

The imagineering of resistance: Pollok Free State and the practice of postmodern politics

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The conflict over the construction of the M77 motorway in Glasgow, Scotland, is an example of a subculture of resistance which has emerged within Britain over the past fifteen years. The paper focuses upon the actions of Glasgow Earth First!, with whom the author has participated, and on the role of Pollok Free State – an ecological encampment located in the projected path of the motorway. Such resistance is characteristic of a postmodern political practice. It is heterogeneous, symbolic and extensively media-ted. It eschews the capture of state power but is a lived, immediate resistance, the experience of which may be transmitted over space and time.

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Introduction

Glasgow. It's a cold, grey Saturday in February, 1995. South of the River Clyde, an ecological encampment stands amid the woodlands and parklands of Pollok estate, Glasgow's largest green space. From the roadside hangs a huge red banner proclaiming 'Pollok Free State' and, amid the tall beech trees, stand carved totems of eagles, ravens and owls, and a confusion of tents, benders (do-it-yourself shelters) and tree houses. Pollok Free State represents a material and symbolic site of resistance to the proposed M77 motorway extension that is planned to run through the western wing of Pollok estate. Here, several hundred people have assembled to await the arrival of four cars being driven from several parts of England by environmental activists. The cars comprise an environmental awareness 'caravan' that has been donated by fellow activists from southern England and driven across the Scottish border to Glasgow. En route, the caravan had publicised the opposition to the M77 motorway. Amongst the faces at the Free State are folk from the nearby housing estates, activists from Earth First! and Greenpeace, Free State residents, video crews from local and national media, and residents from other parts of the city. Tea has been brewing on the camp fire.

Warming themselves around the flames, folk present a confusion of colour and style. People adorned with dreadlocks, shaved heads and mohican-cuts rub shoulders with people wearing kilts, tie-dyed clothes and 'ethnic wear' from various corners of the globe including India, Nepal and Guatemala. A group of musicians strike up some impromptu celtic folk music. An air of expectancy hangs amid the woodsmoke and the winter wind. The four cars that are arriving at the Free State are to be buried, engine down, in the M77 road bed alongside the five that have already been buried. Once buried, the cars will be set alight, burned as totems of resistance and on their charred skeletons anti-motorway slogans painted.

Amid the sounds of car horns, whistles and cheers from the assembled crowd, the cars arrive. The cars line up beside a tree which flies the Lion Rampant. As the crowd proceeds to march towards the burial site, a band strikes up a cacophony of bagpipes, horns, drums, whistles and shouts. We march up to the road bed and, one by one, the cars are manoeuvred into the tombs that have been dug for them. Engine down and with earth and stones packed around them, the cars are buried vertically in the road bed. A great cheer rises from the crowd as one teenager from the nearby Pollok housing estate hurls a stone through the driver's

window, shattering the glass. A resident of the Free State swings a sledge hammer and dispenses with the windscreen. Another cheer rises from the crowd. We are a rhythmic crowd, moving to the visceral beat of the drums. We revel in the burial of the car, encoded as it is with our resistance to the environmental consequences of excessive car use and to the construction of the M77 motorway. Once the cars are buried, petrol is poured over them and they are set alight. Voices of celebration fill the air, accented with Glaswegian, London English, Australian, Swedish, American. People dance in the fire-light, their shadows casting arabesques of celebration upon the road: we dance fire, we become fire, our movements are those of flames. (personal journal 1995)

This journal entry refers to one of my personal experiences within the recent campaign against the M77 motorway extension in Glasgow, Scotland, which represented the country's first anti-motorway ecopolitical conflict.¹ I participated in the 'No M77' campaign as a member of Glasgow Earth First! (one of the groups opposing the road) and Pollok Free State – an 'ecological encampment' that was constructed in the path of the projected motorway and which acted as the focal point of the resistance. My participation lasted from August 1994 to May 1995. In this paper, I want to examine the direct action component of this resistance, focusing upon some of the activities of Glasgow Earth First! and Pollok Free State. I will argue that this dimension of the resistance is characteristic of a postmodern politics; one that is symbolic, ambiguous and media-ted. My analysis draws from my participation in the campaign. The paper deals with some of the social-theoretical issues concerning the protest. I write elsewhere about my involvement as an activist and academic in the campaign.²

Imagined communities of resistance

The events of the M77 protest and Pollok Free State are an example of a subculture of resistance that has emerged in Britain over the past fifteen years. As [Pepper \(1991, 1995\)](#) argues, this subculture consists of a variety of lifestyles and identities, most of which engage with some manifestation of 'green' or ecological ideas and practices. It is manifest in a broad spectrum of beliefs – from deep ecology to social ecology to new ageism – and practices, ranging from the more mainstream (e.g. vegetarianism, cycling to work, recycling) to the

more controversial (e.g. veganism, local currencies, communal living). Along with the emergence of green awareness has been the growth of environmental protest, including the anti-nuclear protests of the early 1980s and the animal rights and anti-roads protests of the late 1980s and 1990s. Much of this culture of resistance articulates non-violent, oppositional politics and do-it-yourself, communitarian lifestyles. Among the groups involved in lifestyle and political protest are new age travellers, hunt saboteurs, anti-roads protesters, anti-nuclear activists and animal rights campaigners.

While those involved in this resistance are heterogeneous, they do share common ground, both ecologically and politically. Ecologically, most groups could be said to articulate an environmental awareness and concern which informs at least some of their actions. Politically, they are informed not only by this environmental awareness but also by the assault made upon their collective interests and freedom to protest by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1994).

Following [Mohanty \(1991, 4\)](#), I would argue that an 'imagined community' of resistance exists which engages with alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries and involves a heterogeneous affinity across gender, generation, class and ethnicity. Hence, issue-specific campaigns (such as anti-roads protests) are frequently entangled with broader communities of interest that overlap, intertwine and coalesce with one another. Facets of this community combine at particular times and places into a strategic force or 'assemblage'³ that temporarily unites the disparate elements of its formation. We shall see that these characteristics were shared by the M77 protest.

Postmodern politics of resistance

Social theorists have interpreted the politics of postmodernism in various ways. Some see it as neoconservative: while problematizing emancipatory narratives, it undermines the prospects for criticism, opposition and resistance ([Berman 1983](#); [Habermas 1981](#)). While [Jameson \(1984\)](#) posits postmodernism as the cultural correlate of consumer, multinational capitalism, [Harvey \(1989\)](#) argues that, even when postmodernism attempts a radical project, it tends to aestheticize politics. It avoids confrontation with the realities of political

economy and the circumstances of global power. However, others, such as Foster (1985) and Lyotard (1988), argue for an oppositional postmodern politics that critically deconstructs tradition and poses resistance to established thought through writing. Other social theorists (e.g. Baumann 1992) argue that particular postmodern forms of resistance are exhibited in contemporary formations of political protest.

I use the term 'resistance' to refer to any action imbued with intent that attempts to challenge, change or retain particular circumstances relating to societal relations, processes and/or institutions. These circumstances may involve material, symbolic or psychological domination, exploitation and subjection.⁴ Resistances are assembled out of the materials and practices of everyday life and imply some form of contestation, some juxtaposition of forces involving all or any of the following: symbolic meanings, communicative processes, political discourses, religious idioms, cultural practices, social networks, physical settings, bodily practices and envisioned desires and hopes. Such actions may be open and confrontational or hidden (see Scott 1985, 1990) and range from the individual to the collective. Their different forms of expression can be of short or long duration; metamorphic, interconnected or hybrid; creative or self-destructive; challenging the status quo or conservative (Calderon *et al.* 1992). Resistances take diverse forms, move in different dimensions (of the family, community, region, etc.) and create unexpected networks, connections and possibilities. They may invent new trajectories and forms of existence, articulate alternative futures and possibilities, and create temporary autonomous zones⁵ as a strategy against particular dominating power relations. Moreover, practices of resistance cannot be separated from practices of domination: they are always entangled in some configuration.

The practices and discourses of resistance require some form of coordination and communication, usually involving some form of collective action, although resistance can be at the individual level.⁶ In order to effect this resistance, actants⁷ must establish (however temporarily) social spaces and socio-spatial networks that are insulated from control and surveillance. Such spaces may be real, imaginary or symbolic. bell hooks (1990) refers to these spaces as 'homeplaces' which act as sources of self-dignity and agency, sites of solidarity in which, and from which, resistance can be organized and conceptu-

alized. However, in addition to the notion of location imbued in the concept of homeplaces, they are also sites of difference and distance, and separation and limitation (Kirby 1995). Such places of resistance are ambiguous in character: they are places where resistance is never a complete, unfractured practice but is entwined in some way with practices of domination such as marginalization, segregation or imposed exile (hooks 1990). I will return to these issues later when I discuss Pollok Free State.

A variety of social theorists have termed many of the social movements involved in contemporary resistance in the advanced capitalist countries 'new social movements'.⁸ However, there is much debate as to the extent to which contemporary social movements are really 'new' and whether continuities exist between 'old' and 'new' movements. For example, Calhoun (1995) has argued persuasively that certain characteristics associated with new social movements – a focus on identity politics, autonomy, self-realization, defensive of particular lifeworlds and a politicization of everyday life – were also exhibited by social movements of the early nineteenth century. Others have argued that social movements have always been multiple and heterogeneous, and that the 'newness' of contemporary movements represents only a re-focusing of interpretation by social scientists to include an increased sensitivity to the plural forms of political action that have always existed in society (Calderon *et al.* 1992; Escobar and Alvarez 1992). Indeed, Calhoun (1995, 176) argues that many of the concerns of contemporary social movements (such as 'identity politics') 'were never quite so much absent from the field of social movement activity... as they were obscured from conventional academic observation'. He argues that the 'new social movement' approach is an analytical construct which enables an improved understanding of contemporary social movements, particularly with regard to their cultural forms and their action within the realm of civil society.

Given that many of the characteristics of new social movements are not unique to the contemporary period, I would argue that what characterizes particular contemporary struggles as postmodern is their extensive media-tion and their symbolic nature. I will examine these characteristics with regard to Pollok Free State and will also argue that such politics are also characterized by hybridity and ambiguity.

Analysing an increasingly media-*ted* world, Wark (1994) has argued that contemporary subjectivities are formed within two sets of exterior relations: the map and the territory. The former constitutes broadcast areas, satellite and telephone networks, and the signs and images that accumulate through the interactions in this space of media vector fields. The latter constitutes the physical space of interactions, social relations of production and reproduction, and the places of work and habitation. He argues that the occupation of time in the information network is an important aspect of contemporary struggle, the occupation of space in the symbolic landscape being a means to that end. Referring specifically to practices of resistance, Melucci (1989) argues that, since collective action frequently focuses on cultural codes, the forms of the new social movements are themselves messages, operating as signs, representing a symbolic challenge to dominant codes. Although heterogeneous, movement identity is interpreted through political action: the attributes of actors are defined almost entirely by the action itself. Melucci also argues that such political formations are characterized by diffuse, temporary and *ad hoc* organizational structures, and exhibit short-term, intense mobilizations, reversible commitment and multiple leadership.

According to Melucci, social movements articulate three main forms of symbolic challenge. First, prophecy: the act of announcing, based on personal experiences that alternative frameworks of meaning are possible. Secondly, paradox: the reversal of dominant codes by their exaggeration so exposing irrationality and violence. Thirdly, representation: video, theatre and images retransmit to the system its own contradictions. This leads Melucci to argue that social movements are a kind of new media, acting to transmit messages to society, frequently as symbolic challenges that attempt to make power visible. As Cohen (1985, 706) notes, such action 'involves the purposeful and expressive disclosure of one's subjectivity (feelings, desires, experiences, identity) to others who constitute a public for the participants'.

This process also effects what Baumann (1992, 197–8) terms 'tribal politics': practices aimed at collectivization of the self-constructing efforts of agents. Tribal politics entails the creation of tribes as imagined communities, existing in no other form but the symbolically manifested commitment of their members. The diffuseness and heterogeneity of such resistances results in unstable political

formations that dissolve once the issue in question reaches resolution as the formation is unable to override the diversity of interests amongst its supporters. Baumann also argues that postmodern politics is particularly about the reallocation of attention, particularly public attention, which necessitates a comprehensive media-*tion* of particular struggles. This is due, in part, to increased popular dependence on various media for news and opinion (see Gitlin 1980).

Through their actions, social movements attempt to create public spaces in order to render power visible and thus negotiable. By confronting power, contemporary social movements aim to challenge the symbolic order of what constitutes permissible thinking and action on specific issues. They aim to force power to take differences into account by articulating alternative ideas and practices in space. Many of the struggles which ensue are local in character. However, as Schatzki (1993, 44) notes,

Local struggles are not geographically restricted. What makes them 'local' is their immediacy, the way people focus on the instances of a particular form of power or oppression closest to them and expect a solution today rather than in a promised future.

Part of this process of resistance in recent anti-roads protests has taken the form of the creation of 'Free States', e.g. 'Wanstonia' and 'Leytonstonia' in east London against the M11 motorway and Pollok Free State in Glasgow against the M77. The lived character of these resistance practices is imbued with a 'seizure of presence' (Bey 1991, 23) that experiences reality as immediate. Some of the feelings of these moments are conveyed in non-academic writings such as those of activist publications (e.g. Kala 1995) and, hopefully, in my journal. Paradoxically, such protests also require the gaze of media vectors – media-*tion* – to transmit their messages of resistance to a broader public and to the authorities. As such resistance becomes imagineered, it exists both as immediate and media-*ted*.

Imagineering environmental resistance

... the manipulation of media images constitutes the continuation of politics by other means. (Baudrillard 1988, 16)

Over the past fifteen years, environmental groups have gained increased access to the media,

although, as [Cottle \(1993\)](#) has shown, the extent of television news coverage of environmental issues remains limited and access to TV news by environmental groups is greater at the regional rather than national level.⁹ Nevertheless, media images are increasingly seen by environmental groups as an essential aspect of organization, a tool for changing attitudes, raising public awareness and relaying the views of the movement to a wider public. The use of images has become an important strategy in the conflict over (re)presentations of events between activists, governments, private corporations and the public. For example, video footage has been used to document violence committed by police and security guards in anti-roads protests and to defend protesters in court. In addition, footage filmed by protesters has been sold to TV news companies to be used on news programmes when their cameras were absent from an action. Protest groups such as Greenpeace frequently utilize mass media events when ecological crises arise and gear their actions to the visual content of television and newspapers ([Anderson 1991](#)). The mass media have been a major target of Greenpeace's factual information and its symbolic actions, as was seen in the campaign to prevent Shell Oil dumping the Brent Spar oil rig in the Atlantic ocean in 1995. In addition, an alternative news network of resistance culture is emerging in Britain, being distributed through *Undercurrents*, a video series showing news items that are not shown on the TV news.¹⁰ One of the main purposes of these videos is to mobilize concerned citizens not normally involved in action protests.

Such an engagement with the media has meant that environmental groups have had to adapt their strategies to various media frames. [Baumann \(1992\)](#) has argued that the contemporary media present the real world as a drama, a staged spectacle. In most strategic sites of the 'real world', events happen because of their potential fitness to be televised. Under such circumstances, both politicians and activists 'act' for television, hoping to elevate their private actions into public events.¹¹ In addition, since the news gets consumed as one entertainment amongst many, it must be spectacular. Hence the media feeds on short, sharp, highly visible events rather than the long, drawn-out processes that give rise to environmental issues or the legwork that campaigning requires ([Anderson 1991](#)). Therefore, in order to direct public and political attention to a problem (which

is low profile or out of the public eye), environmental groups rely heavily on the forum of demonstrations and event-actions, in addition to such tasks as leafleting and doorknocking. Event-actions are symbolic and media-orientated, presenting spectacular images to attract public attention. They are also lived in the immediate (note my journal entry earlier). Pollok Free State became a focal point for many event-actions during the M77 campaign.

However, as [Hansen \(1991\)](#) notes in his work on the role of the media, the construction of the environment as a social issue not only gets elaborated in a dynamic and interactive milieu but also within hierarchically ordered fora of meaning creation. Near the top of this hierarchy are the political establishment, the public authorities and the scientific community: the links between them and the media are given more emphasis than between the media and environmental groups.¹² Moreover, environmental groups tend to appear only as 'primary definers' of particular issues through the forum of demonstrations and event-actions which are geared to generate public attention. However, such strategies carry less legitimacy than those fora of parliament and the scientific community ([Cracknell 1993](#)).

Hence environmental movements stand outside the dominant realm of discourse. They tend to achieve media standing as exotica, or local 'colour', and their actions are liable to be consigned to marginality, trivialization or containment. The double bind for activists is that, if protest movements play by the conventional rules in order to acquire an image of credibility (their leaders well-mannered, their actions well-ordered, their slogans specific and reasonable), they are liable to be assimilated into hegemonic political views. [Hansen \(1993\)](#) also notes that, while environmental groups may achieve a short period of media coverage, it is far more difficult for them to maintain a position as an 'established', authoritative and legitimate actor regarding claim-making on environmental matters.

However, [Lowe and Morrison \(1984\)](#) point out that the debates and conflicts over environmental issues are potentially subversive as they present the possibility of alternative ideological perspectives (e.g. anti-industrial, communitarian) and tend to be perceived as a politically neutral by the media. Under such circumstances, the media grants unconventional views more space to speak than might otherwise be the case in more overtly

political conflicts. As I will show later, this was certainly the case with the events at Pollok Free State. However, there are a tangled web of social contexts which receive and interact with media-*ted* communications. A diversity of environmental publics and viewing publics exist, as do different publics for different types of media (Hansen 1991). Thus every media-*ted* event will be open to multiple readings, there being no guarantee of how an audience will receive such images, no matter what the intention of activists.

The M77 campaign

The M77 motorway was planned to run through the western wing of Pollok estate – an area of farm, park and woodland stretching for 1118 acres, four miles south of Glasgow's city centre. The parklands, oak and beech woodlands, and the White Cart River provide habitats for a variety of wildlife.¹³ In addition, the estate is home to two golf courses and the Burrell art museum. In 1939, Sir John Maxwell of Pollok, founder of the National Trust for Scotland, bequeathed the estate to the citizens of Glasgow, stating

The said lands should remain forever as open spaces of woodland for the enhancement of the beauty of the neighbourhood and so far as possible for the benefit of the citizens of Glasgow. (quoted in Hunter 1994, 6)

As early as 1965, an 11 km extension to the M77 was proposed in the Glasgow Corporation's high-way plan to relieve traffic congestion on the A77 road from Glasgow to Ayr. However, it was not until 1974 that the National Trust for Scotland decided to waive the conditions of the 1939 conservation agreement to enable the motorway to be built. Concerted protests against the motorway began in 1978 and involved Corkehill Community Council and other concerned community groups. In 1988, a public inquiry into the motorway issue lasted for three months and included an array of submissions against the M77. This included opposition from Glasgow District Council, local communities who would be affected by the M77 and various community organizations including Glasgow for People. However, despite popular resistance to the motorway, preliminary construction commenced in 1992. A swath was cut through the western side of Pollok estate and the preliminary foundations of the road laid.

The region's roads department advanced a variety of justifications for the construction of the motorway extension. They argued that the motorway would (i) assist economic development by providing a strategic route between central Scotland and Ayrshire; (ii) save travelling time for road users between Glasgow and Ayrshire; (iii) improve the reliability of the public bus transport system; and (iv) enhance environmental conditions and reduce road accidents and congestion by removing traffic from the predominantly middle class residential and shopping areas of Giffnock, Thornliebank and Newton Mearns (Glasgow for People 1994). However, opponents of the M77 – including planners, academics, transport consultants, politicians and environmentalists – cited environmental, economic, social and political arguments against the motorway.

Environmentally, the road would increase noise and air pollution from greater car use and cause irreparable damage to the woodland and wildlife habitats of the western wing of Pollok estate. Economically, the motorway would facilitate car commuting, thereby generating increased traffic. An estimated 53 000 vehicles a day would be funnelled across the already congested Kingston Bridge in Glasgow.¹⁴ Opponents to the motorway argued that the resources that would be used to construct the M77 could be used instead to upgrade existing transport facilities, including freight and passenger rail networks, public bus services and roads. Socially, the motorway would predominantly benefit car users and would not serve the local communities of Mosspark, Corkehill, Pollok, Nitshill, Carnwadric and Kennishead where ownership and use of cars are low.¹⁵ In addition, the construction of the road would sever the access of these local communities to the Pollok estate – a safe recreational area for children – and place a loud, polluting, motorway close to primary and secondary schools. Politically, the construction of the motorway would entail the commercial development of a green belt space and the subsequent restriction of public access to the land.

It was not until Strathclyde Regional Council (in concert with the Scottish Office) agreed to appropriate £51 million to commence construction of the road that resistance coalesced.¹⁶ In April 1994, the Stop the Ayr Road Route (STARR) Alliance was launched as a merging of community and environmental organizations.¹⁷ The Alliance was pledged to have the M77–Ayr road route cancelled; to redirect

financial resources saved from the cancellation into an alternative, environmentally sensitive transport strategy; and to reinstate the land within Pollok estate to its previous condition as open space and woodland. I will concentrate my analysis on the direct action component of the campaign as articulated by Glasgow Earth First! and Pollok Free State.

Processes of resistance

The resistance against the M77 brought together a variety of organizations, groups and individuals in a heterogeneous affinity that traversed gender, age and class differences. The resistance included (at various times) local residents, school children and councillors from the housing estates bordering Pollok estate, Glasgow-based students, 'professionals' (including academics, social workers and artists), unemployed folk and unemployed environmental activists from Faslane peace camp and from England.¹⁸ This heterogeneous affinity was precisely not an 'identity', rather it represented a collectivity based upon the processing of differences through symbolic and direct action. The M77 campaign provided the catalyst for this affinity to coalesce. The direct action component of the campaign was articulated by Earth First! and Pollok Free State.

Glasgow Earth First!

Earth First! emerged in the United States in the 1970s, articulating a philosophy of anarcho-ecology and advocating a strategy of ecotage – the sabotaging of machinery in order to save the wilderness. Earth First! is not an organized movement but rather a loose association of environmental activists or 'earth warriors'. Its methods include non-violent direct action (NVDA), guerrilla theatre, demonstrations and monkeywrenching (i.e. ecotage) (Bari 1994; Merchant 1992). Earth First! groups began to appear in Europe during the late 1980s and Glasgow Earth First! was formed in February 1994. Its initial members were Greenpeace activists who had become disenchanted with what they experienced as increasing bureaucracy within the Greenpeace organization (interviews, Glasgow 1994). The group espoused non-violent environmental action and was non-hierarchical in organization. Regular meetings were held (originally fortnightly, then weekly as the campaign 'heated up') in which

broad strategies concerning the M77 campaign would be discussed and tasks allotted to particular members or groups of members (e.g. banner painting, pub collections, etc.). In the interests of preventing infiltration by the police, specific tactics would usually be discussed in activists' homes.

Earth First! comprised approximately 40 members. Half were from Glasgow while the rest lived in Glasgow but heralded from other places, particularly England but also Australia, Germany and the United States.¹⁹ Amongst Earth First!'s members, twenty were 'core' activists, i.e. those who were involved in ongoing activist work throughout the campaign. The rest were more 'fluid' in their involvement, in that some attended meetings but did not volunteer for particular projects (e.g. fund-raising, flyposting, direct actions) while others would appear only at demonstrations but did not attend meetings. While decision-making was relatively non-hierarchical, a leadership role was adopted by one unemployed member, Lindsay, who devoted himself full-time to the campaign.²⁰ The tactics of the group will be discussed below. Integral to the direct-action dimension of the resistance, but in ambiguous relation to Earth First!, was Pollok Free State.

Pollok Free State

Pollok Free State was an ecological encampment located in the Barrhead woods of Pollok estate in the path of the projected motorway (see Fig. 1). South of Glasgow's River Clyde, the Free State was located close to several low-income housing estates, including those of Pollok, Corkerhill and Arden. Established in June 1994 by Colin McLeod, an Earth First! activist and Pollok resident, the camp acted as a visible symbol of resistance to the motorway.²¹ There was a continually fluid component to the camp in terms of its architecture and its residents. The Free State was in constant flux, changing face and form continuously as tree houses were completed, benders deconstructed and rebuilt, and as new inhabitants arrived to build their homes and others left for various periods of time.²² However, the 'permanent' residents of the Free State varied in number from five to twenty during various phases of the camp's existence. During weekends, visitors from the local housing estates and Earth First! activists would swell the numbers. During event-actions and conflicts with the road builders, up to 150 people assembled at the camp. On one demonstration, 300



Figure 1 Pollok Free State: tree house
(photograph by P Routledge)

people marched from Glasgow's George Square to rally at the Free State. The permanent members were all unemployed, some long term, and had chosen unemployment as a deliberate strategy of 'dropping out' against what they perceived as an environmentally and politically unjust system (interviews, Pollok Free State 1994, 1995).

The Free State represented the 'homeplace' and the focus of the resistance against the M77, articulating an alternative space that occupied symbolic and literal locations. It acted as a place where people who were interested in the M77 campaign could learn more and get involved. It also served as a site from where various symbolic event-actions were initiated (see below). The Free State stood as a critique of the environmental damage caused by road building and an example of how people might live their lives differently. Its politics of articulation interwove ecological, cultural and political dimensions.

Ecologically, the Free State represented an experiment in ecological living and a resistance to the perceived destruction of the local environment. It actively experimented with ideas of alternative technology (e.g. wind-powered generators), architecture (e.g. tree houses, benders) and eco-art (e.g. carved wooden totems of owls and ravens). Culturally, the Free State represented a counter-cultural, DIY lifestyle. It attempted to

create a positive alternative to the road by drawing upon the skills of the local community and by building an inspirational focal point for resistance and non-violent direct action should democratic channels fail. (Free State information board)

The camp lived a communal lifestyle which included communal meals cooked around the campfire, communally organized work sessions (e.g. chopping wood for the fire, building tree houses, digging latrines) and music jam sessions. The Free State attracted a variety of people from the Glasgow area – including artists, scaffolders, tree surgeons, carpenters, musicians and cooks – who contributed their skills to the camp. In addition, people from the surrounding housing estates would visit the camp to participate in ongoing work, donate food, etc. Politically, the Free State articulated resistance to the planning process, challenging the hegemony of road planners' use of space, most especially to the threat it posed to public access to the commons. Moreover, it also articulated resistance to the state and, in particular, to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1994) by declaring independence from the UK on 20 August 1994 and subsequently by issuing 'passports' to over 1000 'citizens'.

These dimensions of the Free State were articulated in 1994 on their first state(ment), the 'Declaration of independence', which appears on the Pollok Free State passports:

Our ancestors were cleared from their ancestral homelands by feudal greed ... Today [this] process of enclosure continues as this land, our land, is threatened with destruction in the name of 'infrastructure improvement'. Pollok Estate was returned to us in 1939 and now it is threatened by privatisation for a car owning élite. At the same time in reaction to resistance by many good people, Her Majesty's government seeks to enclose us even further. Not content with 'owning' the land, private interests seek to stymie our protests and ban our access to our ancestral lands. All these actions have been taken without consultation and imposed upon us. We therefore and more generally

maintain that the threat to our environment and liberty by this road and legislation is incompatible with sustainable environmental use and any notion of democracy. We the inhabitants of Pollok Free State . . . call on all people who share these beliefs, ideals, and aspirations to come to the defence of this new domain.

Finally, the Free State was a hybrid site. In addition to the totems and tree houses – themselves hybrid sites of habitation and tactical forms of protection for the trees – the Free State comprised a mixture of symbols. Abandoned cars were used to create dramatic sculptures such as ‘Carhenge’ (see below). A flag of the Lion Rampant girded the trunk of a tree near to the entrance of the Free State, next to which was an Australian aboriginal land rights flag. A wind-powered generator supplied power to a portable television and stood above a mobile phone. Next to images of celtic knots flew Buddhist-style prayer flags strung from the trees, on which the phrase ‘Save our dear green place’ was block-printed.²³ Indeed, much of the construction at the Free State – e.g. tree houses with framed windows, oil drum barricades, etc. – involved everyday objects and symbols which were wrenched from their habitual context to be used in a different way, enacting resistance as a work of art.

Relationships, ambiguities, tactics

Earth First! had an ambiguous relationship with Pollok Free State. On the broadest political level, the relationship was one of alliance against the M77. Most of Earth First!’s members were Free State passport holders and stayed at the camp for varying lengths of time (e.g. visiting the camp at weekends to help with the communal work activities). Earth First!’s weekly meetings (which were held in the west end of Glasgow) often included the participation of Free State residents while STARR’s coordinating meetings were held at the camp and saw the participation of Earth First! members. Earth First! also coordinated several campaigning activities (e.g. leafleting the housing estates of Pollok, Arden and Corkerhill, etc.) with the Free State in cooperation with the camp members. In addition, several of the major event-actions were staged at the Free State with the joint cooperation of Earth First! and camp residents (see below). Moreover, Earth First! channelled cash from its fund-raising activities into the Free State, which was used to produce Free State adver-

tising (e.g. flyers and posters announcing actions, events, etc.) and to purchase a mobile phone, climbing equipment, walkie-talkies and other equipment deemed important for the defence of the camp.²⁴

However, although relationships between individuals were generally amicable, there were some tensions between some of the personalities of the campaign. Conflicts arose between the principal organizer of Earth First!, Lindsay, and other members of the group and between Lindsay and several residents of the Free State, including Colin. These conflicts tended to centre around Lindsay’s authoritarian manner and frequent disregard for the consensus politics that the group and the camp espoused. In addition, some resentment was felt, at times, by the Free State residents – who were enduring some extremely cold weather living in tree houses and benders – towards the Earth First! activists who were living mainly in Glasgow’s fashionable west end and who tended to visit the camp only for short periods. Comments were occasionally made about the level of commitment of the Earth First! members, implying that they were only part-time activists. These tensions exploded during two memorable Earth First! meetings. At one, the meeting degenerated into a slanging match between Lindsay and two of the camp residents concerning his authoritarian decision-making. At the other, the meeting was taken over by ‘new’ Free State residents who had recently arrived from other anti-roads protests in England. Various accusations flew around the room about the extent to which Earth First! was supporting the Free State. In particular, it was continually insinuated that those people who had not been arrested and who were not ‘full-time’ residents at the Free State were not committed to the M77 campaign. However, these claims were misplaced since many Earth First! members had jobs or were students (and thus could only be ‘part-time’ activists) and Earth First! had provided the camp with financial and logistical support over a period of eight months. Although these tensions remained, they did not disrupt the running of the campaign.

Other ambiguities existed at the Free State itself. Although the naming of the camp as a ‘Free State’ and the issue of passports were symbolic acts of resistance against the government and its legislation, it is ironic that a ‘free space’ should define itself as a ‘state’ and symbolically confer the inclusion of people by the issuing of passports.

However, according to several of the 'Free Staters', this 'state' was as much a state of mind as a physical location. As Jake, a Free Stater, noted (Pollok Free State, 1994): 'We are practising a direct form of democracy here ... it's an independent space here, more like a state of mind'.

Free State residents were predominantly male and the few women who lived there complained that some of the problematic gender relations that existed in society were reinscribed within the Free State. They highlighted the 'macho' character of some of the 'Free Staters', the privileging of men's voices at camp meetings and the fact that gender roles often followed a traditional pattern: the men would chop wood and climb trees, and the women would cook. Fortunately, some of these issues were successfully addressed over the course of the Free State's existence but not before the women of the camp and Earth First! had organized their own 'women's action' at the Free State in response to these issues of gender.

Another problematic aspect of the Free State was that, at times, it attracted anti-social elements from the surrounding communities. For example, during a rave held at the camp, a woman was attacked and received serious head injuries which led to the banning of alcohol from the Free State. In another incident, a local drug dealer, searching for a man who owed him money (who was staying at the Free State), attacked two camp members with a knife. Some community members saw the Free State as a welcome relief from the boredom of unemployment and for them it became a place to take drugs and play truant from school (interviews, Pollok Free State, 1994, 1995). However, visits by the public to the camp (e.g. during weekend festival events arranged by the Free State) did help to break down the (media-generated) stereotypical images of environmental activists as 'dreadlocked crusties'. Despite their differences, friendships and connections were made between activists and folk from the nearby housing estates. Camp residents were seen to be knowledgeable and concerned about their environment (interviews, Pollok Free State, 1994).

The resistance effected an array of non-violent political actions including institutionalized protests such as holding public meetings, lobbying members of Strathclyde Regional Council, leafleting the communities around Pollok estate, conducting community centre meetings and holding legal demonstrations and rallies.²⁵ The resistance also

utilized local, national and international media vectors (e.g. television, radio, newspapers, e-mail, fax and video) which will be discussed in more detail below. Extra-institutional protest (direct action) included flypostings, political graffiti and monkey-wrenching such as the disabling of bulldozers carried out by clandestine 'pixie patrols'. Groups of activists would also attempt to delay and disrupt tree-felling activities by 'locking-on' to equipment. This involved activists attaching themselves to bulldozers, chainsaws, security vehicles, etc. with kryptonite bicycle locks so that the machinery could not be used until they were removed and occupying trees to prevent their felling.

While direct action was effected in an attempt to prevent the construction of the M77, it also threatened to impose upon the road builders extra security costs and delays. As disruptive direct actions increased, so Wimpey was forced to hire increased numbers of security guards to protect their equipment and to enable their staff to proceed with construction of the road. As Jake noted (Earth First! meeting, 1995):

By blockading bulldozers and climbing trees, we are acting as a market force, which is all these multinational companies understand. Next time they decide to build a road, they'll think twice about it if an environmental group threatens them with direct action.

The Free State and Earth First! enacted a variety of communication relays to effect their resistance. As has already been mentioned, numerous planning and strategy meetings were held at various sites. In addition, a telephone tree was established between members of Earth First! and the Free State (via its mobile phone). Whenever the Free State, or the woodlands around Pollok estate, were threatened (by eviction or felling respectively), then the Free State would activate the phone tree and whatever action was planned would be passed along its branches. Further, information about other actions (e.g. demonstrations, rallies, etc.) was conveyed via flyposters, leaflets and word of mouth.

The other principal facet of Earth First!'s practices was the establishment of informal affinity groups.²⁶ These comprised small, non-hierarchical groups of three to eight people who conducted their own political actions in addition to the other organized events. These groups embodied flexible, often spontaneous modes of action and there was also an ongoing itinerancy about their form. At times, their particular configuration changed from

one action to the next. They might participate in an action, then dissolve and reform as other affinity groups, mobilized to leaflet, flypost, fund-raise, conduct banner drops and defend trees. Affinity groups enabled a free play of resistances within the strategies of Earth First! that were left up to the imagination and creativity of individuals and groups in the collectivity.

The M77 campaign was also deliberately linked to the local and national campaign against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1994), since the criminalization of protest that the Act effected had an impact upon the direct actions of the anti-motorway protesters. Earth First! and Pollok Free State included activists who were involved in other ongoing issues, such as the anti-nuclear, animal rights and anti-CJA campaigns. Finally, Earth First! and the Free State were connected to a national and international network of activists and organizations that were involved in a multiplicity of (primarily) ecological issues. Hence, activists were involved at different times in solidarity actions at other anti-roads protests in England and environmental protests in Europe,²⁷ and networking (through conferences, electronic and regular mail, etc.) with various groups and organizations throughout the world. Also, activists from other anti-roads campaigns, and from other parts of the world, participated in the M77 resistance.²⁸ Rather than a static place-based, single-issue 'movement', it is perhaps more accurate to consider environmental movement networks and webs of interrelationships in flux. As at Pollok Free State, these coalesce at different times and places (and sometimes at several places simultaneously)²⁹ around a variety of interrelated issues.

The campaign lasted from June 1994 until May 1995. A 'phoney war' between the protesters and the road builders lasted until February 1995. This consisted of various event-actions but no attempt by Wimpey to fell trees or commence construction of the road. Between February and April 1995, several conflicts between environmental protesters and a coalition of tree-fellers, road contractors, security guards and police took place at Pollok Free State. Although the protesters were able to delay the felling of the trees around the estate, they were eventually defeated and the construction of the M77 proceeded. However, most of Pollok Free State and 50 trees around it were defended successfully, although the Free State was subsequently abandoned in late 1996.

Imagineering resistance

The conflict over the M77 attracted considerable media attention, perhaps in part because the M77 conflict represented Scotland's first anti-motorway protest. Newspaper, radio and television coverage occurred at local, national and international levels.³⁰ Tactically, Earth First! considered the media to be very important in its ability to publicize and popularize the campaign, and as a means of organizing around the issue (i.e. recruiting new members to the campaign). Hence Jake argued (Pollok Free State, 1995):

The more we get on TV the better. We're trying to use TV as a media to get people off their arses, to get them angry, and get them involved. But the media, for us, is just the means to that end, not an end in itself.

The campaign organized several dramatic, symbolic event-actions in an attempt to ensure maximum media coverage with a minimum of bodies. They transmitted messages to the public and to the authorities that constituted a critique of, and resistance to, the motorway. The importance of this media-tion to the campaign was recognized by Lindsay who argued (Earth First! meeting, 1995):

A two-minute 'take' is what the public perceives the struggle to be about, so for those two minutes it is important to manipulate reality as you wish to see it represented.

The Free State was frequently used as the focus for several event-actions to which the media were invited. These included an illegal mass trespass upon the road from the Free State following a demonstration and rally (on 9 January 1995) and the creation of Carhenge, the most visually dramatic symbol of the campaign. This consisted of nine cars (eight in a circle with the ninth in the middle), buried engine-down in the M77 road bed. The cars were set alight and then spray-painted with political slogans (see Fig. 2).³¹ This hybrid site not only humorously evoked Stonehenge, it was also a symbol of the end of the age of the car, a dark work of art which challenged people's common-sense understanding of car culture. Carhenge was symbolic of what activists understood as the irrationality of the car culture – the poisoning of the air that we breathe by increasing amounts of exhaust fumes, or 'carmageddon'. It was also a challenge: activists declaring that these nine cars would be the only cars that would use the M77.



Figure 2 Pollok Free State: Carhenge
(photograph by P Routledge)

Moreover, the very existence of the Free State enabled the campaign to transmit its messages of resistance to the public and to the authorities in the form of visually exciting images, such as tree houses and Carhenge. Hence, Anna (Pollok Free State, 1994, emphasis added), a camp resident, noted, 'The point is, that the camp is a *visible* example of what we believe in', while Colin, referring to the camp, argued (Pollok Free State, 1994, emphasis added)

It's a *message*, man, to the community around here. We know we are being *watched* by people, so we want to try and get their *attention*, let them know what is happening here, and what we are trying to protect.

The camp and its event-actions are an example of what Benford and Hunt (1995, 84) term 'dramaturgy' – the staging and performing of political action to gain public attention and influence.

Media exposure served to publicize the existence of the Free State that resulted, in part, in increased numbers of people visiting the camp and thereby being involved in the campaign or contributing their skills, food, etc. In the housing estates bordering Pollok estate and in the pubs and clubs where Earth First! conducted their fund-raising, public awareness of the issue was high. For example, in a newspaper poll of readers' opinions regarding the M77 conducted in October 1994 by the *Evening News* over 68 per cent of the respondents articulated their opposition to the construction of the motorway.³² However, the majority of the residents of the housing estates that stood to suffer the full impact of the construction of the motorway did not participate directly in opposition to the road. Residents visited the Free State at various times – during weekend events, raves, etc. – but usually as spectators rather than participants.

While media coverage of the Free State served to announce to a local and, indeed, national audience the existence of a practising alternative culture, media framing of the Free State conferred a sense of the alien other to the public. For example, the Free State was described by Close (1995, 2) in *Scotland on Sunday* as 'an outlaw encampment mocking the authority of the outside world', while an editorial (1995, 8) in the *Daily Mail in Scotland* focused upon the 'squalor and decay' of the camp. Free State residents were variously described by Lyons (1994, 18) in the *Evening Times* as 'new agers, freeloaders, green extremists' and 'society's drop-outs', and by Clouston (1995, 5) in *The Guardian* as 'hippy protesters ... women resembling elves, and the men hairy goblins'. Activists were also frequently portrayed as being from outside of the community, most frequently as 'professional' activists from England. In certain rare moments of self-reflexivity, some of the press acknowledged their own biases and professional interests. Hence, Grant (1995, 16, emphasis added) acknowledged in *The Guardian* that roads protests provided journalists with 'colour reporting' and that

the youth, the dreadlocks, the crusty dresses and the vegetarian boots ... have come to characterise *our* visual images of these campaigns.

As the campaign moved from the protest of symbolic presence (i.e. the Free State) to active conflict between protesters, tree fellers, security guards and police, much of the media became increasingly critical of the campaign and focused upon the dramatic images of arrest, tree

occupations and police 'only doing their job'. The media also tended to portray the resistance as spontaneous, carried out by a small group of people who travelled around the country from site to site. Neither the work involved in the campaign nor its history fitted in with media images of who was responsible for opposition to the M77. The tree-sitters provided far more photogenic and televisual images than did the door-knockers. As such, the media focused on the theatre of politics – a process that was accentuated by the dramaturgical imagineering of the campaign.

The tactical use of the media by Earth First! and the Free State had ambiguous results. First, an aspect of the media-tion of the conflict was the use, by Earth First!, of a video camcorder. The group was lent the camcorder by BBC's *Video Nation* in early 1995 in order to record the ongoing events of the M77 campaign. Although Earth First! recorded six hours of footage, only a couple of two to three minute cuts were used by the BBC. Secondly, during some of the event-actions, the process became more of a media circus than a political practice. For example, during the mass trespass onto the road bed, the media's cameras inundated the Free State, filming everything that moved – from people cooking food and eating, to speeches and non-violent direct action practice. Not only did certain activists feel that this was an intrusion upon their privacy but others had misgivings about the publicizing of particular tactics and strategies (interviews, Pollok Free State, 1995). Thirdly, during the first six months of the campaign, any activist who was interviewed by the media gave one of two names: Ray Vaughn (rave on) and Teresa Green (trees are green). While being an ironic comment on media 'celebrity', this strategy also served to enable anyone who was involved in the campaign to speak on its behalf. However, as the campaign progressed, certain activists became 'official' spokespeople for the campaign. During event-actions, the media would request only these activists for interviews, even if they were unavailable and other activists were willing to be interviewed. Fourthly, at times, the success of particular actions was measured by some Earth First! activists in terms of the amount and quality of the media coverage that the action attracted. Indeed, many activists frequently revelled in their 'appearance' on news vectors, lending a somewhat uncritical credence to their actions. The appearance of resistance at times seemed to constitute a goal in itself. However, this was not the case with the Free State residents. As Seel (1996, 10) points out:

It would be misleading to suggest that the Free State camp was merely 'staged' to influence the media agenda, allowing its participants to claim themselves a heroic identity as fighters of evil while having 'a great time on that big [media] stage' (Truett-Anderson 1990, 173) ... gratification from the media spotlight did not seem to be an accurate characterisation of most Free-Staters' goals.

Indeed, as I noted earlier, the imagineering of resistance implies both media-tion and the experience of reality as immediate. For the residents of the camp, the lived experience of the Free State – the articulation of an alternative way of being and of a culture of resistance to hegemonic values – was an end in itself. Hence Anna (Pollok Free State, 1995, original emphasis), referring to resistance culture in general, commented that 'we are *living* it, rather than just talking about it', while Dave (Pollok Free State, 1995) argued

You know, these months [in the Free State] were more important than stopping the road. Life is more real ... I feel free for the first time. For the first time I lived life without constraints imposed by the government. People were living, working together, a community, showing that there are those who resist.

The same could also be said of the practice of direct action in general. The enactment of resistance can accentuate the experience of 'reality'. As I have tried to convey in my journal entry at the beginning of this paper, reality does become 'more real' as the senses are sharpened and existence takes on a heightened intensity from moment to moment. A Pollok Free State leaflet referred to activists being 'alive to the aliveness of life', while Billy, an activist musician, referred to such moments as 'organic chaos'. That is, they are immediate: experienced in the present without mediation. Under contemporary conditions of resistance which necessitate media-tion, such expressions as Pollok Free State are experiences of resistance that are lived as well as images of resistance that are consumed by the public and, indeed, by activists. Politics is thus both theatre and effect.

Postmodern politics of resistance

Environmental protests such as the M77 campaign articulate various dimensions of what I would term a postmodern politics of resistance. In particular, such a politics mounts symbolic challenges that are

extensively media-*ted* in order to render power visible and negotiable, and to attract public attention. Such a politics, and the spaces within which, and from which, it is articulated are frequently hybrid in character and ambiguous in practice and effect. Following [Baumann \(1992\)](#), I would argue that Pollok Free State and Earth First! effected a 'tribal politics' through the creation of an imagined community symbolically articulated by the construction of tree houses, Carhenge, carved totems and makeshift benders, and represented through the media-*tion* of symbolic event-actions and the material ebb and flow of protest. Such a tribe exists as the symbolically manifested commitment of its members. It has neither the power to coerce its constituency into adherence to codified rules (indeed, it rarely has any such rules in the first place), nor the strength of neighbourly bonds or intensity of reciprocal exchange.³³ Such a tribal politics is brought into being by repetitive rituals – for example, direct actions – which serve to create allegiance and 'community' amongst tribal members with the goal of gaining public attention. As the experiences of the Free State attest, it may also be articulated through the creation of temporary, communal spaces of resistance. Such 'homeplaces' of resistance are hybrid, ambiguous sites, entangled within relations of resistance and domination.

The participants in Earth First! and the Free State comprised a heterogeneous affinity of concerned individuals. Both formations were diffuse and fluid with internal conflicts. Although the personnel of Earth First! and the Free State changed throughout the campaign, the resistance retained a core group of activists who ensured that the campaign continued to function. Amid the heterogeneous and, at times, ambiguous positions articulated by activists, links were sustained from meeting to meeting and from action to action. There was a certain self-reflexivity amongst activists in both Earth First! and the Free State whereby members took time to examine group process and effectivity. Although part of the process of resistance, this was not a goal in itself and may have contributed to the ongoing tensions within the campaign. Moreover, the fluid, heterogeneous affinity that characterized the resistance dissolved once the M77 protest was seen to be over. Some activists left Glasgow to participate in other anti-roads protests while others became involved in new projects within the city.³⁴ Still others took a break from activism altogether.

Given the widespread and enduring character of ecological problems, environmental politics seems likely to continue into the foreseeable future. However, as this case study attests, environmental activism in assemblages such as Earth First! will effect frequently changing, fragmented and displaced practices. The unstable character of such assemblages may, at times, vitiate against the formation of strategic alliances with members of communities located where environmental conflicts occur. In part, this is because such alliances take time to develop, especially given various cultural differences (in lifestyle, appearance, etc.) that may exist between activists and members of those communities. This issue of 'cultural resonance' may also surface in terms of the issues raised by particular protests.

Returning to [Melucci's \(1989\)](#) formulation, I have shown how, through event-actions and the ongoing resistance articulated by Pollok Free State, the environmental protest against the M77 acted as a form of media, frequently performing what [Truett-Anderson \(1990, 171\)](#) terms 'theatrical politics'. As Free Stater Colin noted, the camp articulated various 'messages' which represented a symbolic challenge to certain dominant codes pertaining to the planning process, government legislation and lifestyle 'norms'. As a diffuse, *ad hoc* and temporary political formation, movement identity was interpreted through political action, particularly event-actions and the creation of Pollok Free State.

The actions of Earth First! and the existence of the Free State announced publicly, both in a material and symbolic way, that alternative frameworks of meaning were possible. In the words of the camp's activists, the Free State was 'visible' and, following [Baumann \(1992\)](#), attempted to attract public 'attention'. The M77 campaign not only showed that there was a diverse range of social groups opposed to road building schemes, it also articulated various counter-cultural, eco-political practices, of which Pollok Free State was the most dramatic. The Free State articulated a desire and intention to live differently from conventional culture. The opposition to the M77 became a means by which this alternative could be articulated. In so doing, Earth First! and Pollok Free State articulated what [Melucci \(1989\)](#) terms the symbolic challenge of prophecy.

As noted above, an integral dimension of this resistance was highly media-*ted* event-actions. Although predominantly confrontational in character (e.g. the mass trespass), the most dramatic

event-action and symbol of the M77 campaign was the activist artwork of Carhenge. This 'anarchitecture' effected an exaggeration of the pervasive, taken-for-granted sign of the motor car to warn of the environmental costs of ever-increasing car use, effecting what Melucci terms the symbolic challenge of paradox.

Through the images it evoked, the event-actions that it staged and its media-tion in video, television and radio vectors, Earth First! and the Free State attempted to retransmit the contradictions of the state-system, particularly with regard to the government's road building programme. In so doing, the Free State created a temporary public space wherein its residents could represent their counter-cultural, environmental views. Such a 'homeplace' of the resistance, while ambiguous, sought to confront, and make visible, government power and force the regional authorities at least to take note of activists' differences of lifestyle and opinion. Thus Earth First! and Pollok Free State articulated what Melucci terms the symbolic challenge of representation.

Such imagineering of environmental resistance is an ambiguous process. The media-tion of resistance practices can lend legitimacy to a campaign, serve to inform the public and attract new recruits. It can also serve to deepen the commitment and empower those who are participating in the campaign. Such coverage may also contribute to changing the long-term climate of public opinion regarding ecological issues in general and the government's road building programme in particular (Burgess 1990). But environmental protests are still dependent upon the overall narrative framework of the news. Media coverage, however extensive, does not guarantee the success of a campaign (Cottle 1993; Hansen 1993). Moreover, as Anderson (1993) notes, environmental groups tend to focus their media campaigns on press releases and stunts rather than on how people change their minds about an issue. There was little evidence that activists considered how their event-actions and symbolic images might influence the public regarding their opinions and their participation in the campaign. Political issues must resonate with existing and widely held cultural contexts (Hansen 1991). Given that the direct-action dimension of the campaign did not attract many people from the communities surrounding Pollok estate, I would suggest that the Free State had little cultural resonance with the everyday lives of the residents of the housing estates which stood to be most affected by the construction of the motorway.

The symbols and images used by Earth First! and the Free State to articulate opposition to the motorway generated public sympathy and interest but had little power to mobilize the community. In addition to the differences in lifestyle and appearance between activists and community residents, a possible explanation is that for many of the latter, who were either unemployed or living on low incomes, the environment was not the most important issue in their everyday lives.

Environmental groups need to keep in mind that environmental meanings and values are produced and consumed in complex circuits of cultural forms which are constantly being transformed by the activities of all participants in the process (Burgess 1990). As Burgess and Harrison (1993) note, people are awash in communications and audiences rarely discriminate as to the veracity of different media claims. Rather, it is important for activists to frame place- and culturally specific strategies (e.g. targeting different sections of the public through different media and utilizing images that resonate with local people) when attempting to understand and influence the reception of people to media-ted struggles. However, a media vector leaves traces in people's imaginations and memories that exist beyond the experience of a particular event-action or campaign. Memories of previous resistances can be aided by a vectoral record (whether spoken, written, recorded or filmed) which may provide an archive of tactics and strategies for future use – what I would term the 'ghosting' of resistance. Although media-ted, these 'ghosts' recall the other dimension of imagineered resistance: that which is immediate, lived in the present.

Postmodern politics, then, are characterized by heterogeneous affinities that coalesce in particular times and places as activist assemblages. Eschewing the capture of state power, they nevertheless pose challenges to the state by, for example, challenging transport policy through anti-roads protests. Such protests form part of broader environmental movement networks that articulate a variety of counter-hegemonic positions regarding lifestyles, ideologies and identities. Although media-ted and frequently symbolic, it would be a mistake to characterize such protests as an aesthetic politics of gesture. For the processes of protest enacted by Pollok Free State and Earth First!, while temporary and ambiguous, also represented a lived, immediate resistance whose

experiences will always stand in contrast to the theoretical media-tions of the intellectual savant.

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Notes

- 1 Ecological concerns have a rich history in Scotland, most notably the twelve-year anti-nuclear struggle against the Faslane nuclear submarine base waged by the Faslane Peace Camp.
- 2 See [Routledge \(1996\)](#).
- 3 A constellation of singularities/traits that are deducted from the flow of events (selected, organized, stratified) in such a way as to converge artificially and naturally ([Deleuze and Guattari 1987](#)).
- 4 Subjection refers to a form of power which makes individuals subjects. This can mean being subject to someone else by control and dependence as well as being tied to one's own identity by conscious self-knowledge. Exploitation refers to the social and spatial relations that separate individuals from what they produce ([Foucault 1983](#); and see also [Soja and Hooper 1993](#)). Dominating power is that which attempts to control or coerce others, impose its will upon others or manipulate the consent of others. This dominating power can be located within the realms of the state, the economy and civil society, and articulated within social, economic, political and cultural relations and institutions ([Routledge and Simons 1995](#)).
- 5 These are liminal spaces (geographic, social, cultural, imaginal) in which counter-hegemonic practices enact a politics tangential to, and out of sight of, the state (see [Bey 1991](#)).
- 6 However, it is rare to find a resisting subject who acts totally alone without some form of inter-relationship with others, e.g. those who provide some form of logistical, emotional or material support, or those who turn a blind eye when illegal actions are performed.
- 7 Collective entities in action (see [Haraway 1992](#)).
- 8 See, for example, *Social Research* 52 4 (1985), which is devoted to an early debate on this question, including contributions from Alain Touraine, Alberto Melucci, Charles Tilly and Claus Offe (see also [Escobar and Alvarez 1992](#); and [Slater 1985](#)).
- 9 Of [Cottle's \(1993\)](#) research sample of 1799 TV news stories, environmental coverage amounted only to 4.3 per cent of the total. Moreover, 20 per cent of all environmental coverage was about the urban environment and its development, and a third of all TV environmental coverage was on the local media.
- 10 *Undercurrents* is produced by Small World run by Thomas Harding. Small World has also set up Camcorder Action Network, training 100 activists to film protests nationwide.
- 11 The use of the media or video technology by activists may also represent the strategy of 'media witnessing' of events that might otherwise remain hidden from the public eye.
- 12 [Cottle \(1993\)](#) has estimated that environmental groups account for 14.6 per cent of TV news access while 'establishment' sources (e.g. local and national government spokespeople, scientists, etc.) account for 62 per cent.
- 13 including roe deer, kingfishers, sparrowhawks, spotted orchids and stagshorn clubmoss.
- 14 At the time of this debate, the bridge was undergoing repairs due to damage caused by excessive traffic use.
- 15 Strathclyde Regional Council argued that some bus services would utilize the motorway as a short-cut, as they already do on the M8 which bisects the city.
- 16 The tender was awarded to Wimpey construction in November 1994.
- 17 These include Friends of the Earth (Scotland); Scottish Wildlife Trust; World Wide Fund for Nature; Architects and Engineers for Social Responsibility; Transport 2000; Glasgow for People; Earth First!; Socialist Environment and Resources Association; Glasgow Buildings Guardians Committee; Glasgow Cycling Campaign; Railway Development Society (Scotland); Friends of the People's Palace; Friends of Kelvingrove Park; Corkehill Community Council; Park Community Council; Glasgow Treelovers' Society; and Greenpeace.
- 18 Attempts to mobilize this popular opposition resulted in the collection of the names of 3000 local people who pledged to resist the construction of the motorway through direct action. However, when the actual felling of trees commenced, only 50 to 150 became actively involved. Participation in demonstrations ranged from 300 to 3000.
- 19 The three Australian activists had met some of the Glasgow activists in Australia a year or so before the M77 campaign when all were involved in Greenpeace activism. Subsequently, they travelled to Glasgow to visit their Scottish friends and became involved in the M77 campaign.
- 20 Whilst resented at times by other members – e.g. when decisions were taken unilaterally by Lindsay – this relationship was not challenged since Lindsay's organizing skills, commitment and ideas were recognized as invaluable to the campaign; in short, he made things happen and got things done.
- 21 Although the Free State was a spontaneous creation, it nevertheless owed its genesis to Strathclyde

- Regional Council's decision to build the road, although the Free State also owes its existence, in part, to traces from the past, such as the peace camps of Greenham Common, etc. Its longevity was due partly to the Glasgow District Council's decision not to exercise control over it. This was because the Free State did not constitute 'development'.
- 22 Cresswell (1994) makes a similar observation about the women's peace camp at Greenham Common.
- 23 'Dear Green Place' is the meaning of the Gaelic word for Glasgow, *Glascu*.
- 24 For example, Earth First! raised £4000 from organizing a concert in Glasgow at which the headliners, Galliano, performed for free.
- 25 At several rallies, the campaign deliberately set up sound systems to play rave music. This not only provided a sense of carnival and entertainment to the political action but also enacted resistance against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1994) which bans all but officially sanctioned raves.
- 26 Affinity groups take their name from the *grupos de afinidad* devised by Spanish anarchists during the 1930s. They were subsequently popularized during the 1970s in the non-violent resistance against Seabrook nuclear reactor in New Hampshire, USA. During the 1980s, the peace movement utilized affinity groups for both specific non-violent direct actions (NVDA) and for ongoing, small and supportive non-violent action groups. They differ from the communist 'cells' utilized by revolutionary groups such as the Brigado Rosso in that they are non-hierarchical and non-violent.
- 27 At the global climate summit held in Berlin in 1995, an alternative gathering of 700 activists also met in the city to discuss campaigns, tactics and strategies, and to protest about the lack of meaningful environmental action by governments. Members of Glasgow Earth First! attended the 'alternative summit' and discussed their campaign against the M77. As a result, activists from Australia, New Zealand, Europe, USA, etc. carried the information vector from Glasgow Earth First! back to their homes to conduct solidarity actions against the Wimpey Corporation.
- 28 However, because both the M11 and M65 anti-roads protests were taking place simultaneously with the M77 campaign, there was not the same concentrated force of activists as has been witnessed more recently at the Newbury by-pass protests.
- 29 For example, nationwide or worldwide 'days of action'.
- 30 Local coverage included Glasgow's newspapers (the *Evening Times* and the *Daily Record*), the Scottish nationals (the *Herald*, *The Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday*), and coverage in the Scottish editions of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*. Various local radio shows also covered the story. On Scottish television, both the regional BBC programme and ITV's *Scotland Today* programme featured ongoing reports on the conflict. National coverage included several newspaper reports in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Observer* and the *Independent on Sunday*, and television coverage on BBC news, Channel 4 news, and ITV's *3D* current affairs programme. I wrote articles about the conflicts for US publications, *Fifth Estate* and the *Earth First!* newsletter.
- 31 Four of the cars were driven from England by Greenpeace and other anti-roads groups in a convoy called 'To Pollok with love'. On the day that they arrived, the four cars were buried and then set alight under the glare of the media vector. The entire event-action was filmed on video and later appeared on the third *Undercurrents* video news series.
- 32 This figure should be treated with some caution. Earth First! activists attempted to 'flood' the telephone lines so as to register a high percentage of opposition to the M77. One activist rang in 33 times to register 'no' votes. This practice too was part of the resistance.
- 33 See Baumann (1992).
- 34 For example, some Earth First! activists decided to set up a radical bookstore called 'Fahrenheit 451' while some members of the Free State launched a Land Redemption Fund with the purpose of acquiring land outside the city on which to create a sustainable community.

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