas

GFNR: Gasfield Free Northern Rivers

Introduction

Focus and rationale

My research sought to answer the question: How did the campaign for a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers reach the scale of the Bentley blockade, and what aspects of this campaign and the broader movement are applicable to other movements?

I chose to do this study in the hopes that the findings would increase the likelihood of other environmental movements attaining the same level of success as the opposition of invasive gas industries in the Northern Rivers region. It is not my intention to extrapolate an exact formula for successful environmental action by studying the Gasfield Free Northern Rivers campaign as it evolved into the Bentley blockade. Instead, I focused on gathering data about the community engagement, leadership structure, nonviolence training, sustained commitments to environmentalism, and the framework used to launch and sustain this movement.

This project is relevant to sustainability because the activists involved demonstrate a strong belief in the protection of the environment and surrounding communities. Sustainability is a word used so often it has lost much of its meaning as definitions splinter in a multitude of directions. Despite the disagreement on what constitutes sustainability, it is something many are striving towards. Many definitions include aspects of a triple bottom line: economic, environmental, and societal aspects of sustainability. The triple bottom line was coined by Elkington (1997). Some theorists believe the aspects of a triple bottom line are of equal importance (Alhaddi, 2015), while others view the economy as subordinate to society, and society subordinate to the environment (Peet, 2002). I tend to agree with Peet's interpretation of the triple bottom line. Prioritizing the protection of ecosystems and limiting our resource use is the best way to sustain our society and economy. Therefore, I define sustainability as the consideration of ecological, social, and economic needs in all decisions, with the recognition of the environment as the foundation for society and economy.

The activists advocating for unconventional gas free communities and protesting at the Bentley blockade demonstrate a similar understanding of sustainability. They put their bodies on the line to keep a natural resource in the ground and prevent the contamination of many water sources. This demonstrates their regard for the environment over the economic incentive of the drilling companies. Many of these activists understand their reliance on the earth's resources for their well-being, and thus fought passionately to prevent the drilling for

unconventional gas in the region. Understanding the organization and framework used in this campaign is relevant to the sustainability of other regions, as this knowledge could empower other communities to protect their natural landscapes.

Literature Review

Activism and social movements

Activism is a broad term which can be defined as “actions and activities intentionally designed to exert influence within the democratic processes. In this sense we could see democracy as the process, and activism as the specific actions and activities taking part as part of that process” (Ricketts, 2012, p. 7). Framing activism within the context of democracy is important to help contextualize the potential for political, social, or environmental change. Like contextualizing activism within democracy, it is helpful to frame activism as an aspect of social movements. While individual activists can achieve change, they become far more effective through organized groups and social movements (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20; Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 261). Social movements have immense power in creating political change because they have the potential to harness the collective agency from many people (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20).

Specific social movements are generally defined by the values and issues that it is active in promoting (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20). The term social movement can have many meanings. This allows social movements to encompass formal organizations, loose alliances, and individuals (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20). A social movement, environmentalism for example, is complex and consists of numerous groups that share some but not all of their values (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20).

Social networks

Social networks are a key aspect to understanding the power and potential of social movements. Social networks influence individuals’ recruitment and ongoing involvement in a social movement (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 253). Social networks are the patterns of ties, or connections that exist between social entities (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 256). There are four basic types of network processes that can be explored in social networks (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 256). These include personal networks which are implicated in initial recruitment and ongoing mobilization of a social movement, inter-organizational networks that link members within a specific social movement, network structures that help transmit ideas and other aspects of culture, and networks that produce social capital for group members (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 256).

There can be both friendship ties and political salience within the social movement, in fact these ties and goals likely strengthen each other. The Bentley blockade engaged a multitude of different organizations and individuals. This relates to a biodiversity metaphor for social movements in which different groups work together for a common goal despite tactical differences (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 263). Despite the differences between environmental groups, various social network ties connect them to a “broader political ecology of social movements” (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 263). The ability for multiple different organizations and groups to work together at the Bentley blockade exemplifies the power of social networks as they work within the social movement to create political change.

In addition to the attention paid to network ties within the social movement, it is also important to engage with the general public. The public needs to be recruited to embody a pro-environmentalist standpoint to achieve cultural transformation and political pressure to improve sustainability (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 268). This is challenging because the general public is an abstract construction rather than a social group with identifiable boundaries (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 268).

Characteristics of social movements

One characteristic of powerful social movements is adopting a leadership structure that reflects the values of the movement (Ricketts, 2012, p. 24). While there are many theories about power dynamics, organizations and social movements usually develop and produce their own structures and processes (Ricketts, 2012, p. 25). Groups such as coalitions and alliances are usually organized more organically and often share decision making power in decentralized ways (Ricketts, 2012, p. 25). This model of organization is facilitated by technology, as enhanced means of communication and outreach can support the shared decision-making structure (Ricketts, 2012, p. 25). Another key aspect of social movements is their adaptability to changing events and conditions. Ricketts explains that “it is the ability of social movements to emerge, evolve, and mutate over time which equips them with the flexibility to keep bringing people together in a productive and resourceful way” (2012, p. 26).

Eight stages of social change

Visualizing the stages of a social movement helps contextualize current events and the trajectory of ongoing social movements. Moyer has created what he calls the Movement

Action Plan (MAP) model of social change which displays eight stages of social change (Moyer, 2001). Ricketts offers an adapted version of this model which includes 1) normal times; 2) prove the failure of official institutions; 3) Ripening conditions; 4) Take-off; 5) Perceptions of failure; 6) Majority public opinion; 7) Success; 8) continuing the struggle (Ricketts, 2012, p. 29).

Stage 1: Normal Times

There is a politically quiet climate. The population may not know an issue exists, or they support the policies that have created the problem (Moyer 2001, p. 43)

Stage 2: prove the failure of official institutions

The intensity of public opinions and upset which initiates social movements happen when people realize policies violate widely held beliefs, principles and values (Moyer, 2001, pp. 48-9).

Stage 3: ripening conditions

Prior to take off, the conditions must build over time. These include historic developments, a growing population of discontented people, and the beginnings of grassroots opposition (Moyer, 2001, p. 51).

Stage 4: Take off

A publicized trigger event will thrust the social movement into the public realm. This may surprise and shock people, creating a space for conversation (Moyer, 2001, p. 54).

Stage 5: perceptions of failure

As the movement builds, perceptions of failure emerge when activists are faced with the strength of powerholders. They may believe the power holders are too strong to overcome (Moyer, 2001, p. 58)

Stage 6: majority public opinion

As the movement evolves from protest in crisis to a long-term grassroots struggle, more of the public becomes engaged. It is a slow process which gains the backing of a larger share of the public which creates a new social climate and political consensus (Moyer, 2001, p. 64)

Stage 7: success

Success begins when the movement, after a long process of growth, results in the social consensus which turns the tide of power against the powerholders. An endgame is launched which eventually leads to the movement reaching its goal. This may take the form of a dramatic shutdown, quiet shutdown, or attrition (Moyer, 2001, p. 75).

Stage 8: continuing the struggle

The success in stage seven is framed as a landmark in a long-term process of fundamental social change, not the end of the struggle. This is the period in which the movement can expand upon its success, focus on new demands, and move beyond reform to social change (Moyer, 2001, p. 80).

Outlining the stages of social movements is relevant to my study of the Gasfield Free campaign and the broader social movement because it contextualizes these events within the social movement discourse. The Northern Rivers region was successful in getting Metgasco's exploratory licenses suspended, and eventually bought back (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 75), however the struggle against invasive industries continues in many other communities.

Sustained activist commitment to environmental causes

In many studies, scholars track persistent commitment to a cause through activists' involvement in a group or organization (Driscoll, 2018, p. 698). However, Driscoll finds that substantial activist commitment can exist independently of organizational membership, as "activists link their activism to strong connections to nature, biographical influences, individual tactics, and personal missions rather than to organizations" (2018, p. 698). This finding is pertinent to the Bentley blockade because it reaches beyond organized groups and may help explain how so many individual activists were involved. Sustained engagement in environmental activism is attributed to participants' personal missions outliving any organizational involvement (Driscoll, 2018, p. 701). Rather than depend solely on environmental organizations to make change, activists view organizations as possible allies, and to create a greater impact for the cause (Driscoll, 2018, p. 708).

Sustained commitment to environmental or social movements is key to success because change takes time. Sustained commitment to the cause is necessary to create change because power holders do not relinquish power easily (Ricketts, 2012, p. 27). Supporting a social movement for the long-haul means entails looking after yourself and your comrades, as burnout and disillusionment will hinder social change (Ricketts, 2012, p. 27).

Contextualizing the Bentley blockade

Difference between conventional and unconventional gas

Conventional and unconventional reservoirs yield the same natural gas (Mitsui E&P, n.d, para 1). The difference between conventional and unconventional gas refers to the source of the rocks that create the gas, and the permeability of the gas reservoirs (Mitsui E&P, n.d, para 1). Conventional gas is extracted from reservoirs typically consisting of porous sandstone capped by impermeable rock (Mitsui E&P, 2019, para 2). The gas trapped in these formations can move to the surface through gas wells without the need to pump (Mitsui E&P, 2019, para 2).

Unconventional gas (UCG) is natural gas trapped in dense rocks with low permeability which prevents gas flowing into wells at the rate conventional reservoir gas would (Mitsui E&P, 2019, para 4). The three most common forms of UCG are tight gas, shale gas, and coal seam gas (Mitsui E&P, 2019, para 5). These gas types are identified by the geology of the area where the gas is sourced (Mitsui E&P, 2019 para 6). Shale gas is usually found in layers of sedimentary shale rocks and tight gas is found in sandstone or limestone formations with low permeability (Mitsui E&P, 2019 para 8). While shale and tight gas are found at deep depths between 2-5 kilometers below the surface, coal seam gas is shallow and extracted from coals at depths between 300 meters to 1 kilometer (Mitsui E&P, 2019, para 8).

Unconventional gas extraction in Australia

Over the past 20 years in Australia, there has been a rise in UCG extraction (Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, 2019, para 8). For example, Australia's production of CSG has increased exponentially since 1995 and has come to comprise 30% of the country's overall gas production in 2015-16 (Evershed, 2018, para 1). This expansion is expected to continue as the domestic and export market demand for natural gas increases (Hepburn, 2012, para 1). It is estimated that the export value of the liquid natural gas industry has increased more than fourfold over the last decade in Australia (Hepburn, 2012, para 1).

Environmental concerns about unconventional gas extraction

The increased extraction of UCG has been framed by the industry as a benefit to the public, made possible by technological advances and "more sophisticated methods of extraction" (Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, 2019, para 9). Although supporters of the industry

claim “natural gas from coal seams (CSG) is extracted from deep below the ground using world-best practice techniques that protect the community and our environment,” (NSW Government, n.d, para 1) the nature of this extraction process raises many environmental concerns. The primary method of UCG extraction is hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking (NSW Government, n.d, para 2). Fracking is an environmental risk because it involves stimulating the gas seam by injecting water, sand, and chemicals into the seam. This is problematic because fracking can rapidly deteriorate groundwater aquifers and is the primary source of chemical pollutants in associated water (Hepburn, 2012, para 8).

Roots of opposition

Until recently, authorities and many academics ignored an abundance of anecdotal evidence suggesting that UCG and the ramifications of extraction could have adverse effects on human health and the environment, claiming that there was not enough “rigorous evidence” of the negative impacts (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 12). It is within the context of unclear information and fear that opposition to UCG mining emerged (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 13). The Bentley blockade was the culmination of several years of mobilizing effort (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55). From 2010, opposition to gasfield development emerged in the Northern Rivers as a response to the increasingly visible exploration of petroleum companies, and from the stories emerging from communities in southeast Queensland (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55). Nationally, Lock the Gate was raising awareness through its campaign against unconventional gas mining, and a global anti-fracking movement was emerging (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55).

By 2010, gas exploration licenses covered most of the Northern Rivers region, and communities began to organize in response to the perceived threat (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55). By 2011, approximately ten experienced social movement activists met with the intent of fostering a local resistance and scaling it into a regional movement (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55). This group “identified within Gasfield Free Northern Rivers as ‘Capacity Builders’ focused upon enabling rather than directing the emergence of region-wide resistance” (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 55).

Key initiatives leading to the Bentley blockade

While the Bentley blockade seems to represent the face of the Gasfield Free campaign in the Northern Rivers, NSW, it is important to recognize the smaller scale actions and tactics that were used prior to the manifestation of Bentley.

From early 2012, the movement expanded rapidly through several key initiatives (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 56). One key initiative was a process called ‘Gasfield Free Communities.’ Starting as a local pilot survey, this process spread to several other communities in which house to house surveys revealed overwhelming support for remaining Gasfield Free (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 56). This was not a top-down community organizing model, instead, local communities were assisted, but conducted their own meetings and surveys (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 56). Visiting every house as part of this survey process engaged people of diverse political affiliations and created ‘network cascades’ as coal seam gas became the focus of conversation (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 56). By the end of April 2014, there were 136 Gasfield free communities (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 56).

In September 2012, The Lismore City Council conducted a poll in which the NSW Electoral Commission recorded that 87% of the Lismore Local Government Area opposed the gas industry (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 57). However, the NSW government issued a production license to Metgasco and renewed Metgasco’s exploration licenses, despite the results of the poll (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 57). GFNR framed this as a crisis of democracy in which the 87% were pitted against the NSW government and the invasive gas industry (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 57). This point of the movement is contextualized by Moyer’s second stage of social change: prove the failure of existing institutions (Moyer, 2001, pp. 48-9). Kia and Ricketts use this framing as they write, “the dual framing of the failure of existing political institutions and of an invasive threat from outside the region provided a powerful argument for a resort to nonviolent direct action as the last remaining option for the community” (2018, p. 57).

When community members caught wind of Metgasco’s intention to explore UCG extraction in the Northern Rivers, they began to organize and facilitate activist training (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 15). These trainings across the region built a mass of people who understood social movement dynamics; the basics of non-violent action; and civil disobedience as a form of democracy (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 58).

As Metgasco attempted to establish mining sites, activists did everything in their power to slow Metgasco’s progress. The protectors sustained resistance to Metgasco’s attempts to

establish wells at Glenugie near Grafton, and later at Doubtful Creek near Kyogle in 2013 (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 14). Approximately 150 activists attended the Glenugie blockade, and hundreds attended the Doubtful Creek blockade (Luke & Lloyd, 2018, p. 91). Police were deployed to enable the installation of drill rigs at these sites, and to provide security for the gas company operations (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 58). These early blockades did not prevent drilling, yet supporters maintained a disruptive presence throughout the entire operation (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 58). As the social movement built momentum, setbacks such as the drilling at these sites were framed as part of the extended process which would eventually hold the government and corporations accountable (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 58).

Manifestation of the Bentley blockade

Despite Metgasco's withdrawal from two locations, activists remained focused when Metgasco formally announced in February of 2014 that it would drill at Bentley, which is 12 kilometers west of Lismore (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 14). This announcement evoked large scale direct action, especially because it was widely believed that industrial scale production would ensue if the initial exploration was fruitful (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 14).

Prior to the formal announcement from Metgasco, community members were taking actions including screenings of films such as *Gaslands* and *Fractured Country*, holding informational meetings, holding marches in Lismore and Murwillumbah, and conducting nonviolent direct action trainings to spread awareness and prepare for direct action at the site (Luke & Lloyd, 2018, p. 91). The Bentley blockade began as an ongoing vigil at the site that started in January 2014 (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 15). This vigil was emblematic of nonviolent action, as the principle was to bear witness and express opposition (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 15). The vigil site grew into a tent village with three gates blockaded by protesters twenty-four hours a day (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 15).

Popular support grew and spread throughout the Northern Rivers region. In response, Metgasco contacted the state government to provide police to coincide with the arrival of equipment (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 16). The activists believed that 200 police would be sent to defend the site in April, and the community responded by increasing their presence at Bentley to approximately 2000 people (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 16). This deterred police, and they called off their operation (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 16).

As the blockade wore on, activist training increased, primarily focusing on non-violent resistance and preparing people to be police liaisons (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 17). In May, the NSW government was preparing to send 800 police and a riot squad to break the blockade (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 17). By this time, it was anticipated that a crisis alert system could draw five to ten thousand people to the Bentley site to defend the land (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 73).

In the meantime, local farmers and activist leaders went to Sydney in search of a political solution to avoid the anticipated clash between activists and police at Bentley (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 17).

Outcomes of the Bentley blockade

On May 15th, 2014 the Office of Coal Seam Gas suspended Metgasco's drilling license on the grounds that the company had not adequately fulfilled the obligation to meaningfully consult with the community (Hartman & Darab, 2014, para 18). More than a year after the Bentley blockade ended, in November 2015 GFNR reached its main campaign goal when Metgasco shareholders accepted an offer of \$25 million dollars from the NSW government for the surrender of all its gas licenses in the Northern Rivers (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 75).

Methods & Ethics

Study location and participants

I chose to conduct this study in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, Australia, because this region exemplifies a strong resistance to unconventional gas, and the Bentley blockade gained widespread attention from surrounding areas. While there are other regions in Australia resisting invasive industries, I felt that the community actions taken in the Northern Rivers informed and inspired the actions of other communities. Therefore, it was only fitting that I conduct my study where it started.

The participants in this study were selected based on their involvement in the Bentley blockade, but also with the movement for a Gasfield Free region more broadly. It was my goal to engage with people from various backgrounds and levels of involvement. I drafted an outline of participant types that included radical environmentalists, people with an organizational role at the Bentley blockade, media oriented people, film makers, members of Lock the Gate, the organizer of the Gasfield free community idea, local businesses, and farmers. It was my hope to get in contact with people from all these backgrounds to best investigate the ways in which people with varied backgrounds and motivations can collaborate to deliver such a strong community response.

Despite my attempts to reach people from all these backgrounds, I did not get the breadth of people I was hoping for. I interviewed 11 people in total. Many of these contacts were provided by my advisor who was involved with the campaign, some of them I contacted through the snowball method, and some I met at community events. I ended up interviewing facilitators of the GFNR campaign, logistics managers of the Bentley blockade, individual activists, a film maker, and community members. A full list of people I interviewed and their affiliations can be found in Appendix A: Interview Schedule.

Data collection and analysis

Conducting and analyzing intensive interviews

Prior to any data collection, I spent a week doing background research on social movements, unconventional gas, and the history of unconventional gas opposition in the Northern Rivers specifically. Using this information, I refined my study question and drafted interview

questions that I thought would evoke the most information to answer my study question (Appendix B: Interview Guide).

By the end of the first week of field study, I started conducting interviews. The interviews were scheduled based on participant availability, and I continued conducting interviews through the last week of my field research. I conducted my first interview on April 12th, and my last interview on May 2nd.

During these interviews I followed my interview topics, but left many questions open ended and let the interviewee talk about their area of expertise. I recorded all the interviews and took brief notes during the interview process. After the interviews, I listened to the recordings and typed notes about the most relevant topics and important quotes. After writing extensive notes from each interview recording, I made a list of key themes from each interview.

After concluding my last interview, I compared the emergent themes from all the interviews and made a list of the most prominent themes that answer my study question. These are the themes I chose to analyze in relation to current literature on social movements and environmental campaigns. These themes were analyzed to convey their applicability to other social movements.

Interview ethics

Prior to scheduling any interviews, I drafted an informed consent form which made participants aware of my research goals, how the information gathered would be used, and presented the opportunity to choose how they are referenced in my research (Appendix C: Informed consent form). After participants signed the form, I asked them if they are comfortable with me recording the interview for accuracy of quotes. Everyone I interviewed consented to having their interviews recorded, but if they had not, I would have relied on my handwritten notes.

Survey distribution

In addition to conducting 11 intensive interviews, I also created an electronic survey to investigate activist motivations and involvement in the Bentley blockade. This survey included questions about participants' previous experience with activism, how they learned

about this specific campaign, and the extent to which they agree with multiple statements about the movement (Appendix D: Survey).

My advisor is the administrator and member of many activist Facebook groups that were involved with the Bentley blockade, and she shared my survey on 10 Facebook pages. This survey also may have been shared by people within those Facebook groups. It is difficult to discern how many people had access to this survey, however it had a relatively low response rate, with 27 people taking the survey.

Survey data analysis

As I looked at the responses to the survey, I chose to focus on questions that had a strong skew in one opinion. This is an indication of the significance of that data. Additionally, I chose to focus on survey questions that were most related to the interview themes. The survey responses I chose to include in my results and discussion are percentages calculated from the number of respondents that indicated each response. I chose to represent my data in percentage form because this is a better representation of the sample's opinions, compared to citing a flat number without the context of the sample. Some of the survey data can be presented in sentence form, but for my survey question with multiple variables I chose to create a graph. My survey question about how people were informed of the risks of unconventional gas extraction included ten options for response. Therefore, a graphical representation is the most efficient way for my audience to see the comparison amongst these methods of information dissemination.

Limitations of Study

Time constraint

I had 5 weeks to conduct background research, interview people, distribute a survey, analyze the data, and write a final report. Due to the compact nature of this project, I had limited time to conduct interviews. If I had an extended period for data collection, I may have interviewed a wider breadth of people from the community. Although I had excellent interviews with key organizers and participants of this campaign, a longer data collection period would have allowed me to reach a more diverse group of people to interview. This may include representation from farmers, businesses that refused to serve Metgasco employees, police officers that supported the effort, people from Lock the Gate, and more individuals that participated in the campaign.

Lack of engagement with the survey

The Bentley blockade and the campaign leading up to it engaged thousands of people. Only 27 people responded to my survey. Therefore, the survey data must be understood as a limited sample of the population involved with the Bentley blockade. Although the survey data is limited, it does yield some insight into the experience of activists that participated in this campaign. Therefore, the survey is supplementary data to interviews, providing support for themes that emerged through the interview process. It does not have a large enough sample size to inform my study question on a standalone basis.

Ethics

Local review board approval

Prior to any data collection, I received ethics approval from the local review board. I submitted a description of my project and proposed methods for investigating my research question. I received ethics approval on April 3, 2019.

Decision not to distribute reductive information to this community

During the early stages of this research, I intended to create a small distillation of organizational tactics and frameworks used in the campaign leading to the Bentley blockade. However, through my interviews and interactions with people involved in the campaign and its analysis, I realized that distributing a reductive list of tactics is counterintuitive. Although my initial intention to do this was rooted in the hope that my research findings would be relevant to others, and perhaps empower other communities, I now recognize how this is problematic. It does not make much sense for a foreigner, with very limited contact or immersion in the community, and no involvement in the actual campaign, to be distributing this information to surrounding communities that likely have a better understanding of the issue than I do. Therefore, I recognize the potential for the Bentley blockade and the framework used in the broader campaign to inspire others, however my role is not to attempt to educate other Australian communities on this matter. In fact, people I interviewed had already traveled to other communities to educate and inspire them (I did not know this when I began this research project).

My intention to make a short list of tactics was also conceived prior to discussing with interviewees the issues with an over simplified, cause and effect analysis of social movements. Given my gained understanding of the complexity of social movements and

campaigns, I decided not to make or distribute a short list of factors that lead to successful campaigns. Instead I have resolved to complete my research here and explain to others in the U.S the importance of recognizing the complexity of these movements, and stop searching for the cookie cutter approach to social movement success.

Results/ Discussion

Gaining interest and community support

The importance of personal, face to face conversations about unconventional gas extraction was emphasized by most people I interviewed. Heather, a community member and mother, stressed the importance of bringing up the subject of gas in just about every conversation she had, and if people did not listen, she told them to do their own personal research (2019, pers.comm). When discussing the Gasfield Free Northern Rivers (GFNR) campaign, Annie Kia, the key conceptualizer of this campaign, stressed that there is no replacement for face to face conversation and community engagement (2019, pers.comm). She said that the campaign “started to go viral, not social media viral, but person to person community to community viral” (2019, pers.comm).

The importance of face to face communication in building this movement is also reflected in the survey data. When asked “How did you initially learn about proposed UCG drilling and its threats in the Northern Rivers? (Select all that apply)” there were responses in every category, yet 92.59% of respondents cited friends or community members as their initial source of information (Figure 1). This demonstrates that even in the age of social media, personal communication is still extremely important for the growth of social movements and campaigns. Social media still played a significant role in building this campaign, with 34% of respondents citing it as an initial source of information, followed by 26% citing films as the initial spark of awareness about unconventional gas extraction (Figure 1). These findings demonstrate the importance of not only personal communication, but diverse methods of information dissemination, in the hopes that all sectors of the population are reached. Benny Zable, performing artist for peace and the environment, stated, “arts is activism, and anything can be art. It brings attention, the whole thing about art is bringing attention to different things and getting the conversation started” (2019, pers.comm). Multiple people interviewed, including a local filmmaker echo the opinion that arts are an important avenue for building social movements and spreading awareness about an issue.

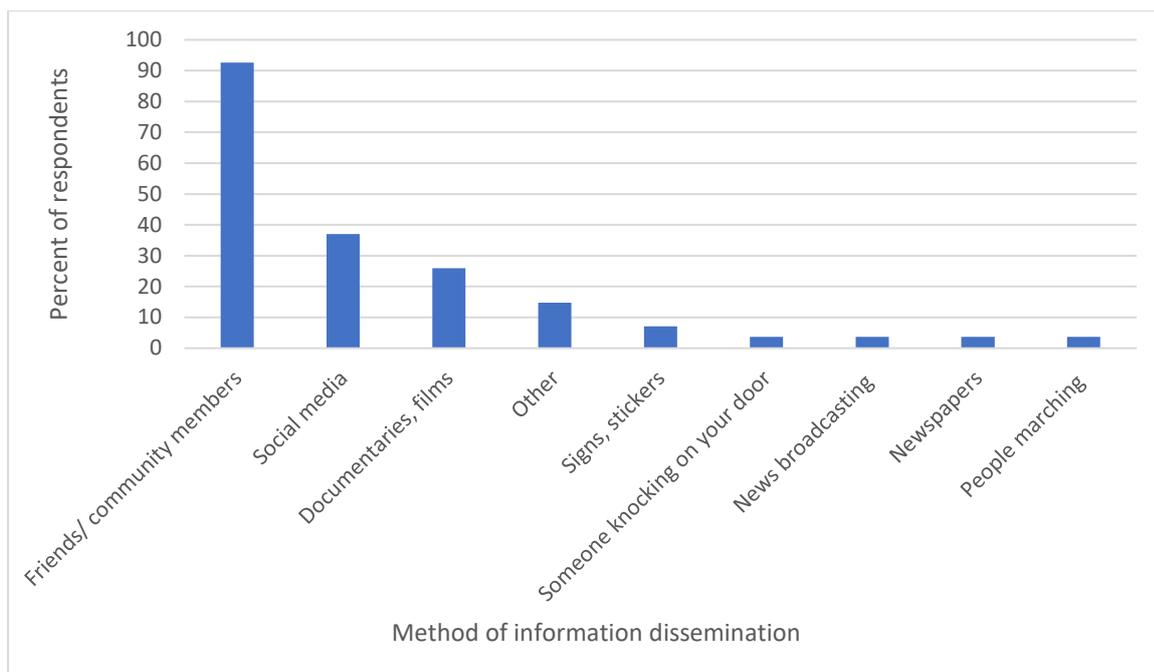


Figure 1. Methods of information dissemination by percent

Another key aspect to the growth of the GFNR campaign was the intentional tightness and focus of the message (Kia, 2019, pers.comm). It was the specificity of this campaign which made it accessible to the diverse community. One community member formerly on the committee of GFNR stated:

What sets Bentley apart is the depth and breadth of community engagement. There is a maturity in Bentley where we were able to accept some fairly right-winged, racist, my goodness whatever people, and we did that on the basis that they were totally committed to stopping UCG. And that was the issue, we were not getting ourselves in a knot about their other attitudes and they weren't getting themselves in a knot about us not being like them. There was enough commonality. It doesn't take a lot of discussion when you run your flag up and say, we are here to stop UCG. Keep it simple. (2019, pers.comm)

Ian Gaillard, former coordinator of GFNR, also cited not allowing any specific political party to dominate the narrative to keep as much of the community engaged as possible. He states, "We were the community and we consciously kept it that way. The Greens tried to take over and we did not allow it. We would lose people. In the end we had National Party members coming to our talks, they would bring farmers, we had a broad spread of people" (2019, pers. comm.)

The diverse engagement with the community is attributed not only to the diverse methods of information dissemination, but the focus on the goals of the campaign, rather than the differences of those involved. While many activists may pride themselves in recognizing the intersectionality of environmental issues with socioeconomic status, race, or political affiliations, the success of this campaign was in the disregard for people's differences, given that they were against UCG drilling in the Northern Rivers. Often in the environmental movement people pride themselves on seeing the intersection of all these domains to produce a subordinated region or population, yet it is the fixation on these intersections that excludes people from the movement. Each layer added to a campaign presents another frame with which potential supporters may disagree, and therefore choose not to support the campaign.

Annie makes the point that “people use the term movement when they are actually talking about a campaign. Movements are turbulent and generative and have many thousands of actors, whereas campaigns are tight and focused, and we need both.” (2019, pers. comm).

GFNR was a campaign within the broader environmental movement opposed to UCG. Annie's point about the necessity of having both campaigns and movements is relevant because it helps us understand how so many different people were involved in the movement. Social movements are broad and encompass formal organizations, loose alliances, and individuals (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20). A social movement such as environmentalism is complex and encompasses many groups and individuals which share some but not all their values (Ricketts, 2012, p. 20). While the specific focus of the GFNR campaign made it accessible to a diverse range of the population, this campaign was one of many campaigns and actions leading to the Bentley blockade.

The broader social movement encompasses the emergence of autonomous groups working towards a common goal of opposing UCG drilling. This relates to social networks used to grow and strengthen the movement, in that the diversity of groups and individuals strengthened existing social networks and created new network ties. Stoddart & Tindall discuss the relevance of personal networks in the initial recruitment for a social movement, inter-organizational networks, networks that transmit ideas to people outside the movement, and networks that create social capital for the movement (2010, p. 256). All these types of network ties manifested in the growth and success of the movement for a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers. The diversity of networks within a social movement is like biodiversity in our ecological system, in which different groups can work together despite tactical

differences (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 263). Thus, various network ties connect people to the “broader political ecology of social movements” (Stoddart & Tindall, 2010, p. 263). The diverse nature of the groups and individuals involved is one factor which made this movement resilient and successful.

Leadership structure

The leadership structure of the GFNR campaign and of the larger social movement was essential to the growth and power of the movement. Multiple people I interviewed emphasized the importance of having a core group of experienced activists guiding the movement. As Ian explained, “It is really important to have a core of facilitators who can steer a meeting and shutdown unhelpful discussion, which is a sensitive thing to do, and to come up with outcomes that are transparent to the group” (2019, pers.comm)

The importance of having a core group of experienced activists was discussed in almost every interview I conducted. Ian makes an important point not only about the efficiency of meetings, but also the necessity of transparency between leaders and other people participating in the movement (2019, pers.comm). Aidan Ricketts, author of *The Activists’ Handbook*, also discussed the importance of creating clear parameters and conditions for the movement as it grew in numbers and strength. He explains,

The initial conditions are that it is nonviolent and its self-organizing social movement with these aims and philosophical premises, and once it took off, we had to stand back and care for the boundaries, so it did not step over these boundaries. We had to deal with the capacity for disfunction, this entailed troubleshooting and looking after where it could go wrong, and otherwise letting it grow and prosper, and it did. (2019, pers.comm).

It is evident that although there were designated core facilitators for the GFNR campaign and the greater social movement intent on maintaining nonviolence and efficiency of actions, they otherwise encouraged the autonomy and agency of the people and groups working towards a Gasfield Free region. To elaborate on this style of leadership, “the Capacity Builders group intentionally fostered the growth and fitness of the movement rather than to attempt to centrally direct it. The result was a diverse movement in which local autonomy was maximized, leadership was performative and functional rather than structural, and innovation and initiative on part of the growing range of participants was encouraged” (Kia and Ricketts,

2018, p. 62). The encouragement of autonomous groups served to grow the social movement in that people could contribute to the cause using their personal strengths. The diversity of autonomous groups allowed for a greater breadth of community engagement. The leaders within this movement recognized the necessity of guidance and remaining nonviolent, yet also saw the opportunity for growth and resilience through “midwifing action groups into being” (Kia, 2019, pers.comm).

Applying complexity theory as a framework for which to understand the leadership style was discussed in four interviews with various core facilitators of the GFNR campaign. Aidan explained, “Complexity theory allowed us to have an incredibly horizontal structure for mobilizing Gasfield Free across the landscape, for bringing people together to build this incredible people power, while also allowing for very small cells of very intelligent switched on people working on very strategic campaigns” (2019, pers.comm).

The essence of this theory as it applies to GFNR is the ability for the leadership structure to adapt to the current conditions of the social movement. This can also manifest different leadership structures in different realms of the movement. While autonomous groups were celebrated and encouraged for using their expertise to forward the movement, there were simultaneously existing campaigns that were tightly controlled and strategic. Annie explained,

The top-down framework is default setting, enforced by society, and it is what people are used to. However, it is important for people in social movements to understand when you use top down networks and when you use distributed leadership and decentralized networks. I think it is essential for anyone involved in campaigns and social movements to understand this. (2019, pers.comm)

This movement demonstrates that not only is the coexistence of horizontal and top-down leadership possible, but this coexistence within various sectors of a social movement can strengthen the overall movement.

Aidan emphasizes not only the importance of leadership style within a situational context, but the necessity of some sort of leadership structure in general. He explained,

If you try to impose an ideology of leaderless-ness and structureless-ness in a social movement what you end up doing is continually clear-felling emerging functionality. As a

structure that emerges that works, you go ‘that’s structure!’ And demolish it...in the end this leads to no control over the voice of the movement to the media, or a political strategy. (2019, pers.comm).

While the organic nature of grassroots campaigns and social movements is often celebrated, Aidan’s point demonstrates the relevance of understanding the effectiveness of different leadership styles within various contexts. Organic and grassroots social movements are not synonymous with the absence of leadership structure. While activists may be keen to romanticize the organic nature of a movement, or oppose top-down power, we must acknowledge the necessity and effectiveness of both top-down and horizontal leadership. This understanding comes within the context of the specific campaign or social movement.

Nonviolent direct action training in the context of social movements

In every interview, activists emphasized the necessity of nonviolence throughout this movement. Additionally, 96.3% of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “nonviolence is key to success.” One of the GFNR campaign slogans was ‘Nonviolent ; Non-negotiable’ (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 57). The interview and survey data evidences the embodiment of nonviolent values and the consistency of nonviolence through each action leading to the Bentley blockade. The contextualization of nonviolence *within* social movements made it easier for the community to understand why nonviolence is powerful, and how nonviolent direct action leads to change. Aidan explained,

Nonviolent training was strategically linked to social movement training, to teach what it meant to be part of a self-organizing social movement, and I think that was key. It was not all about lining up in front of police, it was about everything else you did leading up to that. It was about the agency you have. Because people had grown up in the hierarchical society that encourages passivity, and we are trying to teach them that this is not an organization that is running things and your job is not just to get arrested; no, you are this organization, and you are running it, it is your social movement. As people learn that they get empowered and creative and that's the magic about it. (2019, pers.comm).

The contextualization of nonviolence is necessary to prepare people to sustain throughout each campaign within a social movement. While nonviolence is a strong value amongst interviewees, it is its context within social movements that gives nonviolent direct action the

power to forward a movement. Aidan makes the point that nonviolent direct action is valuable, but it is not the end all solution to any issue (2019, pers.comm). The preparation and actions taken leading to and after nonviolent direct action are what makes it a catalyst for change. Part of the nonviolent direct action trainings was restoring the notion of agency amongst groups and individuals that have been conditioned by society to fall within hierarchical strata and remain passive. Replacing this conception with celebrated autonomy was an important avenue in which the capacity builders could guide people into realizing their agency and using it to forward a movement for a Gasfield free region.

Power of framing and language

Multiple people interviewed emphasized the power of framing and language during the Gasfield Free campaign. Annie, one of the conceptualizers of the Gasfield Free campaign, explained that “we specifically use the term ‘gasfield’ as one word as a framing thing. We do not want to talk about the gas without the field” (2019, pers.comm). Ian explained how the use of the words ‘Gasfield Free’ enabled the facilitators to “rebrand the narrative, we have ‘Lock the Gate’ going on, but we are really Gasfield Free Northern Rivers. It took it from just stopping something to ‘what is it like to live in a gasfield?’ This expanded our narrative. That was an important distinction, it made it the Northern Rivers specifically” (2019, pers.comm). The capacity builders of the Gasfield Free Northern Rivers campaign were very intentional in their framing of the campaign as it closed the gap between their homeland and the gas the industry intended to extract. Annie’s refusal to allow a discussion of gas without the field solidified the narrative of the gas being a part of the landscape, that which could not be extracted without disrupting the land and the surrounding community. A community member formerly on the committee of GFNR discussed this aspect of framing in saying,

Aidan was brilliant at framing, he said ‘look fracking is not the problem, it is *a* problem, but the real problem is the whole landscape the whole community that will be smashed.’ It was Aidan who developed the term ‘invasive industrial gas.’ And that meant we got a whole different mission, not of this elite idea of something going on underground, but of the actual destruction of rural environments and farmland (2019, pers.comm).

This is another example of how the capacity builders served to guide the campaign and create a context within which participants can act to protect their communities. Additionally, the development of ‘invasive industrial gas’ is provocative of the threat this industry poses to

farmland and communities. This frame is another way in which capacity builders made the campaign accessible to a broader community. It was not just environmentalists concerned with preventing an industry from entering the community, it was also the farmers, townspeople, business people, and individuals concerned for the wellbeing of the land and water systems.

Additionally, Annie discussed the ways in which framing can be designed to best achieve the goals of a campaign. She said, “The language we use is really important to think through. What are the consequences or implications of using a particular phrase or frame? For example, instead of having a campaign that is no fracking, a campaign that is *Gasfield Free* evokes something positive for that community, it’s something you can celebrate. It gave us the chance to create those ceremonies as positive happy events. Whereas if it had been like ‘we’re all opposed to gas fields’ it would have been doom and gloom” (2019, pers.comm).

While the distinction between ‘Gasfield Free’ and ‘anti-gas’ may seem small, the positive impression evoked by ‘Gasfield Free’ surpasses the effectiveness of designating a community as anti-fracking or anti-gas. Giving the community something to work towards, rather than against, is what this framing evokes. Maintaining a positive frame is also important to consider when trying to maintain the attention and focus within a community. Using Gasfield Free as a campaign, rather than negative language, had the capacity to mobilize more people, and sustain their commitment through a positive vision.

Annie furthered her discussion about framing by explaining the value in understanding the frame of the entity the campaign is working against. She said, “we have to think constantly about how corporations and government frame things and use framing that works for us. Governments and companies talk about how we need gas. Their frame is ‘we’re all going to run out of gas.’ So we refuse to talk about gas, not even a hyphen between gas and field” (2019, pers.comm).

Understanding the framing and appeals of the opposing entity is helpful when trying to craft the frame of a campaign. My interviews with Annie and other conceptualizers demonstrate the sheer amount of thought and preparation that goes into the language of a campaign. While some might think the difference between a few words is meaningless, the insights shared in

these interviews demonstrate the power of language and the extent to which a frame can welcome or exclude people from joining a campaign.

Sustained commitment to activism

In addition to expanding the narrative of those living in the Northern Rivers, language and framing were crucial to maintaining positivity and sustaining commitment to the campaign. I chose to frame this section as sustained commitment to the campaign rather than ‘burnout prevention,’ given Annie’s insight about the word ‘burnout.’ During our interview she explained, “I do not use the word ‘burnout’ and I strongly encourage activists to not use that word because of what it evokes. To me it evokes a burnt-out vehicle on the side of the road that is not going to get going again. I prefer to say tired, very tired, or very very tired. And you can do something about that, and we are resilient. I do not like that word burnout, because I think it is a very limiting frame” (2019, pers.comm).

This discussion demonstrates how the frame we chose to characterize our experiences can have an immense impact on our ability to sustain a campaign and maintain the energy to participate in other social or environmental movements. Aidan also discussed the importance of framing in relation to restoring courage and hope amongst activists at the blockades leading to the Bentley blockade. In his account of the blockade at Glenugie he recalls,

What needed to be said rose within me, which in the literature that is referred to as ‘sense making,’ where a leader’s role is to make sense of what is happening to the rest of the group, because otherwise the group flounders, or they feel like failure. People were getting disempowered and upset and I got the megaphone and said the NSW government has paid us a very good compliment in sending these 80 riot police today, because what they are telling us is that we are powerful and they are afraid of us, and what the NSW government and police know is that they are rostered here for a finite amount of time, whether it be 1 or 3 days--it does not matter because this is our community, and we are here 365 days a year and we will not go away (2019, pers.comm).

What Aidan describes relates to Moyer’s fifth stage of social change: perceptions of failure (2001, p. 58). As the activists at Glenugie doubt their power in the face of police presence, Aidan actively shifts the frame to create a positive outlook and inspire the activists to sustain.

Shifting the frame to encompass a longer period of time and contextualizing this blockade within the greater movement for a Gasfield free region empowered the activists and inspired them to sustain within the movement.

In addition to the power of framing, there are many other ways activists can sustain their commitment to a cause. One of the most prominent methods discussed in interviews was the strong connection to nature. All eleven people I interviewed expressed their deep connection to nature as not only a motivation for opposing invasive industries, but also as a place of rejuvenation and resilience. As a local filmmaker remarked, “Deep connection to nature is key to a most fulfilling life here, I think if you don’t have that, you are basically treading water. Once you fully appreciate the sacredness of life, all life, and just how incredible the natural systems are, you can’t possibly desecrate them. So, then you are compelled to protect them” (2019, pers.comm).

Deep connections to nature amongst environmental activists are known to inspire and sustain their commitment to a campaign (Driscoll, 2018, p. 698). The activists involved in the movement for a Gasfield Free region are no exception. In addition to 100% of interviewees citing nature to sustain their involvement, 100% of activists that took the online survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “You have a strong connection to nature or country.” These findings are significant because identifying various ways in which activists can motivate and sustain their commitment to a cause is relevant to the cultivation of future activists and campaigns. The findings from interviews and the survey are consistent with Driscoll’s assessment of what sustains activists (Driscoll, 2018, p. 698), in that personal past, family relations, role models, and personal missions were all cited as methods of maintaining a positive commitment to the campaign.

Intergenerational involvement

One of the site coordinators of the Bentley blockade, Robyn Kelly, commented on not only the diversity of communities represented at the blockade, but also the diversity of ages represented (2019, pers.comm). The intergenerational aspect of this movement, and the Bentley blockade specifically, is important to note when considering how we can sustain the environmental movement. Terri Nicholson, a community member and mother explains the relevance of the history of activism in the region:

The people involved in Terania, who back then were in their 20s, ended up being the elders in the more current Gasfield Free movement. It was amazing to see how they took their experience from Terania from 40 years ago, and became the elders, I was 3 at the time of Terania and was then involved in this movement (2019, pers.comm).

When talking about Terania, she is referring to the Terania Creek protests that took place on her parents' property 40 years ago. This is significant because this was the first time citizens used direct action to protect rainforest, placing themselves before police and bulldozers (Jeffery 2019, para 13). This blockade was a catalyst for the NSW government to gazette the remaining rainforest in the state, including Terania Creek, as National Park (Bible, 2009, para 16). Terri explains how this is relevant to understanding the lead to and success of the Bentley blockade:

The experience of Terania created a massive sense of continuity in the region, for the region to already have experience, and for the community to have had the experience of being able to win a massive environmental protest. There are so many losses within the environmental movement, so a really significant win, saving that Terania forest, gave the community confidence and belief that it was possible going into Bentley (2019, pers.comm).

The past success of an environmental campaign in the region, and the continued support of those involved, fostered hope and courage within the community as they prepared to battle invasive gas industries. The intergenerational aspect of this movement is relevant because it demonstrates the potential of history and experienced activists to inspire the next generation of activists. This is relevant because the previous generations will eventually pass on. Therefore, it is of great importance to carry their legacy and sustain environmentalism through younger generations. Terri discusses the importance of bringing her children to the Bentley blockade:

This is something your kids will remember and know is entwined with their story. You need to show up not just for the cause, but to give your kids their own sense of identity as someone who partakes in nonviolent direct action for the planet. It is really important to instill that sense of belonging to your kids and a movement that is bigger than yourself (2019, pers.comm).

Terri and other activists I interviewed recognize the necessity of engaging younger generations in activism. This is pertinent because although there have been significant wins within the broader environmental movement, there is a continual wave of battles that require the sustained engagement from the community. This is sustainable only through the participation of younger generations, and those to come.

Legacy of the Bentley blockade

The Bentley blockade was a significant win for those involved, given that the gas license was suspended at the close, and eventually bought back by the NSW government. However, it is important to recognize this success in the context of the greater movement. As Annie said in her interview, “It’s not just Bentley, it was a whole campaign strategy...a charismatic thing like Bentley crowds other knowledge” (2019, pers.comm).

There is so much more to the movement for a Gasfield Free region than the largest, most visible action taken. While it is worth celebrating successes of individual actions, we must not fall to triumphalism. Annie and Aidan write, “success, particularly in the often frustrating world of protest and activism is worth writing about not only for the morale of future movements but more importantly to attempt to identify the practices and processes that may have contributed to that success. It remains critically important however to avoid attributing a simple cause and effect explanation to the relationship between processes and success” (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 74). Rather than attempt to distill the clear cause and effect of actions taken in the lead up to Bentley, I am trying to understand the framework within which such a campaign was possible. Although I have traced specific themes that emerged from interviews, these themes are intentionally chosen based on their broader applicability to other social or environmental movements. The discussion of themes in relation to other movements is with Aidan’s words in mind:

Complexity theory does not provide a model for social movements, it provides an informed approach to experimentation. So, you don’t say ‘let’s do what was done what was done at Bentley,’ you say, ‘let’s do what will work with the conditions we are dealing with, in a different situation.’ It is always adaptive, investigative, and experimental. You will do things differently in different circumstances. It is not about having a cookie cutter (2019, pers.comm).

This is an extremely important realization given the social context in which we are conditioned to follow set guidelines from our superiors. The essence of complexity thinking is that there is no concrete formula to the success of a social movement, rather it is the application of critical thinking within changing circumstances that can lead to useful actions. As Annie and Aidan write, “complexity thinking does not provide a model for success for social movements; rather it provides a framework within which the movement itself continually fosters its own growth and fitness. Adaptability, inclusiveness, and iterative experimentation lay at the foundation of the success of the Bentley blockade, and of the broader GFNR campaign” (Kia & Ricketts, 2018, p. 75).

The application of complexity theory to this campaign is enlightening as it can inspire the use of the complexity framework for other campaigns. The core principle of this framework is the ability for people to experiment and alter their actions as the conditions of the movement evolve. The GFNR campaign was especially successful because the capacity builders had a clear understanding of the complexity framework and how it could be applied to current events.

Conclusion

The growth and applicability of this movement

In this study I sought to answer the question: How did the campaign for a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers reach the scale of the Bentley blockade, and what aspects of this campaign and the broader movement are applicable to other movements?

The first aspect of this question is answered through my investigation into the community outreach of GFNR and the design of their campaign goals. People on the committee for GFNR stressed the importance of face to face communication about unconventional gas. This occurred through the Gasfield Free Communities initiative, but in many other realms such as community meetings, marches, and everyday interactions. Additionally, my survey found that the diverse methods of information dissemination were relevant, as each method was cited as a point of initial awareness about unconventional gas drilling. These findings demonstrate that there is no replacement for face to face communication when conveying the urgency of an issue. However, all methods of information dissemination are relevant as this increases the likelihood of engaging with a diverse range of people.

The immense growth of this campaign is also attributed to the thought and intentionality of the GFNR campaign. The specificity and tightness of the message was crucial to the growth of the campaign, as it reduced the likelihood of excluding members of the community based on differing opinions regarding periphery issues.

Through interview analysis, several key themes emerged that are applicable to the growth and success of other social or environmental movements. In terms of leadership structure, the first relevant finding is that structure is necessary to the success of a campaign. Structureless-ness will inevitably lead to an inefficient campaign and eventual collapse. Secondly, it is not only possible, but also beneficial to a campaign to have coexisting top-down and horizontal leadership. The coexistence of these leadership styles is important because it creates an opportunity for certain aspects of a campaign to be strategic and controlled, while autonomous groups and individual agents of change can utilize their strengths in other realms. The combination of these leadership styles allows for a balanced and strengthened system to forward a campaign. Understanding that leadership structure can vary across realms of a campaign, or in different stages of a social movement, is relevant to future

campaigns, because it gives leaders the freedom to evolve with the changing conditions, and thus produce the best response.

The contextualization of nonviolent direct action within the greater context of social movements helped participants in this movement understand their power as stakeholders and sustain their commitment to nonviolence. The holistic nature of the nonviolent direct action trainings in this movement is applicable to other movements because it highlights the necessity of context. While not all campaigns will involve direct action, the importance of contextualizing is applicable more broadly because people are more likely to commit and sustain their involvement to a campaign if they have a holistic understanding of their role, and how their actions will create change.

In addition to contextualizing, the careful choice of language and mindful framing of this campaign contributed to its success and lasting commitment. The language used in the GFNR campaign was strategic in that it created an avenue for broad community engagement, while simultaneously expanding the narrative. The interviews with conceptualizers of the GFNR campaign demonstrated the necessity of careful thought and planning around language and framing. This applies to other movements and campaigns because it demonstrates how language, something we often take for granted, can immensely impact the accessibility and success of a campaign.

The intergenerational aspect of this movement demonstrates the community's commitment to environmentalism and sustainability. Understanding the importance of engaging all age strata of the community is relevant to future campaigns because without the engagement of younger generations, the campaigns and environmental movements of the current era cannot sustain.

The final, and arguably most important, theme from the interviews is the necessity to resist triumphalism and the tendency to attribute campaign success to a cause and effect progression of events. We cannot continue to search for the exact formula for social movement success. This does not make sense given the variability of social movements and their continually evolving conditions. Instead, what we can learn from the GFNR campaign, and the broader social movement leading to the Bentley blockade, is the value of an informed approach to experimentation. It is the ability to experiment and adapt throughout a social movement which creates resilience and increased likelihood of success. Therefore, we should embrace complexity and systems thinking, rather than an isolated or reductive approach to

studying social movements. This system of thought is liberating and applicable to all social movements. This framework allows leaders and participants of social movements the freedom of experimentation and adaptability to the specific conditions they experience.

Recommendations for further study

While I do not believe there needs to be further research in terms of distilling the exact formula for social movement success, I think further research on how leaders are receptive to complexity thinking would increase the likelihood of social movements and campaigns to continue reaching their goals. The application of complexity theory to social movements specifically is relatively new, and in many ways pioneered by Annie Kia and Aidan Ricketts. In this research I did not have the time or space to integrate a coherent understanding and in-depth application of complexity theory to this specific social movement. While Kia and Ricketts are working on that front, I also think it would be beneficial to explore how complexity theory and using this frame to forward social movements is being accepted more broadly. This application could have the potential to empower and educate many leaders working on a plethora of campaigns or movements. Therefore, it is worth exploring how this application can be made widely accessible and easily implemented within the social movement discourse.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Schedule

Name	Date of interview	Mode of communication	Length of interview
Ian Gaillard, former coordinator of Gasfield Free Northern Rivers	4/12/19	Meeting at the La Baracca Cafe	1:10
Robyn Kelly, logistics manager at the Bentley blockade	4/12/19	Meeting at Henry's Bakery Cafe	37
Benny Zable, performance artist for peace and the environment	4/14/19	The Channon Craft Market	1:08
Community member on the committee of GFNR	4/15/19	Meeting at La Baracca Cafe	39
Aidan Ricketts, lecturer at Southern Cross University School of Law and author of <i>The Activists' Handbook</i>	4/16/19	Meeting Southern Cross Uni	1:21
Louise Somerville, spokesperson for the Knitting Nannas Against Gas	4/18/19	Meeting at Flock cafe	43
Annie Kia, representative from Gasfield Free Northern Rivers and conceptualizer of the Gasfield Free community idea	4/23/19	Meeting at Annie's home	1:34
Johanna Evans, organizer of direct action at the Bentley blockade-Gate A	4/25/19	Voice call over WhatsApp	31
Local filmmaker	4/30/19	Meeting at Dragonfly cafe	48
Heather McDiarmid, community member	4/30/19	Meeting at the Bank cafe	1:19
Terri Nicholson, community member and mother	5/2/19	Terri's home	33

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

The Bentley Anti-Gas protest and its Applicability to Other Movements

Study question: How did the movement against coal seam gas in the Lismore area reach the scale of the Bentley protest, and what aspects of the Bentley protest could be applicable to other social or environmental movements?

Interview topics

1. Initial involvement in activism/ UCG opposition
 - a. Individual or organization
 - b. Recruitment tactics
2. General role within movement leading up to Bentley
 - a. Small scale direct action
3. Role at Bentley blockade
 - a. How did this contribute to license suspension/ overall success of blockade?
4. Organization of the blockade
 - a. What was the leadership structure?
 - b. What types of people/groups took the lead?
 - c. Cohesivity? Tensions? >> about what issues?
5. Social Networks
 - a. Within the movement
 - b. Transmitting information to public
 - c. Connections with social capital/ politicians/ powerful people
 - d. Outside the movement—burnout prevention
6. Key value holding people together?
7. Perception of the Bentley blockade and its legacy

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

The Bentley Anti-Gas Movement and its Applicability to Other Movements

Mariah Thomson

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

My name is Mariah Thomson and I am an undergraduate student with SIT Study Abroad. For the past two months I have been studying sustainability and environmental action in Australia. As the culmination of my semester I am doing an independent research project on the Bentley blockade. My research project will seek to answer the question: How did the movement against unconventional gas in the Lismore area reach the scale of the Bentley blockade and what aspects of the Bentley protest could be applicable to other social or environmental movements? This study needs to be done to increase the likelihood of other environmental movements attaining the same level of impact as the fight against unconventional gas in the Northern Rivers region.

Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about it to make an informed decision. If you have any questions, please ask me.

INFORMATION

1. Your participation in this study will involve the following:

- a) An interview in which I will ask questions about your personal involvement in the Bentley blockade and the movement against unconventional gas more broadly. This interview should not exceed 45 minutes, and you have the option to end the interview at any point.
- b) Potential for a follow-up email or phone call with clarifying questions that may improve the accuracy of the information presented in my research.

2. The information gained from this interview will be incorporated into a written report that will be submitted for an undergraduate class and will be included in the program library and may possibly be published on the internet. It will also form part of a short oral presentation that I will make to my class. I may also use this research when writing my senior thesis for the Sociology & Anthropology department at the University of Puget Sound

RISKS

The interview process about the movement against unconventional gas may result in mental stress because this may have been an emotional experience for the people involved.

Discussing the struggles associated with direct action, frictions with authorities, and failures prior to the Bentley blockade may be mentally stressful. You may opt out of the interview at any time. If you choose to do this, you also have the option of revoking your interview from any use in my research. Furthermore, we will discuss anonymity and how you would like to be referred to in the research.

BENEFITS

Participation in this study may not benefit you directly. However, the knowledge that we obtain from your participation, and the participation of other volunteers, may help us to better understand how social movements grow, and how the strategies used in the anti-unconventional gas movement can empower other communities

CONFIDENTIALITY

You have the option of either remaining anonymous or of having your contribution to the study acknowledged. We will discuss how you would like to be referred to in the research.

If you choose to remain anonymous, the information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to myself. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may also decline to answer any specific question. If you withdraw from the study at any time the information already obtained from you will be destroyed.

For written consent:

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study.

Subject's signature _____ **Date**

Researcher's signature _____ **Date**

APPENDIX D: Survey: Activist Motivations and Involvement in the Anti Unconventional Gas Movement

1. Did you have a background in activism prior to the anti-unconventional gas (UCG) movement in the Northern Rivers?

- Yes
- No

2. If yes, how many years activist experience do you have?

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20+ years
- Not applicable

3. Were you aware of the risks of unconventional gas extraction before proposed drilling in the Northern Rivers region?

- Yes
- No

4. What year did you become interested or involved with the anti UCG movement?

- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- After the Bentley blockade

5. How did you *initially* learn about proposed UCG drilling and its threats in the Northern Rivers? Select all that apply.

- Social media
- Friends/ community members
- Documentary, films
- Signs, stickers
- Someone knocking on your door

- News broadcasting
 - Newspapers
 - People marching
 - Other (please specify)
-

6. Did you attend or partake in the following events?

- Gasland film screening
 - Community based informational meetings
 - City council meetings
 - Door knocking
 - Leafleting houses
 - Distributing informational DVDs
 - Conducting surveys of local neighborhood
 - Conducting surveys of businesses/ shop owners
 - March in Lismore 2011
 - March in Murwillumbah 2011
 - Rock the Gate, Lismore 2012
 - Nonviolence/direct action/ social movement training
 - Blockade at Glenugie (near Grafton)
 - Blockade at Doubtful Creek (near Kyogle)
 - Bentley blockade
 - Other (please specify)
-

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Political change was your primary goal

You created strong friendships with people involved

You felt an obligation to your

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
family to protest gas companies					
Your safety would be compromised by gas companies					
You have role models that inspired your actions					
You take active measures to prevent activist burnout eg take a step back, rejoice with friends or family outside the movement					
Nonviolence is key to success Inter-generational involvement in social movements is necessary to sustain the movement					
You have a strong connection with nature or country					
UCG movement is one of many environmental or social movements you are involved in					
You are a more effective activist when working with an					

Strongly
disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

environmental
group

You are a more
effective activist
when working as
an individual

Art and creativity
are essential to
sustaining social
movements