



VOICES OF THE WILDERNESS

SECOND EDITION



A PUBLICATION FROM SAVING ICELAND

£2.00/350ISK/€2,50

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO SAVING ICELAND	2
THE ICELANDIC ENERGY DILEMMA AND HOW TO HELP MIRIAM ROSE	3
THE EFFECT OF S.O.S ICELAND BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR	5
PHOTO'S OF THREATENED OR DESTROYED AREAS ONE	6
GREEN ICELAND'S HOT AIR DANIEL	7
YOUR HEART WITH THE LAND SIGGI PÖNK	10
PHOTO'S OF THREATENED OR DESTROYED AREAS TWO	11
YOUR HEART WITH THE LAND CONTINUED	12
NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF LARGE DAMS	13
NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GEOTHERMAL POWER	14
EMBODIED ARTICULATIONS OF PLACE AND IDENTITY ANDREW TOVEY	15
RESPONSES TO THE LOSS OF KÁRAHNJÚKAR VARIOUS CONTRIBUTORS	18
MAP OF ICELAND'S MASTER PLAN (CENTRE PAGE)	19
PHOTOS FROM BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR AND "STERILE"	21
SAVING ICELAND CONFERENCE 2007 DECLARATION	22
THE SHADOW OF POWER GUÐMUNDUR BECK	23
MINING SACRED MOUNTAINS TO FUEL THE WAR ON TERROR SAMARENDRA DAS AND FELIX PATEL	25
THE REAL HIGHLIGHT REEL REVEREND BILLY	27
PHOTOS OF ACTIONS ONE	28
OVERVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN	29
CORPORATE CRIMES IN THE CARIBBEAN OLI MUNION	31
PHOTOS OF ACTIONS TWO	33
ALCANS SOUTH AFRICAN SMELTER ON HOLD... LERATO MARIA MAREGELE	34
THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF SOCIETY MIRIAM ROSE	35
POETRY AND ARTWORK	38

From the Editors-

All the writing within these pages comes under the collective voice of the Saving Iceland Campaign. We are diverse and come from different positions across the world. We also have slightly different beliefs and views. Because of this, each article has been written by an individual and that individual has been briefly introduced at the beginning of their writing. We wanted to do this so that their words could be put into the context of who they are and what they have experienced. We wanted to make it clear that each person speaks autonomously and does not always speak for everyone.

However, at the same time, all the voices in this magazine come from the same starting point; a passion for the defence of the Icelandic wilderness and the resistance to heavy industry across the globe. It is under this common banner that we act together, and that we write together under this title. We are a collective and we hope that is reflected here too. There were lots of silent contributors to this magazine; the ones who took the photos, organised the camps, locked themselves to the diggers, cooked the food, raised the money, acted in solidarity, designed the pages, checked the facts and made the suggestions. There are a couple of pieces of writing that have been attributed to no one. This is because they reflect the voice or actions of us all.

There is a lot which could not fit into this publication! You can find so much more at www.savingiceland.org. We hope that what's in here will both shock and inspire you. And we really hope that you will join us in the fight to defend the Icelandic wilderness and the earth!- x



SAVING ICELAND INTRODUCTION

SAVINGICELAND.ORG

Saving Iceland is an international network dedicated to resisting, stopping and ultimately reversing the destruction of Iceland's wilderness to produce power for heavy industry. The highlands of Iceland are one of the largest and most ecologically rich areas in Europe, the unique geology and sub-arctic climate harbour a stunning array of fauna, flora and landscapes. But Iceland's mostly uninhabited wilderness has the potential to generate a huge amount of energy from large scale hydropower and geothermal power stations. It's this energy, falsely labelled as 'green' and 'renewable' that lures multinational corporations, mostly aluminium corporations, to Iceland.

Last year saw the completion of Kárahnjúkar Hydroelectric Plant; a 200 metre high concrete dam that flooded 57 square kilometers of Iceland's eastern highlands and interrupted the flow of 2 huge glacial rivers, solely to power a new aluminium smelter owned by Alcoa. In the summer of 2005 a few Icelandic environmentalists set up a protest camp in the area to be flooded having appealed for solidarity and help from activists abroad. Saving Iceland as a network grew from this action camp and the resistance that continued throughout that summer after the camp had been evicted. The purpose of the action camp had been to bring direct action and a much more radical tone to the struggle against heavy industrialisation, a struggle that in recent years had been cowed into symbolic protest and inactivity. That summer saw lots of effective actions and inspired more throughout the winter. Internationals who had been at the camp were heartened to hear of the Icelandic Parliament's roof being occupied by mountain rescue teams and a series of office occupations by a group of 30 or so youths.

In 2006 Saving Iceland wanted to broaden the appeal of direct action to more Icelanders and build links with more mainstream groups and collaborated with Islandsvinir on a ten day family protest camp near the almost complete Kárahnjúkar Dam. This camp was a base for several large actions and at one point was occupied by over 200 people. Saving Iceland continued actions throughout the summer, including resisting the eviction of their protest camp site in the area to be flooded and an occupation of the smelter construction site that lasted over 8 hours and cost the company over a quarter of a million pounds.

Despite these two summers of resistance to the Kárahnjúkar Dam, increasing voices of dissent across Iceland and 15,000 people marching in Reykjavik...the dam doors were closed on the morning of 28 September 2006, and the river Jökulsá began to drown the valley.

With the Kárahnjúkar Dam completed except for underground works, 2007 saw a need for a change in strategy and focus. The action camp was established much closer to Reykjavik and began with a conference entitled 'Consequences of Heavy Industry' with delegates from other campaigns that oppose the aluminium industry in Trinidad, South Africa and Brazil. While many of last summers actions were typical of the campaign so far (blockades, occupations etc), some were publicly advertised and attracted quite broad participation, such as a Reclaim the Streets in Reykjavik.

Recently construction has started on a new smelter for Century at Helguvík, despite it having no valid Environmental Impact Assessment. Energy companies are looking to build and expand geothermal plants across the south west and the National Power Company are pushing to build 4 dams on the lower Thjorsá river where the community is determined to resist it.

Saving Iceland has no leaders or hierarchy and while the campaign employs a wide range of tactics there's a strong underlying philosophy that in the end it is Direct Action that gets the goods. This ethos coupled with a 'no compromise in the defence of the earth' stance has certainly reinvigorated resistance in Iceland. Not to mention considerably shifting the middle ground, radicalising youth culture and galvanising environmentalists. Since the campaign's founding, Icelandic environmentalism has evolved from a series of single issue debates into a broad push to save the land's resources from exploitation at the hands of multinationals. Despite continued attempts to marginalise it, the campaign has widespread support across the community from artists to farmers. Areas once earmarked for destruction are beginning to look safer; the aluminium lobby is facing resistance at every step from grassroots groups.

At the time of publishing, Saving Iceland is getting ready to hold its fourth action camp (July 2008). Saving Iceland has regular gatherings throughout the year in various places (inside and outside of Iceland) and organises itself entirely by consensus. Solidarity actions welcomed at any time.

Direct Action: Any kind of action that bypasses lobbying, symbolic protest and middlemen, to achieve goals ourselves, and with urgency. Direct Action can be diverse and creative. Based on the idea that power should be dispersed and the world shaped by us, not others on our behalf.

Consensus: A decision-making process that includes everyone. Instead of using majority voting in which the minority are ignored, consensus hears all voices.

THE ICELANDIC ENERGY DILEMMA AND HOW TO HELP

A MASTERPLAN TO EXPLOIT EUROPE'S GREATEST WILDERNESS



MIRIAM ROSE is an environmental activist and environmental scientist from the UK. She has lived in Iceland since May 2007 and has been very actively involved in actions against the aluminium industry since 2006. She has also visited the Narmada river in India where tribal peoples struggle to resist a series of dams that will displace at least 130,000 people. Miriam was threatened with deportation from Iceland in September 2007 for taking part in demonstrations against the government's heavy industry policy. Luckily she was acquitted when there was public outcry against her unfair accusation.

In our safe and comfortable western society, nature has been tamed and commodified like everything else around us; relegated to landscaped parks, quaint little fields and ordered managed forests. As beautiful and valuable as these friendly and biodiverse areas are, they are a far cry from nature at its most organic and free state, where powerful processes of birth and death, erosion and deposition and sun and rain, shape the evolution of vast ecosystems without human's pacifying touch. This is the wilderness, the overwhelming expanses of mountains, deserts, rivers and forests which, from our sofas in front of the discovery channel, make us feel so small and in awe of life on this beautiful planet.

The mysterious and isolated island of Iceland now contains the largest remaining wilderness in Western Europe. With its 300,000 strong population concentrated into Reykjavik and a few tiny coastal towns, the rest of the country is a pure and wild land of unearthly beauty. Here roaring glacial rivers carry millions of tonnes of nutrient rich silt to the Atlantic, feeding the algae and fish that create and maintain biodiversity in our seas. Here are the breeding grounds for many thousands of birds, who migrate in clouds of flapping wings every winter for warmer climes. Here looming white glaciers meet with hot steaming rivers, which flow through mossy valleys and desolate sand deserts to the crashing seas. It is an absolutely unique landscape on this planet, and one which has inspired artists, poets and almost anyone who steps into it, since humans first set foot on this strange volcanic island.

Now this last great outpost of unadulterated European nature is at threat from the greedy hands of the Aluminium industry, the Icelandic government and others who wish to profit from the great energy resources of this powerful land. As fishing stocks decrease and this rich nation becomes ever more affluent and ambitious, the Icelandic elite have turned to their plentiful resources of thundering rivers and boiling geothermal fields to facilitate their ever growing economy. The idea is to export this energy in the form of Aluminium; mined in South America and Australia, smelted in Iceland with hydro and

geothermal power and sold in America and Europe, partly to feed the ever growing arms trade.

The energy master plan (see centre pages) drawn up by the government and these corporations involves ultimately exploiting every major river and geothermal zone in the country, and fragmenting and destroying this valuable wilderness completely, drying the veins of the land and flooding its colourful valleys. If this vision is realised it could be one of the greatest European environmental tragedies of our time.

For the Icelandic people it is tough to see the facts through the high profile PR greenwashing of their national power company (Landsvirkjun), and the bribery and promises of the Aluminium giants who build sports halls and new roads, and pay off consultants and politicians for their contentious factories. When the huge Kárahnjúkar dam in the eastern highlands drowned 57km² of uncharted wilderness for a single 340,000 tonne smelter in the tiny Eastern village of Reydarfjörður, half of the nation cheered and half cried. They saw huge prosperity and advancement in this status symbol megaproject. However, almost 2 years on it turns out that the project has provided much less economic benefit than expected, and much greater environmental impact; affecting 3% of the country's landmass, forcing magma to rise dangerously in a



Saving Iceland does Reclaim the Streets, Reykjavik, 2007

nearby volcano, flooding areas 10m higher than planned and almost completely drowning the protected reindeer breeding grounds in Kringilsarrani. In 2007 OECD economist Val Koromzay reported that the huge capital investment into heavy industry was causing massive inflation and had uncertain benefits for the economy. He recommended that Iceland slow down on the planned industrial expansion until the effects of this project alone could be determined. Despite this warning, the government continues to plough ahead with its plans to build 2 more smelters and expand at least 2 existing ones in the

next few years.

In Helguvík, close to Reykjavík, illegal construction of a 250,000 tonne Century Aluminium smelter began in March 2008. The power company had not completed a valid EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) for the whole project and its power sources, a trick already played during construction of the ALCOA smelter in the East, nor consulted the local people. Contracts were simply signed and the diggers moved in. In Þjorsá, where 4 dams are proposed to provide energy for this and other

Southwestern projects, locals joined together horrified by the outright threats and bribery of the national power company, who require their land and permission for dams shown by government scientist Páll Einarsson to be placed on highly dangerous earthquake faults. Both this report, and an earlier government EIA of a proposed dam on the RAMSAR wetland site Þjorsarver were suppressed and their conclusions ignored or simply changed, as the projects march ahead.

At the same time plans are underway to expand the 2 existing smelters in the Southwest, at Hvalfjörður (Century Aluminium) and Hafnarfjörður (RioTinto-Alcan) bringing them up to 300,000 and 460,000 tonnes respectively. Aswell as this there are rumours of a new 600,000 tonne smelter in Þorlákshöfn, also in the Southwest. At the moment the power company cannot even guarantee electricity for current industrial expansions with the energy projects they have been granted, but it is clear that if all of the plans (already promised to the Aluminium giants) go ahead, every river and geothermal field will be needed, at enormous cost to the ecology and economy of this island.

Though public opinion is turning as people realise the implications of this Aluminium invasion into their proudly independent country, the small size and closeness of the population create difficulties in raising a voice against the powerful and dominant national elite (and often against your neighbour or cousin), and there is a sense of reluctantly giving in to what seems inevitable. Members of Helguvík environmental group Sol á Suðurnesum describe how locals are afraid of the town mayor Árni Sigfússon, who declared "nothing can stop us now!" as he forced the Century smelter through despite illegalities and problems.

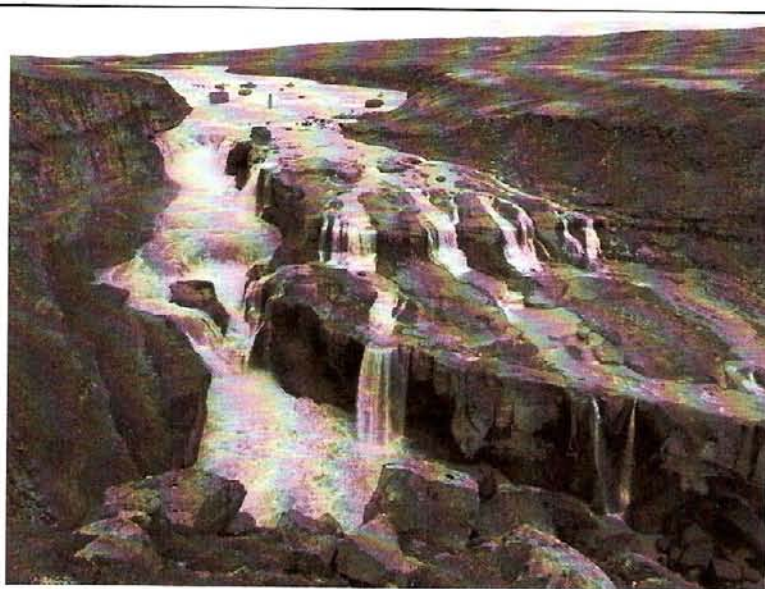
Meanwhile in the North of Iceland ALCOA have secured a site for another 250,000 tonne smelter in the beautiful town of Husavík, a popular spot for whale sightings. Although it is unsure if there will be sufficient power for the initial smelter from the nearby Krafla geothermal fields (currently only 25% has been found), ALCOA is already talking about expansion up to 500,000 tonnes, requiring the additional damming of at least 2 major rivers in the North. The damming of Kárahnjúkar alone stopped 10 million tonnes of river sediment per year from reaching the sea, affecting North Atlantic fish populations and accelerating climate change as the vast swarms of green photosynthetic algae once found around Iceland disappear. The damming of all of proposed rivers will irreversibly damage the ecology of land and sea around Iceland, and directly affect the rest of the planet through climate change. Development of geothermal fields means the destruction of the

incredibly globally rare ecosystems found at the hot bubbling springs and steam vents so characteristic of Iceland.

If all of the proposed projects go ahead Icelandic smelters will require 28.7 Terrawatt hours (Twh) per year by approximately 2015 (domestic supplies currently require only 3.8 Twh, while existing heavy industry uses 5.3 Twh). This will seriously exceed Iceland's already generous Kyoto protocol and pollution targets (see article on page 8), which only include the emissions from industry itself and not from the methane producing reservoirs of hydro dams.

For many Icelanders, their incredible and wild nature is something they have always taken for granted, and often hardly even experienced due to the inaccessibility of all but a tiny portion of the country. With the hardships of extreme poverty not far behind them, it is not surprising that the nation which survived a volcano which killed a third of its population, years of famine and exploitation under Danish rule, and just managed to keep itself afloat on fish and determination, is not afraid to use its natural resources for promised profit. But this promise is wrapped in deception and exploitation of the land and people, and Icelanders are always the last to know the scale of the backroom deals being done in their ancient parliament.

It is up to anyone who cares about the existence of the last of Europe's wilderness, the ecology, the climate, and the disgusting behavior of huge multinational corporations - who pillage the earth and exploit its most vulnerable people all over the world - to stand with those who are brave enough to speak out in Iceland. It is up to us to give them strength and amplification, and help them avoid the same tragic loss of incredibly valuable and awe inspiring wild lands we have experienced in our countries.



Dynkur Waterfall, River Thjorsa, under threat.

Please join us at the summer protest camps in Iceland, write letters and do solidarity actions in your own countries wherever these greedy corporations are found. Iceland needs every bit of help it can get to prevent this ecocide at one of the most beautiful places on earth.



THE EFFECT OF S.O.S ICELAND

BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR REFLECTS ON DIRECT ACTION IN ICELAND

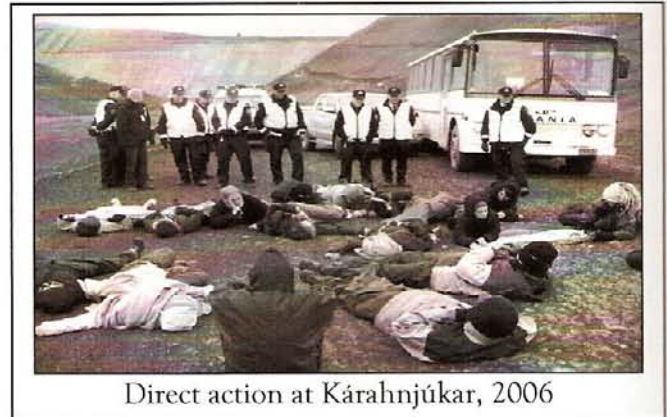
BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR is an activist poet, one of the original organisers of the first Saving Iceland protest camp and an anarchist by heart. Right now she translates books, makes books, organises various protests where ever it is most needed and likes to spend time with her kids when not consumed by email.

Before the first Saving Iceland protest camp – direct actions occurred rarely in Iceland. Since the summer of 2005 there has been much debate wither or not direct action really works. I remembered that I had conversations with some fellow activists after we had been forced to leave our protest site close to Kárahnjúkar. They felt discouraged and sort of depressed after all the setbacks. The police were out of control. No results could be felt from the sacrifices made. I told them that they had crossed the threshold for the Icelandic nation, when it came to direct action and the results would be felt later. It was also a bit of a disappointment that only a handful of Icelanders joined in the fight the first year and the media didn't report that it was US, the Icelandic activists, that sent the SOS call to the world to help us. The activists who came to Iceland and their actions were indeed by our bidding. The problem we faced was typical when we are fighting for something in Iceland: the inability for different groups to work together. As a result not many Icelandic environmentalists showed up at the camp or wrote articles in support of us when we where under attack for our peaceful actions. We were labeled as extremists, terrorists, tree huggers ...

For a short period of time the pubic opinion was in our favor, especially when the oppression and brutality of the police was beyond what the Icelandic public believed to be just. But people are lazy and they used the first possible opportunity to turn their back on us. So in the end we felt this hard work might not have had any results. However, the results are being felt and seen today in ways we might not have foreseen. By crossing that threshold, we gave other people and groups, the precedent to do similar actions. We might not see much result when it comes to all the pristine nature that has been sacrificed since we sent out the SOS call. All our worst predictions of the horrid effects of the dam at Kárahnjúkar are happening much faster than we thought.

Will that help us to get people to listen when we yet again try to get their attention about the destruction in the pipelines from Landsvirkjun [the national energy company] and the government? It is hard to tell. Our President has been selling Iceland abroad as THE country of green energy! One of the big banks invited Al Gore to Iceland to give his famous lecture on global warming. What does it all mean to us who know that this is all green-wash and how do we get people to act before it is too

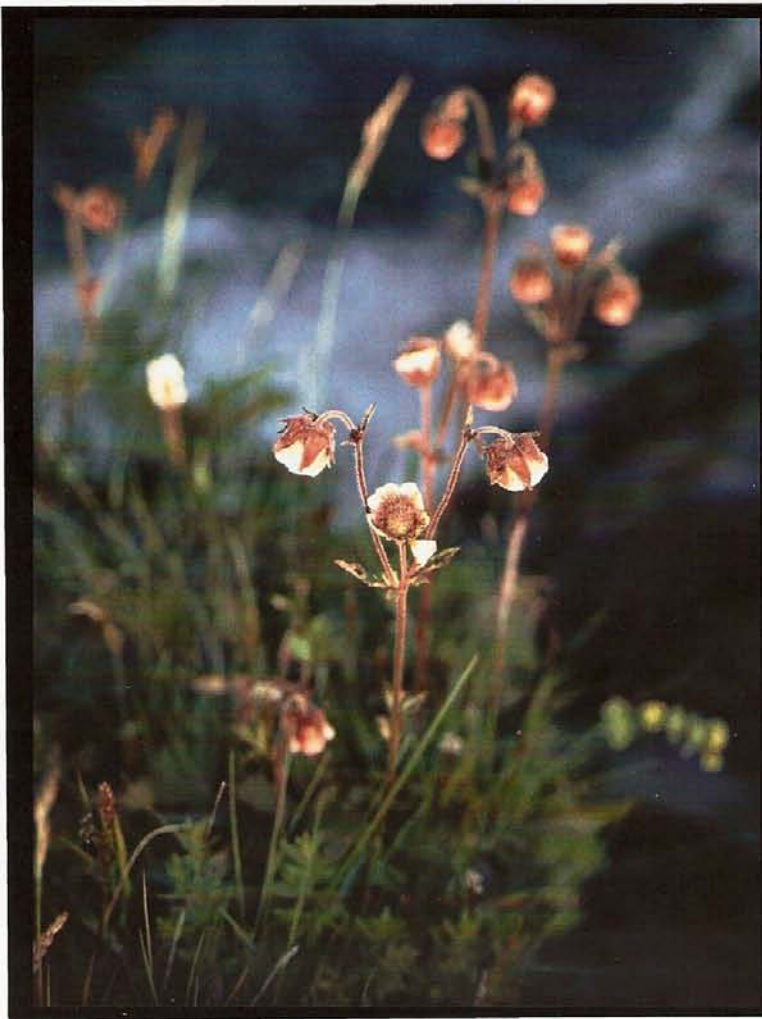
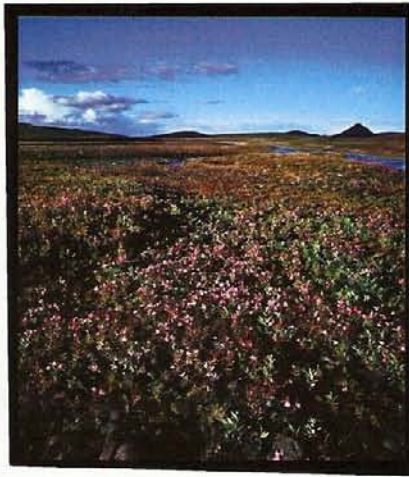
late? I think by carrying on what we are doing. The camps have always managed to get the nation to debate about the issues we want them to debate about. However, I believe we need to turn our focus more on the Icelandic government and give them more responsibilities for where Iceland is heading. Iceland is now dealing with the foreseen recession of money spent on virtual short-term growth. The government will act as it has been doing in the last 10 years: short term solutions for long term problems and that means more drilling for geothermal energy and more dams and of course more heavy industry. The government is responsible for it – without the government's agreement, it wouldn't happen. Since last camp we have got yet another giant with infamous history to join in the leeching of Iceland: Rio Tinto. Most Icelanders are not aware of their bloody and corrupt history. I feel it is very important to get information to the public and give them other ways to protest if direct action is not their style. But the backbone of getting the information in the spotlight of the media and general discussion is direct action.



Direct action at Kárahnjúkar, 2006

There is a need for this sort of action because all other ways have been tried. And it is important that Icelanders remember that direct action has nothing to do with violence. It is always the cops that cross the line of violence and even the most peaceful lock-on's look violent when the cops are pulling people away with force.

I know one thing for certain: doing nothing will change nothing. So I call upon my fellow Icelanders to wake up to what is being done to our nature, to our future. Soon there will be no return point and by doing nothing to stop it: my fellow Icelanders are responsible for the destruction of our greatest treasure: our nature. We don't own this land, no one ever owns land. It is an illusion. If we can get Icelanders to look at what is happening in the East of Iceland before they make more choices of further dams or drilling. Please my dear nation: We can do better than that. How about harvesting all this creative energy we like to brag about to the rest of the world?



Clockwise from top: Goðafoss waterfall in the North of Iceland, threatened by an Alcoa smelter expansion; Flowers in Hengill, South West Iceland. Threatened by further geothermal exploration by Reykjavik Energy; Thjórsárver is on Rio Tinto-Alcan's and Landsvirkjun's hit list for dams; Lava at Krisuvik, West Iceland. Under threat of geothermal exploration by Century Aluminium; flowers in Kárahnjúkar

GREEN ICELAND'S HOT AIR

ICELAND'S ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY ENERGY MYTH

DANIEL has been active with Saving Iceland since he first followed some of his more eco-minded friends to a protest camp on top of a very cold highland plateau where both he and a whole country learned what the term 'lock on' meant.

In March this year Al Gore came to Iceland to talk about climate change. His efforts to raise awareness of the issue had earned him a joint Nobel Peace Prize a few months earlier alongside the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Iceland, he claimed in his Glitnir Bank funded appearances, is a world figurehead in the battle against global warming due to its development of "environmentally friendly" energy resources.

Which ones are those then? True, Iceland is one of the least fossil fuel reliant countries in the world, deriving over 70% of its stationary energy from geothermal power and dams. But this does not mean that the island does not contribute more than a sustainable amount of greenhouse gasses (GHG) into the atmosphere. The average Icelander produces seventeen tonnes of carbon dioxide and its equivalents (CO₂e)¹ per year compared to the European average of eleven.²

Its leaders claim Iceland is a special case. As the second largest island in Europe even this amount of pollution per its population of 300,000 pales in comparison to other industrial nations. And because of its ability to utilise so called "renewable" forms of energy, the expansion of industry in Iceland rather than most other countries in the world means that on a global level more pollution in Iceland constitutes less pollution overall, particularly when those interested in using Iceland's energy are willing to use the best industry technologies to minimise their pollution. Iceland's energy is so green, Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde told the 2008 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, that it could even provide the coalition with eco-friendly weaponry from its aluminium smelters.

Iceland's Kyoto Exemptions

Unlike most industrial countries, who had to reduce or at least halt the increase or their GHG emissions, the Kyoto Protocol originally set out that Iceland could increase its GHG emissions by 10% between 2008 and 2012. This often quoted figure was the largest such allowed increase of all industrial nations subscribed to Kyoto. But even this was not deemed enough of an allowance for the expansion of Iceland's heavy industries to go ahead. So in 2001 Iceland won itself a major special exemption, Decision 14/CP.7, which allowed it to separate and increase the pollution of its new energy intensive projects from its +10% national target.

This non-tradable allowance, applicable to only Iceland and Monaco, allows Iceland to increase its GHG emissions from its

1990 level of 3,282 giga-grams (Gg) CO₂e per year³ to 5,202 Gg CO₂e by 2012. Far from demanding that all nations decrease their GHG levels, the Kyoto Protocol encouraged Iceland to increase its by a mammoth 63.1%.

This free allowance has allowed Iceland to sell its electricity to energy intensive industries at possibly the lowest price in the world. It's no wonder why such industries are scrambling to turn Iceland into what many concerned environmentalists are calling the world's aluminium Eldorado.

As a Friday night in downtown Reykjavik proves, excess is hard to control: it seems like Iceland will even overshoot its +63.1% target.

In 2006 the Icelandic Ministry of Environment calculated that the island would "be very close to exceeding the allocated amount of 5,202 Gg CO₂" given the planned scenario of the construction of a new anode rod plant in Hvalfjörður and the enlargements of the Rio Tinto-Alcan smelter in Straumsvik, the Icelandic Alloys Elkem plant in Hvalfjörður and another expansion of the Century aluminium smelter in Hvalfjörður. Today these four projects are to go ahead or are highly likely to go ahead by 2012, bringing Iceland to 5,185 Gg CO₂e, 0.3% below the Kyoto agreed limit.

But this is not all. Century Aluminum has started to build an entirely new smelter in Helgúvík without any pollution permit; Alcoa is in the preliminary stages of building a new smelter near Húsavík; The mayor of Þorlákshöfn has been crying out for an energy intensive project; Íslenskur hátaekniidnadir ("Icelandic Hi-Tech Industry") and The Geostream Services Group have announced their will to build a whole oil refinery in the West Fjörds; Plans for new silicone factories and internet server parks are being floated.⁴ With these extra projects on the go Iceland will spectacularly surpass its massive Kyoto allowance. And even if all these projects aren't completed by 2012 and Iceland manages to not breach its obligations, it will definitely need to increase its quota for the second, post-2012 phase.

Copenhagen Climate Summit 2009

In the 2007 Bali Climate Summit, over 180 nations agreed to decide upon the second commitment phase of GHG quotas at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December 2009 (COP15). Iceland will probably try to secure another period of GHG increases for itself, allowing it to increase its pollution at no extra cost.

If this fails then it will have to buy unused pollution quotas from other countries using Kyoto's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This will be costly to say the least and would probably restrict Iceland's bottomless goldrush attitude towards its heavy industrial development. But we should not hold our breath for this to happen. Whilst Iceland's energy

policy is still seen as leading the worlds perceived alternative-energy battle against climate change, the island looks like it will win further concessions like 14/CP.7 for free.

At the heart of the problem is Iceland's environmentally friendly energy myth. Because of this the Kyoto Protocol still does not count in the GHG's emitted from dam reservoirs into its quotas, despite proof that dams can produce up to fifty-four times more CO₂e than modern gas power stations. (Fearnside, 1995) The green energy myth hides the fact that even in Iceland, Al Gore's proclaimed climate figurehead, energy intensive industrial development is simply not compatible with a reduction in the worlds GHG's. (see box 'Iceland's Environmentally Friendly Energy Myth')

So why, from Al Gore to the highest global governance institutions to occasionally even small grassroots environmentalists, is Iceland's environmentally friendly energy myth so prevalent and powerful? I propose that corporate and political manipulation are at work.

Corporate Concern for Climate Change

The heavy industrial corporations involved in Iceland have been interested in climate change for two decades now. Alcoa, Rio Tinto-Alcan and Century Aluminum are all members of the Aluminum Association which has itself itself been a prominent member of an organisation called the Global Climate Coalition (GCC). This non-registered organisation which also included climate concerned corporations like Shell, British Petroleum, Ford, Chrysler, Dow Chemicals, General Motors, Exxon, Union Carbide and a list more, was so massive that it proclaimed it controlled in sum six-million companies. Even the US Chamber of Commerce was involved. It spent an estimated \$13 million on marketing global warming related advertisements at the time of the original signing of the Kyoto Protocol, roughly the same amount as Greenpeace's annual budget. Through its most active years between 1989 and 1997 it donated an estimated \$63 million dollars to politicians.

GCC's aim? 'The Advancement of Sound Science.' In other words, to discredit human produced climate change as a fact and to derail effective measures to combat it. Through massive funding of a small group of renegade scientists like Fred Singer, Sallie Baliunas and Patrick Michaels (who claimed everything from climate change not happening at all, to not being anything to do with humans, to not being a bad thing even if it were

world authority on climate change. And through their political involvement they set themselves against the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its legislative body, the Kyoto Protocol.

The results? Most obviously the USA, who lead the world in GHG emissions, refusal to ratify the Protocol, a gigantic block in the way of stopping climate change. But lets not just blame America alone for dropping Kyoto at its birth, there were other victories for GCC and its members. The doubt and lack of urgency that still follows the climate change discourse outside of scientific papers is a prevailing victory. Allowing countries with

Iceland's Environmentally Friendly Energy Myth:

- *Hydropower is not a renewable form of energy.* Dams in Iceland get clogged up by glacial silt which ends their energy production within half a century.
- *Hydropower produces GHG's.* Vegetation submerged by reservoirs rots and turns into methane (NH₄), carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrous oxide (N₂O), three of the six greenhouse gasses recognised by the IPCC. (Duchemin et al., 2003)
- *Hydropower prevents Iceland's glacial rivers from naturally sequestering GHG's.* Clogging mineral rich glacial silt at the dam means that the glacial river can no longer nourish algae and other forms of life at the bottom of the sea food chain which naturally remove GHG's from the atmosphere. (Gislason et al., 2006)
- *Geothermal power is not necessarily a renewable form of energy.* Over-extraction of geothermal boreholes can cool them down to a point that they stop producing energy.
- *Geothermal power in Iceland emits GHG's.* It is possible to remove much of this using an expensive chalk process though this is usually avoided for reasons of profit.
- *Geothermal power is not abundant enough in Iceland on its own for energy-intensive industries.* It is unlikely that all the geothermal fields in the north of Iceland will generate enough energy to power a single aluminium smelter. Therefore for Iceland's heavy industrial development, geothermal power must be used alongside hydro, whose global warming affect is greater.



Kárahnjúkar Dam full, 2007

relatively little pollution like Iceland and Australia to increase rather than reduce their pollution quota was also a major victory, one that followed from Iceland's environmentally friendly energy myth.

Then, from outwardly trying to debunk what they called the *theory* of human produced climate change, the corporations involved with GCC disbanded en mass in 1997 to join the fight against it. Aluminium for Future Generations: Alcoa, Alcan, Hydro, Alusuisse and more claimed that they had the solution to the problem: "voluntary trade agreements

and market based flexible mechanisms." Combat Climate

Change (3C): From Rio Tinto-Alcan, BP, Dow Chemicals, General Electrics to the disastrous South African energy company Eskom (who I'll let Lerato Maregele introduce in her article on page 27) and Tata, (whose genocidal impulse Samarendra Das and Felix Patel can introduce on page 24). United States Climate Action Partnership (USCAP): Alcoa and Rio Tinto-Alcan are signed as individuals, and so are Shell, British Petroleum, Ford, Chrysler, Dow Chemicals and General Motors amongst many others. Notice the similar membership of climate change debunking GCC and the supposedly climate change solving 3C and USCAP?

"In our view the climate challenge, like other challenges our country has confronted in the past, will create more economic opportunities rather than risks for the US economy."

-USCAP Call For Action

Just as the discovery of oil and metals under Greenland's melting glaciers have begun a goldrush of terrifying proportions, climate change is creating new markets open to exploitation. As the planets oil reserves become scarcer, more politically volatile and just plain expensive: big industries are looking towards alternative energy sources. The trade of big amounts of energy is big money for big corporations and they would therefore seriously lose out were climate change to be reversed by energy cutbacks rather than the white elephant of alternative energy sources. Indeed nothing short of the present corporate world order's collapse would occur were we to actually halt climate change. So the current tactic of corporate groups like 3C and USCAP is to enter into the climate discussion, having belatedly accepted that human produced climate change is a threatening reality, and make any solution forming process ineffective.

Evidence? Industrial process fueled climate change has already killed hundreds of thousands through droughts, hurricanes, floods and heatwaves, and the situation is set to freefall should temperature rises reach a fast-approaching tipping point. Yet USCAP, 3C and states like the USA and Japan are arguing for a useless solution: if left to itself the market would solve climate change by 2050 with a 20-40% reduction in GHG's.(USCAP) The IPCC forecasts a need for a 50-80% GHG reduction by 2050 or sooner, secured through urgent international legislation. It is clear that the likes of USCAP and 3C have no interest whatsoever in meeting this need.



Hellisheiði geothermal borehole, 2008

Let's not forget how independent the Icelandic government is of the desires of those who've landed on their island. Regardless of its current energy-intensive policy and its guests' catastrophically limited global warming plans and myth promotion, the political advisor to the environment minister, Kristin Olafsdottir, claims that by 2050 she expects Iceland to have reduced its GHG emissions by 50-75% of its 1990 levels. (Veal, 2007) This should remind us to be aware of something quite simple from our leaders in regards to ignoring major catastrophes like climate change: plain lies.

Cutting to the chase...

Iceland once was a beacon to the world in crisis. It can comfortably and sustainably provide its few inhabitants with energy for domestic and small scale economic use as it did until the early 1990's. But no amount of technological progress can fix the essential issue behind climate change, that the amount of energy demanded by industrial and post-industrial societies is unsustainable in and of itself. Whether in Iceland or the conference halls of the COP15 Summit, we have to make the voice of those who want to stop climate change drown out the voice of big money. Otherwise reckless Iceland, turning itself into an industrial battery, will not only destroy its wild nature but the rest of the planet too.

[1] CO₂e is the adopted measurement unit of greenhouse gasses. It stands for CO₂ Equivalent.

[2]A figure which does not take into account the amount of GHG's released by its dam reservoirs, see info box above.

[3] CO₂e 1990 being the year in which Kyoto sets its base pollution levels.

[4] These two projects will of course not pollute as much as aluminium smelters, but they will certainly add to the GHG level both in themselves and from their energy sources.

References:

E. Duchemin, M. Lucotte, V. St Louis and R. Canuel, 2003, 'Hydroelectric reservoirs as an anthropogenic source of greenhouse gases'. World Resource Review, 14, pp. 334-353.

Fearnside, P.M, 1995. 'Hydroelectric dams in the Brazilian Amazon as sources of Greenhouse Gases'. Environmental Conservation. Vol.22, No.1.

Gislason, S.R., Oelkers, E.H., and Snorrason, A., 2006, Role of river-suspended material in the global carbon cycle: Geology, v. 34, p. 49-52, doi: 10.1130/G22045.1.

Ministry for the Environment in Iceland, 2006, 'Iceland's Fourth National Communication on Climate Change and Iceland's Report on Demonstrable Progress', Guðjón Ó.

U.S. Climate Action Partnership, undated, 'A Call for Action: Consensus Principles and Recommendations of U.S. Climate Action Partnership, A Business and NGO Partnership'.

Veal, Lowana, 2007. 'CLIMATE CHANGE-ICELAND: Emissions Quota Debate Hears Up', IPS News. [Note Veal makes the mistake of missing Decision 14/CP.7]

YOUR HEART WITH THE LAND

FROM A FARMER CAMPAIGNING TO DEFEND HIS LAND.

SIGGI PÖNK is a farming kid, now ER nurse. He is the founder of the anarchist library in Iceland and translates, publishes and distributes radical literature across the island. Here he interviews Ólafur Sigurjónsson, a farmer who lives by the Þjorsa.

In the south of Iceland, less than an hour's drive from Reykjavik, you cross the river Þjorsá if you follow highway one going east. The river moves beautifully over lava, moorland and waterfalls on its way to sea, but it has already been dammed five times closer to the highlands. Now Landsvirkjun, the national power company, threatens to build three more dams in the lower parts of the river. People have been living on the riverbanks since the settlement of Iceland. Many of them go along with the plans and see this as easy money, but others are fighting the power company and have been for years now.

The original plans are as old as 1965, but around 1999 the power company brushed them up and started making deals with the local community. Some of the landowners who will be harmed if the damming goes ahead have said that they will not be making any deals with Landsvirkjun at all. Landsvirkjun has ignored all protest from the campaigners and is looking hopefully to laws that allow land to be forcefully taken "should it serve the interest of the whole nation." But the company does not have any plans for the energy from those dams but to sell it to the highest bidder. Iceland is already rich, unemployment ranking the lowest in the world and the push for more energy is being driven only by capitalist interest.

We spoke to Ólafur Sigurjónsson, one of the farmers who campaigns against the three proposed dams. Ólafur has lived by the river all his life as have many of the other campaigners in this area.

Ólafur : "We who are campaigning against the dams in Þjorsá have been working on informing people about the issues at hand. We have said that if those dams go ahead it will be because of ignorance. This ignorance became quite obvious last summer (2007) when we set up a sign showing how high the water will rise in one of the proposed reservoirs. Landsvirkjun has not shown the effects from the viewpoint we have of it every day, but has visualized the dams mostly from above and said that the river will, for the most part, stay in its path. The way the power company introduces the dams to the public, the high

and long flood walls are not visible, but they would stretch for miles.

We have sat down with the local municipality and told them about the damage this will do to the locals who work with tourism. We have pointed out the warnings of well known geologists about building dams on this area known for its earthquakes. Those who design the dams, VST (Verkfræðistofa Sigurðar Thoroddsen sf.) are the same ones that estimate the risk. They brush off the warnings from the geologists and call them humbug. They even say that we, who live here, will be safer regarding floods after the damming that will place a huge reservoir above the farming areas. The risk assessment has the numbers wrong, about how high the water will rise behind the dams. It mentions fences and alarm bells! They have done their so-called "introductions to the risk-assessment" but they haven't published anything so we don't have anything on paper.

We have taken ministers and members of parliament to the area where the land is torn from past earthquakes next to the proposed dam sites. We have spent many working days with reporters and journalists but not all with success, it seems that their hands are tied when it comes to neutrality. The Channel One TV show dedicated most of their show to Þorsteinn Hilmarrson (the PR of Landsvirkjun) instead of showing the interview with us and the earthquake cracks they filmed.

We have pointed out that if these plans go through, the biggest salmon grounds in Iceland will be history. Their spawning ground will go under reservoirs or will dry up and biologists say that what has been planned to help the salmon cross the dams is totally inadequate.

There are plans to pump 75.000 m³ of sludge from the reservoirs upon the riverbanks. That would cover 7.5 ha of land with one meter thick layer.

Big areas of farmland could be destroyed because of higher groundwater. Anyone who lives here knows that the water level of the river can be measured in building sites and canals far away from the river. Still the power company claims that the riverbed is tight and that no danger will stem from this. The power company has also planned reservoirs and levee's on people's land without considering any of the plans the community already has for these areas.

We have sent articles to the papers pointing out all of this. We claim that the municipalities have been bribed. The county

of Flói had already refused the dam in Urriðafoss. Landsvirkjun then promised a payment in the form of new roads, better mobile connection and waterworks in the area, to buy up their way into the county. In our book this is called bribery but at the power company they call this "oiling the negotiation process." People are giving away amazing natural wealth for public services which the state provides to everyone else anyway. We have tried to sue both the ministry of public roads and the parliament of this county. But they don't need to worry, since they made a deal with Landsvirkjun to take care of all costs (legal costs and other) that would come up in the process.

We have formed this campaign group, Sól á Suðurlandi, with other landowners who are under serious pressure from both Landsvirkjun and their own municipalities (who have been raking in money by taxing Landsvirkjun for the use of land).

We emphasize that no amount of money can replace the amazing nature and beautiful land we have here. It is a sad fact that some of our soundest supporters are foreigners who can't understand how Icelanders treat their land. Our fiercest opponents are so-called cultivators, farmers and capitalists who wait on their knees for multinational companies to offer up Icelandic energy all around, calling it pure and environmentally sound. Can you call it green energy when it leaves big areas of

land under reservoirs and covered in sludge? Or with all the powerlines like a forest all over the country? Is it environmentally sound transporting aluminium back and forth across the planet and all the way up here, underneath the north pole?!

Any sane person has got to see through this farce."

Vow: This has been going on for so many years and it has been so much work for you to keep resisting it. But still Landsvirkjun acts like your fight is a minor detail which does not matter. Tell me, where from do you get energy to keep going?

Ólafur: "First and foremost we get energy from each other. If this goes bad and Landsvirkjun get what they want than no one can take from us the friendships and acquaintances we have made during this fight. We also believe very strongly in our cause. We have said that this is the fight for independence all over again and we have all read about how emotional the nation became during the fight for independence."

As this is written Landsvirkjun threatens to begin serious work on the proposed dams in 2009. The campaigners still hope that they can defend the river through legal means but the future is very unsafe for the lowest part of river Þjórsá.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ICELANDIC RESISTANCE

Although the 1990s saw a resurgence of governmental right wing authoritarianism, and as a consequence, a sharp rise in a climate of fear-of-authority and the vengeful "blue hand" of the conservative forces in Icelandic society; direct action is far from being an alien phenomenon to the Icelandic people.

In the twentieth century numerous incidents can be found where Icelandic people resort to direct action. This is particularly to be encountered in the struggle of the Icelandic peace movement, and of the socialists and anarchists.

In the late 1960s a very determined group burst into the TV studios of the American NATO base in Keflavik. The station's signal was transmitted all over Iceland which did not yet have a television network of its own. In the middle of a direct transmission from a soldier, the newsreader was pushed aside and a declaration read in which the imperialist TV station was declared shut down. The group then proceeded to dismantle all the cameras and spray red paint into the lenses. Soon after this incident, the transmission of the station was restricted to the base only.

In the 1970's 65 farmers used bulldozers and dynamite to dismantle a dam in the river of Laxá in Thingeyjarsýsla. The dam, they said was built without any consideration for environmental consequences and without taking into account the opposition of the local people. This action put an end to the dam project. Only a couple of years ago the government and Landsvirkjun tried to revive the project but were immediately warned by local people that the same would happen. The government immediately backed out.

In the 1980s two Icelandic environmentalists opposed to whaling locked themselves to a whaling boat. Although corporate NGOs such as Greenpeace had no interest in collaborating with the Icelandic grassroots, this was a sign that there was a strong sentiment among Icelandic people against whaling.

Numerous other incidents could be cited but this should suffice to show that Icelandic people are not always as passive in their opposition to the abuse of power as one might think at first sight.



Clockwise from top: The river Djórsá, under threat from Landsvirkjun; River Djórsá again; Jökulsá á Brú river, Kárahnjúkar, now flooded; flooded Kárahnjúkar with reindeer; sunset over the flooded Kárahnjúkar dam with Snæfell in the background; sunset at Kárahnjúkar, now flooded.



NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF GEOTHERMAL POWER GENERATION

Geothermal power has enjoyed an almost entirely clean reputation for its low environmental impact in comparison to the fossil fuels. Geothermal plants are claimed to produce no carbon emissions, virtually no liquid or gaseous pollution, and have little impact on their surroundings. Although it is true that geothermal plants are more sustainable than their fossil fuel equivalents, and less environmentally disastrous than hydro (see Thórhallsdóttir, 2007), there are considerable negative effects of their operation, which will be examined here.

EFFECTS OF OPERATION OF PLANT.

Drainage of underground fluids can lead to a number of disturbing effects including;

Drying of hot springs and geysers in the surrounding area, leading to loss of scenery and tourism, and loss of rare thermophillic plants and algal growth. (many examples in USA, eg loss of Brady springs, Nevada, Steamboat Springs geyser, and Long valley springs, Kristmannsdóttir, 2003)

Toxic waste water entering clean aquifers due to lowering of the water table.

Violent explosions caused by build up of a 'steam pillow' in empty hot underground reservoirs, which have previously killed people working in geothermal plants. (see Goff and Goff, 1997).

Subsidence or sinking of land. In Waitakei, New Zealand subsidence of 15m (40cm/year) occurred at one plant.

Landslides can occur due to temperature and water level in rocks, especially in tectonically active areas. (See Goff and Goff, 1997 for examples of major landslides induced by geothermal plants.)

Local weather changes caused by emission of steam affecting clouds. (Kristmannsdóttir, 2003).

Induced earthquakes caused by lubrication of faults when waste fluid is reinjected into the rocks. Rybach, 2003 shows considerable increase in frequency of earthquakes near geothermal sites.

Air and chemical pollution, including radioactive element Radon, toxic elements Arsenic, Mercury, Ammonia, Boron (highly toxic to plants) and other polluting heavy metals. Waste steam is sprayed over surrounding vegetation (usually rare species in geothermal areas), while waste water is either reinjected (inducing earthquakes), or pumped into streams and lakes untreated, as treatment is considered too costly to be economically viable. (Kristmannsdóttir, 2003). In lake Þingvallavatn, a large area of the lake bottom was found to be biologically dead due to toxic hot waste water pollution from nearby geothermal plants, which is altering the lake ecology.

Hydrogen Sulphide (H_2S) is also emitted, causing a bad smell and forming the acid rain causing compound SO_2 in the atmosphere. Emitted Carbon dioxide (CO_2) and H_2S are heavy gases and can linger in valleys causing increased pollution for local populations. (Kristmannsdóttir, 2003).

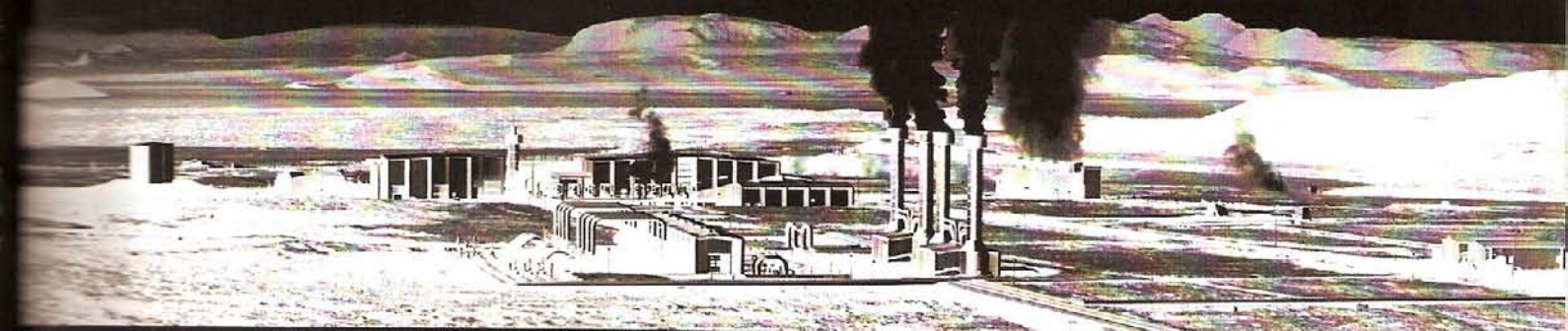
References.

- Goff, S. and Goff, F., 1997. 'Environmental impacts during development-some examples from Central America.' Proceedings of the NEDO International Geothermal Symposium, Sendai. p.242-250.
- Kristmannsdóttir, H. and Armannsson, H., 2003. 'Environmental aspects of geothermal energy utilization.' in *Geothermics* vol.32, p.451-461.
- Rybach, L., 2003. 'Geothermal energy, sustainability and the environment.' *Geothermics*, vol.32, p.463-470.
- Thórhallsdóttir, Thóra Ellen, in press. 'Environment and energy in Iceland: a comparative analysis of values and impacts.' Environmental Impact Assessment Review- Report of Working group 1. Govt of Iceland.

EFFECTS OF DRILLING AND EXPLORATION

Noise caused by geothermal plants is considerable. During drilling it can reach above the pain threshold of 120dB and once in operation reaches 90dB. In the open landscape such noise can be heard for some distance and reduces the value of tourist sites and local recreation. (Kristmannsdóttir, 2003).

Surface disturbance of wilderness has high impact as active sites tend to be in rare landscape types of very high scenic and touristic (economic) value including 'colourful striking landscapes, hot springs, lavas and glaciers'. (Thórhallsdóttir, 2007). Disturbance includes roads, powerlines, factories, heavy lorries and drilling equipment.



EMBODIED ARTICULATIONS OF PLACE AND IDENTITY

INVESTIGATING ATTACHMENT, EXPERIENCE AND LANDSCAPE AT KÁRAHNJÚKAR

ANDREW TOVEY was an active participant in the 2006 Saving Iceland camp at Karahnjúkar having been involved in various other direct action struggles for some years previously. The camp became the subject of his undergraduate geography dissertation and he is now studying at the centre for human ecology. He lives in Edinburgh and cycles rickshaws for a living.

During my time at the Kárahnjúkar camp in the summer of 2006, I interviewed over twenty people about their experiences with the place. I was interested in how people form attachments to a wild place through embodied experience of the landscape. For the most part, the situation was a new and alien one for people and a huge range of emotions and understandings surfaced within them. This was intimately entangled in the place itself such that the line between experience of the land and the land itself became blurred and undefined. What follows is my attempt to piece together individual understandings and voices to give a glimpse of the complex human experience of living in and fighting for the vast and unfathomable wilderness of the Eastern Highlands. The formation of new identities-in-place can be seen as crucial to the construction of resistance to the dams. What follows only scratches the surface. I trust the voices included here would approve of the story they help piece together and I thank everyone who shared their thoughts with me.

To Begin

Through direct embodied experience with the landscape over time, people at the camp formed dynamic and fragmented identities-as-process with their surroundings. These shifted daily, fuelled by new experiences, experiences then reshaped through social interaction and story telling. Overwhelmingly, people at the camp voiced views and understandings about 'untouched nature' and the natural beauty of the place they were living in and fighting for. They also expressed strong emotions connected to the spaces in which they lived in and travelled through.

Landscapes came alive, imbued with personal feelings of connection and meaning, transformed by myths, and identified with as part of the community in the shared battle against the dam. The immediacy of the terrain and the weather played a large role in people's understanding of where they were, leading to feelings of isolation as well as peaceful solitude. Events from gales to the descent of fog strongly affected the general mood and emotions of the camp, and brought out feelings ranging from claustrophobia, fear and despair, to happiness, freedom and self-belief. This directly affected daily community life and more generally held feelings about the wider struggle.

Place(s) Becoming

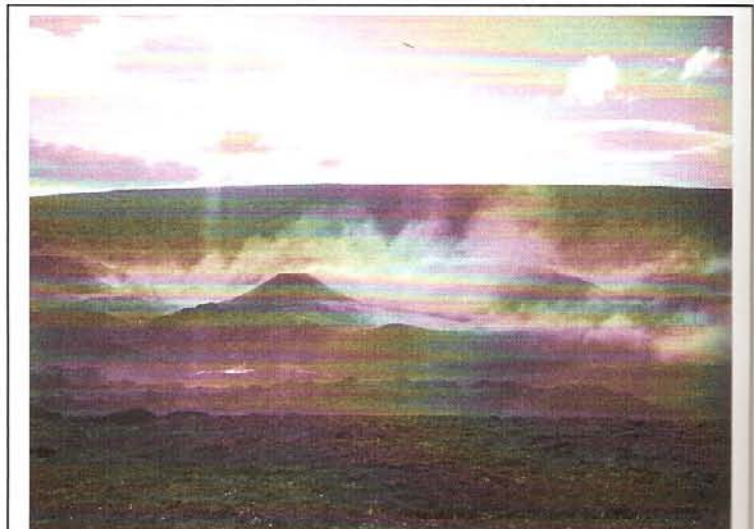
The majority of participants (including many Icelanders) emphasised the process of getting to the camp as extremely long, arduous and in many cases intimidating. Most of the foreign activists took a ferry from Aberdeen or Norway and many had travelled over five days to get to the camp. People emphasised constant uncertainty as they described heading into an unknown or even a non-place. This unknown, coupled with the immense distance travelled and the isolated location high in the mountains, some way from any human settlement, created strong feelings of anxiety, disorientation, fear and intimidation.

"I felt like I was going to the end of the world, it felt like a very very long way to go somehow" – Aðalheiður

"Well, when we came on the track all the way up to this hut I just was really doubting my ability to keep sane about it, 'cause it was just feeling like we were heading into total wilderness, which we are, but like, really heading into just nothingness. I wasn't really prepared for that really, 'cause I don't think I've ever really been in such an isolated place..." – Rosie (my emphasis)

This was a nothingness, full of vast incomprehensible and alien mountain scapes.

Coincidentally the two weekly arrivals of the ferry on which all the foreign protesters arrived coincided with particularly stormy weather.



Kárahnjúkar - dust clouds caused by high wind, 2006

"Last night when people arrived the whole camp was in disarray. Half the marquees had blown down. We were all huddled in the big army tent around some candles as the rain tore across the mountains in the darknes" - Author's field notes.

While the 'vastness' created positive feelings of freedom and potential, it also emphasised isolation and frustration.

“‘what an aggression!’... like such a big er... space... it doesn't have to be destroyed by such an insignificant company compared to the, to the immensity...” – José.

Over varying periods, through living and walking in the area, more attachments and situated identities began to form, which tied people to place in more positive and powerful ways, and helped create direct identification with the landscape.

Topophilia and Topocide

The landscape itself appeared to have a direct affect on participant's understandings of their immediate power entanglements.

“Any time you felt down or like giving up the fight or anything, you just had to turn and look out at the landscape and it made you positive and inspired again.” – Sam.

A noticeable change occurred in participants upon moving to the second camp at Lindur, where people began to live in the area due to be submerged by the reservoir.

The term ‘topocide’ means the ‘death’ of or ‘annihilation’ of place through deliberate administrative destruction. Windsor and McVey (2005) note that ‘One of the most powerful methods of place annihilation is dam construction’. They go on to note that loss of a place attacks the identities through which it existed and can even cause physical or mental health problems.

“I think I protected myself a little bit in not being too emotional... of course it's like a catastrophe that's going to happen here and we are camping now on it. Like if you touch this earth it's going to be underwater in one month, which is really amazing and if you're going to think about it too much I think you'd become very very sad... I don't plan to connect too much with this earth because that would just not be healthy for me either” –Deborah.



Kárahnjúkar - protesters get close to dam, 2006

The depth of emotion and psychological pain described by people in anticipation of topocide ran deep. ‘Place’ implies strong emotional ties between a person and a location; what Tuan (1974) has called ‘topophilia’ or ‘love of place’. Tuan and others have usually dealt with this in the context of people or groups which have lived on or been involved with an area for a

lifetime or across generations. However, this study goes some way towards showing how strong identity-place ties may be formed over a relatively short but intense period of bodily immersion in a location.

“...they're going to take every piece of this country and make energy out of it... There will not be one fucking place left on this... this land.” – Steinunn.

Seeing the dam

“First I just felt kind of nothing... I just saw the dam and I thought like ‘wow, this looks like in a movie or something’... because it was so fucking big... Then it took me like two hours or something until I sort of started to have, like, some sort of a pain like... yeah, it was kind of painful, like... I don't know how to describe it ... not good at all...” – Steinunn

“When I first saw the dam... it really depressed me... not just like seeing the dam, it was the general atmosphere of the dam. I already felt it quite, quite a long distance beforehand, that this sort of atmosphere is changing, that my mood is changing. And, when I actually was at the dam, I realised that, my mood changing actually had to do with the dam, coming close to the dam.” – Harold.

When people approached the dam for the first time their experience was often shaped by a tense anticipation built out of prior engagement with resisting it and reading about it. It represented a culmination of long journeys (both physical and emotional), yet stood as a final immovable and unresponsive wall. The sheer solid physicality of the dam seems to have been the cause of much distress amongst the fluid unbounded relationships and flows in people's daily lives. It seems unsurprising that the primary form of resistance against it became transgression through trespass; the breaching of that solidity with the soft ambiguous presence of bodies and identities.

Weather

Participants noted heightened awareness of and sensitivity to environmental fluctuations in temperature and general atmosphere which corresponded to mood. ‘Such heightened awareness of the local environment's agency ties participants closer to their cosmological value systems as they experience at first hand unmediated positioning with a broader ecological system’ (Paul Anderson).

Myth and Imagination

Mythology and folklore became focal points of camp interaction and community, whether through stories told at night in the communal tent, or music played by visiting Icelanders. Myths inscribed themselves onto the landscape and combined with bodily experience and emotions to cause sentiments of empathy and commonality from people towards the land itself. The landscape became simultaneously an ally and an enemy, it became otherworldly, infused with imaginations born of the Icelandic folk stories shared at camp. This was such that the rocks came alive; the real and the imaginary blurred.

“Our world is inhabited by meanings that go beyond the present physical environment and even beyond the knowledge

of past environments. Such meanings touch on the primordial inner landscape, on paths, and routes, and journeys, and place names, and the stories, memories, songs, half-forgotten though they may be that they call to mind; a network of associations that is as much a part of the landscape as the heather and the clouds” (Robinson, 1997).

Anthropomorphised Landscapes

It is apparent from accounts so far that landscape is infused with meaning and memory, constantly produced or performed rather than being a static backdrop upon which human dramas are enacted. Thus landscape is *implied* as an extension of the self, where no clearly defined boundary exists to separate the subjective from the supposed solid objectivity of rocks and rivers. What is telling is that over half of the 20+ people I interviewed used language that anthropomorphised the landscape such that it was *explicitly* described as alive, capable of feeling pain, bleeding or being raped.

“How can we stop this... rape that is going on here?” – Kolbrun.

Many described such a direct connection to the land under threat that they saw it as an extension of their own bodies, the psychological pain they felt from the land’s immanent destruction being one and the same as the ‘pain’ felt by the land itself.

“...when this dam happens, in one part of the earth, it’s like somebody doing something to one part of your body. It doesn’t matter what part of the body it is, it’s happening to you, and it’s the same with the earth you know, it really is so precious and so crucial to protect and love...” – Rosie.

“...even if I tried to escape it I could not. You know it’s just I, I feel it’s so much born in my blood to protest this... you know like somebody if he would be cutting your fingers off, you know, you would of course have to scream cos it just hurts...” – Steinunn.

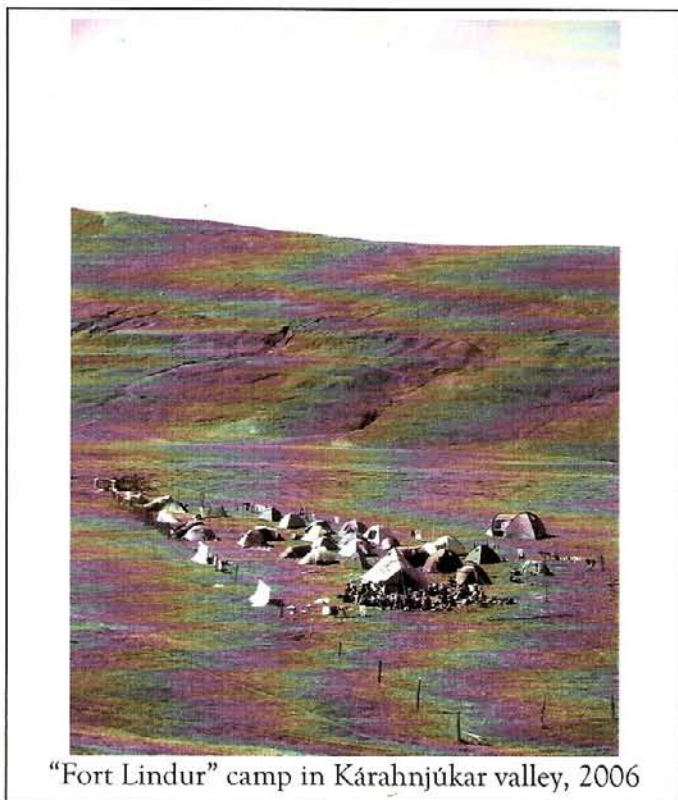


Walkers confront trucks - Kárahnjúkar site, 2006

Tied to this was a strong assertion, made independently and unprompted by six different people, that the land was capable of, and would, retaliate against its aggressors with earthquakes and landslides.

“I’m hoping that the country will... the nature will itself destroy the project... that it will shake the earth or somehow damage the dam...” – Andrea.

The landscape was not only seen as alive but seemingly in possession of its own identity and capable of making and acting upon decisions regarding its own fate – a fate that had become directly linked to the thoughts and emotions of participant’s identities-in-place.



“Fort Lindur” camp in Kárahnjúkar valley, 2006

In conclusion then, I have attempted to explore the formation of self and identity-place ties as a process involving prior knowledge and experience, direct embodied experience and emotions, and the role of myths and the imagination. I have shown that there is no clear separation between nature, society, place and identity; all are co-constitutive. The wilderness ‘landscape’ has been deconstructed and repositioned as a materialised agent in this wider non-linear process of place and identity articulation. It is our imaginings, our stories, our ideas and experiences, entangled with memories, which are part of this landscape, such that no line may be drawn between landscape and our understanding of it. Rather than landscape being seen as a solid disassociated backdrop, whether static or dynamic, over which we lay specific culturally constructed understandings, we must instead understand landscape as part of, as one and the same as, our own shared networks of associations. Sure, it exists in and of itself, outside of human agency, but as far as our interactions with it go, no useful line may be drawn to separate who we are from what the land is. Viewed in this sense, landscape is as discursive and performative as place, and we can see ourselves as part of it, it part of us. The artificial separation of nature and culture breaks down and by re-establishing our oneness with the earth and harnessing our imaginations, we can construct and maintain lasting and sustainable resistance.

This text has been drastically shortened by Katie Hastings, for the full version log onto www.savingiceland.org/placeandidentity

RESPONSES TO THE LOSS OF KÁRAHNJÚKAR

On the morning of 28th September 2006, the flood gates of the Kárahnjúkar dam were closed. The Jökulsá á Dal river began to flood the valley in the eastern Icelandic highlands which lies between the dam and Iceland's biggest glacier, Vatnajökull. It was a slow drowning. Almost like a forced suicide, the river itself destroyed the fragile environment it had nurtured for centuries. Here are a few responses to this loss.

For two summers I scrambled through beating winds up to peaks which told me nothing about themselves - no sign posts, no marked tourist trails, no mediated relationships, no representations, no obvious point of interaction or attraction. Only long views of an endless ecosystem chaotically complex and self-creative according to its own unique and direct reasoning. By the river Jökla I learned that if anarchy is life lived directly then dwelling in a wilderness is lived anarchy.

Kárahnjúkar made me realise why people content with a life of numbness need to destroy their opportunities of liberty. What a nagging pain to know that life could be great if, like a wilderness whose every movement is an honest masterpiece in development, you only took *yourself* as the subject of *your own* destiny. So instead of climbing mountains, people in uniforms erect dams from them to smother the possibility that something completely free might shake up their perfectly controlled existence. In this spectacular age of life-long mundanity, wild ecosystems experienced directly are the ground from which revolutions are born.

And what a surprise that each of us who has fought against the destruction of Iceland's wilderness are 'anarchists' in our own way. Liberators, creators, artists true to our beliefs and involved with freedom projects from wherever we descended. What bonded the multitude of Danish squatters, Trinidadian independent journalists, British tree sitters, South African environmentalists, American comedians, Australian graffiti artists, Icelandic musicians and everyone else who has ventured to a Saving Iceland protest camp is not merely an enemy in common. Rather, the anarchic spirit of wilderness felt heart cuttingly deeply.

By DANIEL

The price of Kárahnjúkar.

The situation in the Eastfjords is awful. During the six years from the 1st of December 2001 to the 1st of December 2007, on average, 73 more inhabitants moved their homes from the Eastfjords to the southwest corner of Iceland than came back. Several people were even packed off by the local authorities and Landsvirkjun. The dam and the smelter were mainly built using foreign workers, who scarified their lives and health for this terrorism. Nobody will ever know exactly how many foreign workers died or were injured at Kárahnjúkar. Those who were

injured or complained were shipped discreetly home to their relatives without further support. The Kárahnjúkar dam was built up by slavery which will be a shameful blotch on Icelandic authorities for eternity. Most of the small local societies in the Eastfjords are dead. Many houses are empty, many people and companies are bankrupt, many community centers and other places where people gathered together for each other's company have been sold to use for alternate purposes or closed by the local authorities. All local companies that operated in Reyðarfjörður have been closed and those that had the highest ventures of getting some profit from the construction of the smelter may not hear the name Alcoa without cursing. Once the cooperative society was the biggest employer in Reyðarfjörður but now there is nothing left of it there. They had to close their store when Alcoa came in. All the lies about the participation of local companies have been unveiled. All supplies to Alcoa (and Bectel) that were not bought from Reykjavík, were transported directly from abroad. And at Kárahnjúkar they even managed to cause two of the biggest companies in Akureyri to go bankrupt. In spite of all this there are still some deluded souls that will be mumbling in their shallow graves: "It is so good to have an aluminium smelter."

By GUDMUNDUR BECK

When you're forced to look away, when you're forced to smile, when you're not even permitted the grace of rage. I had to walk, ramble further into the valley. The sheer enormity, not to mention beauty, encompassing Kárahnjúkar, was what I found hard to grapple with. I often went on walks, on hikes, for meanders up to the hot springs, but each time it got me again. Past the raging waterfalls and untouched, deep and lush hedgerows. This wild nature, soon to be tamed. Bumbling past major waterfalls, the rivers, the shapers of the valley, the true veins of the hydrological cycle and to the top of the spectacular Hafrahvammagljufur, Iceland's Grand Canyon. Occasionally you'd see stacks of rock, piled on top of each other, an ancient Icelandic method to ward off evil elves, seemed quite apt.

Pacing back towards the camp, wondering if the fairies, the elves, the lichen and the reindeer had migrated for good, the process of corporate globalization and its monuments of superpower status, big dams, began to start unraveling; you start to realize that the only hope to bring the world's rivers back from the brink is to join the global consciousness, in not simply river mitigation after a 'big dam' projects completion, but the endeavour to actually dismantle and tear these dangerous mistakes down, sending these almighty destroyers back and burying them deep in the scrap yard once and for all.

By DAN GLASS

Green energy or greenwash?

Iceland currently emits 17 tonnes of greenhouse gases per person per year in comparison to the European average of 11 tonnes, and will achieve a 63% increase on 1990 levels by 2012 if only some of the industrial plans go ahead! Undammed, its glacial rivers soak in GHGs naturally in a similar way to a rainforest. All of its glacial rivers are to be dammed. Iceland, not so green after all.



A planned ALCOA whale spotting cap damming 3 roaring drilling all the mag areas of the North would be scared waves of aluminium



Arnarfjörður - Oil Refinery

Icelandic Hi-Tech Industry
The Geostream Services Group

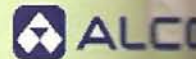
"I don't want to see damage to the nature around my beautiful river Þjórsá. I don't want to lose Urriðarfoss waterfall, the walking and riding paths, and I don't want to lose the salmon in the river, especially when these dams are absolutely unnecessary."



Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir

local to the Þjórsá region where four controversial dams are planned

Bakki - Husavik - Aluminium



Icelandic Alloys
ORKLA

R&D Carbon Ltd.

Katanes - Hvalfjörður - Anode rod factory

Grundartangi - Hvalfjörður - Steel factory



Century ALUMINUM

Grundartangi - Hvalfjörður - Aluminium smelter

RioTinto Alcan

Straumsvík - Hafnarfjörður - Alu smelter

Helguvík - Aluminium smelter



Century ALUMINUM

Þorlákshöfn - Alu smelter?



On the Reykjanes peninsula steaming hot pools and fumaroles hiss from the magical mossy landscape. This unique and rare scenery is to be totally exploited for geothermal energy to partly power 3 smelters in this region.

magnificent glacial rivers and exploiting **all** the rare geothermal areas in the country **for** industrial energy.

ALCOA smelter in Iceland's
ing capital may require
roaring glacial rivers and
the magical hot geothermal
e North for energy. The whales
eared away by the
uminium cargo vessels.

- Aluminium smelter

ALCOA



The Kárahnjúkar dams drowned some of the most beautiful wilderness in Iceland in 2006, including 60 waterfalls and reindeer breeding grounds. **The dams affected 3% of Iceland's landmass, all for one ALCOA smelter.**



Fjarðaál - Reydarfjörður - Alu smelter

ALCOA











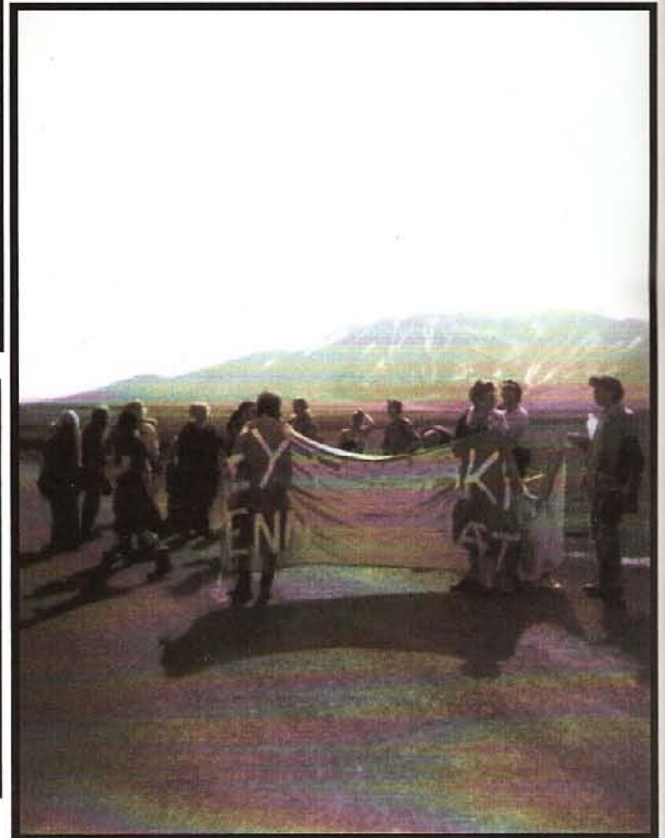
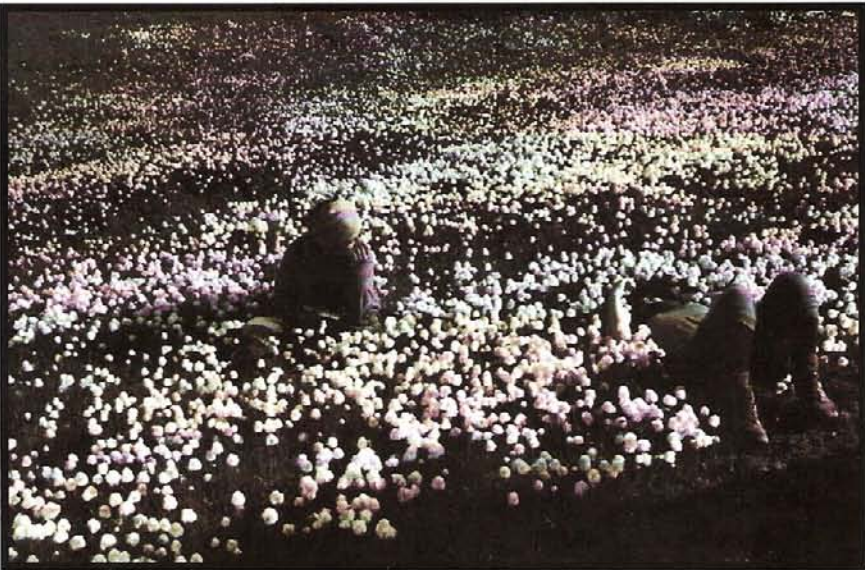
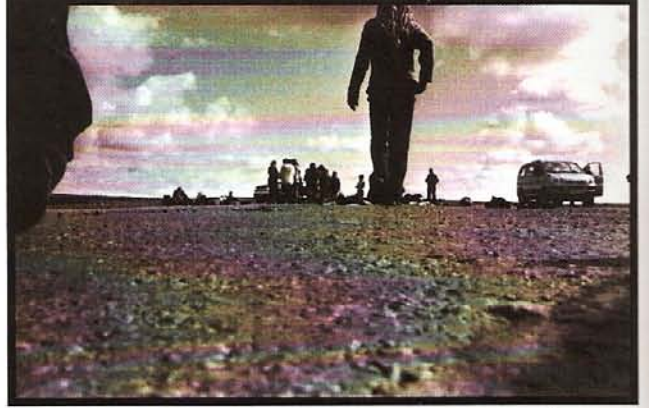
"When the authorities and my neighbours talked about construction I always corrected them and told them that the building of **the smelter and the Kárahnjúkar dam was not construction but terrorism**. I said that I felt sorry for them because they were bringing us seventy years back to the period of heavy industry."

Guðmundur Beck

Farmer forced from his home by ALCOA's Fjardaál smelter, Reydarfjörður

www.savingiceland.org

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | EXISTING DAM RESERVOIR |  | PLANNED RESERVOIR |
|  | EXISTING GEOTHERMAL ENERGY PROJECT |  | PLANNED GEOTHERMAL PROJECT |
|  | EXISTING HEAVY INDUSTRIAL PROJECT with plans for expansion |  | PLANNED HEAVY INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS |
|  | EXPECTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT of dams and geothermal powerplants |  | HIGH VOLTAGE POWER LINES |



Top left photo taken by BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR. Tatrofos Waterfall, flooded by the Kárahnjúkar Dam in 2007.

All others taken by "Sterile" (www.flickr.com/sterile) Saving Iceland Camp 2006



THE SHADOW OF POWER

GUDMUNDUR BECK was a farmer in Reyðarfjörður, in the Eastern Fjords of Iceland, for 35 years. His farm had been in his family for 107 years. He was driven out of Reyðarfjörður along with several other families because of his outspoken opposition to the Alcoa smelter being built there. He now works in a fish factory in the northern town of Akureyri.

On 8th July 2007, Guðmundur Beck addressed the Saving Iceland Conference with the following speech...

Dear Friends!

I am very happy to be here with you today. Iceland owes you a great debt for being here, exhibiting such great concern by traveling over oceans and continents to visit our remote island.

We are here today because of the common threat from an evil power. The long shadow of evil power encloses our earth, abuses and plunders it. This ravage reaches the remotest parts of the world and will destroy it if we don't protest and light up that dark shadow with all the power of our hearts.

I am only one of several million people that have had to leave their homes because of the greed of the international weapon industry that now shows its bloody claws here in Iceland. For more than thirty years its phantom has hung above my beautiful fjord in the eastern side of this unique island.

Ten years ago the minister of foreign affairs announced a meeting of the delegates of local councils in the Eastfjords. We discovered the government was negotiating with the Norwegian company Norsk Hydro about building a huge aluminium smelter in my beautiful fjord, Reyðarfjörður. This plan would be followed by building two or three huge dams in all the main



Wintertime construction of Alcoa's Smelter in Reyðarfjörður, 2006

rivers that fall to the north from the glacier Vatnajökull. Most of the local delegates were pleased because of what later became a banality: "It is so good to have an aluminium smelter". I doubt

any of them really knew what they were asking for. The people in the small villages in the Eastfjords were living with a sense of inferiority, they didn't know the power of union for a common interest.

A Few years later, Norsk Hydro gave up and Alcoa came in as a builder of a smelter. As probably most of you probably know, this was followed by the huge dam at Kárahnjúkar



Guðmundur Beck by his tractor in Reyðarfjörður

which is such a gigantic destruction on this little island.

A few people in the Eastfjords and many people in Fljótsdalshérað were not pleased with this destruction and tried to make a protest. But the only reaction from the authorities was that it should not to be known in Reykjavík that there were some doubts in the eastern side of the country about the terrorism. - We live under the shadow of destruction.

When the authorities and my neighbors talked about construction I always corrected them and told them that the building of the smelter and the Kárahnjúkar dam was not construction but terrorism. I said that I felt sorry for them because they were bringing us seventy years back to the period of heavy industry. This was clear Stalinism, the only difference is that steel has changed to aluminium. - We live under the shadow of Neo-Stalinism where the authorities want to decide where we live, where we work and how we vote. The Icelandic authorities are in some respects worse than the absolute authorities in China - who were also building a huge dam - because in Iceland every citizen has electricity in their home whereas in China they have not. Here is committed a terrible sabotage on the beautiful highlands for the purpose of giving electricity power to just one American weapon producer. Their terrible weapons are used to kill innocent, defenseless people, more often in the poorest counties of the world. Even worse, the Icelandic government made contracts with one of the worse reputed companies in Europe to commit the terrorism at Kárahnjúkar. The slavery there has already cost five human lives in addition to innumerable injuries that will never be reported. - Long and dark is the shadow of depravation from the Icelandic government.

Here in Iceland the weapon producer Alcoa releases advertisements that show women with babies in their arms. This company sells its bribery all over Iceland, in all kinds of associations. When on the other hand you look at a different



GLOBAL CONSEQUENCE OF HEAVY INDUSTRY AND LARGE DAMS

SAVING ICELAND CONFERENCE - JULY 2007

After three years of struggling against large dams and heavy industry, the Saving Iceland campaign held its first ever conference to connect with struggles around the globe. This declaration was made in consensus by dozens of activists, scientists, philosophers and concerned people attending ...

We are gathered in Olfus, Iceland, we are people from more than fifteen different countries and five continents. We are here to share our experiences of heavy industry, dams, transnational companies and other expressions of globalisation, in Iceland, in Brazil, in South Africa, in Denmark, in Canada, in England, Germany, India, Trinidad and Tobago and many other countries.

We are not professional protestors. Unlike the well-paid corporate lobbyists and spindoctors that try to sell you heavy industry, none of us gets paid to be here. We are ordinary people, we are teachers, nurses, youth workers, students, shopworkers, fathers, mothers. We are here because we care. The Icelandic wilderness is unique. It is the largest in Europe and one of the few wild places left on this continent. It's beauty, uniqueness, fire and ice are a heritage we must preserve and must defend. It is the heritage, responsibility and privilege of all Icelanders, and all Europeans, and all humans...

We are global citizens in opposition to global companies. We find it remarkable that in all our countries, we see and suffer from transnational companies following the same blueprint. All around the world, in north and south, in present and past, the same ugly picture is grey and black. We see the same patterns wrought by corporations. Patterns of ecological devastation. Of total disrespect for human rights. Of creating an environment that is unhealthy to live in, where we do not want to raise our children anymore. Of the destruction of communities. Of the corruption and manipulation of governments.

We stand in solidarity with each other, we have a common struggle against common enemies such as ALCAN, RUSAL, ALCOA and Century.

Icelanders - do not forget what these foreign companies have done in the past and are doing now. How these people lie and bribe your government. People from Africa, from South America and many places tell you - do not trust them. Do not walk into this trap. It is the trap of neo-colonialism. It is the trap of false promises. How will you face your children if you sacrifice this country, this unique and unspoilt country.

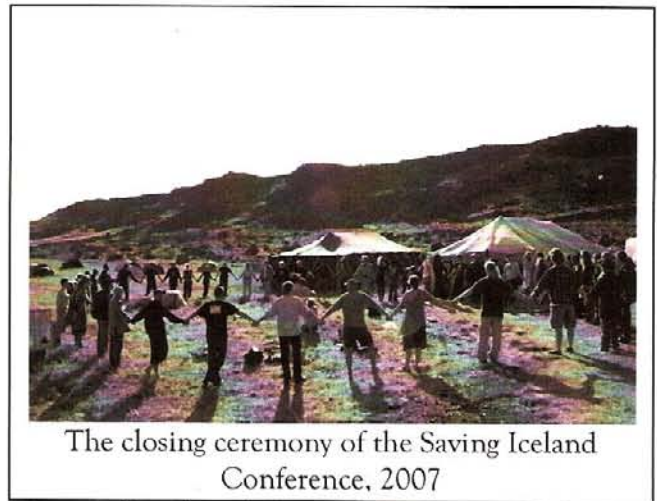
Progress is painted by some as huge projects, large scale development. In all our countries, these have become disasters, socially, ecologically, economically. Progress is a plenitude of small solutions. We should let a thousand flowers bloom.

Inform yourself. Make up your own mind. Do not stay sitting on the fence, as if it doesn't affect you. You have to make a decision.

Dams in Iceland only provide electricity temporarily - they are not a long term solution. They emit greenhouse gases just as aluminium smelters do in huge amounts. It is not a green metal at all. If you allow these factories, all the credit you have under the Kyoto Protocol will vanish like snow. If we do not face the dangers of climate change, our world will become unlivable. What is this all for? You pride yourself in not having an army, but 30% of aluminium is produced for the military, for war effort, for tanks, for missiles. Will you let your wilderness be destroyed so that countries can bomb each other? Or do you prefer to sacrifice it for Pepsi-cans?

It is not that Iceland will be sacrificed so other places will be saved. The aluminium industry will build devastating smelters in South Africa and Trinidad, and all the major rivers of the Amazon are threatened by large dams for heavy industry.

Why more aluminium? Why more dams? What kind of world will we end up with and what will we become?



The closing ceremony of the Saving Iceland Conference, 2007

We can all make a difference. Raise consciousness. Mount pressure. Bring information to schools, bring it to your work and your communities. Everyone can care, no matter how large or small they are, because we are all human. Inform yourself. Make up your own mind or it will be made up for you.

To view the list of signatures that accompanies this declaration go to: www.savingiceland.org/declaration2007

side of this company, you will see advertisements for military equipment, pictures of tanks and fighter aircraft with the slogan LIGHTER - FASTER - STRONGER. - Endless is the shadow of the falseness and lies.

In the little village in Reyðarfjörður there was a small fishfactory that was not allowed to operate in the summertime because of pollution. Yet the authorities still allowed the building of an aluminium smelter with the annual capacity of 480.000 tons, without hesitation. The limits on fluoride pollution were elevated about 50% just for Alcoa and there are no limits set on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH-chemicals) or the 4600 tons of sulfur dioxide the smelter emits. The environmental assessment was just accepted exactly as Alcoa wanted. The same thing had happened with the assessment for Kárahnjúkar dam - although the institution of planning had refused it, the minister of environment changed the decision. - Endless is the shadow from the abuse of power and corruption.

The weather conditions in Reyðarfjörður make the effects of polluting industries even worse. Experience and research shows that there will be much pollution there. The local authorities and agitators of Alcoa tell people that all will be clean, still nobody is allowed to live near the factory. On the map that Alcoa made to show the spreading of pollution, it made a detour by the village. - We live in the shadow of pollution.

But the smelter and the Kárahnjúkar dam were not only terrorism against nature, they were also an attack upon the Icelandic economic base and communities in the Eastfjords. Since the terrorism of this smelter began, excessive borrowing

and inflation has put poison in all kinds of commerce.

In the Esatfjords we had self-supporting communities that have now been destroyed and converted into places attracting gold diggers. Around the smelter there will now be a community of one firm where nobody can live, work or feed themselves without bowing down for "Alcoa Director" Mr. Tomas. - We live in the shadow of polluted minds.

The last two summers many charming young people have come to visit us in the Eastern side of the country. They have showed an extraordinarily unselfish and heartfelt care towards this precious island. They have tried with all their strength to protest against that horrible destruction which was made by Alcoa and Landsvirkjun. Unfortunately they had too little support from the Icelandic people and the authorities looked at them as questionable guests. The minister of justice sent a band of about twenty policemen to follow them. Some of the policemen often showed brutality towards these young people and at court they received unjust treatment. This unveiled the lies about equality within the law. - We live in the shadow of violence and abuse of power.

Dear friends! I will heartily thank you for being here today. You have sacrificed your time, reputation and your heart to the battle for nature, justice and a better life for the next generations. You are the lighthouse of truth that will light up the shadow of lies and corruption. You are the torch of justice that will light up the shadow of the evil power. You are the sunshine of hope that will light up the shadow of destruction, so more people will join in the battle for nature. Thank-you!

Guðmundur Beck.



Century Aluminium Smelter and Elkem steel factory blockade. Hvalfjörður. 2007



MINING SACRED MOUNTAINS TO FUEL THE WAR ON TERROR

SAMARENDRA DAS and FELIX PATEL are political activists from the state of Orissa in India. They have been involved in building grassroots movements for tribal rights and against a variety of mine, dam and heavy industrial projects. Together they have published many articles, are about to publish a book called 'Out of This Earth' and have just released a documentary about the Dawa dam, the first tributary of the Narmada dam, called 'The Struggle'.

The financial scams orchestrated by aluminium companies have created economic and environmental ruin in many countries, dramatically effecting the lives of thousands of their citizens. In each case, a sustained & costly PR campaign promising a new age of prosperity preceded this destruction.

In East India, in the state called Orissa, the world's aluminium companies are jockeying for deals to mine bauxite from the summits of 4,000 foot mountains. But these mountains are the life and soul of the indigenous people. Their base rock is even called Khondalite after the Kond tribe who live all around them. 70 years ago, when Census officials asked Konds "What is your religion?" they got a surprising answer: "Dongar" - "the Mountains". Far from some superstition, this is religion as environmental awareness. All the Konds' lands are watered by mineral-rich streams. This starts from the summits of these mountains, where the layer of bauxite conserves monsoon rain-water throughout the hot summer heat and releases it in perennial, mineral-rich streams. This nourishes the land and forest for miles around.

Aluminium's little-known power in the earth's crust (where it forms 8%) is one of the building blocks of life: it combines with H₂O to conserve water in the soil. Bauxite has an aluminium content over 40%, and wherever it is found it helps nourish the world's most spectacular forests. This includes the Amazon forests of Brazil & Guyana, and those of West Africa & north Australia. In Orissa and other "Jungle story" areas of central India, where tigers, elephants and bears still survive - only just holding out against the hunting mafia.

Whether it is the bauxite mines, refineries and smelters being pushed in Orissa or the smelters in Iceland, the aluminium industry always involves the exploitation of water through mega-dams etc, and environmental devastation on a grand scale. To mention a few countries that have learnt this the hard way: Guyana's Independence was delayed 10 years (1953-63), and destabilised by the CIA, because its first President, Cheddi Jagan, tried to nationalize bauxite so his country could at least make a profit from mining. Jamaica's Michael Manley (whose "One Love" Bob Marley celebrated) was warned by Kissinger that if he tried to nationalise bauxite, he'd face war from the US - no idle threat in 1973, just before the CIA backed Pinochet's coup in Chile for copper mining interests. Manley faced CIA terrorism, but he raised the price of

bauxite by 600% - a victory against the aluminium cartel no other country has repeated. Ghana's independence was massively overshadowed by the Akosombo dam. This had dire consequences for over 100,000 people who were either displaced, debilitated or killed by river blindness and other diseases. The dam was built to power one smelter for a US company, and didn't even provide electricity for villages.

Aluminium's dark side is equally evident in richer countries' experience: Brazil's smelters in the 1980s were built along with the vastly destructive Tucuruí dam. But Brazil's leaders had been hoodwinked by Japanese bankers and developers, who printed lavishly illustrated forecasts of prosperity that never materialised. Instead, the country and its electricity company were plunged into massive debt and price rises. A similar exploitation has been evident in Queensland (vast bauxite mines on richly forested Aboriginal land on Cape York, + a highly polluting & subsidised refinery), and Quebec (a record number of smelters from hydro-power, hugely subsidised), as well as New Zealand (a major smelter).

In Russia, an even worse scenario - the privatization has led to an "aluminium war" of mafia killings and has been central to the country's gangsterisation.

In India we have spent over 6 years witnessing the aluminium companies' stratagems to get hold of south Orissa's biggest mountains - each one the sacred centre of a tribe, and the holding-place of the state's water security. Water & rock seen as "resources" by economists and politicians are understood as Sources of life by people who live close to the land and see themselves as its "Earthworms".

India's New Mineral Policy, being enacted right now, is a neoliberal scam orchestrated by the world's top mining companies and ruling economists to fast-track mining all over India, removing tribal people off the land that has always been theirs. This "development-induced displacement" amounts to Cultural Genocide, since tribal society is destroyed when they lose their land. Their egalitarian social organisation, economy, food security, religion and values are wiped out, and their standard of living invariably drops drastically. The company & Government put out the message they are "giving them development", and raising their quality of life through modern appliances and vehicles, hospitals and schools - a total inversion of the truth. In Damanjodi (where there has been a refinery for 20 years), most of the displaced families are destitute and have to beg or give huge bribes for even the lowest grade jobs. In Lanjigarh and Kshipur, the construction of refineries in the last few years has been orchestrated by mafia elements. There have been hundreds of unreported deaths in construction and on the roads, several murders and police killings and numerous "false cases" - a tactic Icelandic activists have also tasted.

To summarise a story even more contorted than Iceland's: a consortium led by Alcan tried to start construction in Kashipur 15 years ago. Police opened fire in December 2000, killing 3 tribal people. An Enquiry stalled this project for several years, and Norsk Hydro pulled out. Meanwhile Vedanta Resources (= Sterlite Industries, headed by Anil Agarwal, among UK's richest residents) was launched on London's Stock Exchange (with help from the UK Govt and many foreign banks including JP Morgan) in December 2003, swiftly financing construction of the Lanjigarh refinery, with Australian & Chinese help, and outrageous scams. Within 6 months of starting up, this refinery has already polluted a major river at its source.

Indian legislation to protect the environment has been left in tatters. The Supreme Court's advisory body on forests (the Central Empowered Committee) wrote a long report supporting the closure of the refinery and arguing against the mining of Niyam Dongar, the mountain it's sited next to. This mountain is also of outstanding importance for the full forest that covers it. The Dongria Konds, still classed as a Primitive Tribe, who live only in the Niyamgiri range. Dongria religion has a taboo on cutting trees on the mountain top, so their religion has preserved this outstanding monument of biodiversity in the name of their supreme deity, Niyam Raja, "King of the Law".

This gives the Supreme Court case - and ignoring of the CEC advice - a supreme symbolic significance. The case has been fought on a shoestring by environmentalists and human rights campaigners in a rare show of solidarity, against strong vested interests and vast sums on lawyers and PR. For over 3 years, Vedanta's mining plans have been stalled. It's interesting that when JP Morgan wrote a multi-million report on Vedanta to launch it in London, and mentioned Niyamgiri, as the Financial Times did too, none of the players were aware of the Dongria or the mountain's outstanding biodiversity - because none of them knew how to value these non-financial aspects! Because of this they did not foresee this court case. But witnessing it has been traumatic: especially the lies of Vedanta's lawyers, claiming to speak on behalf of India's "poor tribals", and the distortions and manipulations of the judges, as they try to find a way to clear the mountain for mining. Among these has been making the company promise to pay huge sums for "tribal development" and "forest management" - when tribal development in India, even in the public sector, is nearly always a recipe for gross corruption, and when the afforestation plan aims to "enhance" the forest cover through plantations! The forest is valued in "Net Present Value" - a scheme that reduces irreplaceable biodiversity to minimum figures of timber-value etc, promoted by Deutsch Bank & others. The key judge speaks eloquently of "balancing environmental concerns with economic needs & the needs of the poor". What he's actually doing is selling India's most irreplaceable assets, along with India's real culture, represented by village communities who still live sustainably on the earth. A tribal elder, standing outside the court in October last year, made a statement about this judge that is also a succinct summary of Indian philosophy: "His is the Karma (action, sin), ours is the Dharma (religion, duty)."

In effect these judges are serving as dispensers of the neoliberal agenda, opening India up to foreign exploitation on a

scale and speed that even the East India Company couldn't dream of. A plan presented at the court outlines that all major mountains will be given over to mining. BHP Billiton and Alcoa are among the companies making deals behind the scenes, though every mountain is so far protected by a tribal movement to save it.

Orissa's movements are one of the wonders that may yet save our world, and deserve far wider recognition, following as they do in Gandhi's footsteps of non-violent resistance to foreign-financed injustice. These movements have forced multinationals to go slow on implementing deals so far: plans for steel plants by Tata and Posco (Korea's giant steel co) face movements of sustained resistance that are headline news each week in Orissa now, though reasonably unheard of outside.

What is all this aluminium for anyway? Much goes into the car industry, packaging (filling landfills), building huge buildings etc. But the most profitable and inscrutable portion goes into the arms industry. Aluminium is essential in bombs, jet fuel, and hundreds of military applications: "No war can be brought to a successful conclusion without using and destroying vast quantities of aluminum..." as a US expert called Anderson stated in 1951 - the last time anyone has written openly about the industry until today!

Arms companies are making huge profits out of the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan, and the arms sales everywhere. It's good we're all learning to examine our carbon footprints, but metal and arms factories are among the worst emitters of greenhouse gases - too rarely brought into a central place in climate change debates! Without vastly reducing our wars, our limited individual reductions are not achieving anywhere near enough to save our world.

So Iceland is not alone. India's movements to save mountains, forests, rivers and indigenous land need the solidarity of Icelanders and well-minded people everywhere. And from Orissa as well as Iceland, the message needs to go out: the growth of the aluminium industry is utterly unsustainable and we all need to find a way to reduce output and consumption. India's per capita aluminium consumption is still less than 1kg per person per year, while "developed countries" average 15-30 kg. And some of this is literal consumption: from packaging as well as water supplies and pans, tiny yet significant amounts of aluminium leaches into our bodies, where it collects in our bones and brains, affecting us in ways too little understood.

The Indian and Chinese Governments are saying they need a licence to emit as much as other countries in the name of reducing poverty. But the industrialization being imposed is at the expense of people, living sustainably on the land. Far from reducing their poverty, the aluminium and steel industries in Orissa are reducing poor people to a desperate poverty like nothing before.

Reading & films:

New Films on the movements against the aluminium and steel industries being imposed in Orissa have been made by A. & S. Das & Surya Shankar Dash, available from sdasorisa@rediffmail.com & dash.suryashankar@gmail.com, & reading list on aluminium from felixorisa@yahoo.com

THE REEL HIGHLIGHT REAL

REVEREND BILLY COMMUNES WITH US FROM A BAR IN AMERICA

REVEREND BILLY is, with Savitri D, the spiritual leader of the Church Of Stop Shopping in New York City. With their 40 voice choir, they have toured throughout the world in the defense against super malls and highways, military violence and dams. The Church was blessed by the hot holy spirit unleashed in a mall in Reykjavik Iceland, with the sacred activists of Saving Iceland. Reverend Billy delivered a sermon to the Saving Iceland Conference in 2007, and continues to spread his message wherever he goes.

I was sitting in one of those sports bars, with lots of TV's at every angle. There were fifteen or twenty of us standing around, some us talking, the occasional burst of laughter. Mostly our faces were upturned at the televisions. On ESPN: the 100 top plays of the year in all the sports; grand slam home-runs in the bottom of the 9th, finger-tip catches for touchdowns, holes in one, slow motion dives from sixty feet... Two bouncy TV anchors cut to an amazing commercial in which a Gillette Razor flies off a beard up into the sky and becomes a sleek fighter jet. And then back to the highlight reel, the parade of High Lights.

I was alone and sitting near the window, so my gaze turned to a world beyond the TV - outside in the city. The dull glow of the city had no big moments. There was nothing amazing to draw the eye. People walked by with their heads down, maybe half of them on cell phones or iPods... I felt that I was facing two public commons in conflict. Two worlds that we all create and own. First - the commercial world aimed right at my face, packing that sophisticated electric hypnosis. The other common, the street and the shadowy buildings lacked that precision, didn't have anything like that concentration of energy.

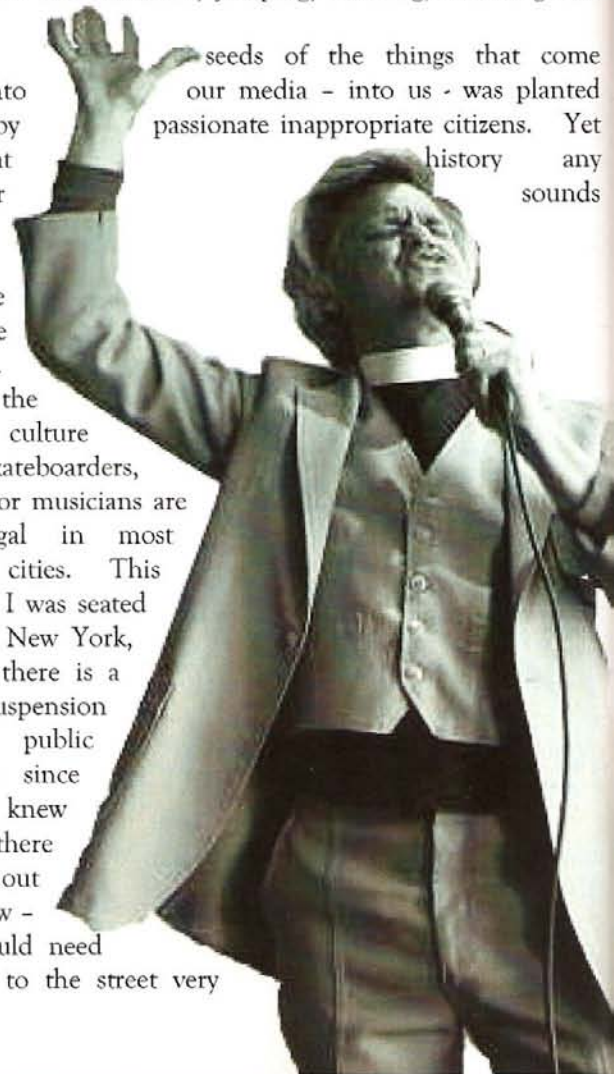
As I looked around the bar, watching the watchers, it was very clear. The flashing intensity of the monitors hanging over our drinks and the lax darkness of public space had a key difference. No-one would change much in the act of witnessing this highlight reel tonight. It was not THAT real. The big moments were not big in that way. There with my beer - I arrived at the inevitable progressive riddle. What kind of moment changes us? ...where meaning floods our souls and we commit to action? When I asked that question, I wasn't asking anyone in the bar. I wanted to go outside into the anonymous blurry city.

The televised experience must always fasten in place our most conservative values. The excellence of the sports highlight reel is ultimately for the glory and support of the biggest and oldest institutions. We've seen this unmistakably with the embrace of the corporatized Iraq war by all our sports. The media-producers are the luminous gravity in the arena. The corporation is the invisible athlete. What's the clue? I simply ask - what am I watching and how is the money for it made? The answer is in these commercials: Cars, beer and recruitment ads for war.

Until the heads-down citizens on these sidewalks, and until the media drinkers in this bar - until we re-enter public space and face a drama that awaits us there, how can we change ourselves or those around us? Until we re-enter the darkened public space and find a way to make an unforgettable message there - which we haven't done since the Civil Rights Movement and its child the anti-war movement of the 60's and 70's - we will continue with this commercial brightness that overwhelms us. We will die on these vinyl stools, die with our eyes open, full of High Lights.

Gil Scott-Heron said "The Revolution will not be televised." He could say, too: "We won't change anything while we watch TV." Public space - out there in the murky world where we are now encased in iPods, in smoked glass cars, with our heads cocked over a blackberry - that is the stage for freedom. Public space has been demoted by the makers of the High Lights. The disconnection with our past in the streets is made formal, a habitual amnesia. When did we forget that these sports we are staring at were born out there, when we were children or our grandparents were children, jumping, dunking, throwing and running.

The seeds of the things that come indoors, into our media - into us - was planted out there by passionate inappropriate citizens. Yet in recent history any gestures or sounds that emanate from the streets are supervised. Most of the kamikaze culture of skateboarders, preachers or musicians are now illegal in most American cities. This sports bar I was seated in was in New York, and here there is a general suspension of free public expression since 9/11. I knew as I sat there looking out the window - that I would need to return to the street very soon.





Clockwise from top left: a message from the camp at Reyðarfjörður, 2005; Kárahnjúkar protest at estimated water height, pre-flooding 2006; ruck lock-on on Kárahnjúkar Dam Site, 2006; benefit gig in Reykjavik, 2007; lock-on practise in Eyjabakkur, 2006; setting up camp, 2007; clowns at Reclaim The Streets, Reykjavik, 2007

DIRECT ACTION

IS A FORM OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM WHICH SEEKS IMMEDIATE REMEDY FOR PERCEIVED ILLS, AS OPPOSED TO INDIRECT ACTIONS SUCH AS ELECTING REPRESENTATIVES WHO PROMISE TO PROVIDE REMEDY AT SOME LATER DATE (WIKIPEDIA.ORG)

Since Saving Iceland began to take shape, people have been taking direct action in its name. There is little point relying on politicians to defend the wilderness when they are so obviously on the side and in the pocket of heavy industry. Direct action gets results, it works. It also plays a crucial role in reclaiming our environment and our communities from those who wish to exploit and profit from them. Direct action, whether locking yourself to a digger or praying in a shopping mall, can be the most liberating of experiences. Here is a small collection of action taken by people in Iceland and elsewhere in defence of the Icelandic wilderness.

BLOCKADES AND SITE OCCUPATIONS



The dam construction site at Kárahnjúkar and Eyjabakker was subject to several invasions before its construction. In 2005 people from the SI camp invaded the site and locked to trucks carrying gravel, stopping work for # hours. In 2006 people from the camp blocked a key road in the Eyjabakker site stopping work for 3 hours. Also in 2006 people held a picnic inside the site and on two separate occasions returned and locked to



The smelter site in Reyðarfjörður was invaded by a local farmer, Guðmundur Beck, in 2005. In 2005 and 2006 SI activists invaded the site and locked to machinery stopping work for almost a whole day. They also climbed cranes and hung banners.



In December 2007 mischievous "Yule Lads" invaded the Hellisheid geothermal power plant and gave rotten potatoes to workers. In Icelandic folk lore it is traditional for naughty children to be given such gifts.

In 2007 SI blockaded the entrances to Century Aluminium and the Icelandic Alloys steel factory in Iceland. A week later they blockaded the Rio Tinto-Alcan smelter in Hafnarfjörður. If that wasn't enough, SI invaded Reykjavik Energy's geothermal construction site in Hengil. They locked to machinery, climbed cranes and hung banners.

CAMPING IN THREATENED AREAS

In 2005 and 2006 the SI camp was partially held in the threatened area of Kárahnjúkar until it was evicted by police. Camping on threatened areas has been a tactic used successfully across the globe.



BANNER DROPS AND OFFICE OCCUPATIONS



In 2005 people from the Saving Iceland camp climbed onto the Kárahnjúkar dam and rolled banners representing cracks down the face of it. This was to raise awareness of the dangerousness of the dam design.

In 2006 the Youth Against Heavy Industry invaded the Reykjavik offices of the national power company Landsvirkjun. Over thirty young people from across Iceland shouted, banged pots and blew whistles inside the building before being evicted by police.



In 2007 SI invaded Reykjavik Council's offices and hung a huge banner inside (Reykjavik Council owns Reykjavik Energy).

BANNER DROPS AND OFFICE OCCUPATIONS

In 2007 the people of Hafnarfjordur held a protest and dropped banners from council buildings after a referendum which said no to the building of a smelter was ignored.

In 2007, on Iceland's "National Day" a 25m Icelandic flag with the logos of aluminium companies emblazoned across it was hung from the national theatre, making the point that Iceland has been taken over by aluminum corporations, rather than being an independent state.



STREET THEATRE AND PARTY

Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping held an anti-consumerist sermon in Reykjavik's largest shopping mall.

SI held Iceland's first Reclaim the Streets in 2007, with a Rave Against The Machine. Around a hundred people on the anti-heavy industry street carnival partied all around Reykjavik's ring road before heading for the city centre. Here they were confronted by police who arrested people and damaged a vehicle. They were unable to kill Saving Iceland party spirit however.



GLOBAL SOLIDARITY ACTIONS



In 2006, when Kárahnjúkar was flooded, about forty people held a funeral ceremony for the death of the Kárahnjúkar valley and the rainforest and beaches in the Cedros Peninsula of Trinidad and Tobago. The black cloaked mourners attempted to hand a letter to the Icelandic Embassy and the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy, but only the Icelandic one accepted it.

While this was happening people in Trinidad had started a protest camp in the University of West Indies against the building of two new smelters by Alcoa.



In 2005 Alcan's smelter in Fort William, Scotland, was blockaded for five hours. During this time no supplies or materials could enter



In February 2006 Alcoa's Runcorn factory in Manchester, UK, was blockaded by roughly thirty people. This lasted three hours.

In 2007 the Earth Liberation Front struck in Essex, UK, against Rio Tinto-Alcan. "The gates were locked shut, office doors and loading bays were sabotaged with glue and a message left painted on the wall. Vehicles belonging to Rio Tinto were also sabotaged" says their statement.

In London on New Years Day, 2007, SI activists climbed on top of and dropped banners from St Pauls Cathedral, the Tate Modern art gallery and the Millennium Bridge. The banners displayed slogans against heavy industry in Iceland and Trinidad.



In the summer of 2007, in response to the police repression of the street party in Reykjavik, the Icelandic Consulate in Edinburgh had its building painted, its locks glued and "The Whole World is Watching" and "Iceland Bleeds" was painted on the steps. The same summer seen the same treatment given to

the Icelandic Embassy in Copenhagen, Denmark. This time "Aluminium Industry out of Iceland" and "Nature Killers" were painted in bright red on the building.



CORPORATE CRIMES IN THE CARIBBEAN

HOW JAMAICA AND ICELAND FACE A COMMON ENEMY

By OLI MUNION – is an edinburgh based anarchist with interests in wilderness defense, affected communities, tackling the root causes of climate change and above all smashing heavy industrv.

Jamaica's densely forested limestone landscapes are famous for their ecological diversity, geological significance and distinctive appearance. But when you enter a mined-out area, their value as an economic resource becomes all too apparent. Every valley is turned into a steep-sided box, devoid of its rainforests and supporting only grasses, and those are the 'reclaimed' ones. Where open-cast strip mining of bauxite, the raw material smelted to aluminium, is under way, the green of the forests gives way sharply to the deep red bauxite colour that extends deep into the valley sides and in every direction. The mines are vast in size and seem to affect every single valley in an area. The machinery is on a similar scale, with massive yellow trucks carrying the red soil from the mines to the refineries on roads as wide as runways, filling the air with dust. According to companies such as Alcoa and Alcan, and Jamaican subsidiaries Jamalco and Winalco, the valley floors never were forested, and the whole process is environmentally harmonious, leaving the land more productive than before.

A history of institutionalised neo-liberal policies, IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programmes, marginalisation of peasant populations through unfair land ownership and a lingering colonial land regime are having devastating effects on Jamaica's forest cover and biodiversity. Jamaica is experiencing one of the highest rates of forest loss in the world, causing declines in biodiversity (40 bird species and a third of all plant species are threatened), unsustainable soil erosion and top soil loss, water supply problems, lower agricultural productivity and increasing the likelihood of desertification setting in.

The True Cost of Bauxite

Bauxite mining is Jamaica's second largest contribution to GDP and by far its biggest industry. The environmental, ecological and social problems associated with open-cast bauxite mining and processing are vast. The mining itself requires the clearing and stripping of the overlying soils and habitats, reducing forest cover, destroying habitats and increasing erosion and runoff. The mines are extensive, displacing subsistence farmers from their traditional lands and reducing suitably arable areas. Large amounts of dust are created by the mining, calcination process and transportation of the bauxite, smothering local vegetation and impacting negatively on the health of local people. The mining has devastating impacts on habitat loss and on Jamaica's endemic and endangered plant and animal life, and pollutes groundwater.

Outside a mine operated by Winalco, some fifty identical huts line the roadside, each distinguished only by its number. These were generously donated to the local community by Winalco to show their commitment to social responsibility and presumably in compensation for appropriated lands. The Jamaicans who work in these huts are desperate. Their homes and farmland were taken from them by government order for bauxite mining or for the extensive waste lakes that are created. They are compensated by being allowed to provide food for workers. They contract illnesses from the dust and industry, and there is nothing they can do about it. Winalco mine supervisors claim that the land they reclaim is fertile arable land and that it is given back to the people who lived there before, but that Jamaicans are lazy people, so more often than not the land is left untouched as grassland. The uprooted Jamaicans, however, tell a different story. Typical restoration of an open-cast mining site involves bulldozing a thin layer of topsoil back over densely-packed limestone gravel and non-native grass species then planted in it. Actual examples of regenerated forest on the sites of reclaimed pits are few and, more often than not, the reclaimed land provides crops for one year, but is then exhausted and useless, owing to the farcical reclamation process. It is no wonder that affected people have begun mobilising against the bauxite miners.

Cockpit Country

It is estimated that 2 billion tonnes of bauxite remain on the island, 1 billion tonnes of which are easily accessible and, at current extraction rates, enough to sustain another 100 years' production. Residents of Cockpit Country, a potential UNESCO World Heritage Site for its karst formations and wet limestone forests, are currently fighting for bauxite prospecting and mining to be stopped in the region because of the devastating impacts the extraction will have on habitat loss and Jamaica's endemic and endangered plant and animal life, and potential impacts on the water quality of the aquifer (a major source of freshwater for central and western Jamaica) running under it. Cockpit Country is Jamaica's only true area of wilderness and the only near-pristine karst system remaining in the Caribbean, as well as a globally significant reservoir of biodiversity, being the largest area of intact wet limestone forest in Jamaica. One area earmarked for prospecting is home to 79 of the 100 bird species on the island, and many other animal and plant species unique and endemic to Jamaica, such as the Giant Swallowtail, and a recently discovered species of tree frog known only to this region. In addition, there are more than 60 species known only to Cockpit Country, some of which are isolated to just one hill. The whole region includes more than

1000 species of animals and plants within a 500 square mile area, and provides 40% of Jamaica's freshwater.

Mining in the Cockpit Country will have human consequences too. The region has a long history of resistance, retaining a Maroon population of some 5000 people, who during the time of British rule provided a refuge for slaves fleeing British oppression. The Maroon resistance was such that Cockpit Country was the only area of Jamaica never conquered by the British, resulting in only one road ever being built through it, and a peace treaty that the British were forced to sign in 1738. Maroon culture and traditions are still very much alive: 'If we had not protected the Cockpit country for this many years, it would be deforested. It would be well cut down like other places in Jamaica and that is why we are against mining everywhere in the area' (Harris Crawley, of the Accompong Town Maroons).

Resistance

Recently, the combination of illnesses and birth defects caused by the mining and refining operations, land appropriation and environmental destruction have lead to community mobilisation and militant challenges to the Jamaican governments relationship to companies like Alcoa, and their atrocious social and environmental practices. Protesters have

clashed with police and set fire to mining trucks, and organisations such as the Northern Jamaican Conservation Society and the Jamaica Bauxite Environmental Organisation are campaigning fiercely against current mining operations and ones in the pipeline.

Bauxite mining in Jamaica epitomises the worst consequences of big profit-driven, large-scale industrial processes on the natural environment. The economic advantages of a few companies are being prioritised over the health of Jamaica's ecosystems and the Jamaican people, a story that is becoming increasingly common all over the world where the aluminium industry rears its ugly head.

References:

www.corporatewatch.org

www.birdlife.org

www.jebo.org

Los Angeles Times:Dust-Up Swirls Around Key Jamaica Industry

<http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=37649>

[http://www.jamaica-](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20061105/letters/letters1.html)

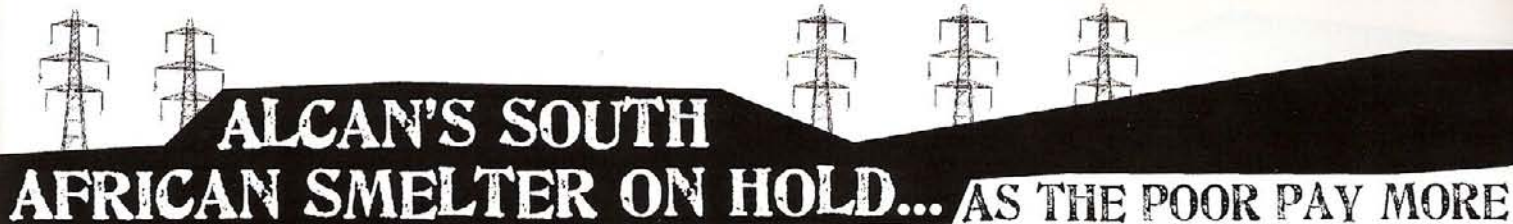
[gleaner.com/gleaner/20061105/letters/letters1.html](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20061105/letters/letters1.html)



The destructive scale of Bauxite Mining in Jamaica



Clockwise from top right: Bloodgroup playing a SI benefit gig in Reykjavik, 2007; Eyjabakker blockade, 2006; banners on police station, Reclaim The Streets, Reykjavik, 2007; blockade of trucks, Kárahnjúkar, 2005; dam invasion, Kárahnjúkar, 2006; Helguvik protest at Century Aluminium press stunt, 2008; rose laid at Kárahnjúkar, 2006



ALCAN'S SOUTH AFRICAN SMELTER ON HOLD... AS THE POOR PAY MORE

LERATO MARIA MAREGELE is a member of the South African branch of the African socio-environmental organisation Earthlife Africa. Earthlife campaigns for development solutions based on clean and sustainable forms of energy and are therefore opposed to the construction of a Rio Tinto Alcan nuclear and coal powered aluminium smelter at Coega, near Port Elizabeth. In a country where a third of the poor, mostly black, community has no electricity, the idea of generating vast quantities only for sale to a global corporation at an incredibly cheap price reminds many of the apartheid era. In the beginning of this year South Africa's largest energy provider, Eskom, dramatically put the Alcan project on hold, Lerato, who attended our 2007 Icelandic Summer of Dissent, gives us an update on the situation...

Here in South Africa the struggle is still continuing. We are experiencing blackouts as our energy company is claiming it doesn't have enough power to power us for the next 5-6 years. But surprisingly the contract between ALCAN and ESKOM it is still on the books.

In this time of electricity supply crisis, the reported (SABC, 17/03/08) construction delay of the Alcan smelter at Coega is to be welcomed as a first step towards a rationalized electricity supply and distribution system.

For over two years, Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (Jhb) has been campaigning against the sale of bulk electricity to Alcan at low tariff rates. In late 2006, the Government & Eskom signed a host of deals with Alcan under the Developmental Electricity Pricing Programme (DEPP). These deals ensured Alcan 1350MW of power (enough to run a small city) at low rates. The estimated special tariff for Alcan is 12c/kWh.

While the details of these deals remain secret—due to dubious confidentiality clauses within the DEPP policy—delaying construction of the proposed smelter gives the Government the time to scrap the DEPP. This will enable the Government to replace the DEPP with an open, transparent policy on industrial electricity supply that will ensure industrial customers meaningfully contribute towards paying for the expansion of Eskom's generating capacity.

In particular, the time has come to ensure that Eskom increases the generation of electricity from renewable resources, in particular Concentrated Solar Thermal, and that the tariff system is brought into line with the new realities.

Earthlife Africa Jhb believes that as commodity prices rise over the next five years (oil, coal, natural gas, and uranium) and as South Africa comes under increasing pressure to cut CO2 emissions, South Africa will have to transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable forms of energy.

Government policies like the DEPP prevent this. The underlying assumption behind the DEPP and the subsequent Alcan deal is that the Apartheid system of providing heavy industry with dirty, cheap electricity from coal-fired power stations is applicable in the 21st Century. This is not the case. South Africa cannot afford the Apartheid-style of electricity system under current global energy trends.

However, the converse is also true. South Africa can afford to invest heavily in an industrial plan to design and manufacture renewable energy technology. Only last week, the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies in the Western Cape announced the possibility of generating 10,000MW of electricity from wave power alone.

Our national resources should be invested in promoting this kind of research and development. Showering tax credits and cheap, polluting energy on foreign users in return for very few jobs is an economic model best left in the 1980s.

Whilst Rio Tinto Alcan lurks in the background, Eskom is now planning to raise the price of electricity, pushing it further away from those who need it the most. This release from Earthlife Johannesburg explains...

Earthlife Africa Jhb, Anti-Privatisation Forum 21st May 2008

The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) will hold a public hearing on Friday (23/05/08) on the proposed Eskom tariff increases. Earthlife Africa Jhb and the Anti-Privatisation Forum will be there, as will 200 community members from Soweto and Soshanguve, demonstrating against Eskom's unwise, ill-timed and anti-poor price increases.

The case against Eskom's proposed tariff increases has a few key components: First, the tariff increases do not adequately protect poor consumers and will bring new hardships to communities already struggling for mere survival. This could be avoided through the implementation of a step-block tariff and an increase of the Free Basic Allocation to 100kWh per person per month.

The second main reason to reject Eskom's tariff increases is the unwise financial planning that structures the increases. By committing itself to a new build programme of coal and uranium power sources, Eskom is effectively locking the entire country into a fossil fuel economy for the next fifty years. Within ten to fifteen years, the costs of solar and wind generation per kWh produced will be below that of coal and uranium, mostly due to the long-term rise of coal, uranium, gas and petroleum stocks. These fossil fuel commodities are finite, dwindling, and increasingly in demand. The long-term price of these fuels will rise significantly.

The third reason is that Eskom has failed to show any meaningful commitment to cost-cutting measures; the ten million Rands in bonuses to top management (who have managed to get coal stockpiles horribly mixed up, invested money in financial instruments instead of maintenance, and have cost the country billions through some bizarrely-timed blackouts) would be a great place to start.

The final reason is that the Developmental Electricity Pricing Programme (DEPP) and the related Alcan contract remain on the books. It is economically unsound, socially evil, and environmentally ill-conceived to provide power subsidies to a foreign corporation with minimal job creation while raising prices on the rest of South African society. In effect, why should South African citizens and small businesses have major price increases while foreign corporations are guaranteed profits through artificially low prices?

CONCERNING THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF SOCIETY

A RESPONSE TO AN ATTEMPTED DEPORTATION



MIRIAM ROSE opened a panel discussion at the 'Reykjavikur Akademia' on the 20th November 2007 with the topic 'What are the Fundamental Values of Society'. Panelists included Reykjavik Chief of Police Stefán Eiríksson, historian and Left Green MP Guðfríður Lilja Grétarsdóttir and philosopher Viðar Thorsteinsson

"For those of you who don't already know me, I am an activist and environmental scientist from the UK. I have been asked to speak today on my experience of the basic values of Icelandic society, based on an interview I did on Kastljós [news discussion programme] in October, after I was threatened with deportation from Iceland for my part in actions against the heavy industry policy of your government. The letter of requested deportation which I received explained that I may be expelled from Iceland for a minimum of three years as my behavior constitutes a 'threat to the fundamental values of society'. In the interview I noted how telling I thought this choice of words, and raised the question: What are the fundamental values of Icelandic society? It seems that free speech, equal rights and the right to protest are not amongst them, so what does this sentence say? To me it revealed a very simple truth about the nature of the decision. I had questioned the right of market and economic values to dominate society and nature, through the policy of heavy industrialisation. In this accusation it was made painfully clear that these are the 'fundamental values' of today's Icelandic society even at the expense of human freedoms, and those who question such values are not welcome here. I will go on to explore this hypothesis tonight.

Iceland is a country with a proud history and belief in strong democracy and human rights. It is certainly perceived from the outside as a country with a representative and refined democratic system, and peaceful and humanist values. But what are these basic values we are so proud of maintaining in such a developed society? There are two essential building blocks of commonly perceived fundamental values of society- the fundamental human rights and the basic democratic values. I will go on to examine some of these values in detail, in relation to their applications in modern Icelandic society. Developed democracies claim to value above all the basic human rights; free speech, equal rights, freedom of movement etc. Rights that were defined by hundreds of years of social struggle against repressive regimes, for equality and freedom, and are now enshrined into UN conventions and government constitutions to put our minds at rest.

So let us start with equal rights, perhaps the most fundamental of these values, assumed by all and part of our everyday rhetoric on the advantages of western democracy. But how are our equalrights monitored and enforced? Well, if we

feel we have been treated unequally our first stop is the law courts, designed to check the application of such rights and deliver justice. It is well known that our ability to be represented in the courts requires and depends on money; good lawyers, payment of court fees, time off work etc. So this system is fundamentally flawed and unequal. Secondly it is the duty of governments and companies to practice and ensure equal rights in their policies and actions. But will they really do this at the expense of enormous profit margins? Big corporations and state economies operate by using cheap labour and products from countries with dubious human rights to give their customers cheap 'value-added' goods. Value in this sense means only the size of the dent in the purse, not the rights of those whose slave labour creates it. To confuse the matter of equal rights further, the use of human rights terminology must also be monitored, as its original purpose is misused and mistreated in the court room. The European Court of Human Rights has in several cases awarded corporations the human rights of individuals. The idea is that by acting against a corporation, you are acting against its shareholders and their fundamental human rights. (ie by blockading a MacDonalds truck you restrict the freedom of movement of its shareholders). Even these conventions now serve to protect the rights of big business and capital growth, and do not represent the voiceless majority as they were intended.

In Iceland there is considerable evidence of terrible mistreatment of foreign workers at the Kárahnjúkar dams. Illegal workers brought by construction company Impregilo had almost no rights in Icelandic society, and reports of deaths at the work site are accused of being grossly underestimated. They received no justice or equality here. The Icelandic state ignored this ill-treatment in favour of the profits promised by powerful companies like ALCOA, (and perhaps also in fear of speaking against corporations with such highflying connections). Personally I have experienced considerable inequality in my treatment here. This summer I was sent directly to prison after being notified of a fine for disobeying the police. In contrast to the norm, I was given no time to pay the amount and no right to appeal in the courts. I was sent immediately to prison where I was kept in isolation for 8 days, as there was not space in the womens prison for me. While inside I was told by the prison guards that this was very unusual as most women are pardoned a few times before being imprisoned in Iceland, hence the small number of female prisoners. They were quite surprised that a woman convicted of her first and non-violent crime would be treated this way. It seems that this unfair treatment was intentionally harsh as a warning to other protesters that they were not wanted by the state.

Let us move on to free speech. Unlike the controlled media of dictatorships and communist regimes, we pride ourselves on the free and unbiased press of the Western world. But how impartial is it really? Icelandic media is controlled by a few private groups and a small state run element, which accepts private finance. What are their interests? Can company owned and sponsored media really criticise its own, or associated companies, or report fairly on their economic abuses? In whose interest was it that lies about the payment of Saving Iceland activists were published by RÚV [national TV and radio station] and never revoked despite complaints made through all the official channels?

I will use the pertinent form of questioning taken by tribal rights activists in India, whom I have worked with and ask: Free speech for whom? At what cost?

Thirdly, and in strong relation to my experience, what of freedom of assembly or the right to demonstrate? When our ability to express ourselves through the democratic system or the free media fails, this is an essential human right to test our democracy and the existence of our perceived fundamental human rights and values. On this subject I will read from an essay by booker prize winning Indian author Arundhati Roy: "The only way to make democracy real is to begin a process of constant questioning, permanent provocation, and continuous public conversation between citizens and the State. That conversation is quite different from the conversation between political parties. (Representing the views of rival political parties is what the mass media thinks of as 'balanced' reporting.) It is important to remember that our freedoms such as they are, were never given to us by any government, they have been wrested from them by us. If we do not use them, if we do not test them from time to time, they atrophy. If we do not guard them constantly, they will be taken away from us. If we do not demand more and more, we will be left with less and less." (Roy, 2005) In several instances the Icelandic State has shown its intolerance to the right of freedom of assembly, and to methods of civil disobedience as a form of protest.

In 2002 any person suspected of being a member of the Falun Gong (a strictly pacifist human rights movement), were arrested or denied entry into Iceland at the request of a corrupt and internationally frowned upon government (China.)

As a personal anecdote, I often use an example from my treatment here last summer. After being arrested and taken to Eskifjörður police station after a protest action, I found myself very thirsty while held in one of the small hot cells. When I knocked on the door to ask for a glass of water (my constitutional right) I was told, "You lost your rights when you broke the law!" and denied the water. This incident highlights to me the mentality of absolute lack of acceptance of the validity of this form of protest, and the lack of respect of human rights by those who's job it is to protect them. (The police.) We suffer from an obsession with the 'sacred' nature of the law, which denies us the right to challenge laws, ask who they are there to protect, and allow society to change and grow as it has done historically by the use of these methods.

Having examined some of the main human rights let us now turn to the fundamental values and building blocks of

democracy, the pride of Iceland's history as the first truly democratic nation. Democracy is based on; participation (of people in the system), representation (of the people by politicians) and accountability (of decisions taken to the people). By examining these elements I will present the idea that real democracy has been replaced by an 'illusion of democracy', manufactured by PR experts and spin-doctors who now hold such an important place in the workings of our governments. In fact many western governments (including Iceland) rely on this illusion to maintain a fairly silent and disinterested population, who don't question a so-called democratic system which benefits big business and capital growth at the expense of all else (the environment, civil liberties etc). The use of rhetoric has confused the 'free-market' with the freedom of the people, suggesting that an open economic environment means an open society, and disguising the loss of civil liberties and democracy that march hand in hand with such unchecked and unquestioned capital growth.

First let us examine participation. In this the democratic systems we use are fundamentally flawed. In the 2003 Icelandic elections 33.7% voted Independence party, 31% voted for the Alliance (social democrats), and 17% voted Progressive. In the following coalition, not only did just 34% vote for the winning party, but a party with only 17% support achieved huge shared power in government. This was the coalition who went on to repeatedly deny requests for an open vote on Kárahnjúkarvirkjun.

Secondly, we may examine representation and accountability. Once elected it seems that ministers have a clean bill to do what they (and their interest groups) want without any accountability to, or representation of the people who put them there. In 2003 Prime Minister David Oddsson and Foreign Secretary Halldor Ásgrímsson, allied Iceland to the war in Iraq without the consultation of the people or even the government. This decision was vastly against public opinion. It was not representative and against the parliamentary rules and the constitution, which state that such issues must go through the foreign affairs committee (which it did not). The Penal Code states that anyone who challenges the fairness of the Icelandic state as defined in the constitution is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Were they tried on this crime? No. Representation and accountability failed here, as in so many cases.

Again, when the legal system and democracy has failed to hold the government accountable, protest is the only avenue for justice. In 2006 fifteen thousand people marched in towns and cities around Iceland in protest of the drowning of Kárahnjúkar, to no effect. It is no wonder that people feel powerless with these methods of protest, and turn to direct action and civil disobedience to challenge decisions made in their name. Some would even say that corporations have more power than people and even politicians in Iceland. Since we have seen the connection between money and power, it is clear that enormous monopolies like ALCOA, Baugur Group, RioTinto and the Kolkrabbin hold much. And how are they held accountable? DECODE, the owner of almost all Icelandic human DNA are selling off their information to other

Meanwhile ALCOA receives energy for many times less than the Icelandic public, an amount so small that Landsvirkjun (the national power company) will not even disclose it. Again we ask: Representation for whom? At what cost? Democracy for whom? At what cost?

Modern Western democracies (such as Iceland and the UK) rely on a silent and disillusioned population, allowing the passing of controversial policies without check, as we are fooled by the rhetoric of democracy and freedom. Unlike under a harsh dictatorship or tough communism, we are too wealthy and content to question the system that creates our wealth. On the issue of authority and acceptance, I always find the famous psychological test by Stanley Milgram very interesting. In this experiment a member of the public is asked to participate in a contrived experiment in which they must read out a list of questions to a second participant (actually an actor) sitting in the next room. When the answerer gets the questions wrong, the participant must give them an electric shock, the dose of which will seem to increase with each wrong answer until it reaches a red (seemingly very dangerous) zone on the machine. The participant can hear the screams of the answerer getting louder and more horrific with each dose. Yet, in most experiments the participant complied to a very worrying level of electric dosage and did not question the authority of the white-coated, clipboard holding scientist directing the test. Milgram concluded that the perceived authority of the scientist removed the personal values of the participant to some extent. He went on to examine how compliance changed with variations to certain aspects of the experiment. He found that compliance dropped dramatically when: a) the scientist did not wear a labcoat or hold a clipboard, b) A third party actor playing another member of the public entered and questioned the validity of the experiment. When related to democracy and societal values, the first instance shows the importance of perceived legitimacy in authority figures, and the need for the PR man to ensure the image keeps the people silent and satisfied. The second element I find most interesting as it shows the huge destabilising force of the dissenting public voice to the illusion of democracy. It only takes one other voice of concern to unmask the powers that be and lead to rejection of the system and re-establishment of personal values. No wonder governments try so hard to quash protest against their contentious policies.

Finally, when asking Icelanders what they consider the basic values of their society, the issue of Independence came up time and time again. It seems that if liberty is the fundamental value of the USA, Independence is that of Iceland. Icelanders are respected worldwide for their rejection of a national army, of the EU, of the globalisation of

to be self sufficient as an island state here, even at the cost of expensive fat-cat friendships in Europe and beyond. Despite this, there is great willingness of the Icelandic nation to accept neo-colonisation of the economy by very few Aluminium corporations, who rip off energy at a fraction of the public cost, burdening the taxpayer and creating economic reliance on so few foreign companies. (ALCOA admitted in a meeting in Brazil that they are paying less than half for Icelandic power, as they will pay for big dam electricity there.) Yet, when foreign activists join Icelanders in opposing this sellout they are shunned and told, 'it is not your business'.

So it seems that the freemarket, the economy and Iceland's role in corporate globalisation are the key values of today's Icelandic society. So we ask once more: Globalisation for whom? At what cost? Does globalisation mean international free movement of people? No, not in the case of the Falun Gong, or Saving Iceland activists repeatedly threatened with deportation. Does it mean equal respect for all human lives? Not in the case of the secretive treatment of workers at Kárahnjúkarvirkjun. Does it mean meaningful international treatise on climate change, racial discrimination or nuclear weapons? No, again it doesn't. Geir H. Harde is even currently trying to weedle his way out of Iceland's already excessive Kyoto allowances. And, if these are the values of Iceland, are they really the values of the Icelandic people? Or just those of the powerful few at the head of the decision making process? If these are not the people's values, how will the people object to them? How will they regain and redefine the real fundamental values of society? That is the question which faces Iceland and most states today. In a climate where the market-god has become almost unquestioned as the basis of our life and values, we must decide whether it is really ok to take the blue pill and settle into the cushioned comfort of the illusion, or gulp the red pill, open our eyes, and set ourselves to unmasking the powers that we must once again wrest our values from."

- Luckily Miriam was acquitted when there was public outcry against her unfair accusation.

References:

Roy, Arundhati, 2005. 'An ordinary persons guide to empire'. Penguin Books, India.



Islandsvinir March against Kárahnjúkar Dam. Revkiavik. 2006

High tech aboriginals of the North

This tyranny of distance
left us to fend for ourselves
The earth shaking
spewing deadly fumes
fire and ice
forces beyond
taming
Natural disasters
nearly killing the entire nation
century after century

Declared independence
no blood spilled
Our colonists
occupied by Hitler
— they had no choice

Our isolation was our salvation
until the big corporations of the West
smelled our naiveté
Like leeches they smelled virgin blood
Alcan, Bechtel, Impregilo, Alcoa, Century Aluminium, Rio Tinto

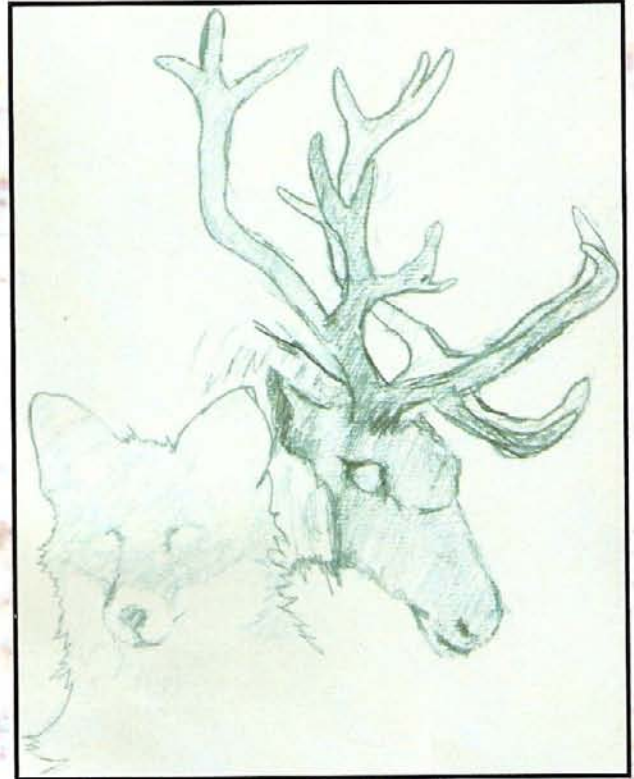
First they take our nature
next they take our economy
and then, and then they take our independence

We are the high tech aboriginals of the North
The \$ beads they gave us
have lost their short term value
We sacrificed more than was ours to give
and we will pay the price
of forsaking the only thing that shaped us
into who we are
—that gave us all our riches
We have forsaken our very own nature
And she will not spare the glass cities

The beads could have been
seeds of a sustainable future
—it still can
If we learn to listen to voices
of glaciers
of waterfalls
of the hidden people
of the oracle in our heart

We can still give the spoiled beads seeds back
before they turn into parasites
beyond our control

by BRIGITTA JONSDOTTIR



by JARED FLAMING

Fear and wallow
repel me from visiting
graves of loves recently buried.

Not yet, Jökla, my friend.

To date flicking images only I've seen
And unless you've held the hand
of a friend laying dead,
how can you not believe
somehow
you've been misled?

Now a hint that the horid tale is true,
water runs green
downstream of your noose.
Memories and memories
of you in your might
charging seawards
beautiful
a rich milk white!

by DN

