Contesting urban fracking in Greater Manchester: opening a political space in an urban terrain of protest

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2019

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List of acronyms and key terms

CBM: Coal bed methane
CLG: Community liaison group
FFGM: Frack Free Greater Manchester
FOI: Freedom of information
GM: Greater Manchester
MP: member of Parliament
NGO: Non-governmental organisation
NORM: Naturally occurring radioactive material
PEDL: Petroleum exploration and development license
TAU: Tactical aid units
UCG: Underground coal gasification
Abstract

This thesis is the first to focus on grassroots political opposition to fracking development in a city-region. It examines the political space opened by activists in Greater Manchester between 15th November 2013 and 12th April 2014, situating their political struggle in a broader urban terrain of protest. Data collection was conducted between 28th August 2013 and 20th October 2014. The thesis looks beyond simple interpretations of community opposition, toward theoretically grounded understandings of anti-fracking dissent. Paradoxically, in this case a local struggle emerged primarily from social movements unrelated to the development site itself, whose actors converged on the issue of stopping fracking in the city-region and engaged disadvantaged communities neighbouring the exploratory well. Research illustrates how activists drew on the tactics and organisational practices of radical urban uprisings to open-up and sustain an anti-fracking camp outside the exploratory well for five months, and examines ways that their dissent challenged what was being contested, who could engage in the struggle and which grievances were recognised as legitimate.

Understanding the complexities of the struggle contributes to existing research on the politics of contemporary urban environmental movements by examining how solidarity and an emancipatory politics can emerge from disparate groups that have seemingly discordant perspectives. This has practical as well as theoretical relevance, because the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement successfully presented a united front against ‘fracking’, despite internal conflict between actors. Using ostensibly horizontal and less-obvious vertical organisational modes of practice to organise the anti-fracking movement, activists sustained a protest camp and limited access to the exploratory well while it was in operation, before leaving of their own volition. This means that analysis contributes to a politics of hope, offering lessons for similar struggles that emerge from disparate, autonomous groups.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Craig Thomas
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Acknowledgements

Thanks go to my supervisors, Noel Castree and James Evans, who have provided me support, inspiration and guidance, while tolerating the twists and turns that my research took as I discovered exciting and arguably-relevant theories and research. I would also like to thank my examiners Karen Bickerstaff and Sherilyn MacGregor for helping sharpen the contribution of this thesis, and the faculty of Geography at the University of Manchester for payment of my tuition fees. Amongst many friends who have helped along the way, particular thanks must go to Jana Wendler, who has discussed many iterations of this thesis and has been the best office buddy I could ask for.

I’ve only been able to complete my research because of the understanding and help of friends and family. Particular thanks goes to Rachele Evaroa, who has helped me to take professional procrastination to a new level with our band Galivantes and our ‘STEAM’ pub the Old Abbey Taphouse, and has endured my frequent absences to University. Thanks are also due to Gareth Thomas and Reuben Holmes, who have helped run the pub while I write this thesis.

Most of all, I dedicate this thesis to my fiancé Jez, whose constant belief in my abilities provides me the strength to continue and who has supported me over long years of juggling research with work and family commitments. Jez you’ve brought colour, adventure and Elmo and Django – our sons – into our life, and I could not have completed this thesis without you!
1 Researching a contemporary anti-fracking struggle

1.1 Introduction

‘Fracking’ is a colloquial term used to describe a form of energy extraction that is able to recover oil and gas from impermeable rock, which cannot be accessed using conventional drilling methods. It involves drilling vertically down to the shale bed and then horizontally, to enable a borehole to be steered sideways and so increase the radius from which a single well site can extract gas. Once the well is drilled, large amounts of water mixed with other fluids – including chemicals – are pumped underground at high pressure into the shale bed, so that fractures are formed that are propped open with sand. Where the shale formation is fractured, gas flows freely up to the well and is then pumped up to the ground.

In the US, Europe and the UK there has been considerable opposition to fracking development, with struggles emerging outside multiple well sites, from which activists organise to stop the expansion of the industry and raise environmental and social grievances with existing developments. This thesis focuses on the anti-fracking struggle that emerged in Greater Manchester and the political space that they opened up, with on-going struggles for control of Barton Moss Road outside exploratory well between 15th November 2013 and 12th April 2014. Data collection commenced on 28th August 2013, with attendance at a local consultation on the exploratory well. Participant observation continued at events until Barton Moss Protectors camp closed on 12th April 2014 and interviews continued until 20th October 2014. The research questions investigate how and why people responded in different ways to the proposed development, and to what effect.

At first, a focus on energy seemed logical, given that opposition was ostensibly toward a new energy infrastructure project. Yet, as industry actors were keen to point out in interviews, the two techniques of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing commonly associated with ‘fracking’ were not used at the site. In addition, and paradoxically for an ostensibly community-led struggle, local
populations did not initially respond to the proposed development and those immediately local to it were reluctant to be participants in the research. Instead, much of the ‘anti-fracking’ movement came from other parts of the city-region, yet actors presented (and often considered) themselves to be part of the local community. Over the course of the research, it became clear that the case did not fit the frame of a local community opposing a new energy infrastructure development. Across activists interviewed, the exploratory well was a contingent factor in understanding responses which were often based in radical demands for socio-ecological change, only indirectly connected to the development itself. Most participants had no previous connection to the site where the development was located and could not relate their concerns to the local landscape either.

Some activists worked with communities neighbouring the exploratory well to help them seek recognition as the local community. As the analysis in chapter seven shows, their efforts to engage with the council were ultimately unsuccessful, with newly-formed community groups subsumed by the post-political governance processes of the local council. The broader movement, however, embedded their struggle in a collective effort to instigate democracy in the here-and-now, without seeking recognition from the authorities. Their efforts succeeded in reframing the struggle from a local siting dispute to a political movement centred on stopping fracking in the city-region, in which marginalised actors forced themselves and their voices into the visible domain. Rather than seeking justice through requests for recognition, participation or redistribution, these activists opened a dissensual space outside the exploratory well, from which their struggle would be seen and their voices heard, as they articulated the desire for a radical break from the consensual politics that legitimises ‘fracking’, and the neoliberal system through which its development occurs. During a sustained struggle, over a period of five months, activists forced daily confrontations with the people who worked at the exploratory well, making radical demands for socio-ecological change that were not contained at the local scale or focused solely on environmental concerns, and which did not broach compromise. Despite differences in ideology and tensions between organisational modes of practice across activists, they were able to pursue
common goals and express imaginaries that challenged the legitimacy of the post-political consensual police order, within which both they and their grievances were not recognised, and from which the authorities sought to undermine and close down the dissensual space that was opened up outside the exploratory well.

The argument that anti-fracking activists looked beyond the particulars of the development to challenge the system that legitimised it is in line with initial research on the anti-fracking movement, which suggests siting struggles are focal points for resistance that is focused on stopping climate change and exposing processes of deepening neoliberalisation (Kinniburgh 2015; Szolucha 2016). Compared with conventional resource extraction, research that examines these connections is surprisingly limited. In part, this is because of the relatively recent emergence of the fracking industry. However, it is also arguably because the potential for radical political change is not a primary interest of energy geographers, who frame siting struggles through focus on more ‘traditional’ forms of justice\(^1\), and aren’t concerned with voices or actions that fall outside these forms. The following section expands on this argument in more detail, introducing the rationale for the theoretical framing of this thesis.

### 1.2 Rationale for theoretical framing of thesis

This thesis adopts a post-foundational theoretical framing, which is applied to study of actor engagement in the dissensual spaces of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. This places it within the literature of a small set of human geographers, who engage with Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics as a spatial practice that locally constructs a place of universal equality, to challenge the established order. Given the relatively recent interest of these geographers in environmental struggles, it is important to explain why this thesis speaks from within this emergent literature, rather than framing the thesis using a social movement or environmental justice interpretive lens.

\(^1\) i.e. ‘dialogic consensual politics’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305)
Before delving into the details of why this literature is relevant to an anti-fracking siting struggle, it is worth first pointing out how inspirational it has been to me, and more broadly to academics who are interested in the potential of political struggle to disrupt and challenge the way that society is organised, in radical and as-yet unforeseen ways. For me, the literature is inspiring because it is based in a search for moments in which the urban space that we live in – in which inequality can seem ‘natural’, immutable and unchangeable - is ruptured and challenged by people who engage in the praxis of democracy, or what Rancière would term politics. The focus of researchers on the potential of radical urban uprisings is – for me – a focus on the potential that capitalism, economic growth, increasing inequality, the uneven development of neoliberalisation and anthropogenic climate change are not natural or inevitable. It recognises that each of these are based in political choices made within a particular established order, that can be overturned at any point by radical struggle.

For researchers who are interested in the politics of the everyday, this may seem philosophical, unlikely and perhaps a distraction from more immediate concerns. But in my opinion, researching the potential for radical change through local struggles is not solely a thought experiment for philosophers and academics to engage with. It is a real-world necessity that is recognised by people who seek to oppose and fight against an established order that – for example – legitimises and facilitates fracking development.

It is in this context that this thesis is setup, as the first case to apply a post-foundational perspective to an urban anti-fracking siting struggle in which activists were only tangentially focused on the risks of the exploratory well that they ostensibly organised against. Instead they focused their efforts on reframing the struggle itself, in terms of who could engage in it as activists and which issues were recognised as legitimate. The thesis makes a valuable contribution to literatures on radical urban struggle and on environmental struggles by providing an initial study into the radical potential of local opposition to new ‘fracking’ energy infrastructure development. In order to do this, a post-foundational perspective is particularly valuable because it shifts focus onto the dissensual spaces opened up by the anti-
fracking movement. This is important because there is currently very little research on anti-fracking struggles that engages sufficiently with the political and the potential for activists to effect real and radical change through the democratisation of space.

In post-foundational research human geographers have engaged in a critique that draws awareness to the rarity of ‘political’ events, in which present subject capacities are discarded and supplemented with something new. This critique shifts empirical focus toward actors who dissent against – rather than seek compromise over – development. The utility of this focus for examining insurgent movements is exemplified in recent case studies (Erensü and Karaman, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016). Most recently, it has been applied to contemporary environmental struggles, in recognition of their shift toward politicised struggle (Velicu and Kaika 2017).

Given that there is very little post-foundational research on the politics of contemporary environmental movements, and no research that examines the political struggle of anti-fracking activists, there is a lot that still needs to be done on the politics of anti-fracking siting struggles. Applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle creates an exciting opportunity to make an initial contribution here, by taking a conceptual ‘step back’ to examine how the political emerges across the broader terrain of protest. Incorporating a plurality of politics into a case that is not clearly ‘political’ also provides opportunity to address recent criticisms, examined in chapter three, that Rancière creates an artificial separation between ‘politics’ and the ‘political’. There is an opportunity here to move beyond simple interpretations of community opposition to the siting of new energy infrastructure projects, toward grounded research on the organisational practices of the anti-fracking movement and the reasons for the differential reactions of actors.

Where this thesis makes a key contribution is through examination of actor engagement in the dissensual spaces opened up by the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. Analysis examines tensions in the political in detail, as between the discursive, organizational and spatial repertoires of activists. This analysis is
based in a post-foundational theoretical framework that shifts focus onto dissent and the ways that dissensual spaces were organised.

From a post-foundational perspective, examining these spaces in their urban context is particularly important because hierarchical social orders and the political are seen as enmeshed together within the ‘police order’ of the city (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Drawing on the philosophy of Rancière (Rancière 1999), the police are understood here as ‘an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying’ (Rancière 1999, p.29). From this perspective, the anti-fracking movement emerges from within a particular social order, which marginalises grievances on ‘fracking’ deemed to be insensible, makes invisible the formerly visible and renders into noise the formerly audible.

An urban anti-fracking struggle is a particularly interesting empirical focus for engaging a post-foundational perspective, because it isn’t a clear example of – yet has the hallmarks of – radical struggle. This raises the practical question of why the thesis adopts a post-foundational theoretical framework rather than using environmental justice theory, which is more common in the study of environmental movements. The answer is that post-foundational theory shifts focus onto political struggle and does not marginalise the radical tactics of contemporary environmental movements.

This means that researching the politics of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle, in which activists challenge the legitimacy of broader policies rather than a single development, is – in my opinion - best suited to a post-foundational theoretical framework, which allows the researcher to examine how politics emerges through the dissensual spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement. The focus is distinct from an interpretive frame that interprets politics as a mode of governance. The following allegory helps to illustrate why this distinction is so important:

When a group of unemployed people decide to create a political party in the city of Le Mans in France, they elect Victor as their
president, and ask him to present his views on politics at their next meeting. Not having the slightest idea about politics, Victor goes to a park in order to think, and sits next to a homeless man. He is in luck, because the homeless man decides to give him a free tutorial on politics. Politics, he says, is a fraud, and asks Victor to imagine a prison.

In this prison there are, unsurprisingly, prisoners. But they have not done anything wrong; they were born in the prison, where they will stay for the rest of their lives. It is pure chance, a whim of fate: there are those who were born in the prison, and those who were born outside of it. This is the natural order of things. When, one day, the prisoners start complaining about the shortage of food in the prison, an election is organised. There is democracy in this prison, and the prisoners have the right to elect their director. They elect a director from the Left, who thinks that the shortage of food in the prison is unacceptable. When this director proves incapable of resolving the problem, the prisoners elect another director, from the Right this time. In the meantime, the problem of food in the prison becomes a major issue in the political agenda. And this, the homeless man says to Victor, is the fraud. Even if one day the problem of food in the prison is resolved, either by the Left or by the Right, the situation will basically remain unchanged: the prisoners will have enough to eat, but they will still be in the prison. Politics, he concludes, is not about the food in the prison, but about the very prison.

Dikeç, 2015 p.82

What is clear in this allegory is the difference between thinking of politics as a mode of governing, in which the ‘natural order’ of things is accepted, and thinking of politics as a spatial practice, opening dissensual spaces from which the ‘natural’ order of things is not accepted, and dissent challenges its absent foundations
Importantly, neither of these perspectives is ‘wrong’, but they each provide very different ways of looking at the world, and at political events, and so inevitably produce very different research questions.

This means that a post-foundational theoretical framing provides a perspective on environmental struggle that is distinct from environmental justice and allows focus on the political struggle of activists. This is the reason that this thesis adopts a post-foundational theoretical framework, that is based in the philosophical writings of Rancière on politics (Rancière 1999; Rancière 2010; Rancière et al. 2001; Rancière 2004; Rancière 2006; Rancière 2009). Analysis does not often draw directly from these texts, however, but uses as its interlocutor human geographers who have developed Rancière’s philosophy by examining how radical politics erupts through urban spaces from within the established order. Specifically, the framework builds on a call by Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) for more cases that examine political struggles in the places where they erupt.

The work of these geographers, who connect Rancière’s theorisation on the political with the spaces through which the political is enacted, is central to this thesis. It is their understanding of political struggle that informs the concepts which underlie the theoretical framework, and ensure that the focus of analysis produces research that is of value to on-going discussions on political struggle.

1.3 Concepts mobilised

The post-foundational theoretical framing of the thesis draws in particular on three key concepts. First and foremost, Rancière’s understanding of ‘the political’ is used to research the anti-fracking struggle as a rare moment of dissent in which activists make no demands and instead experiment with democratic politics (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016) and the remaking of urban spaces in the name of an infinitely exclusive equality. This understanding of politics shifts conceptual focus onto urban insurgencies that open up political possibilities ‘by producing a spatial rupture’ (ibid. p.14) in the urban spaces governed by the police-orders that they seek to challenge. Within this conceptualisation political space is not just a physical space,
but is also the abstract idea that through their actions and voices, activists open a space of political encounter within the urban (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017).

Second, the thesis engages with Rancière’s understanding of politics-as-political-subjectivation, or ‘the rupture with previous subject positions through the opening of spaces (Rancière, 1999; Dikeç, 2013)’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.55). Put another way, ‘subjectivation’ describes the process through which people become political subjects from heterogonous social subjects, through the contestation of power and the practice of political equality. The concept is used extensively by Rancière and his proponents, and attributes agency to the people who become political subjects.

Third, ‘hybrid subjectivation’ (Karaliotas 2017) is used to conceptualise tensions between the vertical and horizontal organisational practices of activists in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. This allows analysis to better understand how the collective dissent of a heterogonous movement emerges in practice and to reflect on how empirical study of a contemporary urban environmental struggle contributes to theorisation on the political.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In chapter two, I examine research on the fracking industry and anti-fracking protests, which in the main is focused on discourses and public perceptions of fracking. Importantly, existing research highlights the importance of, but does not address, dissent against local developments through protest and direct action. I argue that the fracking industry recognises that obtaining a social license is necessary to ensure developments are not opposed locally, but that currently there is a perceived lack of democratic voice from governing institutions as well as apparent collusion between government and industry, which deepens mistrust and local opposition. This is particularly important with ‘fracking’, which differs from previous new energy infrastructure developments because it extends extractive processes into urban areas not previously used for energy extraction. Understanding the public engagement efforts of the UK industry is an essential
precursor to examining urban anti-fracking struggles, which emerge in a broader context of neoliberal development and a transition toward unconventional energy extraction. Currently there is only a limited amount of research on anti-fracking protests, and this is predominantly focused on rural cases in which there is a clearly definable community. I argue that this means more research is needed on urban anti-fracking struggles, in which a medley of actors engage in anti-fracking protests centred on a siting dispute.

Chapter three is a review of literature on radical urban uprisings and contemporary environmental movements. I emphasise how studies frame their research to focus on some actors while marginalising others. I argue for a ‘re-centring of the political’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14) onto politicised actors. This focus is appropriate to understanding urban anti-fracking struggles and the political spaces that they open up. Chapter four elaborates the research design used to address the research questions set out in chapter one. I draw on research examined in chapters two and three as well as theoretical literature about geographical methods, to argue that post-foundational research is well suited to granular study of actor responses and differential reactions in an anti-fracking struggle, and that to research contemporary environmental struggles a theoretical framework should be designed to take a conceptual ‘step back’ to incorporate a plurality of politics into research.

This is because post-foundational research does not recognise the essential ground of any given social order. Put another way, it begins from the understanding that any given social order is artificially constructed to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others, and can be challenged by anyone who does not recognise its legitimacy. This means that a post-foundational empirical focus can extend beyond social movement or community groups, for example, to study all ‘actors’ who engage in the struggle. Importantly, this incorporates into research those who act autonomously, from outside activist and community groups. This is particularly appropriate to an urban struggle in which a heterogenous collective of people respond to fracking development in differential ways. It allows research to examine tensions between the organisational practices of activists in the opening
up (and closing down) of political spaces, and to question the effectiveness of contemporary environmental struggles that centre on opposition to fracking development.

The subsequent four chapters form the central empirical analysis of this thesis. Chapter five places the case in its urban setting. To understand how an urban anti-fracking siting struggle emerges in Greater Manchester, the discordant orientations of the regional anti-fracking movement are placed in the context of both the development process for the exploratory well and the repertoires of the urban social movements that preceded the anti-fracking struggle. To illustrate differences in how the struggle emerged at both a local and regional scale, I separate analysis of the local development process from the regional emergence of an anti-fracking movement. I use empirical material to argue that the industry actors, who marginalise most local people from the development process, are focused on developing a fracking industry in the North West. I then uncover how the anti-fracking movement emerges from autonomous groups based in other parts of Greater Manchester, who are focused on stopping fracking in the city-region.

Chapter six examines tensions between the horizontal and vertical organisational practices of activists in the anti-fracking movement. I argue that an emancipatory politics was possible because of an ethos of egalitarianism amongst activists, exercised through the acceptance of difference and practices aimed at providing each person equal voice in the movement. This allowed activists to build international solidarities with anti-fracking, indigenous rights and humanitarian groups. The shared acceptance of difference within the movement also necessitated the rejection of far-right nationalist groups who sought to align their performative and discursive repertoires with Frack Free Greater Manchester (FFGM), the regional anti-fracking assembly. This chapter contributes to research on contemporary urban environmental movements, because it provides case study analysis of how an emancipatory politics emerges from disparate groups with ostensibly discordant perspectives. The chapter also has practical relevance where it offers insights relevant to similar urban struggles that emerge from autonomous groups.
Chapter seven examines the engagement of key activists with communities near to the exploratory well. This allows analysis to move beyond the radical politics of activists, toward examining the ‘ordinary’ politics of community actors who supported Greater Manchester activists. I focus on community engagement because, paradoxically, the protest camp and the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement predominantly comprised people who did not live near to the exploratory well, who invoked local communities to validate their struggle. I argue that community engagement was an essential precursor to local engagement in the struggle because it helped to address a low level of environmental literacy amongst community actors, which limited the potential to understand the risks associated with fracking. I analyse the restricted community engagement of the rural community, barriers to engagement in the anti-fracking struggle for actors in working class communities, the community engagement efforts of anti-fracking activists and the processes through which local people engaged in anti-fracking spaces to become political subjects. This chapter contributes to research on community engagement in place based struggles.

Chapter eight examines autonomous and social movement actors who staged their dissent outside Barton Moss exploratory well. The discussion reimagines the anti-fracking movement as a rupture of radical urban politics, which shifts the conceptual focus away from FFGM and toward the protest camp that emerged along Barton Moss Road. Particular attention is paid to the discursive and material practices of actors at the camp, and the dissensual space opened up outside the exploratory well. There, the ‘political movement’ that activists identify with lacks the required legitimacy, recognition and organisational form to be understood as a social movement, yet is not a clear example of radical urban politics either. This is because it is a contemporary urban environmental struggle that contains both social movement and autonomous actors, whose discursive and material practices outside the exploratory well are ‘political’ when placed in their local context. As with FFGM, horizontal organisational practices and a common ethos of egalitarianism enables heterogeneous actors to work together and successfully stage dissensual politics. The chapter contributes to research on radical urban
politics because it provides a UK example of how ‘the political’ (Rancière 1999) can emerge in practice.

Chapter nine clarifies the contribution that this thesis makes, and develops empirically-based theoretical insights into the different forms of protest that emerged in the struggle, which contribute to recent geographical research on contemporary urban environmental struggles. Insights illustrate both the merits and limitations of applying a post-foundational conceptual lens to study of an anti-fracking siting struggle.
1.5 Research objective, questions and contributions

The objective of this thesis is to investigate differential responses to new energy infrastructure development in an urban anti-fracking siting struggle. The surveys of relevant research in chapters two and three indicate that addressing this objective is not an easy task, and requires thinking carefully about how actor responses are framed to ensure suitable data collection and appropriate analysis. The research questions are phrased with these concerns in mind, to enable the researcher to interrogate spatialised tensions within ‘the political’ and engage with the case using a post-foundational perspective to look beyond ‘local’ responses to development.

There are three research questions:

1) In what ways were spaces of dissent ‘political’?

2) How did people engage in the siting struggle?

3) What effects did political action have in a broader context of neoliberal development and the transition toward unconventional energy extraction in the North West of England?

Each of these research questions connects the literature surveyed in chapters two and three with the analysis chapters that follow. They enable me to investigate the emergence of a contemporary urban environmental struggle – in which activists contest the siting of ‘fracking’ infrastructure – through a focus on the differential responses of activists. This empirical focus is a departure from previous research, surveyed in chapter two, on ‘fracking’ in the UK, Europe and US, that focuses predominantly on public perceptions of fracking and engagement in the development process.

In this context, each of the research questions is intended to help the researcher examine the motivations and experiences of activists who engage in an urban anti-fracking siting struggle. The first one addresses the practical difficulty identified in chapter two, that in urban studies of siting struggles there is no single affected community to study. This means that careful thought is required about how to
incorporate key activists into research who are not necessarily from the local community, yet play key roles in the siting struggle.

Chapter three surveys relevant social movement research and argues that a focus on social movements alone would be inappropriate to this case because it would inevitably marginalise activists who do not identify with or operate through a social movement. Chapter four surveys post-foundational research on radical urban uprisings and argues that while a post-foundational perspective enables focus on the anti-fracking spaces opened up by activists, critiques of this approach argue a focus on ‘the political’ elevates one form of politics over another. The first research question allows me to address these concerns by interrogating ways that anti-fracking spaces of dissent are – or are not – political, through focus on actor engagement in these spaces.

The second research question is intended to enable analysis of differential actor engagement in protest spaces. This addresses a key limitation of existing research on siting struggles, highlighted in chapter two’s survey of energy geographies literature, that they can lack depth in their analysis (Bickerstaff 2012). A focus on differential actor engagement within a siting struggle allows examination of the discursive, organisational and spatial repertoires of activists, and the critique of activist efforts to implement horizontally organised practices. As well as providing a critical case study of a siting struggle relevant to wider energy geographies research agendas (Bickerstaff 2012; Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015) the second research question ties the thesis to recent studies surveyed in chapter three on radical urban uprisings (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Erensü and Karaman 2017; Zemni 2017) and contemporary environmental movements (Velicu and Kaika 2017). This is because it extends the scope of analysis beyond simple interpretations of ‘fracking’ and community opposition to the siting of new energy infrastructure projects, toward theoretically grounded understandings of anti-fracking dissent that takes into account reasons for differential reactions.

The third research question places the differential political actions of actors in the broader context of their effect on neoliberal development and the transition
toward unconventional energy extraction in the North West of England. This is important because it addresses the critique – examined in chapter three – that studies which adopt a Rancièrian post-foundational perspective are too focused on the ‘political’ moment in which activists stage their dissent and need to consider what effects of the struggle can be sustained (García-Lamarca 2017a). As such, the third research question ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the empirics of the case and considers the sustained effect(s) of both engagement and non-engagement in the anti-fracking struggle.

For the analysis chapters of this thesis, ‘fracking’ is understood by its colloquial usage, as used by actors in this study to connect a local development to a range of environmental, political and economic grievances. This broader interpretation of fracking draws on Short and Szolucha’s (2017, p2) understanding of the term, discussed in chapter two. Research indicates that a broader usage is most appropriate to empirical research in which actors use the term colloquially (Short and Szolucha 2017; Evensen et al. 2014; Szolucha 2016). In particular, it allows focus on the materiality of the technology and the importance of the place where development occurs.
2 Research on ‘fracking’ and struggles against local development

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by examining research on fracking discourses, and different usages of the term by activists and in academic research, so that its usage in this thesis is both appropriate and clear. A review of research on fracking development in the UK – where development remains at an exploratory phase – shows that studies predominantly focus on public perceptions and public engagement with the development process. A key point drawn from these studies is that the continued marginalisation of dissenting voices from dominant ‘fracking’ discourses makes it likely that there will be further anti-fracking protests in both the UK and US (Whitton et al. 2017; Thomas 2015; Williams et al. 2017). This is because protests create spaces in which people can raise normative issues with development that are marginalised from dominant discourses, and can question the risks associated with fracking.

Attention then turns to research on struggles against fracking development in the US, Europe and the UK. These studies predominantly focus on communities that are geographically local to development sites. While this may be appropriate to rural studies, it arguably marginalises regional and non-local anti-fracking activists in urban anti-fracking struggles against related developments. These struggles have more in common with, and seek inspiration from, ‘radical urban uprisings’ around the world since 2011 (Swyngedouw 2014; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). In Greater Manchester for example, anti-fracking activists occupied public spaces, gave voice to the disenfranchised and challenged proponents of ‘fracking’ development.
2.2 Research on public perceptions of fracking: the marginalisation of dissent and an expectation of future protests

The fracking industry developed rapidly in the US and more recently in Australia and Europe. In a strict, technical sense, ‘fracking’ is the exploitation of unconventional gas and oil reserves, which combines horizontal drilling, hydraulic fracturing, multi-well pads and cluster drilling to extract gas or tight oil from impermeable shale beds. Together these processes use significant resources. In the lifetime of a single fracked well it will use between 13.7 and 23.8 million litres of freshwater (Kondash and Vengosh 2015), 1500 to 2000 tonnes of proppants\(^2\) (Pearson 2013) and 80 to 330 tonnes of chemicals (Wright B. et al. 2010). While each of these techniques had been used previously by the onshore oil and gas industry, the practice of using them in combination to extract energy from shale and coal beds only became commercially viable in the new millennium (Howarth et al. 2011). This opened up shale gas reserves that were inaccessible using conventional extraction methods.

Research on public perceptions of fracking shows that the ways people respond is determined in part by how they understand what ‘fracking’ represents (Finewood and Stroup 2012). Following considerable attention from the media, academic communities and in public discourse, the term ‘fracking’ now has a wider range of meanings (Evensen et al. 2014). As with previous knowledge controversies, fracking is a generative political event (Whatmore 2009) and a vocal anti-fracking movement has crystallised from concerns about the environmental and social risks involved with ‘fracking’. Public discourse is polemical and ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ fracking actors offer different interpretations of its economic, social and environmental risks and benefits (Dodge and Metze 2017).

Interpretive policy research indicates that whether people choose to oppose or accept development is influenced by which of these discursive framings they believe (Dodge and Lee 2017; Metze and Dodge 2016). This means that in order to

\(^2\) Proppants are solid material - often silica sand - designed to keep hydraulic fractures open during or following hydraulic fracturing.
analyse dissent against ‘fracking’ development, it is important to understand the different ways that fracking is discursively framed. Because of the controversial and polemical nature of the fracking debate, it is also important to set out clearly how the term is used in this thesis.

Evensen et al. (2014) argue that researchers should provide as much information as possible on how the term is being used, so that its usage is not misunderstood (Evensen et al. 2014). They explain that across the social and physical sciences, different uses of the term make comparisons between studies difficult, unless authors are clear about what they are referring to:

Scientists’, journalists’, and citizens’ use of the word “fracking” leads to a confusing and unnecessarily contentious discourse... we encourage all writers, scientific and non-academic, to provide as much description as possible when referring to one or more of the processes, risks, and benefits often subsumed under “fracking”.

Evensen et al. (2014), page 136

As the extract explains, fracking is a term now so widely used that it only has academic meaning if its intended usage by a researcher is explained in detail. The authors also recommend that in the future the term should be replaced by ‘better, more descriptive language’ (Evensen et al. 2014, p.136) although they acknowledge that there is not currently a suitable lexicon available to do this. Following Evensen et al.’s (2014) recommendation that researchers provide as much description as possible, the fracking energy controversy will now be examined to understand how different interpretations of ‘fracking’ development can influence actor responses. This includes a critique of discourse framings of the technology, extraction and production processes of unconventional resource extraction, drawing on relevant reports and research.

Studies on shale gas governance and discourses in the UK identify a lack of opportunities for public engagement and the marginalisation of public concerns with fracking development (Dodge and Metze 2017; Williams et al. 2017; Whitton et al. 2017). In a key study, Dodge and Metze (2017) warn that a focus on promoting a positive message has created a post-political language that implies
there is no choice other than to develop the industry, in the national interest. An example given is when the Prime Minister said the UK must go ‘all out for shale’ (Watt 2014). A further study also highlights the dominance of industry discourse in the development process, and argues that where there is a lack of democratic voice from affected communities and apparent collusion between government and industry, this deepens mistrust and local opposition. They recommend that a more constructive approach would be for governing institutions to ‘recognise, encounter and accommodate diverse and polyvalent public views’ (Williams et al. 2017, p.99). The argument that there is a post-political ‘pro fracking’ discourse is also supported by research in the US that elucidates how proponents of fracking development engage a multi-scalar neoliberal framing to limit opposition to development and obfuscate local environmental risks (Finewood and Stroup 2012).

Research on neoliberalisation through unconventional energy – or fracking – development indicates that pro-fracking framings are dominant in places where development occurs (Eaton and Kinchy 2016). In these places the absence of a vocal anti-fracking movement create a situation where local discourses on fracking frame shale gas as a green fossil fuel with potential individual economic benefits. The authors argue that an anti-fracking movement is unlikely in these places because of a ‘paucity of organizational capacity and political opportunities’ (Eaton and Kinchy 2016, p.22). In the absence of collective mobilisation, people address their grievances individually, seeking to reduce the impact of fracking development on their lives and livelihoods. This argument is supported in a further study of ‘fracked’ communities that notes that where there is local acceptance of development, it is based in a neoliberal logic that accepts risks to natural and social resources as a ‘new normal’ (Malin 2013).

Neoliberal discourses on unconventional energy development describe it as a clean transitional energy source that is ‘supportive of environmental integrity and productivity’ (de Rijke 2013, p.15) and a boon to national energy security and economic development (Christopherson and Rightor 2012; Finewood and Stroup 2012). Studies have shown that this framing overlooks broader environmental and social impacts of the industry, for example fugitive methane emissions (Broderick
et al. 2011; Stamford and Azapagic 2014) and regional resource consumption, which can create social conflict with other users (Fischer 2016; Kondash and Vengosh 2015) and along the supply chain (Finewood and Stroup 2012; Pearson 2013).

Writing on public perceptions of hydraulic fracturing for lay groups in the North of England., Williams et al. (2017) argue that the dominant discourse through which the policy debate on fracking is defined is led by UK institutional actors who adopt a deficit model of public understanding of science. This, they argue, has not been successful in the UK because public concerns cannot be explained as a deficit of understanding or ‘a failure to see the self-evident benefits’ (Williams et al. 2017, p.99) of developments. Institutional focus on ‘rational’ scientific risk assessment is claimed to underpin governance decision making, which overlooks key public concerns with development based in ‘the ambiguity and uncertainty of values, politics, economics, interests and other practicalities’ (Williams et al. 2017, p.99).

The authors observe that in contrast to the institutional policy framing on fracking - that relies on narratives about science and technology – participants in the study relate a key storyline:

emphasising the trustworthiness of institutions, the importance of inclusive and democratic decision-making, the need to avoid myopic somnambulism in innovation choices and a humble epistemology.

Williams et al. (2017) page 99

As this extract shows, people can raise normative questions that are so different to the institutional narrative that information on the risks and benefits of development are unlikely to address their concerns. Importantly, anti-fracking discourses are less focused on a single technical process and describe unconventional energy development as understood in colloquial language:

[fracking] covers the potential, or actualised, effects of the entire more-intensive unconventional extraction and production processes, including
all of the required industrial elements from the use of large quantities of water, to compressor stations, high volumes of truck traffic and waste disposal.

Short and Szolucha (2017), page 2, emphasis in original

This extract is taken from a recent case study on the social impacts of fracking in the UK. The authors find that the broader description of fracking that it outlines is more appropriate than a narrow and more technical interpretation, when applied to data collated from community actors that invoke a colloquial sense of the word (Short and Szolucha 2017). Importantly, this interpretation incorporates visible infrastructure at the well pad and connects it to its supply chains via transport routes that include road, rail and pipelines.

This is important because fracking requires a greater density of wells (one or more per square kilometre) than conventional drilling to be commercially viable (de Rijke 2013). These can be spread individually across the gas field or, as has been suggested in the UK, can be clustered onto a single pad. A single well pad and its transport infrastructure require up to 12ha of land (Drohan et al. 2012) and can necessitate over a thousand truck trips during its operational lifetime (Lave and Lutz 2014). These trucks are laden with resources which include waste water, chemicals and silica sand. Their weight can damage roads and require increased maintenance from public services (ibid). A key concern of local actors raised in research is that the cumulative effect of these wells and their transport infrastructure is an industrialisation of rural landscapes. This could affect existing economies of production that include farming, beer making and tourism (Rumbach 2011; Simonelli 2014).

A broader understanding of the term ‘fracking’ incorporates the visible infrastructure above the surface that people see when a new well is built. This can include changes to the spatial distribution of human activities that are caused by new developments (Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015). It can also incorporate a temporal element that allows the researcher to look at effects beyond the event of hydraulic fracturing itself (Short et al. 2015). This is particularly important for health and environmental issues that relate to fracking which can take time to materialise.
(Short et al. 2015). For example, the risk of freshwater aquifer pollution from well leakage is a known decadal-scale legacy issue with unconventional oil and gas extraction (Jackson et al. 2014).

Rather than including alternative understandings of fracking, that are created through reflectivity by civil society or governmental actors, research indicates that public concerns are marginalised by industry and government when they do not fit with established risk-science (Dodge and Metze 2017). There is a ‘closing down’ (Stirling 2008) of public engagement which is seen as a threat to development by institutional actors due to a perceived public ignorance on key scientific issues (Williams et al. 2017).

The marginalisation of public concerns from dominant institutional narratives on fracking development is noted in Whitton et al. (2017). Writing on shale gas governance in the UK and US, the authors observe that the public have minimal influence on fracking developments. As with Williams et al, (2017), they argue that a lack of public engagement on shale gas projects ‘will likely lead to societal resistance and opposition, political critique, and the inability to be deemed positive or ‘good’ (Whitton et al. 2017, p.19). Examples include on-going struggles against shale gas company Cuadrilla in Lancashire and West Sussex, and a previous struggle against I-Gas in Greater Manchester (Whitton et al. 2017). Pointing to a lack of opportunities for engagement in the planning process, Williams et al. (2017) conclude that ‘Our research… seems to suggest further scope for deepening resistance, alienation and, at best, sceptical tolerance’ (Williams et al. 2017, p.101).

A key determinant of whether local opposition mobilises against development appears to be whether it has a ‘social license’. In both countries, research finds that the respective institutional governance systems provide only limited opportunities for citizen engagement and that developments lack ‘social justice, procedural justice, and ultimately, a social license to operate.’ (Whitton et al. 2017, p.11). A further study of public engagement in the US and UK supports this observation, arguing that developments do not engage sufficiently with people who want to
move away from fossil fuels, including unconventional fossil fuels, and toward a more sustainable energy system (Thomas et al. 2017a).

Where development proceeds without a social license and there has been a closing down of engagement in the planning process (Stirling, 2007), Whitton et al. (2017) argue that protests become an alternative space in which normative questions can be raised. These questions may have been prevented from being raised through more formal channels. Identifying these in oppositional voices opens the potential for research to ‘shift away from old debates to more directly address the normative (and scientific) challenges posed by new technologies’ (Dodge and Metze 2017, p.10).

While there has been research on this relationship abroad (Curran 2015; Hall et al. 2015) they maintain that the UK needs its own body of social science research because ‘the unique societal characteristics of the UK, and indeed the localities in which shale gas developments are sited must be understood in order to manage the impacts of any future UK shale gas developments’ (Whitton et al. 2017, p.13).

Importantly, research on public perceptions highlights the importance of, but does not address, dissent against local developments through protest and direct action. This means that social science research on fracking development in the UK needs to go beyond a focus on discourses alone. Anti-fracking dissent is acknowledged as a key obstacle to future development (Whitton et al. 2017), but falls outside the scope of public engagement research, which implicitly assumes the potential for consensus building between the industry and the public, if engagement is done correctly.

This assumption overlooks the differential motivations and experiences of people who engage in anti-fracking struggles. Research that focuses on anti-fracking activists suggests that their grievances go beyond focus on the process of hydraulic fracturing and speak to broader environmental and social concerns (Short and Szolucha 2017; Kinniburgh 2015). For example, climate change activists may not
want to seek compromise with the fracking industry, whose activities will inevitably contribute to climate change through the release of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere.

Keeping in mind the argument that more protest against fracking development is likely in the UK, the following section focuses on how opposition to new energy infrastructure development is framed in research.
2.3 The importance of urban siting struggles: moving beyond research on ‘local’ responses to infrastructure developments

The way that siting struggles are framed determines which political claims are focused on and how they are interpreted (Köhne and Rasch 2017). This section argues that in research on anti-fracking struggles, a focus on local communities marginalises the concerns of broader social movements and autonomous activists, who do not live locally to the fracking site. This is particularly important with developments in urban regions, where there can be multiple affected communities. The section looks beyond cases on fracking to include struggles against other forms of infrastructure development. Specifically, it examines how ‘local’ communities are framed in studies, and differences between rural and urban cases.

In research on struggles against new energy infrastructure development, actor responses can be studied through focus on the socio-political identities that different groups use, and the ways that these are mobilised to either marginalise others or put forward a particular claim. Spatial representations are used by particular groups to make claims of sovereignty within a struggle and so establish control over access to resources (Calvert 2015). A key spatial identity used to assert claims is the ‘community’, for example in defining the boundaries of a ‘community’ to determine who benefits from a resource or project (Bristow et al. 2012). Drawing these boundaries is inevitably exclusionary, separating people who are not identified as part of a given community, who are subsequently unable to benefit from the resource or project it is connected with. The importance of belonging to a community to gain access to associated rights and responsibilities around energy has parallels with geographical research on community, citizenship and struggle (Harvey 2012; Staeheli 2008; Staeheli and Clarke 2003).

The communities that are studied in siting struggles are those that are local to a development. ‘Local’ is used in research as a collective term in reference to people who live near to a given energy technology, within a specified region (Gross 2007; Hanley and Nevin 1999; Soland et al. 2013; Upreti and van der Horst 2004; Van der Horst and Toke 2010; Van der Horst and Vermeulen 2011; Warren and McFadyen
This gives scope to discuss local opinions, concerns and opposition in reference to data collected across an entire case. In predominantly positivist cases, quantitative methods and statistical techniques are applied to data collected from either questionnaires or datasets on ‘local’ populations to test rationales (Toke 2005; Van der Horst and Toke 2010; Warren and McFadyen 2010), occasionally with a mixed methods approach that draws on qualitative interviews (Upreti and van der Horst 2004).

As a case study on the siting of nuclear waste argues, accounts of community opposition can lack depth in their analysis:

In recent accounts of community opposition on the siting of infrastructure projects, we see a dominating concern with the characteristics of neighbouring communities – but with little scrutiny of the historical relations underpinning the formation of, and responses by, affected populations.

Bickerstaff 2012, p.2623

This concern is also highlighted in reviews of energy studies research (Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015). Given the potential influence of energy-related research on policy, and the national imperative of a low carbon transition before 2050, there is a pressing need to introduce geographical case study analysis into these discussions, to better understand the complexities of actor responses in siting struggles. As (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2623) argues, research needs to go beyond a focus on ‘the characteristics of neighbouring communities’ to examine the historical relations that underpin responses to development by affected populations.

The historical relations of affected populations may extend beyond local communities, in ways that are not immediately clear in empirical research. A recent study argues that the credibility of anti-fracking activists, both from the perspective of the media and from anti-fracking activists themselves, is in part determined by their ‘degree of localism’ (Steger and Drehobl 2018, p.348). This is described as:
perceived ties to a given local community and associated livelihoods such as agriculture, fishing, and tourism as compared to those considered from outside of the community.

Steger and Drehobl 2018, p.348

The study, which is focused on the anti-fracking movement in Ireland, finds that in interviews with the national media, a distinction is made between ‘professional protestors’, ‘radical hippies... protesting for protest sake’ and locals who have ‘legitimate fears’ (ibid. p.348). As a result, activists who want their grievances to be heard ‘will draw on their local standing, when applicable, due to its resonance’ (Steger and Drehobl 2018, p.350). This means that non-local activists identified in research may emphasise their historical relations to the local community, to legitimise their dissent.

An empirical focus on local communities seems particularly perverse in urban cases, in which a struggle against development is likely to extend beyond geographically-bounded communities to include activists from other parts of the city. Currently, urban cases are not a focus of research on struggles around new energy infrastructure development. Instead, cases elicit a sampling preference for ‘local’ populations that live in rural locations (Drake 2011; Zografos and Martínez-Alier 2009). This is probably because rural populations are simpler to define as a homogenous group than urban populations, which will have more mixed socio-spatial identities. The broad-brush descriptors of ‘local’ opinion and opposition would be difficult to apply to an urban context with its varying demographics, multiple overlapping community and institutional identities and place attachments.

Rural locations also have the benefit of providing comparable sample ‘local’ populations, with each normally contained within a single district. This perhaps explains a preference for remote rural case studies of renewable energy infrastructure technologies, even where those technologies are built in urban as well as rural areas (Soland et al. 2013, p.805). The similarity of cases allows some comparison between them to be made. At this scale of analysis, however, local opposition for each case is reduced to a single set of opinions within a dataset, which can then be quantified and used to test rationales put forward by the
author(s). Across the literature, there is a lack of cases on struggles around new energy infrastructure development that research differences between people, and this has been highlighted as a gap in research (Bickerstaff 2012; Bridge et al. 2013; Frantal et al. 2014). In particular, there is very little research on what explains differential responses to proposed developments within a case, which can range between forms of opposition, acceptance and apathy.

A focus on rural locations also overlooks the importance of energy transitions on urban spaces and the ways that energy is both produced and distributed within them. This includes questions around the conflicts which changes to energy production and distribution will create and the unequal impacts that they will have on the people that live in the places affected. Recent cases on anti-fracking protests in cities have provided important groundwork towards engaging with urban siting struggles and examining their connection with issues of climate change and neoliberalisation (Kinniburgh 2015; Simonelli 2014; Fry et al. 2015). The following section examines the research on urban anti-fracking struggles in more detail.
2.4 Urban anti-fracking struggles and neoliberalisation

Fracking can transform urban areas into sites of energy extraction and production as well as consumption, where they are situated over unconventional energy deposits. Importantly, these deposits can be located under cities as well as under less-populated regions, which means that related developments are proposed in places not previously considered spaces of energy extraction. For example in the UK, shale gas exploration in Greater Manchester was conducted in 2013, ostensibly as part of a ‘low carbon transition’ and against fierce local resistance (Speed 2018; Gilmore et al. 2016). The exploratory wells that explore mainland shale formations in England form part of a broader transition toward unconventional energy in the UK, that seeks to open up oil and gas resources which cannot be extracted using conventional methods (Short et al. 2015). Critics argue that this transition is a vehicle for further neoliberalisation of people and the environment (Finewood and Stroup 2012; Malin 2013; Short and Szolucha 2017). For a discussion of the differences between conventional and unconventional forms of energy extraction see Kama (forthcoming).

Currently there is only a limited body of research on responses to fracking development, including anti-fracking protests, which has grown alongside the fracking industry. Most of this is focused on the US, and areas of scholarly interest are energy policy and regulation (Cotton 2017; Dodge and Metze 2017; Fisk 2016; Godzimirski 2016; Whitton et al. 2017), energy transition and neoliberalisation (Finewood and Stroup 2012; Loder 2016; Malin 2013; Mercer et al. 2014), social, environmental and economic impacts (Christopherson and Rightor 2012; Colborn et al. 2011; Lave and Lutz 2014; Rozell and Reaven 2012; Steinzor et al. 2013), public perceptions (Bomberg 2017; Thomas et al. 2017b; Williams et al. 2017) and the responses of anti-fracking movements (Kinniburgh 2015; Mazur 2014; Pearson 2013; Short and Szolucha 2017; Simonelli 2014; Wright 2013). In the UK most research is focused on public opinions and perceptions of fracking as well as the discursive framing of debates at a national scale (Bomberg 2017).

By comparison, there is a strong body of research on the dynamics of conventional resource extraction (for excellent reviews see Bridge, 2013, 2011) that includes
numerous studies of local opposition to development (Arsel et al. 2015; Avci 2015; Bebbington 2009; Bebbington et al. 2008; Beynon et al. 2000). These evidence a sampling preference for places situated away from hegemonic centres of power ‘which are framed as zones of refraction and recalibration, if not active resistance’ (Brenner et al. 2010a, p.201), for example Eastern Europe (Brenner 2000; Bouzarovski 2009; Swain 2006; Smith and Rochovská 2007) and the Global South (Bebbington 2009; Kohl 2002; Perreault 2006; Springer 2009).

The dynamics of unconventional resource extraction, or ‘fracking’ in the US and more recently Europe (Vesalon and Crețan 2015) and the UK (Kinniburgh 2015) is less well researched due to the rapid speed with which domestic industries have grown. The rapidity of development has been termed a shale gas ‘revolution’ (Stevens 2012) that has ‘left physical and social scientists scrambling to catch up with the bio-social consequences’ (Lave and Lutz 2014, p.740). Fracking development is driven by geological constraints to conventional energy supplies, energy security issues and the continued development of new energy technologies (de Rijke 2013; Espig and de Rijke 2016). As conventional resources are depleted, the value of natural gas and oil resources increase and so the extraction of unconventional fossil hydrocarbons becomes commercially viable. This tension, between scarcity and the value of remaining fossil fuels, has crystallised as an unconventional energy transition (de Rijke 2013; Jackson et al. 2014; Stevens 2012).

A recent study argues that local struggles against fracking development have become ‘the front lines of the climate movement’ (Kinniburgh 2015, p.47). At its most successful this has led to legislation preventing development, as occurred in France, Bulgaria, Germany and the US states of New York, Vermont and Maryland (Kinniburgh 2015; Simonelli 2014). More common is confrontation, including peaceful protest and direct action (Kinniburgh 2015; Short and Szolucha 2017; Vesalon and Crețan 2015).

Unlike conventional resource extraction, ‘fracking’ development occurs in urban as well as rural places. Research conducted in the US suggests that the extension of shale gas exploration into an urban setting stimulates mobilisation from actors
across urban communities (Dodge and Lee 2017; Ogneva-Himmelberger and Huang 2015; Simonelli 2014; Weible and Heikkila 2016). In densely populated New York, which is situated over the energy-rich Marcellus shale, a situation described as ‘political gridlock’ between conflicting actors has led to a ban on shale gas development in the region (Dodge and Lee 2017). In Texas and Colorado, where extraction has moved close to urban and rural communities, there has been social and political conflict but this has not stopped development from occurring. In these states, local government and industry have sought to build coalitions of trust with communities and have introduced policies that include banning drilling near schools, the public disclosure of hydraulic fracture fluids, increased water quality monitoring and improved air quality at well sites (Weible and Heikkila 2016).

Of particular interest to this thesis is that all of these urban cases are focused on the North Americas, and more recently on Europe and the UK. These can be understood as hegemonic centres of power and neoliberal reform (Brenner et al. 2010b; Jamie Peck et al. 2009; Peck 2010). For example, the UK is a key case of neoliberal reform globally and its socio-spatial manifestations are well documented (Brenner et al. 2010b; Brenner and Theodore 2005; Jamie Peck et al. 2009; Peck 2010). For an excellent case study of what this means in practice see Ward and Swyngedouw (2018), a case study of an ‘archetypal case of neoliberalisation’ (Ward and Swyngedouw 2018, p.2) that is focused on the North West of England. The study examines how property developer Peel Group mobilises land along the Manchester Ship Canal as a financial asset, allowing it to dominate the land and port infrastructure of the region.

For clarity, it is worth briefly outlining how the concept of neoliberalism is understood in studies on the processes of neoliberal reform, and how this has been applied to fracking developments in these countries. ‘Neoliberalism’ is a form of social, political and economic regulation (Peck 2010). Variegated neoliberalism, refined through its focus on neoliberalisation (Barnett 2009), acknowledges the uneven development pathways of neoliberal ideology while positing a trajectory across most walks of contemporary life (Brenner et al. 2010a; Leitner et al. 2007; Peck and Theodore 2007). Also referred to as ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism (Peck 2003;
Raco 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002), it describes successive waves of re-adjustments of the institutional landscapes of capitalism. These adjustments adopt a discourse of market freedom ‘aligned with the major grids of contemporary political economic power, to guide a cumulative, programmatic series of experiments in market rule’ (Brenner et al. 2010a, p.210). Importantly, once implemented, they do not have to be successful for further waves of neoliberalisation to follow. The process is iterative and as repeated leads to deep(ening) neoliberalisation, where experiments in market rule infiltrate and rework the geo-institutional frameworks through which experiments are conducted. The trajectory created by neoliberalisation ‘experiments’ represents a path of creative destruction ‘shaped by its combative, creatively destructive and path-dependent collision with the crisis-riven regulatory framework that was its negatively enabling yet positively enervating inheritance’ (Brenner et al. 2010a, p.215). However, these processes must be uneven and path-dependent in practice (Peck 2003; Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2010) and this opens a space for resistance and activism outside and against neoliberal projects.

In recent years, several commentators have called for geographical research that understands an energy transition as a vehicle for further waves of neoliberalisation, where ‘neoliberalisation’ is understood as a socio-political spatial strategy and an energy transition is a potential vehicle for change through which the strategy can be implemented (Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015; Cook and Swyngedouw 2012). In this context, fracking development is an opportunity for social change yet also for the reinforcement of existing power structures. Where identified, neoliberalism can be attributed first to the inevitable ‘others’ that it must hybridise with and second to counter-neoliberal alternatives that resist (or in some cases are seen as too strong to challenge) a neoliberal agenda. In the UK, a transfer of political powers away from the national scale has fragmented political power and challenged its primacy as a focus of political struggle. This means that alternatives, where present, may be atomised and focused on local level concerns (Baeten et al. 1999; Swyngedouw and Baeten 2001; Swyngedouw 2007). Even when questioning development at a national scale, such resistance may be spatially atomised.
Alongside research on resistance to fracking development, the concept of neoliberalism is also applied to research on cases in which anti-fracking resistance does not appear. This is important because studies frame local acceptance of and ambivalence toward development as an inevitable part of the neoliberalisation process (Eaton and Kinchy 2016; Malin 2013). Studies include research on communities in the US who are marginalised from processes of development, express powerlessness and are unable to mobilise collectively in Texas (Weible and Heikkila 2016) and Pennsylvania (Eaton and Kinchy 2016; Finewood and Stroup 2012; Malin 2013; Perry 2012). Preliminary research indicates that when civic capacity is depressed and there are only limited opportunities for political protest, collective mobilisation is less likely, and developments move forward without opposition (Eaton and Kinchy 2016; Hudgins 2013). This is supported by UK research on new renewable energy development which finds that developments are more likely to be successful in places where there is a democratic deficit (Van der Horst and Toke 2010). This can mean that the roll-out of new energy technology is shaped in part by the strength and organisational capability of local opposition, with more developments in places that have a democratic deficit, in which resistance does not appear against development.
2.5 Conclusions

The term ‘fracking’ is used by activists to connect a local development to a range of environmental, political and economic concerns. Recognising this colloquial usage, as described in Szolucha (2017), is particularly important in the context of this thesis, in which activists stage an emancipatory struggle, in which ‘fracking’ is used to articulate grievances that go beyond militant particularisms to speak to wider environmental and social concerns.

A key argument made in this chapter is that research on ‘local’ responses to new energy infrastructure development is predominantly concerned with rural cases, and does not address how resource extraction and production affects urban spaces. This omission has practical as well as theoretical significance because the nascent shale gas industry in the US extends development into urban as well as rural places, and the industry is continuing its push to expand into Europe and the UK. However, currently there are no critical case studies of an urban anti-fracking siting struggle. Preliminary research on protests against fracking suggests that siting struggles are likely to go beyond a focus on energy, as protestors connect local grievances with supra-local issues that include climate change and neoliberalisation.

A review of research on fracking development in the UK – where development remains at an exploratory phase – shows that studies predominantly focus on public perceptions and public engagement with the development process. Across these, there is a lack of research of local siting struggles and no research on urban anti-fracking struggles. This means that currently, little is known about the motivations and experiences of people who resist fracking, whose grievances go beyond a concern with hydraulic fracturing, and whose dissent does not broach compromise and cannot be examined through focus on public engagement.

In part, the absence of ‘local’ studies is due to the relatively recent emergence of the fracking industry in the UK, meaning that research has not kept pace with the exploratory phase of development. It is also because research on public
perceptions and public engagement is not concerned with the specifics of individual siting struggles. This means that currently research on fracking in the UK overlooks the emancipatory potential of situated anti-fracking struggles that have more in common with, and seek inspiration from, radical urban uprisings around the world since 2011.

The need for granular research on siting struggles is particularly pressing because, unlike previous forms of energy extraction, the nascent ‘fracking’ industry brings extractive processes into highly populated and urban places. This is not acknowledged sufficiently in existing research, in terms of how cases should be framed to ensure that the conceptual focus does not marginalise key actors, and how the place, in terms of its history of protest and direct action, as well as its urban setting, is enmeshed with the struggle that emerges.

A key contribution that this thesis can make is to research a plurality of politics within a single critical case study, which requires building a research design with which to study the complexities of contemporary urban resistance to ‘fracking’ development. To focus on an urban anti-fracking struggle, it is necessary to design a framework which enables research to extend beyond a single community, and to understand the organisational practices that shape the broader anti-fracking movement. It is also important to examine how actors connect local concerns with environmental, political and economic grievances and create a platform for marginalised actors to be seen and to be heard. The next section expands on this research aim, and uses post-foundational theory alongside research on social movements to build a conceptual framework that places focus on the political spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement, and incorporates non-local and social movement actors into study.
3 Research on radical urban struggles: opening up ‘the political’

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two argued that more research is needed on urban siting struggles centred on new energy infrastructure development, and that the intellectual agenda on fracking needs to move beyond discourses on public engagement to research anti-fracking dissent, in which activists do not seek compromise and do not accept development. To date there has not been a study of an urban anti-fracking siting struggle, despite the industry’s expansion into urban areas in the US (Dermansky 2013) and the UK (Pidd and Vaughan 2013). In part, the lack of research on urban anti-fracking protests is because of the difficulty framing opposition in case studies. In an urban case, multiple communities can be affected by fracking development, as horizontal drilling can extend for kilometres from the well pad at a subterranean level. This means that a geographically defined focus on neighbouring communities is unsuited to urban siting struggles and would marginalise the concerns of actors who engage in the struggle but do not live near to the development site.

Keeping this argument in mind, chapter three primarily examines post-foundational research on the ‘political’. This is a tightly-focused body of literature in which Rancière’s theorisation of politics is applied to the study of radical urban uprisings and, most recently, to contemporary environmental movements. These are examined as ruptures of the established order that make visible the formerly invisible, and give voice to the formerly voiceless, in the name of equality (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). In the context of an anti-fracking struggle, in place of radical urban uprisings there are protests and anti-fracking camps (For a UK example see Balcome anti-fracking camp: Radix 2013), in which activists implement strategies based in notions of equality and, through their dissent, give voice and visibility to the marginalised and disenfranchised.

The chapter also engages with recent criticisms of this literature, and argues that these point to the need for further cases that are not clear examples of the
political, in which there is a plurality of politics. Recent research on environmental siting struggles, that contain both political and social movement actors, is drawn on to develop this argument and to justify applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to an anti-fracking struggle.

As well as engaging with research on radical urban uprisings, this chapter takes the unusual step of engaging with social movement research on siting struggles. At this point it is important to note that there is a significant body of literature on social movements that is only briefly acknowledged here, because most of it falls outside the conceptual focus of this thesis, and indeed outside the focus of any post-foundational study of radical urban politics. In recent years, however, within the literature, there has been research on the political struggle of urban social movements (Routledge 2017). This means that there is a key conceptual overlap between the two literatures that has not yet been examined in detail. This overlap comes from a shared empirical focus on the increasingly radical tactics of social movements and the efforts of marginalised actors in siting struggles to be heard on grievances that go beyond a local level of concern. There is also – arguably – a blind spot within post-foundational literature on the key roles that social movement actors play within political struggles. To develop this argument, this chapter engages with key social movement studies that are concerned with radical protests. Specifically, it focuses on studies that engage with marginalised activists who use the occupation of space to force themselves and their grievances into view, and research that examines ways that social movements move beyond militant particularisms toward common emancipatory struggle. Turning to studies of post-foundational research, this section now discusses how key roles played by social movement actors in radical struggles are acknowledged in case studies, but are not yet analysed in any detail. Arguably, recent efforts to examine tensions in the political, and the resultant concept of ‘hybrid subjectivation’ opens the possibility of bringing the roles of social movement actors into focus within this literature.

A key concept introduced in this chapter is ‘subjectivation’ which describes the process through which people become political subjects from heterogenous social subjects, through the contestation of power and the practice of political equality.
The concept is used extensively by Rancière and his proponents, although it is confusingly referred to by some authors as ‘subjectification’, ostensibly to refer to the same underlying concept (for example: Karaliotas 2017). This overlooks subtle differences between subjectification and subjectivation in terms of the agency through which people become political subjects. For an excellent discussion of these differences see Garcia Lamarca (2016), which notes the influential and foundational role of Foucalt on post-foundational thinkers, whose later work shifted from exploration of the *production* of political subjects (subjectification) to *becoming* a political subject (*subjectivation*). The latter understanding of subjectivation – which attributes agency to the people who become political subjects – is most appropriate to this thesis, which draws on Rancière’s research to understand differential responses of actors in an anti-fracking struggle.
3.2 Where is environmental justice research in this thesis?

Given that environmental siting struggles are also the focus of environmental justice, it is necessary to explain why this vast literature is not consulted or engaged with in this thesis. Environmental justice research has produced a rich history of case studies and theory on civil rights, racial justice and indigenous rights movements (for example: Doyle et al. 2015; Vanderheiden 2017; Agyeman et al. 2016). These are replete with analysis of in-depth material and participant observation that speaks powerfully on the history of social struggles. However, a focus on justice is incommensurable with a post-foundational theoretical framework, that is focused on the dissensual spaces from which activists expose the absent foundations of the power relations that they seek to challenge (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014, p.8). In the context of this thesis, the framework is intended to shift conceptual focus onto the dissensual space opened up by the anti-fracking movement, from which political struggle challenges the normative ideals that frame who has a voice in the siting struggle and which issues are recognised as legitimate. This brings into view activists who do not seek distributional justice and whose grievances are not recognised from within the established order. The framework is not compatible with the concept of environmental justice, which is based in the assumption that there are normative ideals which should be established when engaging in an environmental struggle and presumes a particular consensus on individual subject positions and the parts to be played by actors in relation to the ‘environment’. These ideals are based in a distributional understanding of justice, with researchers focusing on distribution, representation and recognition as the processes through which justice is distributed.

From a post-foundational perspective, this consensus is inappropriate for researching political struggle, because it marginalises key voices and grievances that fall outside – and so are marginalised by - an environmental justice framing:

[The] reduction of the political to the ‘mode of governing’ is particularly prevalent in environmental practices. From the environmental justice movement that urges the elites to rectify
environmental ‘wrongs’ on the basis of a Rawlsian equal
distribution of goods and bads (see also Beck, 1992), to ecological
modernization perspectives that insist on the possibility of a
technological-managerial conduct that can marry ecological
sustainability with economic ‘progress’ (Harvey, 1996) and the
scientific consensus that urges the adoption of a particular set of
management and accounting rules to mitigate imminent
catastrophic environmental disaster, general agreement exists,
shared by a broad range of often unlikely allies, about the need to
develop a more sustainable, and just, socio-ecological practice,
one that operates fully within the contours of the existing social
order.

Swyngedouw (2009), p.605

As explained in this extract, an environmental justice lens would limit the possibility of researching the political because it reduces political action to a mode of governing. This is unsuited to researching radical politics because a key problem with the processes that allocate justice is their dependence on the concept of justice itself, which is used to determine who has the capacity to allocate it (Velicu and Kaika 2017). This is particularly important for this thesis, which is concerned with the efforts of activists to challenge what is being contested, which grievances are legitimate and who can engage in the struggle. These concerns are borne from the particulars of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle, in which the bulk of activists were marginalised from processes of development. They did not seek to engage with the authorities, or mainstream politics, and instead based their legitimacy in their own dissent, and their right to be seen and heard as equals. To the frustration of the developer, for the duration of the struggle the focus of the movement remained on sustaining a dissensual space outside the exploratory well from which marginalised actors made political demands that went beyond a focus on the well itself.
3.3 Researching the political in the radical politics of urban social movements

This section examines post-foundational research on ‘political’ actors, who engage horizontal organisational networks and would be overlooked by a focus on social movements. It discusses this research in the context of the UK anti-fracking movement and, more broadly, the increasingly radical theatre of urban struggle in which contemporary environmental movements stage their dissent.

In recent years, a shift in key contemporary environmental movements toward politicised struggle (Velicu and Kaika 2017) means that they increasingly reflect radical urban uprisings in their organisational modes and tactics. This is arguably evident in the UK anti-fracking movement, which has setup multiple protest camps outside exploratory wells across the country (see: FrackOff 2018 for a map of protest camps). The shift toward political struggle identified in contemporary environmental movements reflects a broader shift in urban social movements that has led to a call by Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) – who are key post-foundational theorists – for more case study research of urban struggles (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). The authors point to similar tactics adopted across seemingly unrelated political movements, which base their struggles in egalitarian politics, understood as a precondition of radical struggle rather than a goal to be achieved through protest. Keeping in mind the argument that contemporary environmental movements stage dissent in a theatre of increasingly radical urban struggle, the discussion will now examine how radical urban uprisings are framed in post-foundational research.

A close reading of recent studies of urban struggles supports the argument that disparate urban movements are adopting increasingly radical and similar tactics. For example, in a study of Barcelona’s Indignados movement – which is focused on housing rights – the author argues that activists use egalitarian practices, horizontal modes of organisation and the occupation of public space to stage their dissent (García-Lamarca 2017a; García-Lamarca 2017b). The Occupy movement – initially focused on the implosion of global capital (Langman 2013) – adopted
similar tactics, as people sought to actively intervene into their situations through radical agency and a re-imagination of ‘real’ democracy (Szolucha 2014). Arguably, these interventions implement an egalitarian politics as a precondition of radical struggle, rather than a goal to be achieved through protest.

A recent study examines the relevance of Rancière’s work on politics for understanding this shift toward more radical forms of political struggle in social protest movements like Occupy, noting that Rancière himself claims to have found ‘resonances between his idea of politics and the aims and practices of the Occupy movement’ (Bassett 2014, p.892). The author suggests that the increasingly radical forms of politics attributed to urban social movements is not accidental, and that Rancière’s claims that ‘the political’ is both egalitarian and universalist are drawn on by some activists ‘to try and make sense of the distinctiveness of their own practices’ (Bassett 2014, p.892). In particular, the author points to three ways that the Occupy movement represents a radical break from previous social movements and contains distinct elements of a Rancièrian form of politics. First, activists distance themselves from consensual politics. Second, they seek to put a commitment to equality into practice through a horizontal mode of organisation. Third, occupations take on characteristics of collective communities that do not demonstrate unity, and instead are a collective of divided people (Dean 2011).

The argument made by Bassett (2014) that contemporary urban struggles represent a departure from earlier social movements aligns with the broader observation that disparate urban struggles are becoming increasingly radical (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Introducing a symposium on radical urban protests, Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) make the following distinction between social and political movements:

In our thesis we insist on differentiating between social movements that are particular and invariably centred on one or more contentious issues that have an impact on urban policy procedures and objectives (and may occasionally be effective in influencing policy actions) on the one hand, and political movements that aspire towards a wider, more universal transformation of both the instituted order and practices of everyday life on the other.
The authors argue that political movements are distinct from their social counterparts because they articulate an emancipatory politics, based in the production and everyday practices of urban spaces, that seeks radical transformation in the established order to address grievances in the name of equality. In this context, with fracking protests, ‘the political’ is enmeshed with the hierarchical social order – or in Rancière’s terms, ‘police order’ – of the place in which it emerges, that constantly seeks to suppress any potential to effect radical transformation.

An important element of distinguishing ‘the political’ in moments of insurgency is separating it from the everyday politics of urban governance (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). This distinction is separated into binary form in Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) as the ‘ordinary’ and the ‘extraordinary’:

we are concentrating on the activities outside institutionalized politics, on what Andreas Kalyvas (2008) calls ‘the politics of the extraordinary’ as opposed to ‘the politics of the ordinary’, that is, the changing procedures of and institutional arrangements for the management of public affairs.

Radical, ‘extraordinary’ urban protests are examined by researchers as a rupture that exemplifies Rancière’s understanding of ‘the political’ (Erensü and Karaman, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016; Karaliotas, 2017). The authors argue that this conceptualisation recognises the centrality of space to political uprisings. Rather than conceptualising a ‘pure’ form of politics, they contend that political struggle becomes enmeshed with the hierarchical social order that it dissents against because ‘politics takes place within consolidated orders by introducing a spatial rupture’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14).

This understanding of political struggle as a spatial rupture brings into focus the key contribution that geographers make to post-foundational theorising on democracy, which is to examine how the political emerges through space (Dikeç 2005).
Importantly, within this conceptualisation political space is not just a physical space, but is also the abstract idea that through their actions and voices, activists open a space of political encounter within the urban (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). This opens a space within the order of the sensible for discussing grievances that were previously marginalised from rational discussion\(^3\), or – in the language of Rancière – were previously heard as noise.

This conceptualisation goes some way to answering a recent critique that post-foundational theory creates an artificial separation between ‘politics’ and the ‘political’ that leads to a focus on ‘heroic’ moments of insurgency at the expense of more day-to-day examples of political resistance (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; Beveridge and Koch 2017b). Instead, a focus on the spaces in which political insurgencies erupt helps understand the plurality of politics that they contain (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016).

As Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) highlight, shifting the conceptual focus away from social movements and toward protest spaces allows actors to be included in research ‘even though they are not always organized in the form of, say, social movements, political parties or identitarian interest groups’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14). The utility of this conceptual focus for examining insurgent movements is exemplified in recent case studies (Erensü and Karaman, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016).

In light of this argument, Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) put forward four propositions that reimagine radical urban politics through focus on the emergence of political struggle. A key aim of these propositions is to shift the intellectual agenda away from a focus on social movements within critical urban theory and so re-centre research toward ‘other forms of contestation and disruption, even though these might operate outside formal policy making procedures or lack the organizational form and legitimacy of social movements’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3). In the context of this thesis, a re-centring of the political also addresses

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\(^3\) In this case for example, political struggle opened a space within the order of the sensible on the development of exploratory wells to talk about fracking.
the problem set out in chapter two, which is that the intellectual agenda on anti-fracking siting struggles needs to move beyond a focus on ‘local’ responses to development. The authors contend that the intent is to avoid a conceptual framework that is either focused on the organisational forms of social contestation or interprets insurgencies as contextual uprisings that can be explained by local socio-economic conditions.

First, they state that radical urban politics must involve ‘radical transformative action in the name of and for an axiomatic and infinitely inclusive equality’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14). This is separated from government institutions ‘that aim at conservation rather than transformation’ (ibid. p.14) and identarian movements, including gender, nationalist and ethnic movements, ‘that are not mobilized in the name of infinite equality’ (ibid. p.14). This proposition sets a clear separation between radical urban politics, as imagined here, and social movements, where the movement focuses on demands that are particular and not framed in the name of equality. The qualification of ‘infinitely exclusive’ (ibid. p.14) equality shifts the focus away from social movements that focus on the rights of a particular group, for example the LGBT movement, and narrows the understanding of how ‘the political’ is imagined.

Second, the authors argue that a radical urban politics is one that ‘calls for the politicization of urban experience and for political subjectivation’ (ibid. p.14). In this context, subjectivation is a call for transformative action to ‘alleviate grievances that arise from their urban condition, and... [make these grievances] part of the production of their urban spaces, while extending these to include processes of planetary urbanization’ (ibid. p.15). This proposition separates radical urban politics from localised social movements that do not universalise their claims and whose demands focus on the particulars of a project (for example: Haughton et al., 2016).

Third, the authors propose that a radical urban politics:

Focuses on instances (for example, urban revolts) or moments of interruption where people believe they are not or no longer equals in political terms, even though no articulate claims have been formulated.
This proposition again places a divide between radical urban politics and social movements that make demands as part of their protests. The phrasing implies that once demands are made, the uprising is no longer an example of radical urban politics. Demands, once made, open the possibility for compromise with actors that operate within the instituted order. This closes down the political and negates the emancipatory potential of radical dissent. Politics, as understood here, makes no demands and instead experiments with democratic politics (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016) and the remaking of urban spaces in the name of an infinitely exclusive equality. Rather than existing on the periphery, urban insurgencies open up political possibilities ‘by producing a spatial rupture’ (ibid. p.14) in the urban spaces governed by the police-orders that they seek to challenge. This rupture is the focus of Rancière’s understanding of politics-as-political-subjectivation, or ‘the rupture with previous subject positions through the opening of spaces’ (Rancière, 1999; Dikeç, 2013)’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.55).

Framing ‘the political’ as a rupture in spaces controlled by the established order is important because it means that ‘the police and politics are enmeshed’ (ibid. p.14). This conceptualisation responds to recent critiques of post-foundational theory that argue its proponents elevate a pure and prescriptive understanding of what is political, that is disconnected from the everyday politics of urban governance (for example: Beveridge and Koch, 2017b, 2017a).

The fourth and final proposition for reimagining urban politics is that urban revolts:

increasingly define our contemporary urban condition and ought to be interpreted as unarticulated justice movements (Dikeç, 2007), as they expose and respond to structural dynamics of discrimination and oppression.

(Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.15)

Again this proposition points to a distinction between radical urban politics, which make unarticulated claims, and social (justice) movements, which articulate their claims through their demands. For both of these the underlying claims of
protestors are based in grievances ‘related to the production and everyday urban practices’ of cities (ibid. p.15).

For each of the four propositions proposed by Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017), a common feature is the disruption caused to the established order by urban uprisings. As the authors note, disruption is not in itself a form of democratic politics, and can be inherently anti-democratic, as with a military coup. Instead, they argue that radical urban politics should be understood as disruptions in the name of equality, which ‘carry a potent political value for those interested in more democratic and human forms of life’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.15).

In the context of this thesis, a key benefit of Dikeç and Swyngedouw’s (2017) four propositions is that they are each based in a tightly defined understanding of the political that shifts empirical focus toward actors who dissent against – rather than seek compromise over – development. This enables research to focus on the emergence of politicised struggle in contemporary environmental movements – through focus on the anti-fracking movement – that seek to force themselves and their grievances into the order of the sensible, engage in radical tactics of occupation and the staging of dissent, and draw inspiration from radical urban uprisings (Velicu and Kaika 2017).

The argument that contemporary environmental movements engage in increasingly radical urban struggle is cognizant of the changing urban context in which dissent is staged. This changing context opens the potential for political struggle within environmental movements. However, social movements – which can be hierarchical in makeup – play key roles in urban struggles that would be overlooked by a focus on ‘the political’ alone. Practically, this means that there could be a plurality of politics in spaces opened up by contemporary environmental movements.

Before addressing this possibility, it is necessary to look closer at ‘ordinary’ protests, to better understand how these are distinct from radical urban uprisings. This is the focus of the following section, which examines recent research on ‘ordinary’ protests in which activists do not scale-up their grievances.
3.4 Beyond the political: post-politics and ‘ordinary’ examples of protest

Post-politics and the depoliticisation of our urban spaces, or the ‘the disappearance of the political’ (Swyngedouw 2011, p.370) have some relevance here. Post-politics refers to the emergence of a politics of consensus and the suppression of political dissent, that are shapes the urban as a place in which financial capital interacts with urban development in search of rents and profits (Swyngedouw 2011). According to this understanding, the organisational structure of dominant urban social and economic configurations is based in capitalism, and the market economy is shaped through forms of neoliberal governmentality that are based in consensus-based decision making, techno-managerial processes and problem solving forms of governance (Swyngedouw, 2009).

As a recent collection of essays on post-politics demonstrates, post-political writers do not agree on the particulars of what this means in practice, or in theory (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). In the introduction to this collection, Eric Swyngedouw uses the concept to place recent radical struggles within a broader context of post-politics that has emerged through the processes of depoliticisation which have deepened following the economic crisis of 2008:

Around the world, notwithstanding the protests that have flared up around Occupy, the Indignados, and the so-called Arab Spring, the global economic crisis has been mobilised not to re-politicise the economy, but to further advance its depoliticisation. We now live in a permanent state of economic, environmental and social emergency.

(Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014, pp.9–10)

In this extract Swyngedouw argues that radical urban uprisings are subsumed into the existing police order and are used to further the process of de-politicisation. The concluding sentence, which states that we live in a permanent state of emergency, is both controversial and questionable, and suggests a futility to political struggle in a broader context of de-politicisation that has also been suggested in his previous writing, for example on urban struggles (Swyngedouw
The futility that Swyngedouw’s work on post-politics arguably points to was picked up in a recent critique Beveridge and Koch (2017a; 2017b), who argue that the ‘intuitively convincing, yet ultimately confining account’ (Beveridge and Koch 2017a, p.35) of urban governance offered by post-political theory is limited by a prescriptive and binary understanding of the political. This, the critique explains, has created a post-political condition in which the opportunity to effect radical change is limited to rare moments of insurgency across an otherwise de-politicised space. Research that adopts a post-political lens focuses on ‘heroic’ moments of social struggle and political uprising at the expense of ‘the in-betweenness and contingency of actually existing urban politics’ (Beveridge and Koch 2017a, p.31):

The post-political lens entails a very open yet still reductive way of seeing the urban: as a spatial frame of reference to distribute the sensible, the police order, or as an occasional site of, a random location for, political events that reject the police understanding of the urban (politics). A lot goes missing in this (lack of) relation of the urban to the political.

(Beveridge and Koch 2017b, p.64)

The urban here is equated with politics, or politics-as-social order. Beveridge and Koch (2017a; 2017b) argue that a key problem with the post-political lens is that politics-as-social-order is synonymous with most activities in the city and so the ‘urban’ becomes a reductive spatial frame of reference for politics and the distribution of the sensible. This limits understanding of urban politics that are embedded in the city, for example ‘the urban roots of capitalist crisis and the recurring struggles associated with it’ (Beveridge and Koch 2017b, p.64). The authors contend that post-political research should embed urban uprisings in the urban through focus on the spaces and places where they take place:

The urban can be seen to consist, albeit provisionally, of spaces and likely spaces (of less frequent) political disruption. This stress on the traditional spaces of urban politics reflects the empirical fact that the various urban uprisings of 2011 used these spaces to enact the political:
the square and the street provide specifically urban opportunities for collective political action.

(Beveridge and Koch 2017b, p.65)

This critique – and others like it, for example Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) - of post-political theory is intended to contribute to rather than negate the notion of the post-political in the context of urban social struggles. Arguably, what they suggest is the need for more research that examines the plurality of politics inherent to political struggles, to provide a more nuanced understanding of ‘politics’, ‘the political’ and ‘depoliticisation’ across the spaces in which urban struggles are mobilised (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016).

In his reply to Beveridge and Koch (2017), Swyngedouw argues that their criticisms are based in key misunderstandings of his writings on post-politics. First, he points out that disagreement is not absent from a post-political urban configuration, as its critics suggest that it is. Rather, post-political and fundamental disagreements are suppressed from the public sphere:

Forms of contentious political struggle or social activism are either skillfully incorporated within the techno-managerial frame of post-democratic governance or ruthlessly repressed by the elites in ways that maintain the status quo.

Swyngedouw 2017, p.55

This is an important distinction to make, because it means that there is always the potential for radical politics to challenge the absent foundations of a post-political configuration, and that these forms of politics exist within the city – and so have not vacated it – and must be suppressed by the police order to stop them from being realised. This introduces fragility to the social orders that post-politics refers to.

Second, Swyngedouw argues that his writing on post-politics ‘makes a claim for the intellectual urgency to foreground critical political thought and analysis in urban research that situates itself politically on the side of the disempowered and voiceless’ (Swyngedouw 2017, p.56). This is important because Swyngedouw is arguing that there an urgent need for more research that is on the side of the
disempowered and the voiceless. This presents a practical utility to the application of a post-foundational conceptual lens to research – from which much of the urban is perceived to be post-political – because it shifts focus onto the ‘extraordinary’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017) efforts of marginalised actors who seek to challenge the status quo through political struggle.

Most protest movements do not fit the test of extraordinary politics set out in Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017). These emerge around local grievances which are not scaled up or transformed into universal demands (Haughton et al. 2016). They are overlooked by researchers that focus on emblematic political uprisings, for example Occupy, Syntagma Square (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017) and Taksim Square (Erensü and Karaman 2017), because a focus on political struggle inevitably centres on rare – and extraordinary - moments of political rupture. In this context, the ‘politics of the ordinary’ is extended to social movements, because they are a form of organised political action.

Haughton et al. (2016) argues that more research is needed on ‘ordinary’ examples of protest to understand why most of them do not scale-up their demands and become radical protests. The case focuses on a protest against Manchester City Council cutting down trees in Alexander Park:

Whilst there has been much written about the recent rise of major urban protests, there is much less analysis of those protests that do not scale-up to provide major challenges to those in authority. Or to put it another way, why did the threat to trees in Gezi Park near Taksim Square in Istanbul lead to a popular mass movement that questioned the existing political order and demanded greater democratic inclusion, whilst the tree protest in Alexandra Park remained essentially a local matter?

Haughton et al. 2016, p.478

As noted in this extract, both the Alexander Park protest and the Gezi Park protest begin spontaneously when protestors staged a ‘dramatic interruption’ (Haughton et al. 2016, p.487) and stopped construction workers cutting down trees in a park. In both cases, protestors occupied the park as part of the protest. Taksim Square
quickly developed into a popular political uprising (Erensü and Karaman 2017) but the Alexander Park protest did not. While the protest received significant interest in the local press and some local support, the protestors did not universalise their claims and instead ‘the protest managed to get mired in the kind of technocratic detail at which local government excels’ (Haughton et al. 2016, p.488).

For Rancière, the Alexander Park protest is not political, because ‘Rancière reserves the term politics for practices that evolve around the democratic presupposition of equality’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.247). For movements to be political in this sense, they must make demands that can be universalised, as well as address the particulars of a local protest (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). The authors note that while the Alexander Park protest remained focused on local issues, the Taksim square protestors were able to link tree removal with a broader state-led project of neoliberalisation, and the protests became a focal point for a broader set of issues around the economy (Haughton et al. 2016).

In addition to the failure of the Alexander Park protestors to connect place-based issues with broader economic and social grievances, the case is presented as a key example of ‘how ‘successful’ post-politicizing tactics succeed in undermining and defusing protestors and their concerns’ (Haughton et al. 2016, p.488). The authors argue that the protestors weakened their position in three key ways:

- by making specific demands,
- by focusing on issues of techno-managerial protocol,
- and by not moving quickly enough to establish a broader social base among disadvantaged local communities, in order to allow them to escalate up to wider claims about injustice and political disenfranchisement.

Haughton et al. 2016, p.487

This is an interesting counterpoint to research on political uprisings because it provides a countervailing interpretation of local occupation and protest. Yet framing the Alexander Park case as post-political reinforces the distinction between ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ politics. As with the propositions put forward in Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017), it implies that protests can be defined as either radical or ordinary politics.
One way to move beyond this distinction is to examine both radical and ordinary politics within a single case. In a case study of a political movement focused on enacting housing rights in Spain, García-Lamarca (2017) takes this approach, and argues that political action can be sustained through community engagement that is concerned with fomenting protest, rather than seeking collaboration (García-Lamarca 2017a):

> at its most effective, this protest is a transformative, emancipatory political process that disrupts the status quo, enacts equality and creates political subjects

García-Lamarca 2017a, p.422

A focus on the transformative potential of community engagement extends Rancière’s proposal that the political erupts through rare moments to allow focus on the processes through which people become ‘political subjects’. This enables research to both examine a moment of political rupture and to consider how its transformative, emancipatory potential can be sustained into the politics of the everyday. The author observes that this has ‘important implications for the temporal dimension of political subjectivation’ (García-Lamarca 2017a, p.432).

Garcia (2017) also argues that political moments can be sustained ‘as solidarity – and equality – based practices’ (García-Lamarca 2017a, p.433). These practices are sustained in part because people do not trust the recommendations of experts. Instead of trusting expert opinion they learn collective, bottom-up political practices that contest and disrupt the order of the sensible. The action of engaging in these practices ‘transform[s] the way people see the world and their way of being, saying and acting within it’ (García-Lamarca 2017a, p.433). The process of political subjectivation that this describes is complex which means that ‘engagement is uncertain, uneven and continues to unfold’ (ibid. p.433).

While the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary politics seems clear in the abstract, these studies demonstrate that to apply theory to practice requires normative judgements on the part of the researcher about what is (and is not) radically political. What is not clear from existing research is to what extent the two
categories overlap empirically. For example, how do social movements engage within radical urban uprisings, across the plurality of spaces in which they rupture the established order and make claims on urban spaces? And, how do we understand the politics of social movement actors in the context of broader radical urban uprisings? Recent writing in this field has made some initial contributions (Erensü and Karaman, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016; Karaliotas, 2017; Zemni, 2017). These emphasise the need for more research that spatialises the material choreographies of protest, in ways that recognise both the plurality of urban spaces through which political action is enacted, and the tensions that exist between different organisational forms of protest.

The following section discusses social movement literature that is concerned with the increasingly radical nature of protests. It develops the argument that there is an empirical overlap between research on social and political movements, which has not been studied in detail.
3.5 Social movements research and urban uprisings: insights into the contested social relations that shape site-specific ‘fracking’ protests

One way of understanding the anti-fracking movement in the UK is as a social movement focused on stopping fracking development. Geographic research on social movements can help us understand its internal operations, including organisational, spatial and discursive makeup (Chatterton et al. 2013; Featherstone 2008; Leitner et al. 2008). It can be drawn on to make sense of how the ‘place’, ‘scale’, ‘space’ and ‘social networks’ of the movement operates (Leitner et al. 2008).

There is a vast geographical literature that focuses on social movements and the politics of urban uprisings. Castell’s The City and the Grassroots (1983) is often highlighted by geographers as a seminal piece that explores this relationship (for example: Dikeç and Swyngedouw, 2017; Erensü and Karaman, 2017). Over the past twenty years, in the context of increasingly neoliberal forms of urban governance, there has been research conducted on mobilisations against gentrification, urban redevelopment and austerity, to name a few. Over time, the more traditional forms of social movement examined in Castell’s work have given way to ‘much more diverse and more radical political mobilizations [that] are increasingly choreographing the contemporary theatre of urban politicized struggle and conflict’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3).

In a recent case study, Veliku and Kaika (2017) argue that this radicalisation extends to contemporary environmental movements, which engage in political struggle to make universalised demands for socio-ecological change. The political is understood here as a precondition of the environmental movement, rather than a goal to be achieved through protest. They explain that there is a need to address:
the emergence of ‘the political’ in contemporary environmental movements; that is, the emergence of practices that aim not only to contest the power positions of existing actors, but also to redefine the very identities and positions of these actors by performing alternative ways of being and acting together.

Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305

In this extract, the authors illustrate a shift in contemporary environmental movements toward politicised struggle. In doing so, they draw together environmental struggles – commonly a focus of social movements and social justice research – with Rancière’s understanding of ‘the political’ as that which interrupts, disrupts and opposes.

This observation aligns with the argument that conventional social movements are giving way to more radicalised forms of political mobilisations (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). A key example is the Occupy movement, in which social movements – including environmental groups (see: Leonard and Kedzior 2014) – came together and applied the tactics of radical urban uprisings to place-based struggles. As with the Mediterranean uprisings, there are multiple case studies focused on understanding the internal workings of these places, for example in the UK (Szolucha 2014; Matthews 2018), Hong Kong (Yuen 2018) and the US (Langman 2013).

While there are multiple studies that seek to understand the Occupy movement, there have not been studies of occupations staged by contemporary environmental movements. In recent years, a key opportunity to examine this empirically has been offered by the rapid rise of protests against ‘fracking’ development. As the nascent fracking industry has expanded, anti-fracking camps have been setup in the US, Europe and the UK, centred on siting struggles against local developments. As Kinniburgh (2017) argues, together these represent a global revolt against fracking, with protest camps ‘the frontlines of the climate movement’(Kinniburgh 2015, p.47). In the UK, where the first anti-fracking camp was established in the summer of 2013, activists setup protest camps outside exploratory wells across the country,
including in West Sussex (Association 2013), Lancashire (Szolucha 2016), Cheshire (Gayle 2016) and Greater Manchester (Speed 2018; Scheerhout 2014).

Research that examines how the universal demands of place-based social movements are formed from contested social relations is of particular relevance here (for example: Paddison et al., 2000; Routledge, 1993). Most noteworthy is the excellent research on the importance of social networks and the spatial convergences of actors in the creation of collectives and the development of political identities (Featherstone 2008; Nicholls 2009; Routledge 2003; Routledge 1993). Studies focus on the contested social relations between actors that work together to achieve ‘multi-scalar political action’ (Routledge 2003, p.333). The ‘convergence space’ in which this occurs is conceived as ‘a network of interrelations and interactions across all spatial scales’ (Routledge 2003, p.346).

The concept ‘convergence space’ draws on David Harvey’s notion of militant particularism (Harvey 1997; Harvey and Williams 1995) to examine ways that political action can be achieved across geographical scales. Harvey observes that a universalist politics is necessary if multiple social movements are to work together effectively. This would enable movements to connect across space without departing from their respective militant particularisms. Routledge (2003) critiques this notion by grounding it in empirical research on social movements working together in particular places, conceptualised as convergence spaces, through the campaign People’s Global Action.

At a local level, Routledge observes that because social movements in the campaign are based in different militant particularisms they put forward conflicting goals, ideologies and strategies. This means that the convergence space is made up of contested social relations as each movement negotiates its position in relation to their respective militant particularisms. Routledge agrees with Harvey (1997) that this creates difficulties as actors across movements negotiate through ‘unequal discursive and material power relations that result from differential control of resources (Dicken et al. 2001) placing actors within network flows (Massey 1994)’ (Routledge 2003, p.346). The unequal distribution of resources across movements
and contested social relations between actors creates conflict between social movements and between activists within particular movements and manifests problems of ‘representation, mobility and cultural difference’ (Routledge 2003, p.346). In addition, alliances are based in entangled power relations of resistance and domination (Paddison et al. 2000) and these come to define the makeup of the protest space.

These ideas are developed in the recent book, ‘Space Invaders: Radical Geographies of Protest’ (2017). The author argues for a radical, spatial, geographic perspective in order to examine the unfolding of protests and social movements in particular places. This, the author argues, is important because ‘particular places frequently become sites of conflict, where, for example, government policies are contested and reworked by social movements’ (Routledge 2017, p.5). Drawing on the concept of convergence spaces in its analysis, Routledge (2017) pays particular attention to the tactical role of networks and scale in developing trans-local solidarities and building ‘convergence spaces’ that connect place-based struggles. This reflects Routledge’s broader work on convergence spaces (Routledge and Cumbers 2009; Routledge 2003; Routledge 2000). The key contribution that this book makes is to acknowledge the increasingly radical nature of contemporary social movements that adopt tactics of ‘space invasion’ and occupation learnt from radical urban uprisings in the Mediterranean and Middle East. This reflects the changing nature of urban protest, as observed in other recent studies (Szolucha 2014; Bassett 2014; Leonard and Kedzior 2014).

Common to each of these studies is an endeavour to understand how militant particularisms can be overcome in protest spaces and a multi-scalar politics effected. As Routledge (2003) observes in his original paper on convergence spaces, effective action can be achieved from contested social relations and uneven processes of facilitation where differences between movements are negotiated successfully. This understanding of how actors interrelate within a campaign underlies the key contribution of the convergence space concept to Harvey’s notion of militant particularism. Harvey focused on the need to overcome militant particularisms in order to achieve a universalist politics. The concept of
convergence spaces applies this understanding to examples of alliances built between site-specific struggles, to show that in order for trans-local solidarities to be built, convergence must emerge from contested and uneven social relations between actors. This requires a respect for difference on the part of actors engaged in social movements and the clear articulation of a common goal which aims to achieve multi-scalar political action. Through convergence around a common vision (and an associated respect of difference) ‘networks become entangled spaces of resistance / domination, still able to articulate alternatives to neoliberalism.’ (Routledge 2003, p.347).

In the context of understanding the emergence of ‘the political’ through the anti-fracking movement, the concept is limited by its focus on social movement networks, whose hierarchical social order is necessarily challenged by activists who seek to engage in political struggle through horizontal organisational structures. As with the Occupy movement, the anti-fracking movement is heterogonous in its makeup, and multiple social movements engage in anti-fracking struggles (Steger and Drehobl 2018). However, a focus on social movements would overlook actors that are not a part of a social movement yet are engaged as activists (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Put another way, a focus on social movements and the tensions between their respective actors can overlook actors who are not active within a social movement. This limits the concept’s potential for examining an anti-fracking siting struggle. It also places conceptual focus on actors that hold some power in a grassroots network through connection with a social movement.

The following section addresses how social movement actors could be researched using a post-foundational theoretical framework, through the investigation of tensions between vertical and horizontal modes of organisation in radical urban uprisings (Dikeç 2005; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016).
3.6 Where are social movements in post-foundational research on protests? Examining organisational tensions in political struggles

In geographical research on protests that employs a post-foundational analytical framework, key thinkers have re-centred the research agenda away from (post-political) urban governance and toward the spatial ruptures created by insurgent political movements. Studies place particular focus on how ‘the political’ unfolds across spaces of dissent, which occur in cities around the world and also emerge in contemporary environmental movements (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016). The UK and European anti-fracking movements are a key example, and their activists commonly adopt a position of (so far successful) dissensus against the fracking industry that is dismissed by governments and developers as extreme and unrealistic (For a UK example see: Gavell, 2017). Importantly, in this body of research, the presence of social movement actors in dissensual spaces is acknowledged but remains largely unexamined. This section discusses the significance of this oversight in more detail, placing focus on how political struggle emerges from a plurality of actors through space (for example in an anti-fracking protest camp) and the tensions that these spaces contain between vertical and horizontal organisational practices.

In recent years, researchers have begun to critique and develop Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics through a focus on how moments of political insurgency emerge through space and the importance of the urban as the spatial frame in which political uprisings erupt (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017). This allows focus on the use of space ‘to construct locally the place of the universal (that is, equality), that polemical place where a wrong can be addressed and equality can be demonstrated’ (Dikeç 2005, p.181). From this perspective, radical urban struggle involves the production of ‘dissensual spaces’ (Swyngedouw 2011, p.376) by politicised actors, who take action to voice grievances that would otherwise go unheard.

Karaliotas (2017) argues that spatialised tensions within dissensual spaces do not feature adequately in Rancière’s writings (Karaliotas 2017). The author addresses this gap by focusing on the 2011 occupation of Syntagma Square in Greece and its
multiple, conflicting ‘discursive, organizational and spatial repertoires’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.55). This focus reveals ‘an opening of hybrid spaces that was marked by tensions’ (ibid. p.55). In particular, the author notes two tensions. The first is between nationalistic and emancipatory performative and discursive narratives. These are separated spatially into the upper and lower squares. The second is conflict between the vertical and organisational practices of groups that have different progressive ideologies in the lower square, which contributes to an emancipatory, antagonistic politics (ibid. p.55).

Importantly, the author notes that the grievances which shaped the uprising were the focus of already existing social movements in Greece. National social movements highlighted are opposing the privatisation of public land, speaking both for and against immigration and resisting gentrification. There were also urban social movements, particularly in response to Athenian mega-projects for the Olympic Games. Across these ‘participants were predominantly middle-class urban dwellers, university students and members of environmental groups and left-wing parties’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.59). On the first day of the uprising, actors from these social movements joined tens of thousands of people who poured into the square, responding to a call from three unknown individuals who set-up tents on the park and put out a call on Facebook for a gathering (Karaliotas 2017). This means that social movement actors took part in, but were not at the forefront of the uprising and subsequent occupation of Syntagma Square.

Other examples in the literature support the argument that social movement activists play key roles in broader radical urban uprisings, and note that social movement actors are at the forefront of occupations in political insurgencies, but do not include them in their analysis (Erensü and Karaman 2017; García-Lamarca 2017b; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016). In Kaika and Karaliotas (2017) - a second case study that focuses on the spatiality of activist activity in Syntagma Square - the authors note the distinctiveness of social movement activists. Unlike the broader movement, they argue that social movement actors are predominantly middle class, educated and politically active, yet also in the minority across a broader heterogeneous collection of people participating in the square.
Common to each of the studies of radical urban uprisings is the observation that the activists organise their struggle through horizontal modes of organisation. Examples include Gezi park in Turkey (Erensü and Karaman 2017), the Spanish *Indignados* movement (García-Lamarca 2017b) and the *Occupy* movement in the UK and US (Szolucha 2014). Conversely, social movements are often hierarchical, with vertical power structures (Karaliotas 2017). Karaliotas (2017) argues that in the lower Syntagma Square there was ‘an institutionalized co-constitutive relationship between horizontality and verticality in the squares movement’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.65). Although the movement ‘experimented with horizontal networking practices’ (*Ibid.* p.65), vertical relations shape the broader networking of the movement, which extended to Popular Assemblies across Greece that staged their own protests and occupied public squares. Within this network, Syntagma Square becomes a central node for issuing calls to strike and organising tactics. It also becomes the symbolic centre of the movement and ‘an emblematic summing up, in a single word and site, of the practices and discourses of the squares’ (Karaliotas 2017, pp.64–65).

In the context of Rancière’s writings on politics and political subjectivation, this points to a tension between different organisational forms of protest:

[there is] a tension in Rancière’s distinction between the police and politics: the squares movement was not completely horizontal; equality within it was limited by certain vertical relations.

Karaliotas 2017, p.65

The author argues that there is ‘an institutionalized co-constitutive relationship between horizontality and verticality in the squares movement’ (*Ibid.* p.65). Although the squares movement disrupted police logic by reconfiguring the sensible, it then created a new logic with its own norms and rules. Put another way, ‘equality in the squares was realized through a police order’ (*Ibid.* p.65). In relation to the process of subjectivation, Karaliotas (2017) describes this as a ‘hybrid space’ (*ibid.* p.65). This explains political subjectivation when applied to the case of Syntagma Square, in which a commitment to equality is compromised by the
organisational necessity of an event and the temporal priority of Syntagma Square over the less emblematic squares that the movement extends across.

In the context of contemporary environmental movements, the hybridity of political subjectivation and the tension between vertical and horizontal modes of organisation are helpful when conceptualising tensions between ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ politics (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). According to Swyngedouw and Dikeç’s (2017) distinction, social movements are distinct from political movements because they articulate demands and ultimately seek compromise with the established order. As exemplified in Alexander Park, this can mean that protestors give way to post-political forms of urban governance and do not universalise their claims (Haughton et al. 2016).

However, as Karaliotas (2017) argues, in practice political struggles contain a tension between the vertical social orders of social movements and the horizontal politics of emancipatory struggle, or between the vertical and horizontal forms of organisation through which the political is staged. In this process, the vertical forms of organisation limit the potential to enact a politics based in equality, yet also enable political action in the form of mass strikes, organised centrally at Syntagma Square.

This tension can be extended to the relationship between a politics of the ‘ordinary’ and a politics of the ‘extraordinary’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Across case studies of protest that draw on a post-foundational analytical framework, a minority of social movement actors operate in a broader political insurgency situated within the spatial rupture created by ‘extraordinary’ radical urban movements, which seek to stage a horizontal politics based in equality (Erensü and Karaman 2017; García-Lamarca 2017b; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017; Zemni 2017). While most people involved are not social movement activists, those that are can play key roles (Erensü and Karaman 2017; García-Lamarca 2017b). To varying degrees, social movements are financially invested as well, and can use protests as a platform for engaging with the media on militant particularisms. This can be seen in Erensü and Karaman (2017), a study of the 2013 occupation of Gezi
Park, Turkey. The authors argue that urban social movements ‘were at the forefront of the Gezi revolt and took on some significant leadership roles, bringing in their expertise and repertoires’ (Erensü and Karaman 2017, p.22). In the absence of demands from the political movement, the agendas of the environmental and right-to-the-city social movements provided the mainstream media ‘much sought context and content’ (ibid. p.23).

Returning for a moment to social movements research, case study research on ‘convergence spaces’ (Routledge 2003; Routledge and Derickson 2015) provide context for Karaliotas’ (2017) concept of hybrid subjectivation, which distinguishes between subjectivation in theory and its spatial rupture in practice. In theory, subjectivation and the political emerge through horizontal organisational forms of activism, for example direct democracy in Syntagma Square (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017). Hybrid subjectivation recognises that this is not the case in practice, however, and that subjectivation occurs within an activist social order which contains tensions between vertical and horizontal social strata (Karaliotas 2017). The concept of convergence spaces enables critical discussion of this social order, even when protest spaces are ostensibly organised using horizontal praxis. Its inclusion in the research design of this thesis, and in particular the adoption of its terminology to describe processes of facilitation and interaction, will help examine tensions between actors and organisational forms of activism in closer detail.

The close relation between social movement actors – for example climate change activists (Kinniburgh 2015) – and broader anti-fracking movements suggests similar tensions between horizontalist and verticalist forms of organisation in anti-fracking protest spaces to those examined in Karaliotas (2017). The concept of hybrid subjectivation that the author puts forward to understand these tensions is one that helps understand how Rancière’s theorisation on politics and politicisation can apply to practice. What is not currently known in detail is what role social movements and social movement actors play in these spaces. In particular, what are the tensions between the vertical practices of social movements and the
staging of equality through horizontal practices and how do these play out in anti-fracking struggles?

This question is particularly relevant to anti-fracking protest camps, in which political subjectivation, the occupation of public space and the praxis of horizontally-organised politics overlap with the organised politics of social movements. To answer the question requires moving beyond the hard distinction between social and political movements, as suggested by key geographical thinkers (Erensü and Karaman 2017; Haughton et al. 2016; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017) As Karaliotas and Kaika (2016) explains, this can be achieved through a focus on the plurality of spaces occupied by a movement, that can be incorporated into analysis of the discourses and practices that underpin the ‘material choreographies’ (p.245) of protest movements. Returning to Dikeç and Swyngedouw’s (2017) distinction between ordinary and extraordinary politics, research can examine differences, tensions and overlaps between social and political movements’ organisational approaches, resources, aims and tactics in the spaces of protest. Analysis can contribute to the concept of hybrid political subjectivation, and help understand Rancière’s theorisation of the emergence (and closing down) of the political in practice.
3.7 Re-centring the political and taking a step back: ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ in contemporary environmental movements

As recent studies have shown, a re-centring of research onto the spaces occupied by insurgent political movements does not shift the conceptual focus away from social movements altogether (Erensü and Karaman 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017). Rather, it places them in the broader framework of a spatial rupture of the political, which contains both social and political movement actors. This means that to go beyond a focus on the ‘heroic’, as its proponents argue that it should (Dikeç 2017; Swyngedouw 2017), analysis should include the role of social movements in its conceptualisation of radical urban protest. Specifically, research can investigate the role of social movement actors in opening up, or indeed closing down, the political across the spaces in which it is enacted.

To frame research in this way requires selecting case studies that are neither ‘heroic’ nor anti-heroic’, in which tensions between different forms of protest can be examined closely. A relevant empirical focus is contemporary environmental movements, which contain both social and political movement actors and evince an emancipatory politics (Velicu and Kaika 2017). In the UK, the most significant contemporary environmental movement is the anti-fracking movement. In numerous examples, its activists combine the organised politics of social movements with the tactics of radical urban uprisings, for example with protest camps at West Sussex (Association 2013), Lancashire (Szolucha 2016), Cheshire (Gayle 2016) and Greater Manchester (Speed 2018; Scheerhout 2014).

There is a rich body of geographical literature on social movements but its conceptual focus on social networks and the politics of organised oppositional movements cannot address seemingly unpredictable ruptures of ‘the political’ onto the urban terrain (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Examples include the riots in Manchester (Clifton and Allison 2011) and London (Lewis 2011) and the occupation of Syntagma Square in Greece (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017).
The squares movement – examined in the previous section – is one of a series of pro-democratic uprisings whose tactics were an inspiration for the UK anti-fracking movement (Szolucha 2016). The occupation of Syntagma Square, and other public squares across Greece, is held up by post-foundational theorists as an example of ‘the political’ in practice. Examples like these are important when viewed through the post-political lens because they contain the hesitant appearance of genuine political moments and produce claims for democracy, equality and freedom:

While often articulated around an emblematic quilting point (a threatened park, devastating austerity measures, the public bailout of irresponsible financial institutions, rising tuition fees, a price hike in public transport, and the like), these movements quickly universalised their claims to embrace a desire for a fullyfledged transformation of the political structuring of life, against the exclusive, oligarchic, and consensual governance of an alliance of professional economic, political and technocratic elites determined to defend the neoliberal order by any means necessary.

Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2014, p. 3

By taking to the streets, people express a radical disavowal of a given hierarchical social order, create a performative space and build new imaginaries that ‘re-identify the political subject of the people.’ (Rancière 1999, p.99). For Rancière, protests like these are a perverse consequence of post-political democratic processes, whereby dissenting voices are rendered into noise (Rancière 1999). This makes protest one of the few ways for people who dissent to make themselves heard.

Across Europe and the UK there are numerous examples of anti-fracking protests by residents that dissent against proposed development. In Vesalon and Creţan (2015), protestors refuse to negotiate on the particulars of individual projects, even when NGO’s make moderate and reformist demands (Vesalon and Creţan 2015). Rather than align with the NGO’s and civil society groups, residents take to the streets to argue that they want to ban fracking development entirely, based primarily on the environmental risk that it poses to freshwater resources (Vesalon and Creţan 2015). They develop a radical environmentalist agenda that is ignored
by the authorities. To further their radical demands, activists engage in protests and occupations at fracking sites, where they display their opposition and make their voices heard.

There are similar cases in the UK, where in 2013 anti-fracking protestors set up camps outside exploratory wells in Greater Manchester (Gilmore et al. 2016) and West Sussex (Radix 2013). Alongside these, there have also been years of on-going protest and campaigning against fracking development in the North West of England and particularly Lancashire, where unconventional energy company Cuadrilla continues to seek consensus with local communities in the face of vehement opposition (Cuadrilla Resources 2013; Short and Szolucha 2017). This is the focus of Szolucha (2016), which closely follows protests in Lancashire in 2013 and 2014. A key finding is that many of these activists do not express affiliation to a social movement or political group and become politically active as they seek to stop development and highlight the environmental risks that fracking poses locally (Szolucha 2016). The study also notes that ‘unconventional fuel extraction has become strongly intertwined with the crisis of liberal representative democracy’ (Szolucha 2016, p.75). For these activists, protest and occupation of public spaces are vital tactics for voicing dissent that goes beyond a focus on militant particularisms and creates a spatial rupture within consolidated orders (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017).

This reflects a broader radicalisation of contemporary environmental movements, highlighted by Velicu and Kaika (2017). The authors argue that more research is needed to ‘account for the dynamics of contemporary political praxis within environmental movements’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.314). In particular, research should:

Address the emergence of ‘the political’ in environmental movements; that is, the emergence of practices that aim not only to contest the power positions of existing actors, but also to redefine the very alternative ways of being and acting together.

Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305
The case focuses on the anti-gold mining struggle in Rosia Montana, Romania, which lasted 15 years and eventually succeeded in stopping the mines altogether (as a result, the Romanian government is now being sued by the developer for $4.4 billion, see: Perrone, 2017). The authors examine tensions in the movement between dialogic consensual politics and ‘radical demands for socio-ecological change’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305). They propose that the politics of environmental movements is reimagined within a post-foundational framework, as the process of subjectivation. This is described as a de-identification with previously existing or given political identities/positions and ‘non-foundational re-identifications, staging/performing new socio/political identities/positions as alternative ways of living in common’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.306).

A key benefit of a post-foundational analytical framework for examining environmental movements is that it provides a perspective that removes the authority of dominant narratives, by exposing the absent foundation of the social order that promotes them. For example in Velicu and Kaika (2017) ideas of economic efficiency and neoliberal development are put forward by proponents of an open-cast gold mine as irrefutable on the basis that they speak to public reason. From this perspective, to oppose the development is to be ignorant of its potential benefit to society. This logic does not fit within a post-foundational analytical framework, which gives equal weight to narratives both within and without public discourse. In this way, ‘the acceptance of such a void liberates us from state and/or market development’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.313).

In the case study, the authors argue that local resistance entails the re-imagination of subject positions and identities and that activists ‘practice EJ [environmental justice] as a transformative act’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.306). The farmers’ dissent is ignored by the authorities, who seek to exclude them from decision-making processes on the basis that their opinions are irrational and emotional. As Velicu and Kaika (2017) note, ‘The situation itself, the framework within which this dialogue operates (e.g. continuous development, neoliberalism etc.) is not (supposed to be) contested’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.307).
Veliku and Kaika (2017) draw on Rancière’s philosophical discussion on ancient Athenian politics (Rancière 2010) to illustrate that exclusion has always played a central part to the practice of democracy and the distribution of justice:

For all the radicalness of the praxis of democracy, ancient Greeks were not radical enough to include women, slaves or foreigners in the category of those who were able to articulate reason; these categories remained invisible politically as their voices could only be used to scream out private sufferings; they had no speech, as speech is the ‘voice’ of those [sic] are considered capable of using reason and therefore able to distribute justice.

Veliku and Kaika 2017, p.306

The lack of speech and visibility described here explains the need for activists to engage in protests, as a way to engage in the praxis of democracy, reimage political struggle and voice grievances in public. In this context, non-engagement with the political process is understood by the authors as a political act. Velicu and Kaika (2017) explain their logic:

No matter how many times they shouted their presence in protests, or put themselves in front of corporate bulldozers, they were perceived as the surplus that could easily be removed by the police outside the domain of the visible or the legible…. It is no surprise, therefore, that after many attempts to enter into dialogue on equal terms, the Rosieni started to refuse dialogue.

Veliku and Kaika 2017, p.309

Rather than engage in consensual politics, the Rosieni assert their power through dissent, opposing the gold mine and refusing to compromise or negotiate. This is a form of dissensual politics (Rancière 2010) which challenges the situation itself, rather than the particulars of the project. Through a process of subjectivation ‘the Rosieni came to reassess wealth, development, happiness, and justice instead of accepting these as fixed categories’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.312).

For Rancière, a shift in identity like this underlies the process of politicisation, or subjectivation, that renders noise into speech and animals into political animals, by ‘re-asserting what is reasonable’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.309). It involves the re-
assessment of previously accepted norms. On a practical level, subjectivation requires a repartitioning of peoples’ time and space. This involves finding the time to engage in political activities alongside already existing day-to-day work and social routines. The new identity as an activist, and its time / space commitments, must co-exist with already existing commitments, for example a farmer must tend to his / her business alongside becoming an activist (Velicu and Kaika 2017). This means that subjectivation requires a split in identity to accommodate a repartition of the sensible. Velicu and Kaika (2017) explain:

A worker or a farmer who decides to radically re-divide (re-partition in Rancière’s term) her / his life experience (bodily, mentally, temporally and spatially) between labouring in the field the mine or the factory, and labouring as a citizen-activist, is no longer someone with a fixed identity-status. By re-partitioning what s/he used to know as the ‘sensible’, ‘s/he’ is becoming and performing that which needs first to be imagined, and then practiced repeatedly through new habits that can subvert pre-existing ways of being.

Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.312

A focus on the praxis of activism and how this repartitions the sensible for individuals allows the authors to examine the process of subjectivation in detail. This process is described as a journey into the unknown, ‘a process of creating alternative worlds for themselves... [as] activists, ecologists, agro-tourism entrepreneurs, or even poets, on the ‘stage’ that opened in Romania as a result of their dissensus’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.313). The performative element of activism is central to the process of subjectivation and to the rupture of the political. Velicu and Kaika (2017) argue that it is the repartition of the sensible, understood as the praxis of activism incorporated into day-to-day activities, which shifts the narrative away from who has power, and the acceptance of unequal power relations, to the practice of power, and the possibility that all people can exercise power equally.

The repartition of the sensible explains the process of subjectivation through which people become politicised in radical urban uprisings and so become political activists that seek to make their voices heard. A similar process could conceivably
occur from within the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, if people become politicised and find time to engage in activism, as a way to make their voices heard. If this is the case, can this be understood as subjectivation, since it would in-part be orchestrated through the organisational structures of an anti-fracking movement? Certainly, it would not fit the understanding of the political described in Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017). However, in the context of the this thesis – focused on an urban anti-fracking struggle – taking a conceptual step back to examine the spatiality of all forms of protest could reveal different forms of (hybrid) subjectivation in practice, that are not so easily categorised as either ‘political’ or as part of a hierarchically organised social movement.
3.8 Conclusions

This chapter builds on the argument made in chapter two that the intellectual agenda on fracking needs to move beyond discourses on public engagement to research anti-fracking dissent, in which activists do not seek compromise and do not accept development. Keeping this argument in mind, it has engaged with research on political struggle and radical protests, from a post-foundational perspective.

I have developed two key arguments in this chapter. The first argument emphasises the importance of applying a post-foundational perspective to an urban anti-fracking siting struggle. The second argument is that the roles played by social movement actors in political struggles are acknowledged in case studies on radical urban uprisings but is not researched in detail. Applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to the study of an urban anti-fracking siting struggle is an opportunity to examine – for the first time - the engagement of social and political movement actors within an anti-fracking siting struggle, using ‘hybrid subjectivation’ to conceptualise tensions within the political.

Both of these arguments help to address the recent criticism that post-foundational research of political struggle is too focused on clearly ‘heroic’ moments of radical urban uprisings (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; Beveridge and Koch 2017b; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). Arguably, this points to the need for further cases that are not clear examples of the political, in which there exists a plurality of politics. Recent research on environmental siting struggles, that contain both political and social movement actors, is drawn on to develop this argument and to justify applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to an anti-fracking siting struggle. For this study, a post-foundational perspective is of particular utility because it shifts empirical focus toward actors who dissent against – rather than seek compromise over – development. In an anti-fracking siting struggle, this moves the intellectual agenda beyond public engagement with the development process and toward the political spaces opened up by activists. This
perspective is particularly useful for an urban anti-fracking siting struggle, in which a medley of activists would be overlooked by focus on any ‘local’ community.

At this point it is important to emphasise my own thoughts on the criticism that post-foundational research focuses too heavily on clearly ‘heroic’ studies of political struggle. I argue that this criticism fundamentally misunderstands the perspective provided by a post-foundational theoretical framework, which necessitates a focus on radical politics that challenges – rather than engages with the particulars of - an established order. At the heart of the criticism is the concern that ‘the political’ is a term used to define what is ‘properly’ political in abstract terms that elevate its status above other forms of politics. As with ‘smart cities’, ‘clean fossil fuels’ and ‘sustainable development’, ‘extraordinary politics’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017), the concept suggests an inherent bias that stems from the importance of ‘the political’ to post-foundational theorists in geography. This is denied by its proponents, however (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017), and doesn’t recognise that the separation between ‘politics’ and the ‘political’ is not intended to elevate one form of politics over another.

For example, referring to their distinction between social movements (which focus on militant particularisms) and political movements (which work toward universalised transformations of day-to-day practices and the instituted order) Dikeç and Swyngedouw maintain ‘we make no claim about which of these is ‘more’ or ‘truly’ political (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3). The argument that they are making here – which this thesis supports – is that a post-foundational theoretical framework shifts focus onto radical forms of political struggle, and so away from social movements.

However, as this chapter sets out, while the criticism misunderstands the conceptual focus provided by a post-foundational theoretical framework, it does highlight the normative judgements that must be made to determine which cases are ‘political’, and which are not. Recently these have extended research beyond clearly-radical urban uprisings, to include environmental struggles (Velicu and Kaika 2017) and radical urban protests (Bassett 2014). This shift recognises the
increasingly radical nature of urban protests that has created an empirical overlap between the study of social and political movements. This overlap presents the opportunity to research both the politics of radical protests and the particular struggles of social movement actors within a single case. This is because a post-foundational perspective shifts focus onto dissensual spaces yet – as Dikeç and Swyngedouw acknowledge – allows for study of social movement actors as well, where they operate within these spaces.

Following on from this argument, there exists a blind spot within post-foundational literature on the key roles that social movement actors play within political struggles, which needs to be addressed. To go beyond a focus on the ‘heroic’, as its proponents argue that it should (Dikeç 2017; Swyngedouw 2017), a post-foundational analytical framework should include the role of social movement actors in its conceptualisation of radical urban struggle.

To do this using a post-foundational theoretical framework requires taking a conceptual ‘step back’ to examine how the political emerges across the broader urban terrain (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). This is not something that has been done before, and presents the opportunity to research both ‘politics’ and the ‘political’ within a single study. While it is a step forward within the body of literature that this thesis is situated, it is important to recognise that this is not a step away from previous research, and that taking a conceptual step back does not mean shifting the focus away from political struggle. Indeed, in the context of the anti-fracking movement in the UK a key benefit of a post-foundational perspective is that its focus on a tightly defined understanding of political struggle shifts empirical focus toward actors who dissent against – rather than seek compromise over – development. The utility of this focus for examining insurgent movements is exemplified in recent case studies (Erensü and Karaman, 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016). Most recently, it has been applied to a contemporary environmental movement in which activists resist gold mining development in Romania. Their opposition is reflected in the UK anti-fracking movement, which is embedded in local siting disputes yet opposes the political project of fracking, rather than the particulars of a single project (Velicu and Kaika 2017).
In this context, the contestation of fracking in the UK presents an opportunity to make contributions to post-foundational theory on the opening and closing of the political and to challenge normative framings of ‘heroic’ politics that marginalise social movement actors. Importantly, the anti-fracking movement contains tensions and overlaps between different forms of political organisation that mean it cannot easily be categorised as either a radical urban uprising or a social movement. This complexity is inherent to radical environmental movements (Velicu and Kaika 2017). The acknowledgement by Karaliotas (2017) that equality in practice is always hybridised with non-equal practices is a step toward understanding how ‘the political’ can emerge in an anti-fracking space that is not obviously a spontaneous rupture of the political. As Karaliotas (2017) notes, while Rancière describes the political in spatial terms, spatialised tensions within the political (through the occupation of public space) and the process of political subjectivation do not feature in his writings (Karaliotas 2017). A post-foundational analytical framework – and the concept of hybrid subjectivation - that examines social as well as political movement actor engagement in the protest spaces of an anti-fracking struggle will enable these tensions in the political to be examined in detail, as between the discursive, organizational and spatial repertoires of activists.

Specifically, research can investigate the role of actors in opening up, or indeed closing down, the political across the spaces in which it is enacted. This broader perspective will provide understanding of the forms of political action through which protest spaces are opened up and sustained. This addresses the research aim, set out in chapter 2, to implement a research design to study of an urban anti-fracking movement that allows analysis to extend beyond a single community, and to understand the organisational practices that shape the broader anti-fracking struggle.

The next chapter explains how the framework is applied methodologically. Specifically, it describes how it is applied to an urban anti-fracking struggle in Greater Manchester, to enable study of the political spaces opened up by the anti-
fracking movement, and to incorporate non-local and social movement actors into research.
Researching an urban anti-fracking struggle

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to reconceptualise responses to new energy infrastructure development in an urban anti-fracking struggle, using a post-foundational analytical framework to engage with the case. It examines the reactions of actors, and explores the effects of different forms of engagement and dissensus with the development process. This research aim addresses a need, identified in chapter two of this thesis, for further studies that test an analytical framework which is not focused solely on ‘the political’ in a narrow sense and allows the researcher to examine tensions between different forms of politics that unfold across protest spaces.

Chapter two examined initial research on ‘fracking’ and the ways that the term is used by industry, colloquially and in academic research. It concluded that a broad understanding of the term is appropriate to this thesis, which reflects its usage by the anti-fracking activists that are focused on in the fieldwork. Chapter three highlighted the importance of re-centring the political in contemporary environmental movements onto actors whose voices would be overlooked by a focus on social movements. While arguing that a post-foundational analytical framework was appropriate to this task, it also examined recent critiques of how the concept of post-politics separates politics and the political (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; Beveridge and Koch 2017b; Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014) and the need to build on efforts by researchers to examine the spatiality of political uprisings through focus on the plurality of spaces across which they appear (for example: Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016; Karaliotas, 2017).

This chapter provides the methodology used to address the research questions set out in chapter three. To build an appropriate methodological framework, it draws on case studies examined in the review and on theoretical literature about methods in geography. It argues that the adoption of a post-foundational analytical framework allows research to go beyond simple interpretations of ‘fracking’ and
community opposition to the siting of new energy infrastructure projects, toward grounded research on actor responses and the reasons for differential reactions. The methodology was designed with an underlying interest in how different forms of political organisation shape the opening up (and closing down) of political spaces and the related efficacy of contemporary environmental struggles that centre on opposition to a new energy development. Research is focused on the people, organisations and groups, or ‘actors’ in the case study. This focus allows the researcher to examine the collective and individual ways that different actors react and the potential effects that responses can have on proposed development.
4.2 Framing research

Drawing on research examined in chapters two and three, three overlapping research foci are central to the construction of the methodology and analytical framework. They are: anti-fracking space, the engagement (and potentially non-engagement) of activists in those spaces and the roles of social movement and autonomous activists in the anti-fracking struggle.

A post-foundational analytical framework should be designed to reflect the aspiration of ‘the political’ to challenge the absent foundations of any given social order (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Velicu and Kaika 2017). Practically, this means that protestors who do not identify with a social movement or political organisation are given an equal platform in research to representatives of vertically organised groups, for example unions and NGO’s.

This is particularly important for understanding cases in which protest spaces are used to enact political struggles that are horizontally organised, and aim to give each person an equal voice. For example, in the 2011 uprisings, activists practiced direct democracy which gives each person an equal voice in debates (Erensü and Karaman 2017; García-Lamarca 2017b; Karaliotas 2017; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013b; Zemni 2017). This is despite tensions between horizontal and vertical organisational practices, with social movement actors assuming significant organisational and media roles (Karaliotas 2017).

In theory, a post-foundational analytical framework should be framed around the same understanding of seeking to give each person an equal voice that these activists aspire toward in these studies. The broad perspective of the framework allows the researcher to examine tensions between the organisational practices of different forms of protest and to bring into focus key actors that would be overlooked by a focus on social movements. Research can examine the multiple forms of protest that unfold across a plurality of protest spaces (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016) as well as the tensions between them that shape the process of (hybrid) political subjectivation (Karaliotas 2017). The researcher can also examine
how different forms of political organisation shape the subjectivation of newly politicised actors and the opening up (and closing down) of the political in practice. These actors have forced their dissent into the visible domain through the praxis of activism and the occupation of public space, to create a platform based in universal equality for voicing grievances and imagining alternative ways of being-in-common, which together form ‘the political’.

A post-foundational framework also allows focus on ‘quieter’ actors, who are not a part of a social movement and whose engagement in the struggle is not immediately obvious. A key example is people who live nearby and feel marginalised from processes of development and yet do not openly voice their dissent, choosing to support the struggle in other ways. This creates a key methodological difficulty, which is how to identify these actors and engage them in empirical research. People who have been marginalised from processes of development can share feelings of powerlessness, that can lead them to express ambivalence toward development while concealing individual grievances (Eaton and Kinchy 2016). In Eaton and Kinchy (2016), the authors use in-depth semi-structured interviews taken from two case studies and apply an open-coding method to identify concepts and major themes. Across interviews, they identify similarities in stories that raise issues of ‘ambivalence, lack of collective action, and individualism’ (Eaton and Kinchy 2016, p.25). While the case highlights the need for more research on ambivalent communities, its methodology is not replicable as the authors did not expect these similarities to occur. This means that their focus on ambivalent communities is accidental, rather than a result of methodological design. The similarities identified were unexpected because stark differences between the two cases made similarities unlikely. These differences include ‘mineral rights tenure, history of oil and gas production, and public and media attention’ (Eaton and Kinchy 2016, p.25).

The difficulty of engaging nearby communities, potentially in a broader context of community ambivalence, needs to be addressed in the methodology. The ‘quieter voices’ of individuals in this context are difficult to capture because they are not immediately visible to the researcher and may choose not to speak openly about
their concerns. To identify and understand quieter voices could require placing them within a broader social and historical context. Geographers are well placed to address this difficulty, because their conceptualisation of energy as shaped by its social relations (Bridge and Billon 2012) recognises its key role as a determinant for the spatial distribution of social activities and mediating the relationship between humans and the environment. Drawing on research critiqued in chapter two, this should include a community’s history of energy extraction, history of political engagement and recent public and media attention (Bickerstaff 2012; Eaton and Kinchy 2016).

In cases where ambivalent communities do not resist development, research shows that this could be because they do not have the motivation or capacity to organise collectively (Eaton and Kinchy 2016; Ladd 2013). Eaton and Kinchy (2016) show that understanding individual ‘actor motivation’ and collective ‘civic capacity’ can help the researcher understand whether a community is able to mobilise or not. This helps determine whether non-mobilisation is because individuals do not hold grievances against development or because the community does not have the ability to mobilise resistance against development. In addition, cataloguing individual responses to development can help understand how actors act on grievances when collective action is not possible or is not desired.

A key study that sets out how this could be implemented is Bickerstaff (2012). It examines controversy around the siting of a Geological Disposal Facility for nuclear waste in the North West of England. The study draws into its analysis ‘the absent ‘Others’ (the distant actors and events) that ‘live on’ in local debate’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2613). Active and non-active actors are identified using a conceptual lens that incorporates into analysis the space-time relations that shape the siting conflict and ‘traces the times and spaces that define [the] issue as a matter of public concern’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2612). The approach is shaped by ‘a concern to make visible the physically absent, the unacknowledged, and the silent, in ways that fracture dominant orderings and narratives’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2612). The author suggests its use in case studies of siting controversies to promote an agenda
'that foregrounds the presence of the absent in the production of controversy' (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2613).

This focus contributes to a gap in research on differential responses to new energy development, highlighted in Chapter two. The methodology can apply conceptualisation of the ‘politics of the absent’ to its design, which allows for quieter or absent voices in a siting struggle to be incorporated into research (Bickerstaff 2012). Importantly, in this understanding resistance does not need to be active and may only reside in thoughts and opinions, and it is also not necessarily consciously articulated as ‘opposition’. It may be found within the embedded social structures and norms that shape people’s day-to-day activities that would be re-structured by proposed socio-technical changes. In other words, alternatives can emerge shaped by the social relations and human-environment vulnerabilities of the people that experience and react to proposed development.

To explore forms of resistance and apathy within a siting struggle, therefore, requires understanding the historical social relations that underlie the perceptions of, and responses to, proposed development by affected populations (Bickerstaff 2012), rather than only addressing the discourses and policy frameworks through which, or in opposition to which, actors may engage in the conflict. The attention paid to participants also relates to the understanding of energy as a social relation that has a key role in determining the spatial distribution of social activities and mediating the relationship between humans and the environment (Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015) in addition to its economic and technological functions. This chapter describes how these conceptual details are translated into methodological design, and study ‘in the field’. The following section provides further detail on the intellectual framework, processes of case selection and finally the methods used.
4.3 Case study design

Existing research on ‘fracking’ and the anti-fracking movement is in the large part focused on discourses, with very few case studies of local struggles, and this is highlighted as a shortcoming of research (Short et al. 2015). Of the few cases on local struggles, none of them are focused on an urban anti-fracking struggle, despite the extension of fracking into urban regions in the US and UK. This means that to ensure that this thesis makes a valuable empirical contribution it should adopt a case study approach, focused on an urban anti-fracking struggle.

This section examines how to apply the research design to a case study. Much is made in case study research of the importance of choosing a suitable design to ensure validity beyond the case itself of the phenomena under study (Bryman 2012). The researcher must abide by a clear sectioning of case-types, and a case can be paradigmatic, critical, or extreme, for example (Flyvbjerg 2006a). Stake (1995) notes the first criterion of case selection should be to maximise what can be learnt that would inform wider societal theories. This requires identifying components of the case that can be compared with similar components from other cases and so give the study broader significance.

There is a suite of case study strategies that the researcher can choose from, and each of these has its respective merits and limitations (Punch 2005). The comparative case study strategy is one possibility that was considered when designing the thesis. A benefit of a comparative case study is that it allows key phenomena to be compared across cases and differences to be considered in the context of each study (Punch 2005).

A limitation of a comparative case study strategy is that the researcher must divide their attention, and time, across two case study sites (Flyvbjerg 2006a). In practical terms this means that less time is spent at each site and data collection is divided across two places. This is important because the need for more in-depth research on cases of opposition to new energy infrastructure development has been highlighted in research on siting struggles (Bickerstaff 2012) and sociology.
(McAdam 2012). To achieve a breadth of research that incorporates two places, a comparative case study must compromise on the depth of study that the researcher can apply to each site. A more pertinent option for this thesis, which intends to undertake in-depth research to make contributions to wider societal theories on radical urban uprisings and environmental protest, is the critical case study strategy (Yin 2003).

As Yin describes it, a key function of focusing on a single case is granular study of abstractions in a real-life situation (Yin 2003). In the context of this thesis, the abstractions are politics and the political, which can be studied through focus on community mobilisation / non-mobilisation and individual responses to development. The real-life situation is an urban anti-fracking movement focused on opposing the development and operation of an exploratory well in the city-region. To study the abstraction, in practical terms, requires identifying how and why different actors react to proposed development and to then use these observations to contribute to broader theoretical concepts. At the analysis stage of the project, there is an expectation that the phenomenon itself is separable from the context of the case, to ensure an element of generalisability (Punch 2005; Yin 2003). To select a critical case in which theoretical propositions can be operationalised for this thesis, the priority is to identify a demographically complex site that allows research production from which analysis can contribute to theories on protests and urban siting struggles.

A critical case study can be designed to allow detailed examination of particular phenomena of interest, with recognition of the complexities that will be encountered as the researcher learns more about the case (Punch 2005; Yin 2003). It is appropriate to the focus of this study, on understanding individual and collective actor responses, because it allows the researcher to conduct fieldwork in a single place and then draw out the nuances of the case. These might be overlooked by a more generalised approach that incorporated multiple case study sites. Currently, for example, there is a multiple case study on quieter voices in the anti-fracking movement (Eaton and Kinchy 2016) and a national study of discourses used by anti-fracking activists in the media (Vesalon and Crețan 2015). Neither of
these builds their case around understanding the different perspectives and reactions of actors within a single case. Most cases on the anti-fracking movement focus on discourses, for example in policy documents or elite interviews, and this has been highlighted as a shortcoming of research on local opposition to fracking development (Short et al. 2015).

On reflection, the shift in design towards a single critical case study demonstrates the difference between planning a project from the comfort of an office and translating those plans into fieldwork. Site visits, combined with the theoretical development of the thesis confirmed the importance of understanding the research design as a non-rigid framework of reference that is constantly returned to during the project. In this context, the fieldwork is a learning process which can require the design to be updated according to new information discovered when conducting the research. The next section looks at how decisions on fieldwork were made to ensure the learning process remained as relevant to the research questions as possible.
4.4 Fracking in the UK: selecting a case study

In the UK, unconventional energy, or ‘fracking’ development is ostensibly aligned by its proponents with a socio-technical energy transition towards a low carbon economy, to which the country is committed under the Climate Change Act (Broderick et al. 2011). UK government policy seeks to increase the use of low carbon technologies (DECC 2012) which will require new ‘low carbon’ energy infrastructures and the expansion of existing energyscapes (Howard et al. 2009; Howard et al. 2013; Bridge et al. 2013; Foxon et al. 2010; Foxon 2013). This combination of drivers pushes forward contradictory changes to energy supply, with unconventional fuel sources like shale gas being developed alongside renewable energy sources (Calvert 2015).

The UK industry remains at an exploratory phase of development, and is still unable to provide an accurate estimate of national unconventional energy reserves. To be able to do this, more research needs to be conducted into the local geology, engineering requirements and costs of production (DECC 2013). What is known are the resource estimates (although these figures do not indicate the amount it would be commercially viable to extract). These are 1329 trillion cubic feet (tcf) gas for the Bowland Shale in the North of England, 80.3 tcf gas and 6 billion barrels (bbl) shale oil for the Midland Valley of Scotland, and 4.4 bbl shale oil in the Weald Basin (Andrews 2013; Andrews 2014; Monaghan 2014). This places most of the known reserves in the north of England and in Scotland.

Despite a lack of data on known reserves, the fracking industry has received strong support from the UK government which has said it is ‘going all out for shale’ (Watt 2014) and argued that shale gas is a ‘low carbon bridge fuel’ that can help the UK transition away from coal energy and create economic prosperity (Leadsom 2016). Development efforts centre on the Bowland Shale (Andrews 2013) which extends beneath cities, national parks and farmland (Figure 1). Its exploration has created conflict with local communities in Lancashire and Greater Manchester (Gilmore et al. 2016; Szolucha 2016). Its future exploitation has the potential to transform
urban and rural areas into sites of energy extraction as well as consumption, where they are situated over or near to shale deposits.
Figure 1: Bowland shale outcrop. Image from: Andrews, 2013
Case study selection took place in the summer of 2013. In May that year a nationwide moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in the UK, implemented following minor tremors attributed to hydraulic fracturing in Lancashire in 2011, was lifted by the UK government (CNN 2013). This allowed the industry to resume the development and construction of exploratory wells. Although hydraulic fracturing was not one of the technical processes used at exploration sites, anti-fracking groups referred to these wells as fracking wells (FrackOff 2018). This is because exploration for unconventional energy in sites not previously used for energy extraction fits with a colloquial understanding of the term ‘fracking’. It is also appropriate to a broader conceptualisation of fracking which includes ‘the entire more-intensive unconventional extraction and production processes’ (Short and Szolucha 2017, p.2). This is how the term is used in this thesis and opens up exploratory wells that are not hydraulically fractured as potential case study sites.

Potential cases were initially identified using council websites, planning permission files and the DECC map of Petroleum Exploration and Development Licenses (PEDLs). PEDLs are controlled by shale and coal exploration companies which obtain them through a bidding process managed by the UK government. Companies are then able to seek planning permission for individual developments within the licensed areas that they control. A PEDL gives a company license to apply for planning permission to explore for energy within a spatially defined area.

PEDLs were used for case study selection because they provide a clear spatial delineation that demarcates a company’s territorial limits for exploration and development. Conceptually, the licenses connect people to fracking developments if their lives or livelihoods fall within a company’s territory. For a map of all PEDL licenses issued in 2013 see Appendix 9. For a table of PEDL licenses in which unconventional energy developments were either approved or under planning review, see Appendix 2.

Following the initial process of case selection the cases were narrowed down further using two key criteria drawn from methodological studies. First, a valid case must be designed so that it can make contributions to wider societal theories (Yin
This thesis is intended to contribute to theories on urban environmental struggles and social change. To do this, it must contain an event that can be researched with the intention of making broader theoretical contributions. An ‘event’ is interpreted here as local opposition to proposed or actual development of an unconventional exploratory well.

Relevant events were divided into three types according to the different forms of energy extraction that they focus on. Although fracking is ostensibly connected to shale gas development, the colloquial use of the term, as used in this thesis, incorporates other types of unconventional fossil fuel extraction as well (Short and Szolucha 2017). In the UK these are coal bed methane extraction (CBM) and underground coal gasification (UCG). For example, activist group ‘Frack Off’ have a map of the UK that details all planning applications for CBM, UCG and shale gas extraction, referred to as examples of ‘fracking’ (FrackOff 2018).

While CBM and UCG cases have significance to the aims of this study, shale gas has the most relevance to the broader societal theories that it seeks to address. This is because shale gas exploration is disruptive and has opened up new territories for the fossil fuels industry. Reserves of unconventional shale tight oil and gas have not previously been exploited, and were only recently recognised as commercially viable energy reserves (Andrews 2013). A result of this is that communities in the US and UK that were previously distant from fossil fuel extraction processes now find themselves on the frontier of the industry’s territorial expansion (Willow 2014; Willow et al. 2014). In the context of neoliberalisation and social change, the growth of the US and UK shale gas industry represent a process of uneven neoliberalisation that includes the disempowerment of local communities and application of a neoliberal logic of economic empowerment and individualised responsibility for lives, livelihoods and the local environment (Eaton and Kinchy 2016; Loder 2016; Malin 2013; Willow 2016; Willow 2014).

A second criteria for case study selection is that a critical case should test a theory in the situation that it is ‘most likely’ to occur (Flyvbjerg 2006b). In the context of the research questions that come out of the review, this means that the case study
should incorporate both non-mobilised and mobilised communities into its analysis, to understand actor responses and their effects within them. One way to do this is to focus on an urban case study. In the UK the government is going ‘all out for fracking’, a technology that will extend extractive processes into and under urban areas that could include London (BBC 2014) and Greater Manchester (Brooks-Pollock 2013). This means that it has the potential to transform cities into sites of energy extraction as well as consumption. Cities are of particular importance to human geographers because, as Calvert (2015) notes, “a city helps us to unpack the dynamic interplay of energy production, distribution and use in a spatial context” (Calvert 2015, p.12).

Cities express particular spatial, material and social expressions of energy regimes (Calvert 2015; Haarstad and Wanvik 2017; Rutherford and Coutard 2014). They are a suitable focus to examine the nexus between energy, society and the environment (Haarstad and Wanvik 2017). This includes questions around the struggles that new developments will create and the unequal impacts that they will have on the people that live in the spaces effected.

Case studies on community opposition to new energy infrastructure developments have a preference for sites in remote rural locations in which it is possible to study community opposition as if it were a homogenous ‘whole’. By moving away from these case selection criteria and towards a ‘messy’ urban conflict, this study addresses a key gap in research (Bridge et al. 2013). The demographics and nature of an urban case give it a complexity that makes it special when contrasted with rural cases. Research conducted in the US suggests that the extension of shale gas exploration into an urban setting stimulates mobilisation from actors across local communities (Dodge and Lee 2017; Ogneva-Himmelberger and Huang 2015; Simonelli 2014; Weible and Heikkila 2016). In an urban case there can be multiple communities exposed to development, allowing the complexities of collective and individual responses across local populations to be examined. Thinking about ‘intersectional’ social relations can help us understand actor response, shaped by the historical and on-going networks that link organisations, objects and people (Bickerstaff 2012; Pierce et al. 2011). Research on neoliberalisation provides a
A difficulty in analysis of differential responses within an urban case is providing detailed examination that meets two challenges simultaneously. The first is to hold onto the messy nature of the case in which opposition can form away from the geographic location of the site itself and alternatives can develop on the margins of development processes. The second is to order events and accounts so that they make generalisable observations on actor responses that have relevance beyond a single case. It is because cases like this are so messy that they can be avoided in energy studies. Yet prominent commentators have noted that this is where the focus now needs to be in order to conceptualise and then identify alternatives put forward by actors who challenge the status quo and so could offer significant change (Bridge et al. 2013; Cook and Swyngedouw 2012; Haarstad and Wanvik 2017).
4.5 Selecting the Barton Moss case

In 2013 there was only a single case of urban ‘fracking’ proposed in the UK and that was Barton Moss in Greater Manchester. For earlier studies on responses to new energy infrastructure development, the Barton Moss case would be an outlier, or extreme example of a struggle around proposed new energy infrastructure development. This is because these studies justify case selection by the comparability of populations, wealth, geography and demographics between cases. Put another way, previous energy geographies cases have avoided intensive studies in favour of extensive studies (Sayer 1992). Extensive studies allow the researcher to produce results that are representative because they can easily be replicated elsewhere. However, extensive studies cannot provide the same depth as a single intensive case.

The Barton Moss case is based around a significant event, which is local opposition to shale gas development in Greater Manchester. Geographically, it has significant factors that make it suitable for research that makes contributions to wider bodies of research. The exploratory well is situated on greenbelt land within the city of Salford and the Greater Manchester city-region, making it alternately urban and rural, depending on the scale of analysis used. This means that analysis can provide similarities and counterpoints with energy geographies research into the deployment of renewables into urban areas and the deployment of unconventional technologies into rural areas. There is an opportunity here to interrogate perceptions of ‘fracking’ which may be based in alternate understandings of the environment in which the development is proposed. Some participants may relate to the site as urban and some as rural and this could impact on the ways that they understand the issues and engage in the conflict.

In other words, it is the spatially complex and theoretically problematic nature of the case that makes it a suitable critical case study for this thesis. What makes the case of particular interest is that to this author’s knowledge it is the first European example of unconventional energy exploration in a city-region. In the US, urban communities have responded to unconventional energy development in different
ways, with some banning it and others encouraging it (Weible and Heikkila 2016). Fort Worth in Dallas, for example, was the first major city to allow extensive drilling within its borders and now has over 2000 wells drilled, with local opposition groups reporting air pollution, environmental harm and ill health (Desmog, 2013). What this means is that cities are potential sites for future unconventional energy extraction. Examining the ways in which local actors respond to shale gas exploration in Greater Manchester can produce generalizable observations that can contribute to discussions on potential developments in other cities.

Clearly, while Barton Moss is the first example of urban exploration for shale gas in the UK, it is not an idiosyncratic case. Given how densely populated parts of the UK and also the EU can be there could very likely be further cases close-by in the future. A key example is London where one company claims to have bought exploration licenses that run up to Westminster (BBC 2014). The extension of unconventional extractive territories into city-regions means that findings can be relevant for other cities where development could happen in the future or where it is happening in the present. The Barton Moss case is also comparable to conflicts in city-regions around other forms of energy extraction, for example CBM and UCG. It creates an empirical space in which to test societal theories and then generalise findings. In sum, Barton Moss is the only UK example of unconventional shale gas extraction in a city-region, and is a suitable critical case to focus on.
4.6 Between an uprising and a protest: the Barton Moss anti-fracking ‘struggle’

The way that a case is framed helps determine how it is understood, what it is related to and what is overlooked by research. The language of clearly ‘political’ radical urban uprisings, used in cases that include Syntagma and Taksim Square (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Erensü and Karaman 2017), seems inappropriate to the Barton Moss case, in which the camp did not ‘erupt’ and the Protectors did not rise up en masse. Conversely, much of what happened at the Protectors camp – which activists intentionally avoided calling a protest camp, because they did not see their role as protestors – and on five months of slow-walks outside the exploratory well, as well as in the regional assembly and on nearby estates, does not sit easily with research on post-political ‘protest’ (Haughton et al. 2016).

To enable research to examine ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ as a single event, the case study is described as an anti-fracking ‘struggle’. This word incorporates the sustained efforts of heterogenous activists to be visible in the space outside the exploratory well and slow the movement of vehicles on and off the site, as well as their broader efforts across the city-region to organise, engage in an emancipatory politics and build solidarity for the anti-fracking movement, both in the city-region and with other local actors globally. The ambiguity of the term recognises that the politics of this event, while not ‘political’ in the sense used by Rancière, is political in the sense that it describes dissent staged by activists who engaged in peaceful, collective opposition to fracking development. An important part of their ‘struggle’ is spatialising their politics in order to scale up and make visible local grievances, practice alternative ways of democratic engagement and experiment with a radical political imaginary. As such, the term also refers to the political space opened up by the anti-fracking movement within the city-region of Greater Manchester, from which activists staged their dissent.
4.7 Engaging with the case: moving beyond the polemic

This section outlines practical decisions made for the planning and conducting of research to ensure the methods used and data collected were relevant to the research questions. It discusses the experience of incorporating quieter voices into analysis and of collecting data on a controversial and polemical topic.

From the study’s focus on actors come two practical requirements that will aid the learning process ‘in the field’. The first is to build a methodological approach that incorporates into its focus the ‘invisible others’ (Bickerstaff 2012) and the ‘quieter voices’ (Eaton and Kinchy 2016) not present at the event itself. In this case the event is the development of an exploratory well in Barton Moss, Greater Manchester and local responses to development.

A key practical concern that comes out of the research design is conducting the fieldwork so that it incorporates the absent and the quieter voices within the case (Bickerstaff 2012; Eaton and Kinchy 2016). The visual ‘glare’ of a camp of protestors and a drilling site could obscure important, yet absent, actors from view. In the context of the research questions set out for this thesis, a key concern of the research design should be to identify and interview these actors. One way to approach this would have been to focus on actors engaged in the anti-fracking movement, as a way to build trust and rapport with them. However, this would not have produced data relevant to the research questions. For this thesis, in addition to anti-fracking activists, the research was designed to identify actors that were not involved in social movements and were in non-mobilised communities, who might individually oppose development. Specifically, people who lived in the immediate vicinity, or community and council actors who had been involved in council-led meetings with the developer were approached. From these initial contacts, snowball sampling helped to meet hidden actors in harder-to-engage communities.

To contextualise community actor interviews, interviews were sought with dominant actors that included the developer and the land owner for the exploratory well site. Some researchers of local opposition to development have
advised against this because they experienced difficulties getting interviews with both community and industry actors (Brasier et al. 2011; Szolucha 2016). Other scholars argue that it is unlikely a researcher will be able to develop a relationship based in trust with both sides of the fracking debate, so it is better to focus on either industry or activist actors (Simonelli 2014). For this case, when communicating the aims of the study to actors, the issues were framed as neither ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ fracking and interviews were sought with a focus on understanding differential responses to development. While it is true that there was not a relationship of trust developed with industry actors, they were willing to conduct interviews, trusting the credentials of the University of Manchester and the anonymity of the research process. For other actors that were seen more frequently, for example amongst activists, a relationship of trust did develop and in some cases has endured following completion of the fieldwork. This means that an honest and pragmatic research design was accepted by actors that were both in favour of and opposed to development, as well as those that were ambivalent. They include activists and actors from mobilised and non-mobilised communities. They also include some actors from industry, whose interviews helped explain the logic of pursuing development against vehement local opposition. This is appropriate to the aim of the thesis which is to investigate the politics involved in the mobilisation and non-mobilisation of communities against unconventional energy development and to understand individual responses across these communities.

The second practical concern is to move beyond the ‘fracking’ polemic in an interview situation. The construction of the fracking debate as a polemic focuses on the extremes of opinion and marginalises actors that have more nuanced perspectives on the issues and may not be present as protestors at the fracking site. A polemical discourse surrounds fracking in the media and influences how the public perceive new fracking energy developments (Bomberg 2017; Cotton 2015; Mercado et al. 2014). Interviews conducted identified that actors would frame the discourse polemically in discussions. This fits with research that finds community actors will only use elements of place attachment that they consider useful as a
discursive resource and hold back elements that they do not (Köhne and Rasch 2017). It means that when asked to talk about fracking in the interviews, some participants would initially frame their concerns according to the polemical discourse around which public debate is constructed.

This creates the practical difficulty that even when the research agenda is explained to participants in the lead up to an interview, they still expect to talk about the issues using a ‘pro’ / ‘anti’ fracking lens. This includes participants from the industry involved in the development of the site. It also includes people who give multiple interviews with the media and expect the interview to require ‘more of the same’.

These two practicalities were key concerns that research design had to address. Through snowball sampling a multifarious range of individual and community actors, an urban medley of mobilised and non-mobilised actors was interviewed. These fitted the criterion of case study selection that a critical case should test a theory in the situation that it is ‘most likely’ to occur (Flyvbjerg 2006b). For the duration of the case there was an opposition camp located outside the exploratory well. Early visits, including overnight stays, were incorporated into scoping interviews. Looking back, the decision to camp with activists is an example of the different ways that an open-ended research design was used to engage with different communities and allowed practical engagement with actors across the case. The overarching aim in doing so was to move beyond reductive interpretations of community engagement that are common to media and sometimes academic research too (Thomas 2015). Around the same time, local, and regional meetings began that were ostensibly ‘anti-fracking’. Attendance at these meetings created opportunities for engagement in the mobilisation of a broader anti-fracking movement in Greater Manchester. It also opened up access to networks that contained actors involved in activism against the development. Importantly, these actors were quite different from the ones that lived at the protest camp.

Contacts at the University were used to develop links in the industry which, through a process of snowball sampling, would lead to key actors involved in the
development itself. The urban context and the historical legacy of land and resource based conflict in the Barton Moss case allowed a contextual analysis of generalizable components to inform wider societal theories on social change and neoliberalisation. Through attendance at local meetings and conversations with people engaged in the anti-fracking struggle, a messy reality emerged of actors that did not choose to speak publicly or place themselves in either the ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ fracking camps. The process of learning about the case and of gaining the trust of local actors and industry took weeks and sometimes months of patience and stubbornness to realise.
4.8 Choice of methods

Documentary analysis, participant observation and interviewing were combined to undertake fieldwork. In reflecting on these methods, this section discusses their advantages and limitations to data collection, and how they were adapted to the specific conditions of the case and the context of identifying individualised and collective responses in the anti-fracking struggle at Barton Moss.

4.8.1 Documentary analysis

At the start of the research, a desk review of grey literature was conducted in preparation for interviews. It was directed to better understand the historical social relations that underpin the case and to research the interaction of actors in the Barton Moss area. This is an important part of understanding struggles around new energy infrastructure development (Bridge et al., 2013). The review of historical documents and media in the Barton Moss area incorporated literature on local resistance and organised protest. The initial foray into local history was helpful for the interviews as it helped relate to the participants and contextualise responses to the proposed development.

Documentary analysis incorporated a broad range of ‘texts’ that include written, visual (for example maps, charts and pictures) and electronic materials (Shurmer-Smith 2001, p.123). Sources used to access historical documents include local libraries, Union Trades Councils, Astley Green Colliery Museum, the People’s History Museum and the Working Class Movement library. Among documents examined were meeting minutes circulated by anti-fracking groups and online public materials from social media which actors used in the struggle. Maps were sourced from the John Rylands Library as well as local libraries and through local interest groups. The process of collecting and collating information was on-going throughout the fieldwork period. A few useful sources were provided by participants in the study. In this way, learning about the case and reviewing
documents was enmeshed with the process of learning about the actors and the ways that their human environment vulnerabilities and social relations linked them to the struggle.

Analysis was conducted through the ordering and coding of texts and through basic discourse analysis. Meaning was understood to be intertextual, produced between the texts and through the context in which they were circulated (Seale 2004; Silverman 2010).

4.8.2 Participant observation

Participant observation was important for collecting data in the field and gaining a broader understanding of the case and actors within it. In particular, it was useful for understanding the complex range of actors that made up the anti-fracking movement, through attendance at local and regional anti-fracking meetings as well as the Barton Moss Camp and the protests outside the exploratory well. Participant observation offers opportunities to analyse interactions between actors that have not been setup by the researcher and can go beyond what people would explain in an interview or through documentation. Given the complexity of the actor networks that made up the anti-fracking movement, these opportunities proved important and allowed an exploration of day-to-day interactions that would not have been possible to observe in an interview situation.

Participant observation involved attendance at local anti-fracking meetings, Greater Manchester anti-fracking meetings and North West anti-fracking meetings. It also included staying at the protestor camp at Barton Moss, joining and photographing actions including slow-walks to the exploratory well and attending court hearings for protestors arrested on slow-walks. Attendance at these events was opportunistic and closely connected to the snowball sampling which opened access to less visible, key actors who attended these events. In some cases, attendance was negotiated through offering practical support, for example taking minutes at meetings and recording events at the protest camp. The representations made at grassroots and regional anti-fracking meetings by interested actors and the
discussion that followed them offered first-person accounts of experiences of
development at Barton Moss and at other sites in the UK. The minutes taken at
these meetings were treated as useful primary data for analysis of the different
ways that actors responded to development, both individually and with other
actors. Attendance allowed observation of community mobilisation in practice, and
the opportunity for informal discussions which could be followed up on in
interviews.

The reflexive tension between participation as an observer and observing as a
participant was different for each of the situations observed and participated in.
For meetings the role was one of silent observer, yet it was also that of a
participant (albeit a participant whose task was to observe and record details of the
meeting). For protest marches involvement on the ‘slow-walks’ – which led a
convoy of trucks on and off the exploratory well each weekday – was as a full
participant yet also observing and recording with a camera. This was encouraged by
protestors as a way to reduce the chances of police brutality and to gather
evidence where that did happen. At the protest camp engagement in its various
spaces was as a silent observer. An exception was the initial few days helping set up
the camp and sleeping at the site. Living at the site helped to understand the
difficult conditions activists lived in (it was a cold winter) and to appreciate the
solidarity of the group as they helped each other.

Participant observation allowed contextual information to be gathered which could
then be explored further in interviews. At meetings and for individual
conversations, my status as a researcher was carefully emphasised, although
consent was harder to confirm than in an interview situation. For each event,
observations were noted down in a research diary immediately after it concluded,
once there was time to reflect on what had been observed. The diary provided
information that helped to understand some of the conflicts between actors, to
triangulate information collected from interviews and documentary analysis, and to
identify which voices in the anti-fracking movement were louder and more
frequent and which were quieter and harder to identify.
In the empirical chapters of this thesis there are two photographs of a protest that I took part in, and one of an activist being interviewed by the media. Before taking these photos people who were in profile were asked permission and it was explained that they would be used in a thesis. In addition, before going on these protests I was clear with people (including the police) that my role at the protests was as an observer and researcher. Because the protests attracted international media attention, events depicted in these photos were also filmed by the media, as well as activists and the police.

For the purpose of this thesis, to ensure the anonymity of people in these photos, image manipulation is used to conceal the faces and noses of all people who are visible. This method is used in the medical profession and social sciences as a way to anonymise people who have not given their consent (Tranberg et al. 2003; Palacios-González 2015; Jordan 2014). The use of image manipulation has its limitations as a method for anonymising participants, and has been criticised by some for ‘criminalising’ photos by taking away the humanity of participants (Wiles et al. 2012). While this is a valid criticism, it remains a suitable method and is arguably better than removing these photos from the thesis altogether. For this reason, it is used to ensure that identities are not revealed, since the people could not be contacted individually to confirm their written consent.

4.8.3 Interviews

Over the course of the fieldwork period 40 interviews were conducted. Of these, 37 interviews were audio-recorded, that lasted between forty minutes and two hours. Three interviews were conducted in note form, because the people being interviewed did not want to be recorded. Preceding the fieldwork, three scoping interviews were conducted with activists who engaged in anti-fracking struggles in neighbouring Lancashire and in West Sussex. These helped understand the national anti-fracking context in which the Barton Moss struggle emerged, but are not included in Appendix 3 because they were not directly used in the thesis.
Taken as a whole, the case study ‘event’ began at the point activists set up camp in November 2013 and concludes at the point that they left in April 2014. Some actors were interviewed following this date because of the time taken to confirm an interview with them. To ensure a representative range of actors were interviewed the list of participants was initially broken down through a process of actor analysis. This set of tools can be used to identify and approach actors by mapping their position in relation to the issue of fracking, as well as each other (Varvasovszky and Brugha 2000). As discussed in the previous section the complexity of the case meant that many of the actors were not immediately visible and so this process was on-going throughout the period of fieldwork. ‘Gatekeeper’ contacts were initially approached at local interest meetings, academic and industry events.

Having identified initial participants, ‘snowball sampling’ was used to identify further participants relevant to the study. Snowball sampling utilises the social networks of initial respondents to identify appropriate participants that are able to comment on the subject under study (Silverman 2009). It has been identified as useful when accessing study populations that have a low visibility, requiring a referral chain that develops from an initial contact (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Snowball sampling is appropriate to the Barton Moss case. The focus of the research questions is on understanding the positions of different actors, many of whom are of low visibility. They were identified through an enmeshed and on-going learning process of a desk review, participation in the anti-fracking movement, attendance at industry events and interviews with participants in the case. Actors, including local businesses, NGO’s and unions often remained quiet about their involvement in the events that unfolded at Barton Moss. As discussed, a key reason for this is that the public debate on fracking is polarised and views are interpreted by both media and participants as either ‘for’ or ‘against’ fracking. Some actors had more nuanced understandings than those of the anti-frack groups and contractors and so were less able to fit into this debate.

The phrasing of questions in an interview is of critical importance as a determinant of its utility to the researcher (Kitchin and Tate 2013). To ensure questions were constructed with relevance to the thesis, and that there were common themes
across interviews, a schedule was designed for the interview process (Appendix 4). The interview schedule begins with questions that the participant would likely feel comfortable answering, with more difficult questions broached later in the interview, when participants felt more relaxed. Before beginning the schedule, participants should ‘warm up’ to the semi-structured interview process (Longhurst 2009). A good way to do this is to engage in general conversation about current events, not related to the study itself as a way to build rapport with participants. To this end, practical ‘hooks’ were used, built around getting a hot drink, the weather and so on. Each interview began with 5 to 10 minutes of general conversation with the participant before starting the formal interview and pressing the record button. This time was used to check that the participant was at ease and understood the interview process. It also helped engagement with and empathy for the participants’ situations on a more human level than simply jumping straight in with the interview questions.

To get past the ‘pro/anti’ framings of fracking in the interview process, interviews were in depth and around an hour long. Transcripts of two interviews are available in Appendices 5 and 6, which are respectively for a FFGM and camp activist and provide some insight into how the interviews were conducted. Each interview was based around carefully planned themes and questions designed to pull out underlying concerns and motivations that participants may not have been willing to express in public. As noted above, this was particularly helpful where participants sought to anticipate which issues were likely to be important for the study rather than discussing the issues that they found personally important. Actors could also withhold information due to respective concerns about the implications that their comments becoming public knowledge could have on their livelihoods. For example, some local residents and workers were reluctant to take part in the interviews because of the power that Peel Group holds in the local area. Peel Group is the dominant land owner (see figure 9) and part owner of the local road networks. In 2013 and 2014, when the research was conducted, these roads were in a state of disrepair but due to be resurfaced. The company’s power over local infrastructure and land was enough to convince quite a few local tenants not to
engage in the struggle. Some even cited this reason for refusal to partake in interviews. Those people were not formally interviewed but they were willing to talk with me about their concerns as long as their comments remained ‘off the record’.

The first section of the interview schedule is designed to collect data on the participant / actor (e.g. how long have you lived in the area?) that will both contextualise the interview and put the participant at ease by asking them questions that they find easy to answer. The second section is intended to probe first thoughts or automatic links (Joffe and Lee, 2004; Sherry-Brennan, 2008) that the participant associates with fracking. The question on feelings is designed to ‘tap idiosyncratic responses’ that reflect ‘an individual’s “stored reaction” to the phenomenon under investigation’ (Joffe, 2003; p.110). Associations that were revealed by the initial questions can then be explored further in the third section. In the third section, questions are open ended and explore understanding of the development and ‘fracking’, human-environment vulnerabilities and historical, ideological or personal opinions that might influence how fracking is understood and how the participant / actor reacted (or not) in the struggle.
4.9 Data analysis and writing the thesis

In all, 44 participants were interviewed and coded using data analysis program Atlas.ti. Qualitative data analysis software has the practical benefit that it makes large data sets easier to handle, allowing the researcher to break up and categorise data into similar groupings (Kitchin and Tate 2013). It can also enhance empirical credibility by making ‘the research processes more transparent and replicable’ (Hwang 2008, p.525).

Actors are defined as those that participate in the struggle at Barton Moss or are potentially affected by the development of the exploratory well. For example, farmers who extract freshwater from the sandstone aquifer beneath Barton Moss have a stake in development since the exploratory well has to pass through the aquifer in order to reach the shale bed. This means that even though most farmers did not react in the struggle they are still actors in this case study. Appendix 3 categorises actors interviewed according to their involvement in the anti-fracking struggle. Interviews are separated into groups ‘Activists’, ‘Fracking industry and landowner’, ‘Experts and media’, ‘Resident’, ‘Council’ and ‘Businesses and NGO’s’. These categories are intentionally general in scope, because the sensitive and contemporary nature of fracking meant that extra care needed to be taken to ensure anonymity for participants.

If members of a grouping have no clear stake in the development and also did not engage in the struggle then they do not fall within the scope of this study. This means that interviews coded as ‘resident’ (Appendix 3) are residents who lived in a community near to the exploratory well and engaged in anti-fracking spaces in some form, and so can be defined as actors. It does not refer to all local residents. Neighbouring Irlam and Cadishead estates have a population of 20,190 (Salford City Partnership 2012), and the majority of their residents fall outside the scope of this case study, since they have no clear vested interest and made no visible engagement.
The careful framing of who is defined as an actor is important because a novelty of this case is that rural actors with a clear vested interest did not engage openly in the struggle and did not seek to put forward claims as a community. Instead, actors within these communities responded individually and dealt with their grievances privately. Conversely, others who had no clear vested interest and who did not identify as part of an affected community were actively engaged in the opposition movement. From an urban medley of actors came complex concerns that stimulated variegated reactions to the Barton Moss development. The subsequent opposition movement that formed around these lifted the anti-fracking struggle from a local and site-specific event to a multi-scalar and multi-issue struggle around energy, humanitarian and environmental concerns.

4.9.1 Examining political struggle: mobilising anonymous interviews

A single critical case study should provide granular study of abstractions in a real-life situation (Yin, 2003). For this case, in the process of undertaking the fieldwork the nature of urban politics in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement posed certain limitations to how the interviews could be mobilised. It transpired that a major obstacle to achieving the desired granularity was the vulnerability of the activists who were seeking to rupture the dominant order, meaning that it was not possible to write about who they were or to comment on their positionality. For the anti-fracking activists, there were real concerns that the police were closely monitoring them and seeking to close down the anti-fracking struggle, and that an interview could be incriminating if it were connected to the informant. Anonymity was also a concern for the elite actors involved in the development process, who comprised a small set of people. Including quotes that referenced the position of a participant would have risked exposing their identity. Rural actors were so concerned about the risk of being identified within the study that they refused to be interviewed at all.
This has important implications for the analysis chapters of this thesis, in terms of how analysis engages with the interviews and what claims can be made about political struggle. While there is clearly a need for further granular research on radical protests and urban uprisings, in this case the sensitive nature of the struggle proves a key limitation of the claims that can be made through semi-structured interviews alone. This is a key finding, because it shows the practical and ethical difficulties that are encountered when connecting the political theory being engaged with in the thesis with the practice of radical protests. It is the reason that participant observation of actor engagement in meetings and in the anti-fracking space was used to understand the processes that played out in the anti-fracking struggle.

This approach draws on Karaliotas (2014), a thesis on Urban Politics and Governance in Thessaloniki’s port restructuring, which discusses similar difficulties in its methodology section. Rather than use interview quotes to reference the position of a participant, interview data is used to reconstruct the narratives of both the activists and the developers of the exploratory well. As such, the interviews are not intended to provide an objective understanding of the politics around the anti-fracking struggle, but are an opportunity to gain insight into the hegemonic discourses of the established order and of the anti-fracking movement.

To this end, interview participants were encouraged to explain their line of argument to develop their own narrative in the interview that permitted the reconstruction of different narratives around the exploratory well and the broader anti-fracking struggle. For the elite interviews, this meant it was particularly important to recognise the intentions and goals of individual interviewees when conducting the interview (Ward and Jones, 1999).

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4 See the conclusion of chapter three for more detail on this argument.


4.10 Ethics and reflexivity

For this thesis data collection is focused on fracking, an energy controversy for which opinions can be interpreted using a polemical framing (Mazur 2014; O’Brien and Hipel 2016) or concealed when considered unhelpful to the anti / pro-fracking cause (Köhne and Rasch 2017). In addition, opinions can be concealed when there are potential consequences for actors in their private lives or professional roles. In this context, reflexivity can help the research to ensure ethical practice and responsibility for the line of questioning pursued in interviews (Berger 2015; Guillemin and Gillam 2004).

Where participants were identified and agreed to be interviewed, potential interviewees were given a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix 7) and an informed consent form (Appendix 8). The PIS informs potential participants about the focus of the study and that the interview would be recorded. It advises that they will be contacted within a couple of weeks to register their interest (or non-interest) in taking part. The pause between initial and second contact was intended to allow potential participants time to read provided information and consider whether they would like to be involved in the study.

When conducting research on a potentially sensitive issue it is important to appreciate the help of actors that participate and to empathise with their situation (Bondi 2003; Moss 2002). Where an actor agreed to participate, they were sent an informed consent form and asked to sign and return it when ready. On reading the information sheet some people chose not to participate because they were not satisfied that the interview would remain confidential and had concerns about the potential consequences its publication could have on their own situation. Each of these people agreed to informal and unrecorded conversations based around the research themes, with notes added to the research diary following the conversation.

Semi-structured interviews should be fairly informal in nature. They require the researcher to construct questions, identify and invite participants, select a location
for the interview and transcribe data, at each stage considering the ethical issues and power relations involved in undertaking qualitative research (Longhurst 2009). Each interview is a social interaction and there are no hard and fast rules to follow (Valentine 2005). There are, however, ethical guidelines that should be respected when designing the interview process (Longhurst 2009).

When interviewing participants it is important to be reflexive and to recognise your own positionality (Berger 2015; Valentine 2005). The identity of the researcher shapes interactions with participants and this must be considered when conducting fieldwork and planning the interview process. In this case, actors were varied in socio-economic background and included people who had no fixed abode, retired residents, tenant farmers and industry experts, for example. Barton Moss, the location of the event, was an unfamiliar place for the researcher, which meant that research began from the position of an ‘outsider’ with ‘no personal familiarity or experience with what is being studied’ (Berger 2015, p.219). Over the course of fieldwork this position shifted as the role of academic researcher became increasingly blurred with that of an active participant in the anti-fracking movement. Reflexivity throughout the process of changing conditions from ‘outsider’ to ‘insider’ helped to limit potentially negative effects. It became an opportunity to ‘gain more understanding of the effects of position on the process and product of the study’ (Berger 2015, p.230).

Given the sensitivity of issues discussed and the on-going slow-walks and direct actions at Barton Moss during the interview process, some actors may have been uncomfortable when questioned about their personal situation or their actions during the siting struggle. Recent research on unconventional energy development in the US and UK show that it can induce collective trauma for local communities (Perry 2012; Short and Szolucha 2017) and this case supports these findings. During the operation of the exploratory well at Barton Moss, participants were faced with disruption to their daily lives that included the stress of increased traffic, a heightened police presence, protests along Barton Moss Road and the environmental and health risks that people associated with fracking. In addition, the exploratory well and the Protectors camp placed the local area in the spotlight.
of international media. Unconventional energy development and responses to it trained media and public scrutiny on a place that does not normally receive a lot of outside attention. This had adverse effects on the people who lived near to the exploratory well and on the communities that they are a part of.

While some interviews were conducted during the event, others were arranged in the months following completion of the exploratory well. For those who suspended their day-to-day lives to engage in the struggle, once the anti-fracking movement shifted its focus to other exploratory wells being drilled in the North West\(^5\), its absence was keenly felt. For some local activists, when the anti-fracking movement left Salford they felt forgotten (Resident 4). This meant that even after the event was completed, empathy with the actors and their situation was important when conducting interviews.

One way that the interview process was shaped to help participants feel comfortable was by ensuring an appropriate interview location was used. This became an important part of planning the research strategy. It is essential to find a space that is as neutral as possible, quiet and easy to access for both participant and researcher (Silverman 2009). While these factors are important, choosing an interview location is more than a technical point of selecting a convenient and comfortable space. The interview space can be understood as both a cultural product and a producer of reality (Herzog 2005). For this reason, it is important that the space used does not engender a ‘false’ reality in which participants feel uncomfortable and are unwilling to express themselves openly because of how the space makes them feel.

A possibility considered was to interview participants in a formal space, for example a University or local office room. A disadvantage of using a formal setting is that it can contribute to a more stilted and formal interview (Valentine 2005). Talking to participants in their own space or ‘territory’ facilitates a more relaxed interview and provides contextual data through insights about the participant.

\(^{5}\) Following eviction of the Barton Moss protest camp activists helped set up similar camps at Davyhulme in Greater Manchester, Upton and Bridge Trafford in Cheshire and Crawberry Hill and Kirby Misperton in East Yorkshire.
gained by observing them in their own environment (Valentine 2005, p.118). For this reason, where possible each interview was conducted in a space that they chose and so felt comfortable with. Most actors interviewed in a work capacity chose to be interviewed at their workplace, which is the situation in which they are likely to be most comfortable talking in a professional capacity (McDowell 1997; Valentine 2005). Residents often chose to be interviewed in their homes or in a public space that they knew near to their home. The protestors were interviewed either on site or at a local cafe, depending on their preference. This meant that although the sites themselves varied from the inside of a tent to a plush office in Mayfair, London, the constant between them is that each was chosen by the participants and so were the spaces in which they were most likely to feel comfortable. For each of the interviews, the times of interviews were arranged to match the schedules of participants.

As well as considering the wellbeing of participants it was also necessary to ensure personal safety for the duration of the fieldwork and draw up safety guidelines for fieldwork. These are explained in detail in the ethical approval application that was submitted to the University of Manchester as part of the fieldwork approval process. At the start of the fieldwork the interview schedule was tested in a series of scoping interviews across multiple sites that included the Balcombe anti-fracking camp and an anti-fracking event in St Anns, Lancashire. Following these the schedules were adjusted by re-ordering the questions and removing some of the technical terms which had confused the interviewees. A couple of questions were too abstract, and these were adjusted slightly so that they were more grounded and less ‘academic’ in their phrasing. The modified schedule was adopted for future interviews. The scoping interviews are considered secondary interviews and are not directly referred to in the analysis.
4.11 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined how a post-foundational analytical framework is applied to research, which focuses on the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement and its struggle against the operation of Barton Moss exploratory well. Applying a post-foundational framework to an anti-fracking struggle in the city-region of Greater Manchester is important because it addresses the need, highlighted in chapter two, to conduct research on opposition to ‘fracking’ infrastructure development that goes beyond a focus on the affected community, to incorporate both politicised and quieter voices into its analysis.

The framework is designed to enable focus primarily on activists and the protest spaces that they open up. Specifically, it enables focus on people who have been marginalised from processes of development on fracking, and seek to make their dissent visible through public protest and the occupation of public space. Chapter two argued that research shows that in the UK a tightly constrained recognition of the ‘community’ in public consultations marginalises most people from the development process, meaning that protest spaces become the space in which they can seek a platform for their grievances to be heard. This is of particular concern in the North West, where exploration for shale gas is focused on the Bowland shale and passes beneath the highly populated city-region of Greater Manchester. In a city-region, a focus on the local community inevitably marginalises most people, meaning that they will not have opportunity to voice their grievances through the development process.

The focus on a contemporary urban environmental struggle creates an exciting opportunity to address recent criticisms, examined in chapter three, that Rancière creates an artificial separation between ‘politics’ and the ‘political’. Building on a call by Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) for more cases that examine radical urban politics, the framework is designed to enable focus on the protest space opened up by the anti-fracking movement. This is important because it re-centres analysis onto the autonomous actors who occupied this space and would be overlooked by
a focus on social movement actors. It also allows research to move beyond simple interpretations of community opposition to the siting of new energy infrastructure projects, toward grounded research on the organisational practices of the anti-fracking movement and the reasons for differential reactions of actors.

Returning to the research aim of this thesis, the methodology is designed to apply a research design to study of an urban anti-fracking struggle that allows analysis to extend beyond a single community, and to understand the organisational practices that shape the broader anti-fracking struggle. Addressing this aim is important because ‘fracking’ is different to previous forms of energy extraction and brings extractive processes into highly populated and urban places. This is not acknowledged sufficiently in existing research, in terms of how cases should be framed to ensure that the conceptual focus does not marginalise key actors, and how the place, in terms of its historical protests and direct action and urban setting, is enmeshed with the struggle that emerges. In this case, snowball sampling is used to reach less visible actors and actors are identified according to their engagement in the struggle, rather than affiliation to a social movement or community group. For activists, interviews are extensive, and include questions that explore both how they understand the anti-fracking struggle and their roles in previous struggles and social movements.

In summary, the research design is intended to move the empirical focus beyond either social movement or community actors. Keeping this in mind, it is also important to ensure that this does not lead to research overlooking the important roles that social movement actors play opening up and sustaining protest spaces. Instead, the analytical framework, and its focus on the political spaces opened up, allows the researcher to examine the roles of community and social movement actors alongside autonomous actors. This means that analysis includes all types of people, organisations and groups, or ‘actors’ that engaged in the anti-fracking struggle at Barton Moss. Social movement actors in these spaces are acknowledged by post-foundational research, but have not been studied in any detail using a post-foundational analytical framework. Put another way, a focus on spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement creates the opportunity to examine how different
forms of political organisation shape the opening up (and closing down) of political spaces and the roles of social movement actors, as well as autonomous actors, within these spaces.
5 Fracking in a city-region: contextualising the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle

5.1 Introduction

This chapter places the thesis in the context of Greater Manchester, the city-region in which the anti-fracking movement emerged against a nascent ‘fracking’ industry across the North West of England. The formation and the discordant orientations of the anti-fracking movement are examined in the context of the development process for the exploratory well and the repertoires of the urban social movements that preceded the struggle at Barton Moss. Analysis of the local development process is separated from the regional emergence of an anti-fracking movement to argue that different framings of the development are mobilised by industry and activist actors which determine who is included and who is excluded from the development process. Specifically, industry actors, who marginalise most local people from the development process, frame the development locally and connect it to a future fracking industry in the North West, while anti-fracking activists frame the exploratory well regionally and focus on stopping a future fracking industry in the city-region.

From a post-foundational perspective, placing the anti-fracking struggle in its urban context is particularly important because hierarchical social orders and the political are seen as enmeshed together, within the city (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). Drawing on the philosophy of Rancière (Rancière 1999), the police are understood here as ‘an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying’ (Rancière 1999, p.29). From this perspective, the anti-fracking movement emerged from within a particular social order, which had marginalised grievances on ‘fracking’ that were deemed to be insensible, made invisible the formerly visible and rendered into noise the formerly audible.

The chapter begins by examining reasons that industry actors spoke about the
exploratory well in relation to a future shale gas extraction industry in the North West, when the well was located in the city-region of Greater Manchester. It then turns to the post-democratic tactics of the council that marginalised local communities from Barton Moss exploratory well. Marginalisation is understood as exclusion from the processes of development – in particular the CLG – for the exploratory well. The final section examines the formation of regional assembly ‘Frack Free Greater Manchester’ (FFGM), which formed from autonomous groups focused on stopping fracking in the city-region.
5.2 ‘Fracking’ in a city-region, or in the North West?

Barton Moss exploratory well is located on Barton Moss Road in Salford, alongside the M62 and on the edge of Salford’s greenbelt. The outline of the well site is visible on aerial imagery taken two years after the well had finished operating (Figure 2). Planning permission for exploration at the site was submitted in 2010 and only received 124 public objections. Permission was granted for:

The construction of a new access road off Barton Moss Road. The installation of wells, production and power generating facilities and the extraction of coal bed methane and the subsequent restoration of the site.

Council et al., 2010, accessed on 9th May 2016

As this passage indicates the site had planning permission for coal bed rather than shale gas exploration and extraction. In 2011 Island Gas (IGas) acquired the planning permission when they took control of Nexxon Energy. At this point the company was ‘only looking at coal bed methane’ (Industry 4). Following completion of the exploratory well, they acknowledged a further aim had been to drill past the coal bed and explore the Namurian shale sections⁶ ‘because of what's happened with shale in the US’ (Industry 4).

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⁶These are the Sabden shale and the Upper and Lower Bowland shales.
Figure 2: A map of Barton Moss where exploratory well and Protectors camp were located (Digimaps n.d.). Image taken on 11th June, 2015
To date, the Barton Moss development is the only UK extraction site in a city-region from which samples of shale have been taken. The site is located within PEDL license 193, which was auctioned to Nexxon Energy as part of the UK government’s 13th license round for onshore fields and licenses (Appendix 9). Exploring for gas in a city-region made the development one of international significance and in October 2013 the New York Times ran an article which noted that what happens there could determine Britain and Europe’s future approach to shale gas (Reed 2013).

The overlap of PEDL licenses with cities and towns is not apparent in DECC’s map of licenses awarded in the 13th licensing round, because most urban conurbations are not included on the map (See Appendix 9 for the full map of the UK and Appendix 1 for the North West section). Of particular note is that the map does not include Greater Manchester7, and instead provides rural markers, that include farms and a village in Lancashire. The conspicuous absence of the city-region from the map means that it is not immediately clear which PEDL license extends into its borders. Figure 3 overlays the PEDL license with a map of Greater Manchester:

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7 Pickering, with a population of 6,855(Population Statistics 2018), is the only city labelled on the map.
Figure 3: A map that shows the extent that PEDL 193 extends into the city-region of Greater Manchester
The map shows the extent that the licensed area overlaps with the city-region. Around half of the PEDL license is within the city-region and crosses into Salford and Wigan as well as a small section of Manchester. In 2013, following lobbying by anti-fracking activists, Manchester City Council declared itself to be anti-fracking (Councillor 1). For the duration of the occupation and dissent staged outside Barton Moss exploratory well, Salford Council refused to take a position on ‘fracking’ or shale gas exploration (Councillor 2; Councillor 3). Wigan council were also quiet during the anti-fracking struggle. Activists related that when lobbied, councillors refused to take a position on fracking or the exploratory well at Barton Moss (FFGM 10).

Although IGas only had planning permission to explore coal measures— rather than the deeper shale formations – for gas, the development at Barton Moss was a precursor to future shale gas production in the North West of England. This is evidenced by a report commissioned by IGas and released shortly after work at the exploratory well was completed:

The development scenario... envisages the development of 30 shale gas production sites, each site comprising 10 vertical ‘motherbore’ production wells with 4 horizontal laterals (40 laterals per production site). Overall development costs to 2035 are estimated at £9.8 billion with a peak annual cost of £945 million and an average annual cost of £466 million.

Amion, 2014; p. i

The above extract indicates the extent of an envisioned industry, with development costs estimated at £9.8 billion to 2035. Commercial extraction sites modelled in this report are considerably larger than a single exploratory well. Each of them is made up of 10 production wells creating 40 laterals that extend outwards from a site. They are designed to focus the surface activities required by a commercial-scale industry into as few sites as possible. ‘Motherbores’ (ibid. 2014) reduce the amount of sites and surface area needed to reach a commercial scale of extraction, making
them more suitable for use in highly populated areas, yet they also raise questions about where these sites will be located and which communities will bear the concentrated impacts of development. These wells are referred to as ‘superwells’ (Protectors camp 6) by anti-fracking activists.

In interviews, industry actors were candid that the exploratory well was intended to explore for shale gas and help to ascertain the viability of a regional shale gas industry. They argued that the development of a ‘fracking industry’ provided clear regional advantages:

In the North West the potential for jobs and investment is something you can’t ignore, can’t miss, it’s too big and important, we’ve got major businesses, energy users, along the canal, people who use gas in the process, gas for energy, chemical businesses, those businesses are having to face costs of importing gas, which is potentially less easy to secure, possibly more expensive, it makes a lot of sense to be using indigenous resources.

Industry 1

In this extract, natural gas is described as an ‘indigenous resource’ that will benefit industrial, rather than domestic, actors. This argument is common to the industry interviews conducted for this thesis. As one actor explained, they wanted to create an ‘Aberdeen of the North West’ (Industry 4):

If you look at where the geology is, and you look at the infrastructure that exists [goes to map on wall] I mean even just old fashioned infrastructure like the Manchester Ship Canal, you’ve got steel production as well... you could think about taking water from the Manchester Ship Canal, using that in the industry, bringing sand up the Manchester Ship Canal, you could clean it up, you could put it back in... you’ve got lots of big, industrial, heavy users of gas in this area as well, so you’ve got the whole, reinvigorating of the industry.

Industry 4
The Manchester ship canal, referred to here, stretches from Salford to Liverpool. Developer and land owner Peel Group controls the Manchester Ship Canal plus land acquired from ‘the acquisition of other companies and landholdings’ (Industry 3). These include significant parts of Barton and Chat Moss, where the exploratory well is located (Figure 8). Plans to develop land along the Manchester Ship Canal are outlined in regional development plan the Atlantic Gateway (Atlantic Gateway 2012), which connects Greater Manchester to Liverpool and envisions changes to international shipping routes. Importantly, the plan is ‘not just about shipping, it’s about all forms of development’ (Developer2014B). These developments would be along ‘the Manchester Ship Canal corridor [which] would go from Manchester to Liverpool, then you’ve got the Port of Liverpool’ (Developer2014B).

A recent study of the Atlantic Gateway notes that city leaders in Greater Manchester see the imaginary it promotes ‘as potentially dissipating effort and detracting from the city-region case’ (Hincks et al. 2017, p.26). For the Barton Moss exploratory well this concern proved to be correct, and the Atlantic Gateway provided an alternative that the industry considered more appealing than the city-region. In 2015 an industry report argued that the Atlantic Gateway was particularly suitable to a future onshore shale gas industry because ‘there exists an infrastructure of suitable land, premises, and connectivity already in place ’ (Ineos, 2015; p.21). The industry’s focus on the North West side-steps the identity of ‘Frack Free Greater Manchester’, which was ostensibly focused on stopping fracking in the city-region. In addition, it acknowledges the limited support offered to the industry by Greater Manchester councils who fell within the PEDL 193 license. Their lack of support frustrated actors in the industry:

[whether we pursue developments in Greater Manchester] depends politically whether [Greater] Manchester wake up and say we ought to have something here, but at the moment Liverpool are certainly the ones making the most positive noises.

Industry 4
Industry actors spoke disparagingly about the support they received from Greater Manchester councils (Industry 4; Industry 1), which was less positive than the support offered by Liverpool.

The focus of industry actors on how shale gas will benefit the North West, rather than Greater Manchester, is also partly explained by the close relationship between IGas and Peel Group. Peel Group started talking to IGas in 2008, and worked with the company through Peel Environmental (Industry 1). Although IGas currently ‘lead on all the planning and public engagement side of things’ (Industry 1) in an informal sense the Peel Group advises IGas on local issues, for example on site selection (Industry 1). This relationship has since been formalised through the creation of Peel Gas and Oil (Peel Gas & Oil 2018). The group aims to provide development expertise to the shale gas industry. Specifically, it will ‘seek to facilitate the shale gas industry with what we believe we’re good at doing which is development work... we’d actively get involved in the planning side, so we’d actually go out and do development’ (Industry 1).
5.3 The process of development for Barton Moss exploratory well: the marginalisation of (almost) everyone

In the autumn of 2013, the UK anti-fracking movement’s attention moved to the North-West of England, where an exploratory well was planned by IGas within the city-region of Greater Manchester. The exploratory well was located on the edge of the greenbelt, next to some of the most deprived housing estates in the country (Figure 4). Before the Protector’s camp emerged outside its gates, many residents were not aware of the well’s development and did not understand what the term ‘fracking’ referred to (FFGM 9).

In 2013, when IGas announced the development, the company already had planning permission and did not have a legal obligation to consult with local residents (Industry 4). Planning permission for the appraisal and extraction of coal bed methane was granted by Salford City Council in 2010, when the site was owned by Nexxon Energy. In 2012 IGas had acquired Nexxon Energy and with it the right to develop the Barton Moss site. This meant that IGas had not been involved in the planning permission process and so ‘what you would regularly do on a public consultation with any development had been done... back in 2008, 2009’ (Developer, 2014D).

Despite not being under a legal obligation to consult the community, the exploration company felt that a social license was necessary for the development to proceed, given recent anti-fracking protests in the UK:

Technically, we did not need to do any public engagement per se, but we took the view, after what happened at Balcombe, last summer, this time last year, that we had to be open and transparent, [and] talk to people about what we were doing

Developer, 2014D; p.2
Figure 4: Index of Multiple Deprivation for parts of Salford, Wigan and Trafford that fall inside the IGas PEDL193 license (adapted from 2010 Open Data on Index of Multiple Deprivation)
Balcombe, referred to here, has a population of 1,917 (Nomis 2011). In the summer of 2013 its villagers helped sustain a protest camp outside a nearby exploratory well for three months (Radix 2013). Barton Moss, by comparison, is situated within the densely populated city-region of Greater Manchester. The site lies adjacent to Irlam and Cadishead, which has a population of 20,190 (Salford City Partnership 2012). The developer did not want a repeat of the protests at Balcombe and felt that getting local support was an important precursor to development (Developer, 2014D).

To build support, IGas leafleted 2000 houses near to the site to advertise a community information event about planned works. A total of 80 people attended the event (Industry 4). As well as holding this information event, they made financial contributions to local businesses and ‘were just trying to be a good neighbour’ (Industry 4), for example by repairing fences, building a website for a local company, providing funds for a local fishery and paying for publicity for a local animal rescue site.

The only sustained means of public engagement provided was the Community Liaison Group (CLG), which met regularly in the run up to the exploratory well and during its operation. Ostensibly, the group was the community’s voice in the development process. It was presented by the authorities as an opportunity for the exchange of information on the construction and operation of the site and for two-way dialogue between community members and the developer. These prerogatives may have held true for its members, but for the broader community that were excluded from the meetings the common feeling was that their voices went unheard as development proceeded (Resident 3; Resident 4). For example, when residents were told about the meetings by anti-fracking activists, they tried to attend the next one, held at their local sports stadium. The residents were stopped by security and escorted from the building (Protectors camp 6). Subsequently, a local resident submitted a Freedom of Information request to Salford City Council asking for more information on the meetings:
[I request] the full minutes of meetings for ALL meetings that have been attended by either a councillor or a council representative. I require the dates of these meetings as well as if possible a list of people who attended.

Salford City Council, 2013 (Appendix 10)

The council responded to this request by explaining that they could not provide any details, because:

The liaison meetings are not Council meetings, they are arranged by IGas and any invites and minutes are provided by IGas. The requested information is not held for Council business and is the property of IGas in their capacity as monitoring liaison, to carry out condition Section 25 of the Planning Permission. We cannot provide copies of the minutes as they are not held for Council business.

Salford City Council, 2013 (Appendix 10)

Although the number of residents on the CLG is not a matter of public record, a leaked copy of the minutes for one meeting lists one farmer and two residents in attendance, as well as three representatives from the council and four from IGas (Appendix 11, Salford City council, 2013). Copies of these minutes were circulated at the camp and activist meetings and reinforced a sense that the majority of people’s voices were being ignored, and that the CLG was a front for a developer-led project that did not acknowledge local opposition. Inevitably, there was some suspicion amongst excluded residents about what was being agreed at these meetings by the community representatives (Resident 3). This was raised at anti-fracking meetings a number of times, on one occasion when a resident known to be on the CLG was present, who was accused of collusion with the developer.
Following letters and emails from local residents, their MP Barbara Keeley raised concerns about the private nature of the CLG with IGas, saying people felt excluded and that:

"It appears to me that the current forum is not giving the whole community the opportunity to discuss issues that may arise during the construction and operation of the site. It is essential that all residents in communities affected by operations at the site are able to have their views represented at the Community Group. If any residents in those communities do not feel that they are being given a voice or a chance to raise issues, then clearly this needs to be addressed."

Keeley in Salford Star, 22nd January 2014

In response, rather than open up the meetings or make the minutes publicly available, the company offered a recorded voicemail line that people could leave questions on (Salford Star, 2014).

During the operation of the exploratory well the CLG remained the official connection between the developer, council and local communities. Local people who were marginalised from this group approached the council on questions of participation and consultation, which they pursued through the technocratic apparatus of local governance. As with Haughton et al. (2016) this resulted in a foreclosing of radical political heterogeneity as councillors employed de-politicizing tactics:

De-politicizing tactics... manage conflict through foregrounding technical or managerial solutions for consensually established problems or issues in a way that forecloses or subsumes radical political heterogeneity of views and positions under a techno-managerial frame.

Haughton et al., 2016, p. 477
Residents noted that the council had not taken a position on fracking development yet and hoped that through campaigning they could get councillors to publically state they were ‘anti-fracking’. They did not realise that the neutrality of their councillors was pre-meditated:

> We as local councillors can’t express as for or against, because if we do then we would not be able to take part in a vote as part of the planning

Councillor 2

In this interview with a local councillor his refusal to take a position on fracking is justified on the grounds that stating a public opinion would ‘disenfranchise ourselves and the people that vote for us’ (Councillor 2). This position is predicated on the argument that opposing a given technology demonstrates bias toward all related developments. During the fieldwork, the argument was put to a councillor in another Greater Manchester council, who had recently sought legal advice on whether councillors could oppose new energy developments. He explained that councillors who openly oppose a new energy technology (for example wind, solar, hydraulic fracturing) can sit on planning committees for related applications, so long as they have not expressed bias against the development itself (Councillor 4).

The argument that councillors should not take a position on fracking is also undermined by the example of councillors in Lancashire who were arrested alongside activists following peaceful direct actions against fracking (Reclaim the Power 2017). The arrests achieved local and national media interest (The Gazette 2017; The Independent 2017) and demonstrated solidarity between Lancashire council (who had refused planning permission for exploration sites in Lancashire) and activists.

In Salford however, councillors chose not to offer an opinion on fracking, which meant that they were ignored by the local and national media:
I was delighted, because everybody turned up at the fracking camp, you know, MP’s, other people, they all got publicity, well I just, I was quite happy to leave them to it. I was actually amazed, I thought that the BBC and ITV would have said hey, you cannot escape, you’re [a local politician], we want a meeting with you, but they never did, no and I was happy with that. I never said no, I just was never asked, and I did not encourage.

Councillor 3

Whether it was a legal requirement or a tactic for non-engagement, the policy of ‘sitting on the fence’ (Councillor 2) proved effective at reducing media attention. However, it was also mis-interpreted by some local people and Greater Manchester activists as uncertainty about whether to support the technology or to oppose it. Working autonomously, local community groups sought to voice their grievances from within the apparatus of local governance. They hoped to persuade councillors to publically state that they were anti-fracking (Autonomous activist 17).

A key way that local groups took action was to conduct and submit surveys to the council that showed there was local opposition to fracking development. The first of these was led by an Irlam and Cadishead residents group, who compiled a public consultation report for which they ‘interviewed about 500 people and then... compiled the results’ (Resident 4). The report, called ‘Save Salford, Extreme Energy Public Consultation’ claims that people oppose fracking for a range of environmental and social reasons and ‘we spelt it out very clearly what people’s concerns were’ (Resident 4). The group sent it to interested parties 'FoE, FFGM... we sent it to all the Salford City councillors and people like that' (Resident 4). Activists shared the report through their networks (FFGM 9), but the council did not respond and so 'whether they read it or not I do not know' (Resident 4).

Shortly after the first survey was completed, residents of neighbouring Brookhouse estate conducted ‘a survey of a small housing estate [the Brookhouse estate] of about... 1000 to 5000 homes near the fracking site of Barton Moss' (Autonomous
The survey was conducted with the help of a Greater Manchester activist who worked with them over a period of months, going door-to-door on the estate. Once the survey was completed, they tried to submit their findings to the council:

We took the result to the councillors and the response was, they were basically on the defence and totally hostile and not like oh wow, cool, you've done the survey, what did the residents in our area think? They were just like, we don't know if we trust this, we don't know how you've done this, we're not sure about this.

Autonomous activist 16

This extract shows disconnect between the residents’ expectation that the council would be appreciative of their efforts and the defensive and hostile response of councillors. In Rancière’s language, this disconnect is between the expectation of people that in a democracy they each have an equal say and the realisation that their grievances are marginalised as noise, rather than heard as legitimate voices. The experience was disheartening, both for the community group and the activist who ‘did not have much faith in the council after that meeting’ (Autonomous activist 16).

As well as the surveys, residents tried to force councillors to publically state their opinions on fracking via the Salford City Council petition scheme, which requires 3000 signatures to be officially acknowledged and processed by the council (Salford City Council 2013). In the petition, residents asked the council to oppose fracking. Collecting signatures became an on-going part of the anti-fracking campaign. When the petition closed in February 2014 it had reached the required threshold of signatures that ensured it would be passed to the ‘scrutiny team’ of Salford City Council, and ‘may then be referred appropriately to a strategic director, assistant mayor, or to the cabinet for consideration’ (Salford City Council 2013). The Salford
mayor and council representatives met to discuss the petition in April 2014 and during the meeting anti-fracking activists protested outside the council hall (Thompson 2014). Again, however, residents were disappointed as councillors refused to respond publically to the petition. The meeting was a closed event and councillors would not engage with the protestors or the media on what was discussed, saying they could not comment on fracking issues (FFGM 9). Their non-engagement was disheartening for the people who had worked to collect the signatures and force a debate (NGO 4), yet fitted with the post-democratic tactics of the council.

As one activist who worked closely with local residents argued, ‘people’ in this system are not expected to engage constructively with the development process:

‘democracy’... relies on public apathy, it actually relies on people not giving a damn, and just letting the politicians do whatever they want to do.

Protectors camp 7

The description of democracy provided here suggests that it is dependent on continued public apathy. This is an unsurprising interpretation for an anti-fracking activist to provide, given that it is (representative) democracy that both enables and legitimises the ‘fracking’ industry, both in the UK and abroad. In the language of Rancière, this system is not a democracy, but rather is the domain of the social, or ‘police’ order, that is ‘the law, generally implicit, that defines a party’s share or lack of it.’ (Rancière 1999, p.29). As the activist notes, its function is dependent on continued ‘public apathy’ and ‘people not giving a damn’ (Protectors camp 7).

For the majority of residents, their exclusion from the CLG and the lack of two-way engagement meant that they were marginalised from the development process and their grievances went unheard. With the exception of the CLG, public engagement for Barton Moss exploratory well followed a deficit model of technological
governance and provided one-way communication with community actors. This model presumes public ignorance on technical concerns when compared to experts and that supplying the public with more information will lead to rational decision making and ultimately the support of a given technology (Wynne 1993; Stirling 2008). The model has been roundly criticised ‘for misrepresenting the diverse reasons that structure public concerns to potentially controversial science and technology’ (Williams et al. 2017, p.98). Its use undermines the validity of local, non-expert knowledge, which is marginalised from processes of development when dismissed on the authority of expert opinion (Dodge and Metze 2017).
5.4 From autonomous groups to a People’s Assembly

In the months leading up to the occupation of Barton Moss Road, a ‘multiplicity of autonomous groups’ (FFGM 10) in Manchester focused on ‘fracking’ as a campaigning issue. These included environmental, labour movement and anti-capitalist groups that had each begun to see fracking as a relevant concern.

On one level, opposing fracking was an environmental struggle, against increasing dependence on fossil fuels, industrialisation of the countryside and the threat of anthropogenic climate change. Historically, Greater Manchester has a vibrant history of environmental protest and direct action that stretches back decades (Haughton et al. 2016) which enabled the anti-fracking movement to draw on intergenerational experience when organising protests and direct action. Amongst older anti-fracking activists a number of them were involved in the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp in the 1980’s (FFGM 13). The movement also drew on the experience of activists that had engaged in direct action during the 1990’s, when the city contained one of the largest anti-road-building activist movements in the country (Doherty 1999; Doherty et al. 2007).

More recently, in the climate change movement, activist group ‘No Dash For Gas’ operated from Greater Manchester and in 2012 occupied and temporarily closed West Burton gas power station for a week (No Dash For Gas 2014). Members of this group played a key role in the anti-fracking movement, engaging and educating local communities on the risks of fracking and on climate change (Autonomous activist 16). Through their connections the movement was supported by climate change activists, who saw fracking wells as ‘the frontlines of the climate movement’ (Kinniburgh 2015, p.47). As one activist explained:

Since the nineties I’ve been a campaigner on the question of climate change... Frack Free Manchester was really just a natural follow on from that, in the sense that fracking produces methane and is a turning away from the development of clean renewable energies, which is obviously
the way that I think we have to go if this civilization is to survive in its roughly present form.

FFGM 12

The movement was also embedded in a broader struggle, which centred on the articulation of left opposition to neoliberalism. In 2012 residential squatting was criminalised in the UK. The closing down of squatted living spaces led anti-capitalists in Manchester to form a social centre called Subrosa (Subrosa, 2012). In the period leading up to the struggle at Barton Moss, the social centre became a key space where anti-fracking meetings were held. These were organised by activists that had recently helped organise the anti-austerity movement which ‘was a bit of a catalyst for linking people up’ (Autonomous activist 16). Greater Manchester activists travelled to support anti-austerity occupations including Occupy London, Occupy New York and the ‘15th May’ (15-M) anti-austerity movement in Spain (FFGM 14).

At this point fracking was new in the UK and ‘the industry was saying fracking is brilliant’ (FFGM 10). Through online connections with anti-capitalist groups in the US, activists learnt about the environmental risks associated with fracking. Importantly, the fracking industry was associated with an on-going struggle against capitalism in which ‘fracking is just the cherry on the cake’ (FFGM 14). This placed the movement in solidarity with a multitude of local groups fighting against developments, and placed the anti-fracking protests onto a terrain of struggles and contestation against processes of neoliberalisation (Featherstone 2015). Framing opposition to fracking as a struggle against crony capitalism and corruption, the movement was able to build on pre-existing trajectories of resistance and opposition toward capitalism and austerity, and received solidarity from an unlikely plethora of heterogenous groups around the world, united by their marginalisation from processes of development and, more broadly, their opposition to the crisis of neoliberalism.
In the summer of 2012 the Occupy movement broke down. Occupy was a key focus for environmental and anti-capitalist activists in Manchester (Autonomous activist 16) but had grown in size until it lacked focus because ‘you had so many people coming at it from so many angles’ (FFGM 14) and ‘it was too fragmented, it was too divided’ (Protectors camp 6).

In Manchester, these activists turned their attention to fracking development. At first, their focus was on supporting actions in Lancashire and West Sussex, where development was either in process or appeared to be imminent. Then in the autumn of 2013 it became apparent that the next exploratory well would be at Barton Moss, within the city-region of Greater Manchester (FFGM 12).

A focus on fracking by activists from both the climate change and anti-capitalist movements provided seasoned activists to the anti-fracking movement in Greater Manchester. With the Barton Moss development now on the horizon, these activists began to organise and campaign on the dangers of fracking to residents in the city-region. They were drawn from ‘a multiplicity of autonomous groups’ (FFGM 10) and were supported by key NGO and corporate groups.

Independently of each other, Friends of the Earth (NGO4), the Green Party (FFGM 11) and the Co-operative group each supported community anti-fracking events in 2012 and 2013. The Co-operative group, which was campaigning for a moratorium on the exploration of shale gas, sponsored events screening anti-fracking film ‘Gasland’ for communities around Manchester and funded the Tyndall Centre at the University of Manchester to produce a study on the impact of a future fracking industry on the UK’s climate change commitments (Broderick et al. 2011). The largest event was an all-day ‘Balcombe to Manchester skillshare’ (Autonomous activist 16). This event drew on the experience of activists who had recently occupied the protest camp outside the exploratory well in Balcombe, West Sussex. It brought the issue of fracking to the attention of experienced environmental
activists, who resolved to engage in the anti-fracking movement (Autonomous activist 16).

At this point each of these groups acted concurrently and without any formal channels for organising between groups. Then in October 2013, a meeting was called by union and NGO representatives, which was open to ‘anybody who was against fracking’ (FFGM 10). As one of the organisers explained, the thrust of the meeting was to say ‘would not it be better if we all worked together?’ (FFGM 10). Organisers proposed an umbrella organisation that would share information across anti-fracking groups and help to co-ordinate actions, campaigning and funding (FFGM 13).

The proposal was put to a vote. Most people supported the idea and voted to work together on future campaigning. They agreed to form an umbrella group, called 'Frack Free Greater Manchester' (FFGM). This group was ‘a very loosely organised organisation without a formal structure... there is not an official convenor or secretary or chair’ (FFGM 12). The group’s founders recognised that the multiplicity of actors across environmental and social movements in the city could not be controlled by a hierarchical organisation:

We're working with anarchists, we're working with pagans, we’re working with druids, we’re working with Labour party people, we’re working with Tories to a certain extent... so, we're working with all sorts of people.

FFGM 9

Members had ‘militant particularisms’ (Harvey 1997) – ideals created from collective struggles focused on particular places – that they would need to overcome if they were to work together. A key example is the No Dash for Gas activists, who complained that the issue of new gas power stations ‘has kind of got a bit swept aside’ by the issue of fracking (Autonomous activist 16). Yet these
disparate groups also shared a common concern with stopping fracking development. FFGM was intended as an open meeting space in which differences would be tolerated and ‘everyone would be listened to’ (FFGM 12). To some extent, this side-stepped rather than overcame the issue of militant particularisms. Activists agreed to focus on the task at hand while understanding that their own particular struggles were respected by other activists but that no single issue would be allowed to distract from the shared concern of stopping fracking development.

To avoid FFGM becoming a compromising voice in the anti-fracking movement, activists agreed that future meetings would take the form of a ‘People’s Assembly’ in which every voice was equal and would be heard, and there would be no leaders (FFGM 14). Key activists in the movement had engaged in People’s Assemblies at Reclaim the Power and the 15-M movement in Spain. As one activist explained, the implementation of a People’s Assembly format enabled them to put direct democracy into practice, and this was an inspiration for the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement:

You have the Puerta Del Sol in the centre of Madrid and then you have five different squares, so for three days they called general assemblies all day, so one square was education and another was law, another was housing, another was economics and one was a community square. So all day you would have facilitators in the square keeping peoples’ contributions flowing... and then everybody goes back to the assembly in the evening and they sit there and all the points, everything is fed back to the masses, and it takes a long time... So I watched all of this happen and it was absolutely amazing and honestly when you are in a city that is bigger than Manchester and people have come from all corners of the country, it is an amazing experience.

FFGM 14

In keeping with 15-M (García-Lamarca 2017b) and the Mediterranean uprisings (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013b) FFGM agreed that its activists would remain autonomous and could campaign on fracking individually,
rather than operating through a single organisation. This recognised the plurality of
the movement and addressed a concern raised by some activists that the
movement could become controlled by a single-interest group (FFGM 14). It also
reduced the harm that could be caused by corporate agents or undercover police
infiltrating the movement (Autonomous activist 16). These concerns were not
unfounded – Mark Kennedy had recently been exposed as an undercover police
officer involved in the Manchester climate change movement, who took part in the
planning and implementation of direct action against Drax power station, leading to
the arrest and conviction of 29 activists (Schlembach 2016).
5.6 Conclusions

This chapter makes a key contribution to research on urban siting struggles around new energy infrastructure development. It does so by illustrating how the historical relations of both the local communities in the development process and urban activism in the region helped determine who was marginalised from processes of development and who engaged in the anti-fracking struggle. As such, this chapter sets the stage for the ‘theatre of urban politicized struggle’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) that is the focus of the analysis chapters that follow. Analysis engages with how, at a local level, the post-political tactics of the ‘instituted order’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) marginalise people from processes of development in relation to the exploratory well. It also examines how, at a regional level, resistance emerged from social movements unrelated to the development site itself, whose actors converged on the issue of stopping fracking in the city-region, and organised an anti-fracking movement at the regional scale through the format of a People’s Assembly.

In other words, the chapter places the anti-fracking struggle in the context of both the development process and the formation of regional assembly group FFGM from autonomous activists. It uses empirical material to show that industry actors applied a narrow understanding of the local community in the development process and connected the exploratory well with a future fracking industry in the North West. Analysis then examines the role of council actors, who were notably absent from the struggle, and the fruitless efforts of local residents who engaged with the apparatus of local governance to voice their opposition to ‘fracking’ development. Finally, it examines the formation of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, which was predicated on building support to stop fracking in the city-region. Understanding the urban context in which the struggle emerged helps to setup the following analysis chapters, because the political should be understood in the context of the urban social order that it is inevitably enmeshed with (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017).
Analysis separated examination of the local development process from the regional emergence of the anti-fracking movement to enable distinct examinations of industry and activist framings of the struggle, which each created conflicting understandings of who should be included and who should be excluded from the development process. Significantly, the opposition movement emerged primarily from the city-region, while the industry actors framed the exploratory well as a local concern which they connected to a future shale gas industry in the North West. A narrow understanding of the affected community allowed them to claim that they had social license to operate because of the ‘community’ role in the development process played by the CLG.

However, granular analysis has shown that the CLG was privately-led and its minutes are not publically available. This means that the validity of the social license is based on a small subsection of local people operating in a private sphere, despite its name suggesting a broader public role. While industry actors framed the development of the exploratory well as a local concern, the anti-fracking activists framed it regionally, arguing that a future fracking industry could explore beneath homes in other parts of the city-region.

Beyond the CLG, engagement between industry and local people was limited to one-way communication that sought to improve understanding of the development amongst local people. This means that the role of the local community in the processes through which the development was realised is best understood as a deficit model of engagement (Stirling 2008) that sought to inform local people about the development but did not offer recourse for people to challenge it in any way.

The council, which could be expected to speak up for local people’s concerns with the developer, were markedly absent from events at Barton Moss and refused to take a position on fracking or to publically engage on the development. Importantly, their non-engagement was mis-interpreted by some local residents as uncertainty. As with the Alexander tree protests (Haughton et al. 2016), residents tried to articulate and prove their concerns through citizen-led surveys, which were
ignored or rebutted by the council, leading to feelings of disempowerment amongst activists.

The non-engagement of councillors is an example of post-democratic tactics because they argued that their inaction was the only option available to them. Specifically, they argued that giving voice to anti-fracking concerns would result in them losing the power to make planning decisions on future fracking-related developments. This created the incongruous position that councillors were able to justifiably claim they were powerless to do or say anything about ‘fracking’ development, because doing so meant they would become powerless in the future. The position was challenged when triangulated in an interview with a councillor from another part of Greater Manchester, who explained that legally councillors could oppose any given energy technology as long as they did not publically oppose a given development. It is also undermined by the actions of Lancashire councillors who have openly opposed fracking and supported local activists (Reclaim the Power 2017).
6 A radical urban uprising? The Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the organisational practices of the anti-fracking movement to question how the movement emerged from autonomous groups and organised resistance across Greater Manchester. Understanding the complexities of the movement contributes to existing research on contemporary urban environmental movements by examining how solidarity and an emancipatory politics can emerge from disparate groups that have seemingly discordant perspectives. This has practical as well as theoretical relevance because the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement successfully presented a united front against ‘fracking’, despite internal conflict between actors. Using ostensibly horizontal and less-obvious vertical organisational modes of practice to organise the anti-fracking movement, activists sustained a protest camp and limited access to the exploratory well while it was in operation, before leaving of their own volition. This means that analysis contributes to a politics of hope, offering lessons for similar struggles that emerge from disparate, autonomous groups.

A key aim of the chapter is to question how the movement was able to overcome organisational tensions to stage an emancipatory politics. A focus on the organisational tensions that marked the protest spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement helps to understand ‘the terms on which the crisis is being articulated and politicized’ (Featherstone 2015, p.26). Specifically, it allows analysis to go beyond the portrayal of environmental protests as defensive by bringing key solidarities into view, across which the politics of ‘fracking’ was articulated. These are used to argue that activists realised an emancipatory politics because of an ethos of egalitarianism amongst activists, predicated on an acceptance of difference and the right of each person to have an equal voice in the movement. The chapter depicts a political movement led by a heterogenous multitude (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017), described by activists as ‘a multiplicity of
autonomous groups’ (FFGM 10). From convergence around stopping fracking, articulated through a shared commitment to universal equality, activists forge solidarities with indigenous rights, anti-fracking and humanitarian groups. They also reject far-right nationalist groups who seek to align their performative and discursive repertoires with Frack Free Greater Manchester, the regional anti-fracking assembly.
6.2 Building horizontality through the organisational practices of a People’s Assembly

This section examines the ‘discordant orientations’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.63) and different modes of organisation through which the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement was organised. It contributes to existing social movements (Szolucha 2014; Routledge 2017; Routledge et al. 2018) and post-foundational (Zemni 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaman 2013) research on contemporary urban struggles that seeks to understand how solidarity and an emancipatory politics can emerge from disparate groups who have seemingly discordant perspectives. The discussion argues this case provides an example of how a heterogenous collection of activists can successfully implement an emancipatory politics in an environmental struggle, and converge around the shared concern of stopping fracking development. This is made possible because of a common commitment to universal equality, practiced through horizontal modes of organisation and enforced as the acceptance of difference and condemnation of intolerance.

The Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, which emerged in the winter of 2013, reconfigured the sensible and disrupted activities at the exploratory well when equality was staged by ‘the part of those that have not no part’ (Rancière 1999, p.11). Over five months of on-going efforts to slow development at Barton Moss exploratory well and to engage people in the anti-fracking struggle, activists held meetings and organised solidarity marches in Salford and Manchester and opened a protest camp on Barton Moss Road, where they staged a five-month occupation which became known as the Protectors camp.

Frack Free Greater Manchester (FFGM), the main organisational group for the movement, was ostensibly arranged as a ‘People's Assembly... [it’s] about getting a consensus and about bringing all those skills into one place’ [FFGM 14]. The aim was ‘giving people a space and a platform to come together’ in which each person
had an equal voice in discussions, so that ‘it does not matter who you are affiliated to’ (FFGM 14). The umbrella organisation was also an opportunity to build a Greater Manchester anti-fracking network ‘to pool resources to make sure that we oppose fracking and harness all of those individuals’ experience’ (FFGM 14).

As with the squares movement, (Karaliotas 2017) a key element of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement was its experimentation with novel modes of organisational practice. Underlying its organisational repertoires was the understanding that each person was equal and ‘the firm belief in the collective deliberation of the people as the mode for organizing democratic politics’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.63). This logic was shared across anti-fracking assemblies and within the organisational practices of the protest camp, allowing the movement to operate in the large part through autonomous groups and horizontal organisational networks.

Autonomy and horizontality in the anti-fracking movement were not naturally occurring phenomenon though; they were consciously implemented organisational practices. These were instituted through rules and procedures promoted by a significant minority that believed the movement was about implementing direct democracy and finding a workable alternative to representative politics (FFGM 14; Protectors camp 5). To make this work in the regional assemblies, which often had upward of forty people in attendance, each person got two minutes to speak, and interactions with the assembly were tightly managed by the chair, who was selected at the gathering. Passing the role of chair between members for each meeting was a part of sharing organisational responsibilities, which helped maintain the horizontal organisation of the group (FFGM 14). The only elected position was the treasurer, in recognition of the particular set of accounting skills that the role requires (FFGM 13).

The meetings were run efficiently, drawing on the experience of some of its members at previous Peoples Assemblies. At the start of each meeting, attendees
would be reminded of the hand signals that they could use to engage with the group. People could interrupt a speaker with a technical point by making a ‘T’ with their hands. Agreement with the speaker could be signalled by shaking both hands in the air at the same time. This signal ‘is clapping in deaf language but it means that you show you agree without interrupting the person that is speaking, so we can get a really good feeling of what the group think’ (FFGM 14).

When a speaker ran over their two minutes, the issue under discussion could be assigned to a breakaway group that would report back to the meeting later on, or if the issue was particularly complex, at a subsequent meeting. All proposals put to the assembly needed to be seconded by a supporting activist. Agreement was identified firstly by a show of hands, or ‘consensus building’ in support of the proposal. If there was not clear consensus then the proposal would be put to a vote, with hands in support and against counted and noted in the minutes. Resultant action points were assigned to individuals or groups and again this was noted in the minutes. Following completion of the meeting, minutes were shared via email with the broader network. Importantly, while each of the anti-fracking groups had autonomy from the broader network, they were expected to abide by decisions made by the regional assembly, and needed to have activists at each assembly participating in the decision-making procedure.

These measures were aimed at giving each person a voice in a space of equality and respect for difference between members, with the ultimate aim of achieving horizontal participation for each individual engaged in the movement. By providing a public platform to speak from and to report their experiences, public assemblies helped anti-fracking activists feel that they were supported (FFGM 11). The assemblies were used to arrange funds for local groups to access, link people from across Greater Manchester with the activists at Barton Moss protest camp and as a space from which to organise and fund larger anti-fracking events, for example the weekend solidarity marches (FFGM 14).
As with Karaliotas (2017), the assemblies became a stage for an unlikely coupling between two discordant political perspectives. Most actors saw the movement as horizontally-organised and distant from the influence of the political groups and NGO’s that were involved in the anti-fracking movement (FFGM 14). However, a few key actors saw the movement as centrally-organised and operating with the support and guidance of those same political groups and NGO’s (FFGM 10). For these actors the anti-fracking movement was an opportunity to build a mass political movement.

At the initial meeting, in which the regional assembly was setup, the discordancy of these two perspectives came to the fore when anti-capitalist and environmental activists disputed the right of a single group to organise the anti-fracking movement. As well as a disagreement over how the movement should be organised, the dispute was also due to conflicts of personality that led some activists to decide it would be better to work independently. As one such activist explained, ‘I never felt much affinity to the group and found a few people a bit difficult’ (Autonomous activist 16). The departing activists setup a separate campaigning group called the ‘Northern Gas Gala’, described on their website as ‘an on-going event– an invite to come to Barton Moss to resist IGas and their drilling plans’ (Northern Gas Gala 2013). Whereas FFGM contained members connected to NGO’s and union groups, the Northern Gas Gala was made up of activists unaffiliated to any group, united by their aim to stop work at the exploratory well, using direct action if necessary (Autonomous activist 16).

Following this split, FFGM sought to avoid opportunities for future conflicts in assemblies that could further divide the movement (FFGM 10). Unlike the squares movement, which voted on each decision made (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016), the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement chose to emphasise ‘consensus-based decision making’:

Activist: We aim to reach consensus, not vote.
Interviewer: What do you mean?

Activist: So, when we reach an agreement, we ask, is everybody happy with this? Then it’ll only go to a vote if there’s a polarisation of views, and that’s normally when a few activists try to out-vote the representatives of large organisations.

FFGM 10

The distinction made here between individual activists and activists that represent organisations is an important one. The regional assembly did not allow people to come to meetings as representatives of organisations. However, inevitably, some of the participants were members of unions, NGO’s and political groups and shared the orientation that the movement was a representative rather than a direct form of democracy. For them, the movement was not ‘one person one vote’, since ‘our union has over a million members and you represent yourself, so I should be able to blow your vote out of the water’ (FFGM 10).

These conflicting orientations were recognised by key activists in the movement as an on-going internal tension:

The problem is overcoming those old ways of people thinking ‘I'm going to have my party and my party is going to be the one to save us from capitalism’. It's about switching that way of thinking.

FFGM 14

While the ‘discordant orientations’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.63) of activists created tensions within the movement, the implementation of a ‘People’s Assembly’ at the regional scale created organisational practices that engendered universal equality and helped maintain focus on the issues that were agreed upon. This created the conditions for a pluralistic movement in which actors could choose very different ways of engaging as activists, while identifying as a single ‘anti-fracking’ movement.
Geographical research on protests that adopts a post-foundational analytical framework re-centres the research agenda toward spatial ruptures in politics (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Velicu and Kaika 2017). This ‘re-centring of the political’ allows the inclusion into research of actors that do not identify as part of a social movement yet are engaged as activists, who would be marginalised by a focus on social movement networks and actors. In this case, the activists that lived at Barton Moss Camp fit this description since they remained autonomous from the broader anti-fracking movement in Greater Manchester yet played a key role opening up a space of protest outside the exploratory well. While the regional assemblies were used to organise peaceful protests and solidarity marches, activists at the camp chose to express their dissent through individual actions aimed at slowing activity at the exploratory well and raising the profile of the movement (Protectors camp 5).

Autonomous activists setup Barton Moss protest camp and staged multiple direct actions outside the well. The most common direct action was the ‘lock-on’, where activists would fasten their arms together in a plastic tube and place themselves between the trucks and the gates of the exploratory well. These actions were quick to setup and would slow progress at the well considerably. Because direct actions were organised independently by their participants, the actions were also hard to predict or to stop from happening using covert activity (Schlembach 2016). A key example is the 17-metre wind turbine blade that activists gift-wrapped as a Christmas present and inconveniently placed across the gates of the exploratory well (Figure 5).
Figure 5: 17-metre wind turbine blade left outside the entrance of Exploratory well as a 'Christmas gift' (No Dash For Gas 2013),
Copyright: No Dash For Gas, permission obtained
Later that week a large orange bus was parked outside the exploratory well, blocking its entrance for over six hours (Figure 6). The bus was driven up by activists from Balcombe (FFGM 10). The bus had activists locked-on both its inside and on its roof. Northern Gas Gala used their website to release the following statement:

The action is part of the growing opposition to fracking and in reaction to the Government’s announcement yesterday of a new licensing round for onshore oil and gas which will now cover over 60% of the UK and will include the whole of Greater Manchester.

Northern Gas Gala, 2013

While the direct actions of autonomous activist groups did serve to slow activity at the well, they were criticised by the activists that understood the movement as a centrally organised group:

Lock-ons are all very well, but it’s a very individualistic type of campaigning. We need to move away from that – the solution lies in building a mass movement. As a strategy, lock-ons and unplanned direct action is flawed, it does not promote collectivism, it promotes individual heroes, and in the end all the heroes get killed.

FFGM 10

The activists that promoted collective rather than individual actions did concede there was a ‘positive element’ (FFGM 10) to autonomous direct action and acknowledged ‘you need an element of secrecy to make these things happen’ (FFGM2014J). However, they maintained that the strength of the struggle at Barton Moss lay in its potential to build a mass political movement.
Figure 6: An orange bus parked outside Barton Moss exploratory well, with activists locked on, who acted independently of any anti-fracking group
6.4 Vertical organisational practices: organising collective actions

While the anti-fracking movement was ostensibly horizontally organised and engaged horizontally organised politics, key social movement activists engaged with these practices pragmatically, using less-obvious vertical modes of organisation to provide resources and organise support for solidarity marches. Recognising the roles that social movement actors play in the struggle is a departure from research on horizontally-organised struggles like Occupy (Szolucha 2014) and Syntagma Square (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016). The role of social movement actors is apparent in analysis because the research design used for this thesis enables focus on social movement and autonomous actors, bringing tensions between their organisational modes of practice into view. These tensions would be overlooked by a focus on either one of these actor groups.

Experimentation with horizontal organisational practices was an important element of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. As with the squares movement (Karaliotas 2017), these practices were borne from a firm belief that ‘the people’ should be at the centre of democratic politics (FFGM 14). However, while the organisation of the movement was ostensibly based in horizontal practices, the reality was more complex.

The function of FFGM as an umbrella organisation for local groups made it the central node for a regional anti-fracking network. From the outset activists expressed the importance of extending the organisational practices of People’s Assemblies to local groups so that direct democratic practices extended across the movement beyond the regional assembly (FFGM 14). However, as a network of assemblies developed at local anti-fracking groups, they each sent activists to the regional assembly to take part in the decision making process there. Decisions made at the regional assembly were then passed down to local groups, placing it at the centre of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking network.
For most activists this was not an issue, since they participated in the regional assemblies themselves and were not overly concerned about whether decisions were made through horizontal or vertical networks. However, the increasing centrality of the regional assembly was a concern for a significant minority of activists who believed the anti-fracking movement should engender direct democracy and be based in purely horizontal practices. In particular, it created friction with activists at the protest camp, who did not recognise the regional assemblies as the organisational centre of the movement:

When they [FFGM activists] come along we go, ‘fuck off’, do not come in with your bullshit, do not tell us what to do, do not tell us how to campaign, do not tell us how to protest. You know, we’re the ones on the front line, we should be telling you!

Protectors camp 5

As this extract illustrates, to varying degrees activists at the camp felt that they were on the ‘front line’ of the movement and that should place them in a position of authority within the anti-fracking movement (Protectors camp 5). On a number of occasions, camp activists challenged the right of the regional assembly to organise anti-fracking protests on Barton Moss Road. A key issue was whether activists should inform the police when these events occurred:

[They are] ringing the police for permission to do this and permission to do that, I mean fucking hell, do not ask on our behalf... can we shut the road down, can we do this, can we get some cones out, can we protest here? I do not want permission from the state to do anything. I’m telling the state that they’re gonna behave themselves and I’m going to make it happen, so why would I want permission?

Protectors camp 5

Of particular interest here is the perception of the activist that the regional assembly is asking for permission ‘on our behalf’ (Protectors camp 5). Although
activists from the protest camp attended the regional assemblies, a significant minority of them did not recognise its authority to make decisions for them or to speak on the behalf of people that were not present at the meetings. They argued that the movement should remain a collection of autonomous individuals engaged in a common struggle against fracking, realised through the contestation of space outside the exploratory well.

The relationship between the regional assembly and anti-fracking groups beyond Greater Manchester provides a further interesting example of how vertical relations were institutionalised in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. These relations were created by key FFGM activists, who were members of regional and national political and NGO organisations that supported the anti-fracking movement. Activists passed information from FFGM meetings back to their organisations and in turn related information to FFGM, from the perspective of their organisation. In addition, these activists had been meeting in supra-regional anti-fracking meetings since 2012, with other representatives of political, community and NGO organisations based in Lancashire, Ellesmere Port and Cheshire (FFGM 10). Unlike regional assemblies, participants in North West anti-fracking meetings attended as representatives of community groups and organisations, for example one Manchester activist attended ‘to represent Trafford Green Party’ (FFGM 13).

The connections of these activists both with local anti-fracking groups and supra-regional organisations created a network of vertical relations connected by particular activists, which the group used to their advantage. A key example is when the regional assembly called for solidarity through attendance at anti-fracking protest marches. Putting out calls for solidarity became one of the key functions of FFGM assemblies, which organised these events to show support for the Barton Moss Camp, both in the city-region and nationally. Whereas daily protests outside the exploratory well would have up to fifty people in attendance, the solidarity marches attracted thousands of people. People on these marches came mainly from Greater Manchester but also a considerable amount from
Lancashire as well as other regions across the UK. The most successful of these was on 26th January 2014 when around 1500 people attended including groups transported on ten coaches from across England and Wales.

The marches were either in Manchester City Centre or at Barton Moss. For the Barton Moss marches, the volume of people that attended the march required that a four lane dual carriageway was slowed to a crawl for up to an hour to allow them to march a quarter mile along it. In the absence of the police, FFGM members acted as stewards to facilitate this difficult and dangerous task. At the end of the march there was a stage and sound equipment set up as a platform for speakers.

It is through focus on the ‘organisation, practice and discourses’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.556) which evolve in a movement that research can explore the ‘limitations and possibilities... for opening up (or closing down) democratic politics’ (ibid, p.556). In this case, the commitment to building a movement in which all voices were accepted as equal created an organisational repertoire and discourses that promoted an acceptance of difference. The commitment is exemplified through pragmatic solutions such as a focus on consensus building rather than voting (FFGM 10), which could have opened divisions within the movement. Recognising this commitment is important because it contributes to the critique that the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement engendered radical urban politics, since transformative actions were ‘in the name of and for an axiomatic and infinitely inclusive equality’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14). It ensured that organisational tensions between horizontal and vertical modes of practice did not come to the fore.
6.5 Implementing a commitment to universal equality

Although discordant perspectives existed within the anti-fracking movement, they proved reconcilable because the movement was based in the recognition and acceptance of different perspectives, toward achieving a united front against fracking development. As Harvey argues (Harvey 1997; Harvey and Williams 1995), a universalist politics has practical importance because it allow movements to connect across space without departing from their respective militant particularisms. In the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, it proved a key facet in building a movement able to achieve ‘multi-scalar political action’ (Routledge 2003, p.333) through contested social relations.

The political imaginary generated by the anti-fracking movement was based in a presupposition of universal equality that precluded any intolerance of difference between actors within the movement. This imaginary, articulated across the heterogeneous connections and alliances of the anti-fracking movement, had a significant effect on the perceptions of activists, who came to see the localised protests at Barton Moss as part of an international struggle against fracking development. Alliances were built using key spatial practices of dissent that made international connections between local anti-fracking movements, and facilitated the territorialisation of particular spaces, with efforts to build spatially dispersed solidarities and activist networks.

Two aspects of the geographies of anti-fracking politics are particularly pertinent here. The first is the solidarities and international connections made and how these were used to articulate an emancipatory politics. The second is the movement’s rejection of support from far-right nationalist groups who sought to align their performative and discursive repertoires with Frack Free Greater Manchester, the regional anti-fracking assembly.
6.6 Building solidarity globally and rejecting nationalist support

Events at Barton Moss were followed by an international audience, as one local media outlet related:

in a month we had 115,000 hits which for a hyper local website is amazing – I mean we usually get about 40,000 – 50,000 a month, [so] 115,000 was just phenomenal! We were getting hits from all over the world, a lot from Holland, a lot from Spain, from America, Afghanistan, there were loads from Afghanistan.

Resident 6

Online audiences of people from around the world followed events at Barton Moss, including ‘loads from Afghanistan’ (Resident 6). The unlikely attention that a local siting dispute in Salford received from a Middle East audience generated connections between activists, and in January 2014 the Afghanistan Peace Volunteers announced their solidarity with the movement via Youtube (Afghan Peace Volunteers 2014). The group is an Afghan civil society volunteer organization whose aim is ‘to build a critical mass of nonviolent relationships for a green, equal and nonviolent world without war’ (Hicklin 2017). In the video in which they announced their solidarity, speaking from Kabul in the Dari language, Afghan volunteers and two UK activists shout ‘We are with you Barton Moss!’ (Afghan Peace Volunteers 2014).

As well as solidarities built on humanitarian concerns, the movement built connections with local people fighting against unconventional energy developments in Europe, Australia and North America. Alongside online messages of solidarity, groups co-ordinated efforts and taught each other from their failures and successes, for example in 2014 an activist involved in the failed ‘Lock the Gate’ campaign in Australia travelled around anti-fracking groups in the UK relating her experience. Also in 2014 a Romanian anti-fracking group organised co-current
protests with the Greater Manchester activists that included a protest outside the British embassy in Romania (Alexe 2013).

The anti-fracking movement’s commitment to respecting difference amongst activists within the anti—fracking struggle caused it to reject nationalist groups as well as build solidarities with indigenous groups internationally. Enforcing a commitment to universal (as opposed to particular) egalitarianism proved important because the far-right in England was running its own anti-fracking campaign and raising similar environmental and political concerns about fracking development in Greater Manchester. In February that year, social nationalist political organisation the British National Party (BNP) wrote an article on Barton Moss titled ‘Salford should expect earthquakes’ (British National Party 2013). The article sets out the argument that that the exploratory well is part of Peel Holdings’ broader development plans for the Moss that threaten ‘the last green belt in the city’ (ibid.) and that ‘Locals are very worried and unhappy about the plans – especially since no-one feels they have been informed by the council’ (ibid).

The issues raised here show a desire to oppose corruption, protect the environment and defend the powerless against corporate power. Yet these concerns are based in an entirely different political imaginary to that of the anti-fracking movement, as its members articulate xenophobic and racist views when voicing their discontent. For example, a comment on the BNP article states ‘Yet another case of inconvenience and threat to the English for the profit of foreigners’ (British National Party 2013). Here, the protection of an ‘English’ community is based in equality for a particular group, articulated as an intolerance of the foreign ‘other’. This form of equality is incompatible with a political imaginary based in a presupposition of universal equality (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). The qualification of an ‘infinitely exclusive’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14) equality, which can be applied in this case, separates the anti-fracking movement

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8 Perhaps surprisingly, key activists described the anti-fracking movement as an indigenous struggle (FFGM 14). In interviews, this description is related to the activist community, and ‘indigenous’ is not understood in racial terms. Instead, it refers to people who are being forcibly removed from the land, or in this case, whose land is being forcibly ‘fracked’.
from social and identitarian movements that focus on the rights of a particular group.

As with Kaika and Karaliotas’ (2016) examination of the Indignant Squares movement, two different and radically opposing political imaginaries were generated in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, which shared a common desire to organise and protest against fracking development. Events came to a head when members of social nationalist organisation Albion Dawn attended a regional assembly. At this point, members of Albion Dawn had been ‘going down to the camp and supplying material aid’ (FFGM 10) and had recently advertised their own community anti-fracking meeting to FFGM:

I got invited to speak and then got a message from anti-fascists saying these people are part of Albion Dawn, a fascist group. So then we boycotted it and the event did not happen.

FFGM 10

Following the boycott, members of Albion Dawn came to the assembly to ‘protest that we’d [FFGM] closed down their community group’ (FFGM 10). In response, activists explained that they had ‘boycotted the event but did not close it down, it’s just that no one went cos we called them out as fascists’ (FFGM 10). As another activist explained, intolerance was a red line for the movement:

Our answer [to social nationalists] is no... It's not, like, we'll go down the road of having agreement on four things out of five, but disagree with you on racism.

FFGM 9

The assembly then consented to a proposal to exclude Albion Dawn and all ‘racist activists’ (FFGM 10) from future FFGM assemblies and from the protest camp, on
the grounds that ‘we’re a rainbow coalition in which everyone gets a voice and is equal’ (FFGM 14).

Close examination of the spatial and discursive choreographies of the anti-fracking movement indicates that as with the Indignant Squares, in this case a democratic politics – in which there is a common acceptance of difference amongst activists – is incompatible with xenophobic, nationalistic discourses. In both cases, activists evolve democratic politics through ‘organised efforts to stage a more inclusive politics of solidarity’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.557). Where this case differs from Kaika and Karaliotas (2016) is that unlike Syntagma Square, in which two radically opposing political imaginaries were staged side-by-side, in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle a nationalistic political imaginary was excluded and its activists were prevented from contributing to the anti-fracking movement. Practically, this meant that once their political beliefs were known, far-right activists were refused entry to the Protectors camp and denied access to the regional assembly. Furthermore, their efforts to incorporate themselves into the movement forced an explicit statement by the regional assembly that xenophobic and nationalistic political beliefs were unacceptable in the context of the anti-fracking struggle. This had the effect that the dissent of far-right groups was limited to their own meetings and internal discourse, which was shared via online social media and websites. It also meant that their activists did not have opportunity to evolve a nationalistic political imaginary through the material and discursive practices of the Protectors camp.
6.7 Conclusions

In this chapter analysis focused on the organisational practices of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement. It contributes to the literature on contemporary urban environmental movements by exploring tensions in organisational practices, and examining how an emancipatory politics emerged from disparate groups with discordant perspectives. In this case, activists address the ‘crisis’ (Featherstone 2015) of stopping fracking through ostensibly horizontal modes of organisation that include, and are paradoxically supported by, vertical organisational structures. In particular, two tensions are evident. The first is between the discordant orientations of activists, which created internal tensions between horizontal and vertical organisational practices. The second is between nationalistic and emancipatory performative and discursive narratives, which created conflict with far-right anti-fracking groups who were prevented from joining the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement.

As with the squares movement, the discordant orientations of activists demonstrates ‘a tension in Rancière’s distinction between the police and politics’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.65). The movement was not entirely horizontal, and ‘equality within it was limited by certain vertical relations’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.65). Importantly, the pragmatic approach of key actors to engaging in the anti-fracking movement allowed them to ostensibly work through horizontal modes of organisation while simultaneously drawing on less-obvious connections to national social movement groups and unions to access financial resources for activists and organise support for solidarity marches.

In the language of Rancière, this means that equality was realised through a police order. There are, however, ‘a worse and a better police’ (Rancière 1999, p.30) and the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement is best understood as the latter, having produced spaces that contained tensions between the vertical organisational practices of social movements and the horizontally-organised politics of political actors, in which events were neither examples of ‘politics’ nor ‘the
political’ and there was a ‘co-constitutive relationship’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.65) between the two.

Looking at the movement as a whole, the discordant perspectives of activists proved reconcilable because it was based in the recognition and acceptance of difference, and an enforced condemnation of intolerance, toward achieving a united front against fracking development. This means that although there were tensions within the movement between organisational practices and political perspectives, a collective commitment to universal equality, visible in their organisational practices and articulated as respect for difference and the right of every individual to have an equal voice, provided a common emancipatory cause that extended beyond local concerns with the exploratory well.

Their commitment to universal equality proved a key facet in enabling convergence and building a movement able to achieve ‘multi-scalar political action’ (Routledge 2003, p.333) from contested social relations. This supports Harvey’s argument (Harvey 1997; Harvey and Williams 1995) that a universalist politics allows movements to connect across space without departing from their respective militant particularisms. It also made it inevitable – and correct – that activists would conflict with nationalist activists, whose underlying political philosophy is based in a particular and exclusive struggle for equality.
7 A contemporary environmental struggle: community engagement as a transformative grassroots process

7.1 Introduction

A central aim of this thesis is to move beyond a focus on either ‘politics’ or the political’ in the study of a contemporary urban anti-fracking struggle. To this end, both of the preceding analysis chapters drew upon research on social movements, alongside a Rancièrian understanding of politics, which emerges through spaces of political subjectivation from ‘the part of those that have got no part’ (Rancière 1999, p.11). With the same aim in mind, this chapter shifts the conceptual focus away from the political spaces of the anti-fracking movement and toward the communities who live near to the exploratory well. This shift in focus is intended to allow analysis to move beyond a focus on the radical politics of activists, toward examining the ‘ordinary’ politics that exists within the same case. As such, the chapter addresses a call for more research on the possibilities and barriers to engendering radical social change at a grassroots level (García-Lamarca 2017a; Purcell 2014; Temenos 2017), by showing that in this case community engagement was an essential precursor to local people becoming active in the anti-fracking movement.

A focus on community engagement comes from the paradox that a spatial rupture of political subjectivation – through which an ostensibly community-led Protectors camp emerged outside the new ‘fracking’ energy infrastructure development at Barton Moss – predominantly comprised of people who did not live near to the exploratory well. Activists subsequently invoked the support of local people and encouraged their engagement in the struggle. The restricted community engagement of the rural community, barriers to subjectivation, the community engagement efforts of anti-fracking activists and the processes through which local people engaged in anti-fracking spaces to become political subjects are discussed.
Community engagement, for this case, is understood as a transformative grassroots process that emerges as local people improve their environmental literacy and become increasingly engaged as political activists.

I argue that the community engagement efforts of autonomous activists were vital to ensuring the legitimacy of the anti-fracking struggle, because they ensured the movement had a broad social base of support amongst local disadvantaged communities. This means that the case is distinct from ‘ordinary’ protests in which activists do not engage the local community sufficiently, scale up their grievances or provide significant challenge to the authorities (Haughton et al. 2016). Conversely, it indicates the importance of the ‘ordinary’ politics of community engagement as a precursor for radical urban uprisings, since activists would not have had the support of local communities without these efforts.
7.2 A ‘Mancunian Spring’? Quashed hopes of a political uprising

The anti-fracking struggle at Barton Moss emerged in a place in which most people had been marginalised from the processes of development for the well. However, it was not these people who initially setup the Protectors camp. Instead, activists came from across Greater Manchester and from other parts of the UK to occupy Barton Moss Road and slow activity at the well.

Early on in the struggle, anti-fracking activists expressed the hope that the slow-walks along Barton Moss Road would be the start of a heterogonous political movement similar in scope to recent uprisings abroad:

if you’ve got the whole of Irlam and Cadishead comes up here [sic] and says no, then they [IGas] have to stop and think about it. When four million people went to the streets in Egypt, to say that they did not want Morsi as their president, well we can do that kind of thing over here.

Of particular interest in this extract is the call for Irlam and Cadishead people to show their solidarity by attending the slow-walks. It points to the hope that fracking would create a unified political – rather than social – movement that was built from a mass of local people. This is expressly different to the makeup of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, which comprised of people from across the city-region united by their opposition to fracking development. It is also different to the space opened at Barton Moss Camp, which was made up of activists from across the UK as well as a minority of people who lived nearby.

To illustrate the point, the activist refers to the Egyptian uprising of 2011, which opened a period in which radical urban uprisings emerged around the world. For example, tens of thousands of people flooded Syntagma Square (Karaliotas 2017), hundreds of thousands occupied Taksim Square (Erensü and Karaman 2017) and
'the people’ rose up and occupied public spaces in the Tunisian revolution (Zemni 2017, p.78).

A key distinction between the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement and these radical urban uprisings is that local people did not join the ‘frontline’ of the movement *en masse*. Instead, key activists from the surrounding estates regularly engaged in the movement whilst others offered different forms of practical support:

> we’re getting food drops, off locals, we’re getting wood drops, off locals, we’ve even had locals turn up and cook us meals on site, we’ve had locals turn up with cooked meals that are still warm, cos that’s how close they live, without the locals, I do not think the camp would have grown as fast as it had.

Protectors camp 4

In addition to the practical support offered by local residents there were also ‘people who lived nearby who came every day and they would do the morning and the afternoon walk’ (Autonomous activist 17).

However, during the occupation the number of campers did not rise above thirty at any one time and protests outside the exploratory well were normally attended by tens rather than hundreds (or even thousands) of people. Early on in the struggle, this post was put on Facebook by the camp and shared by anti-fracking groups:
OK, here's an unpalatable but unadulterated fact of life ... unless the population of Northwest England find ways to get themselves to Barton Moss Road (M30 7RQ) on weekdays between 10.00am & 2.00pm, IGas will have effectively achieved their much vaunted 'Social License'... in less than a month of 'exploratory drilling'! 250+ at the weekend is a nice day out but neither IGas nor the UK Government give a rats about weekend protests! 20% of the Protectors were arrested yesterday (Monday), on a day when the local community was conspicuous by it's [sic] absence!

Activist fb post, 12th October, 2013

As this extract illustrates, in the opening month of the exploratory well very few local people engaged in the slow-walks. Their limited engagement is a departure from previous examples of protests against new ‘fracking’ energy infrastructure developments that are led by local communities, for example in Pennsylvania (Poole and Hudgins 2013), the UK (Radix 2013; Szolucha 2016), Romania (Vesalon and Crețan 2015) and the Netherlands (Köhne and Rasch 2017; Rasch and Köhne 2016). In each of these cases opposition to fracking development is led by local communities that live near to proposed extraction sites. In this case, the greatest level of support was seen at the weekend solidarity marches, which were organised by the regional assembly and at their peak drew in approximately 1500 people from across the UK (FFGM 10). Most of these did not live near to the exploratory well and represented a heterogenous multitude of social movements and wide-ranging political groups (Figure 7).

This demonstrates a greater groundswell of support than the ‘post-political’ response of Greater Manchester in the Alexander Park tree protest, which remained small and locally focused (Haughton et al. 2016). However, it falls short of the political uprising that some activists believed would emerge from the anti-fracking movement (Protectors camp 4; Activist 1).
Figure 7: Gaughan Stagg Cumann, an Irish Republican Group and part of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, marched in solidarity with anti-fracking activists in Greater Manchester
7.3 The effect of post-democracy on political engagement: the non-engagement and disempowerment of people who lived near to Barton moss exploratory well

Activists who campaigned around Barton Moss exploratory well found that residents who had heard of fracking often expressed their support for the anti-fracking movement but felt they were not able to help (Autonomous activist 16). Many had long since disengaged from a system that they perceived to be working for someone else:

People feel like they won’t get listened to or that nothing is going to happen, and I do not think that is an unjustified belief, that comes about because very often the things that happen do not seem to be in the interest of the wider people.

Autonomous activist 16

In this extract a Greater Manchester activist is pointing to the lived experiences of residents to explain their non-engagement in the anti-fracking movement. The experience described is one of marginalisation, as people’s grievances are ignored and no action is taken to address their concerns. This means that developments ‘do not seem to be in the interest of the wider people’ (ibid). Also implicit to this extract is the observation that local people do not recognise their own power to take action through dissent. This proved a key barrier to them taking action and frustrated the efforts of activists to engage local communities, because people did not believe their dissent could affect positive change.

A key example is the restricted engagement of the rural community in anti-fracking meetings and at the Protectors camp. During the five months the exploratory well was in operation, people who lived on Barton and Chat Moss were notably absent and did not play a significant role in the space opened up outside the exploratory well. Their non-engagement was noted in the fieldwork stage of this study, because
residents who were approached for an interview were not willing to speak on the record, despite expressing a personal interest in the development. It was also noted in an interview with a journalist who reported on events at Barton Moss Camp:

I met a couple of local people down there [at Barton Moss Camp] who were, did not really want to speak on air but they’d kind of come down out of interest, and curiosity and were very supportive of the camp and what they were trying to do.

Media 3

As indicated in this extract, the reluctance of local residents to openly engage with the anti-fracking movement was not because they did not support the activists. They paid close attention to the Protectors camp and slow-walks that emerged on their doorstep and some attended anti-fracking meetings anonymously (Resident 1). A farmer who lived nearby explained that he supported the anti-fracking movement in principle but could not publicly offer them his support (Resident 2). He talked at length about his love of the area and of farming. He hoped that the farm would be a gift for his children to take over when he retired, but with fracking now on the agenda he worried that the farm would not be viable by the time they had grown up. His primary concern was that a fracking industry could pollute the freshwater aquifer which he used to irrigate his land.

Despite his concerns, the farmer was not willing to go on the record and be interviewed. The reason that he gave was that he did not want Peel Group to find out that he had engaged with the anti-fracking movement in any way. This fear was common to many of the Barton and Chat Moss residents spoken with during the fieldwork. Their concerns were corroborated in an interview with a local resident:

Farmers here, a lot of them are nervous about Peel Holdings. I won’t say which farmer, but I was at a farm the other day trying to talk to the guy and he was like 'oh do not tell anyone that you were speaking to me',
you know, they’re that scared of Peel. It’s not really about [being] anti-fracking, and it’s not really about us, it’s the way things have been done in Salford for a long time... Peel are pulling the strings and everyone else says how high?

Resident 4

In this extract a local resident explains that there were people near to Barton Moss that had an interest in the development who could not openly engage with activists because of their relationship with a local landowner and developer.

The involvement of Peel Group also affected perceptions of the development on the estates near to Barton Moss. When activists explained to residents that Peel Group owned the land on which the exploratory well was developed, many expressed inevitability that the development would go ahead regardless of local opposition:

The biggest emotion that comes across [from residents] is the feeling that the council won’t listen to us, the council do whatever they want, Peel Holdings will do whatever they want, and they do not feel able to change things, and therefore [they] do not want to be involved and are apathetic.

Autonomous activist 16

What is important in this extract is the connection made between local people feeling disempowered and their decision not to take action in the struggle. Residents were not surprised to hear that Peel Holdings (part of Peel Group) were pursuing a new development and appeared resigned to the inevitability of its success.

The power of the company in local developments was also noted in council interviews (Councillor 2; Councillor 3). In one such interview the councillor
referenced a map (Figure 8) the council commissioned to examine the extent of land owned by the Peel group in Salford.
Figure 8: Peel Group ownership of Chat Moss (Salford City Council, 2014, adapted to mark site of exploratory well)
On the map, land owned by the Peel Group within the boundary of Salford is highlighted in red. The map supports the councillor’s claim that ‘everything’s Peel round our way... you can’t ignore them [in local development]’ (Councillor 3). The councillor referred to the map to illustrate the power that Peel Group has over the direction of future development in Salford, because they own a significant amount of brown and greenbelt land in the city.

The councillor’s observation supports a recent case study on Peel Group that argues its mobilisation of land as an asset has transformed ‘the regional political-economic fabric while plugging into and co-shaping wider national and transnational processes of neoliberalisation’ (Ward and Swyngedouw 2018, p.17). This was corroborated in an interview with a company connected with Peel Group:

[Peel Holdings] have guys out there that manage the tenancies and keep those things going, at some point parts of them might become development... [farms] have come out of the acquisition of companies where we wanted some particular assets and they just happened to be part of it. They might come of something in the future, they might be sold off to the tenants, I do not know. You’re right it’s not a core business though, [Peel Holdings are not] farmers, [they] do not farm any of that land. Tenants farm it.

Industry 3

This extract illustrates how farms are corollaries of assets acquired by the developer. The farms, which make up the majority of the Mosslands, have been subsumed into the assetisation of land that has transformed the regional political-economic fabric of the region (Ward and Swyngedouw 2018). Through staged dissent, activists created a space for challenging the legitimacy of this process, by thinking about Barton and Chat Moss in radically different ways. From a post-foundational perspective, they opened a dissensual space from which local people could question the process of assetisation and imagine alternative ways that the land could be used (Rancière et al. 2001). For example an Irlam resident who
regularly visited the camp related an idea that the Moss could be designated a national park for the city-region:

We think that the Moss, the ship canal, it's all world heritage standard... we're even thinking like in Zambia, there's a visitor centre and probably about ten tours a day in safari vehicles, and only locals are allowed on it, local farmers and such like that are allowed on the main area of the national park. You could train local people up as tour guides and you've got an industry there, that's a sustainable, green economy. If the locals are involved it keeps the next generation of locals involved. If people and the farmers are concerned about too many cars then you do day permits, for limited safari tours, or park and ride, even bike rides, hiring bikes. We were even thinking of rickshaws and why not?

Resident 4

In this extract the activist imagines that Chat Moss and the Manchester Ship Canal are part of an urban nature reserve, with a visitor centre, safari vehicles and rickshaws. This is a radical re-imagining of the Mosslands in which the land is appreciated for its wildlife and green space, and generations of local people are trained in eco-tourism. Importantly, at the heart of this alternative imagined future is local pride in the region and its potential as one of the largest expanses of green belt in the city-region. The extract provides insight into how people’s dissent allowed them to imagine themselves in a different world, in which development was designed for their collective benefit. This process is described in Veliku and Kaika (2017) as a journey into the unknown, ‘a process of creating alternative worlds for themselves... [as] activists, ecologists, agro-tourism entrepreneurs, or even poets on the ‘stage’ that opened... as a result of their dissensus’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.313).

Radical ideas like this are brave because they stand in contrast to the overbearing reality of business-as-usual in the region. As already discussed, this has recently been critiqued as on-going neoliberalisation through the assetisation of land (Ward and Swyngedouw 2018), in which farms are coveted for their future development...
potential. The anti-fracking movement and the space opened at Barton Moss by activists created a physical and metaphorical space in which alternatives to this reality could be imagined, provided opportunity to breathe and develop through shared conversations on what was possible, within the realms of imagination. The idea of creating a nature reserve was one idea discussed frequently at the Protectors camp with local people, who shared their hopes and dreams for the area.

However, while rural residents quietly engaged in these conversations with activists, tenant farmers were in a precarious position and could not risk openly supporting the anti-fracking movement. Their non-engagement indicates the human impact that assetisation has had on the rural community. Their limited role fits Rancière’s description of ‘post democracy’ (Rancière 1999):

The utopia of postdemocracy is that of an uninterrupted count that presents the total of "public opinion" as identical to the body of the people.

Rancière, 1999, p. 103, emphasis added

Residents’ feelings of powerlessness makes sense when placed in a post-democratic context, in which the state’s function is reduced to managerialism and (local) public opinion is portrayed as supportive of the development, despite privately-held grievances amongst rural residents who do not feel they have the power to publically voice their dissent. The restricted engagement of the rural community is particularly significant because it is unlike other examples of community opposition to shale gas exploration in the UK, in which local farmers protest against development, for example in Cheshire (Hayhurst 2016) and Lancashire (Case 2017).
7.4 From Manchester to Barton Moss: the importance of ‘anti-fracking’ community engagement

This section addresses calls to examine barriers to engendering radical social change at a grassroots level (García-Lamarca 2017a; Purcell 2014; Temenos 2017). Recent critiques of post-foundational research on radical urban struggles argue that ‘there has been [too] much focus on moments of rupture in the seemingly post-political condition’ (Temenos 2017, p.584). Analysis therefore moves away from the moment of rupture, to examine efforts to engage local communities in the run-up to the operation of Barton Moss exploratory well. It provides evidence that in this case community engagement was an essential precursor to local people engaging in the anti-fracking movement. Specifically, it examines activists’ efforts to enable community actors to engage in radical social change at a grassroots level on the estates surrounding Barton Moss, both leading up to and during the operation of the exploratory well.

7.4.1 The importance of local communities to the anti-fracking movement

The anti-fracking movement in Greater Manchester comprises a heterogonous community made-up of people from across the UK. Its broad base of activists reflects the pervasive nature of ‘fracking’, a term that connects local developments with a multitude of processes and impacts that relate to gas / oil exploration, extraction and development (Evensen et al. 2014). Across the North West, activists have highlighted its risks to the region via issues that include climate change, water pollution and the industrialisation of the countryside (Cotton 2017; Short and Szolucha 2017). Since the industry has not even got off the ground yet in the UK, its development has as many implications for future generations as it does for people living in the UK today (Figure 9).
Figure 9: A mother-to-be at a Greater Manchester anti-fracking protest highlights the implications of 'fracking' for future generations.

Permission obtained from photo participant
When activists came to Barton Moss and opened up an anti-fracking space outside the exploratory well, these concerns were not recognised by the developer, who argued that ‘fracking’ was not taking place on any exploration sites (Industry 4). Efforts to connect a future fracking industry with the exploratory well were described as ‘political’ and guided by an ‘anti-capitalist agenda’ (Industry 1). This is interpreted as ‘against industry, against business, against economic growth’ (Industry 1). Activists were described as ‘BANANA’s, which means build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone’ (Industry 3). The pejorative framing removes political voice by marginalising grievances as irrational and highlighting activists’ lack of personal attachments to the site.

Non-local voices were also marginalised by the media (for example: Daily Mail, 2014; Daily Telegraph, 2013), who were keen to interview people who lived near to the exploratory well, rather than activists who did not:

we were constantly saying to them [camp activists], look, is [sic] there people locally who live very close by, because obviously... we kind of wanted people who were going to be directly affected.

Media 3

The marginalisation of non-local voices by the media (Media 3; Media 4), developer (Industry 1; Industry 3) and police (Daily Mail 2014; Manchester Evening News 2014b) meant that local voices became the ‘legitimate’ oppositional voice in the struggle. Paradoxically, this meant that although local communities did not start the Protectors camp, they were invoked as its leaders and direct beneficiaries (Protectors camp 4; Activist 1).

Activists were keen to show that they had the support of local communities and that the movement comprised people who lived near to the exploratory well as well as activists from across Greater Manchester and the UK. In interviews, they spoke about the importance of community engagement to empower local people
to take action and become visible as anti-fracking activists (Protectors camp 5; FFGM 15). Community engagement took place over a period of months, both preceding and during the operation of the well. A significant starting point was an ‘anti-fracking skillshare’ (Autonomous activist 16) which was held in the summer of 2013. Activists at the event discussed the implications of a future fracking industry and how to organise against the exploratory well at Barton Moss. The event was well attended and included environmental activists from across the UK. For one such activist, this was the moment when engagement in the anti-fracking struggle began:

The big thing that occurred to me from that, was in a breakaway meeting on the community, I realised that community engagement is massively important. We talked about how important that was and so that's why a few of us were like, we need to do something like that here [Barton Moss exploratory well] because people had not engaged the community yet.

Autonomous activist 16

Of particular note in this extract is that it was ‘community engagement’ that motivated their decision to take action. Rather than protest against fracking, these activists wanted to engage people that lived near to the well (Autonomous activist 16). Over the coming months they reached out to communities on the rural Mosslands and nearby Brookhouse, Irlam and Cadishead estates (Autonomous activist 16).

Importantly, none of these activists identified as part of a political or social group. This means that their vital role campaigning on the estates would be overlooked by a conceptual focus on social movements. As a key activist explained, the decision to remain autonomous was borne from previous experience:

I have been involved in lots of environmental campaign groups in the past and I became a bit allergic to them all... I stopped thinking it was
gonna get anywhere, I lost hope, and then recently community organising gave me an injection of hope.

Autonomous activist 16

What is interesting about this extract is that it offers insight into why some experienced activists chose to work independently, rather than through an environmental campaign group. Realising ‘there were a load of protestors that were about to turn up and no-one had done any community engagement work’ (ibid.) they organised regular visits to estates near to the exploratory well where they set out to engage with local residents on the issue of ‘fracking’.

In part, their autonomy, and the absence of social movement actors, was borne from necessity, because environmental groups lacked organisational capacity in that part of Salford (Autonomous activist 17). There are no Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace groups on the surrounding estates and the Green Party group for Salford closed in 2010 due to a lack of membership (FFGM 11). The absence of environmental groups near to Barton Moss is one reason why community engagement was led by activists from other parts of Greater Manchester. Their interactions with communities near to the exploratory well preceded the formation of the regional anti-fracking assembly and they remained autonomous from any social movement organisation for the duration of the struggle (Autonomous activist 16).
7.4.2 Community engagement: empowerment through the improvement of environmental and political literacy

The community engagement efforts of activists were focused on empowering residents to engage in the anti-fracking movement themselves. Empowerment is an important element to political subjectivation, which ‘implies taking charge on one’s own becoming as a political subject, a change in his / her subjectivation’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.313). The process occurs when spaces open up in which politics can be staged (Dikeç 2005; Karaliotas 2017; Rancière 1999). In this case, these were the anti-fracking meetings, Barton Moss Road (where slow-walks were staged), anti-fracking protests and Barton Moss Camp.

Activists were keen to incorporate local people into these spaces and encouraged them to organise local anti-fracking meetings in which they worked with Greater Manchester activists. These meetings placed local people, who had habitually been marginalised from processes of development, at the heart of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement, both in the lead-up to and during the operation of Barton Moss exploratory well. Activists also encouraged them to attend the regional assembly, engage in Barton Moss Camp and take action on the slow-walks (Protectors camp 2; Protectors camp 6; FFGM 14). A Protector explained that they wanted to form a community with local people because ‘[anti-fracking] activists come from all over but we have to have local people and we have to form a community and communicate and work together’ (Protectors camp 6). By creating anti-fracking spaces with residents, activists encouraged them to learn how to vocalise their concerns, both with fracking and the development at Barton Moss.

Anti-fracking meetings on the Brookhouse, Irlam and Cadishead estates brought supra-local environmental issues into a space in which local people had been marginalised from processes of development. As a complex environmental controversy, fracking connects local political concerns with supra-local environmental issues, including where our freshwater comes from, climate change,
water pollution and environmental risks from chemicals (Evensen et al. 2014). Key activists hoped that their actions would act as a catalyst for broader political engagement in local communities:

you literally want to empower people to take control of their communities, again, their economies, the local economy... [and understand that] the environment is all around you... everything is all connected up.

FFGM 15

Rather than campaign on the environmental issues, activists focused on local grievances, which they then universalised through connection to the environmental and social implications of a future fracking industry. By connecting global environmental issues with local grievances, the anti-fracking movement became based in the ‘open egalitarian ideal’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305) of environmental justice which ‘movements across the world continuously redefine in embodied and performed ways which are historically and geographically distinct’ (ibid, p.305).

In an area where people felt disempowered from politics and processes of development, activists highlighted the absence of opportunities for people to voice their concerns about the exploratory well, either through the planning process or in any regional or national forum (Protectors camp 6). The pervasive nature of fracking exploration, which extends horizontally for kilometres beneath the ground, allowed activists to argue that a future industry affected everyone because fracking wells would trespass under properties. They also campaigned on the local traffic impacts and environmental risks posed by the exploratory well, which they connected to the (non-local) risks that fracking chemicals and air pollution pose to the food chain (AV1; FFGM 9; Expert2).
As well as campaigning amongst local communities, activists encouraged people to explore the online and physical anti-fracking spaces and educate themselves about fracking. Arguably, this was both a sensible and necessary approach for an unfunded grassroots social movement to take (Protectors camp 6). It reflected an ideological consensus that the anti-fracking movement should be horizontally organised (FFGM 14; Protectors camp 6). Activists wanted local people to self-organise so that they became the anti-fracking movement, empowered to act autonomously and speak as equals both amongst activists and with the media, who were particularly keen to speak with ‘local’ (Media3; Media 4) people (Figure 10).
Figure 10: A local resident interviewed by the media at Barton Moss Camp. In the background the interview is being live streamed by a camp activist to an online audience.
A month before Barton Moss Camp was setup, and following a period of sustained door-to-door campaigning, activists held an anti-fracking event at the Tiger Moth pub (Figure 11), where they organised a presentation informing people about the risks of fracking development and its connection to the exploration phase of development underway in the UK. This was the first anti-fracking event held near to the exploratory well. It was considered a success by its organisers because ‘the room was packed, there were thirty, forty people from the estate’ (Autonomous activist 16). Subsequent door knocking was led by residents and ‘it was really good because you had neighbours knocking on their neighbours’ doors, talking about the issue’ (Autonomous activist 16). In addition, key local activists that helped setup Barton Moss Camp first heard about fracking through this event (Resident 3) which ‘did rally some of the local people into understanding the danger and also made sure that the Barton Moss Camp did get supported [locally]’ (FFGM 12).
Figure 11: The Tiger Moth pub, where the first anti-fracking meetings on the Irlam and Cadishead estate were held
Although the event opened a space in which people could learn about fracking development, it was clear that residents who attended had not entirely understood why fracking should be of concern to them. One lady, for example, hearing that there was a risk to freshwater aquifers, asked if she should stop her dog from drinking puddle water while the well was in operation. Activists realised that people’s concern about ‘fracking’ belied a low level of awareness about what the term referred to:

they’re very ignorant of it [fracking], so you rarely get somebody who says, I’ve heard about it, but I know only a little bit, they’ll say, I’ve heard about it but I know nothing.. [we found] not a lot of people have been educated on it [fracking].

FFGM 9

As this extract illustrates, engagement proved difficult with people who struggled to understand why fracking was controversial. Another activist noted that ‘the local people have not been educated in what’s going to happen, whereas people who protest against the system are well researched in what the system is up to’ (Protectors camp 5). The low political and environmental literacy of local communities on the issues of fracking meant that they were not immediately receptive to being asked to take action or to talk about environmental or social issues.

In order to engage people in the anti-fracking movement, activists first needed to raise awareness about the environmental and political risks that fracking posed to the community. As one seasoned environmental activist explained, this meant relating ‘fracking’ in less hyperbolic and complex terms than in previous campaigns:

I think you have to be a bit more delicate with the issue here [than in Balcombe]. They’re not like hardened middle classes, they’re very regular people. They’ve never thought about this stuff before. It sounds like something from a scary American doomsday movie, you know? ...So
Activists realised that they needed to do more than provide information about fracking if they were to politicise people on the estates near the exploratory well (Protectors camp 7; FFGM 15). Through anti-fracking events, online activist spaces and Barton Moss Camp, activists encouraged people to educate themselves about fracking and then to take action as they learnt about its wider implications:

you never teach people by simply talking to them, you teach by doing... not through evangelising and giving them a nice leaflet, and a politician preaching to them, it does not work like that, people change because of what they do, and they feel it in their bones and through their daily reactions to things, and [that’s why with politics]... you can never get local enough.

AV1

In this extract the activist makes a distinction between campaigning to inform local people and seeking to ‘change [them] because of what they do’ (Activist 1). The extract provides an apt understanding of what activists sought to achieve through their community engagement efforts. It illustrates what Rancière describes as political subjectivation, through which people change both their perceptions and their daily activities as they become politically active (Rancière 1999). The process of learning that it describes is distinct from the deficit model of technological governance practiced by the developer (Wynne 1993; Stirling 2008).

In this case then, community engagement describes a process of active-learning through which local people engaged in the anti-fracking movement. The process was supported by activists, who campaigned extensively to stimulate people’s
curiosity about fracking and then helped them to become more active in the movement:

it was not somebody coming into the area and saying we’ve got to have a meeting, I want you to know about this, which we could have done, but you know, it was about trying to stimulate curiosity within the local community, getting people in the local community to realise it [fracking] was a problem, and then getting people in the local community to be sufficiently motivated to call that meeting.

Protectors camp 6

Of particular interest here is the distinction made between ‘trying to stimulate curiosity’ (Protectors camp 6) and setting up a meeting in the local community. This is an important distinction, because it shows that activists saw their efforts as more than public participation. They engaged in community engagement, and sought to stimulate people’s curiosity so that they would then teach themselves about fracking and its implications and become politically active through engagement in the anti-fracking movement.

The meeting referred to is the first Frack Free Irlam and Cadishead meeting, held in October 2013 at the Tiger Moth pub (Figure 11). It was organised by residents and followed on from the event in October held by Greater Manchester activists. The meeting had over 70 people in attendance and demonstrated that there was significant local concern about fracking. Local curiosity had piqued because activists had campaigned on the estates for over a month. Before this, residents did not recognise that ‘fracking’ was something that they should be concerned with (Autonomous activist 16; Protectors camp 6; FFGM 13). This is acknowledged in the extract above when the activist explains that campaigning was initially about ‘getting people in the local community to realise it [fracking] was a problem’ (Protectors camp 6).
The community engagement efforts of activists ensured that the anti-fracking movement was able to engage with disadvantaged local communities and involve them in the anti-fracking struggle. The quick movement of key autonomous activists to establish a broad social base on estates near to the exploratory well ensured that the struggle was distinct from the Alexander Park protests examined in Haughton et al. (2016), where ‘post-politicizing tactics succeed in undermining and defusing protestors and their concerns’ (Haughton et al. 2016, p.488).

In this case, these tactics were based in a policy of non-engagement and apparent neutrality from the council alongside privately-led community engagement via the CLG, in which a narrow interpretation of who was part of the affected community determined who could engage on the development. Through sustained community engagement efforts, activists encouraged local people to escalate their claims about political disenfranchisement and give voice on issues which went beyond a concern with the exploratory well. The following section examines this process in more detail, and places it in the context of the disadvantaged local communities from which these claims emerged.
7.5 Conclusions

This chapter focused on the community engagement efforts of activists both leading up to and during the operation of the exploratory well. Analysis addressed a call for more research on the possibilities and barriers to engendering radical social change at a grassroots level (García-Lamarca 2017a; Purcell 2014; Temenos 2017). It did so by providing evidence that in this case community engagement was an essential precursor to local people engaging in the anti-fracking movement. ‘Community engagement’ describes the transformative grassroots process through which local people improved their environmental literacy and became increasingly engaged as political activists.

In other words, the community engagement efforts of Greater Manchester activists enabled local people to engage in the anti-fracking movement. Subsequently, local residents contributed to the upkeep of the camp and helped slow activity at the exploratory well, taking part in protests, ‘slow-walks’ and direct actions. Through engagement in anti-fracking meetings and Barton Moss Protectors camp they learned how to understand, scale up and express grievances on complex environmental issues.

In a broader context of resisting ‘fracking’ development, the involvement of local people in the upkeep of Barton Moss Protectors camp ensured its legitimacy as a community-supported camp. This proved important because activists needed to invoke the local community, both as leaders and beneficiaries of the struggle, in order for their grievances to be recognised as legitimate within the ‘instituted order’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) and to be reported by the media. This observation supports a recent study on anti-fracking activism in Ireland, which argues that activists’ degree of localism helps determine their credibility in the media (Steger and Drehobl 2018). It also supports the argument – set out in chapter two of this study – that a focus on local communities marginalises the concerns of broader social movements and autonomous activists, who do not live locally to the exploratory well. In this case, activists from Greater Manchester and
from other parts of the UK had legitimate concerns with fracking development that did not need to be articulated from a community perspective. However, sustained attacks on non-local activists at Barton Moss, both in the local and national media, meant that their perspectives were marginalised and in their place the local community was invoked to articulate grievances with the development.

As well as providing evidence that community engagement was an essential precursor to people on neighbouring estates becoming active in the anti-fracking movement, this chapter asked why an ostensibly community-led struggle predominantly comprised people who did not live near to the exploratory well. This question is best answered by examining the historical relations that underpin the formation of people’s responses to the development. In the city-region of Greater Manchester, anti-capitalist and environmental activists engaged events at Barton Moss as part of their on-going political struggles. For these activists, the exploratory well becomes the frontline of pre-existing campaigns. At a local scale, local residents did not engage en masse, in part because of high levels of deprivation and low environmental literacy on nearby estates, which limited their potential to engage in the struggle. In addition, there was an absence of established activist groups, and in interviews people from disadvantaged communities expressed disempowerment in relation to local developments. For rural residents, concerns for their own livelihoods and the perceived risks of engaging openly with activists restricted the ways that they engaged in the struggle. In particular, their response was shaped by fear of how open engagement could affect their lives and livelihoods and as a result they seek to manage their grievances privately and individually, without joining the broader anti-fracking movement.

Returning to the central aim of the thesis, in this chapter examination of the efforts of activists to engage people on estates neighbouring the exploratory well enabled analysis to move beyond a focus on the extraordinary politics of the anti-fracking movement, toward the ‘ordinary’ politics of community engagement amongst disadvantaged local communities. Analysis contributes to the argument that there
is a temporal element to political ruptures and the process of political subjectivation, which is evident where the emancipatory potential of political ruptures is sustained through the politics of the everyday (García-Lamarca 2017a). This case provides further evidence of a temporal element to the process, because the anti-fracking struggle is preceded by months of community engagement aimed at fomenting protest, without which activists could not have legitimately invoked the local community or elevated grievances from the local to the universal.

A focus on community engagement in the months leading up to the operation of the exploratory well reveals the transformative and emancipatory potential of community engagement, where such development is focused on fomenting protest. As García-Lamarca (2017) argues, in this context community engagement is a political process that ‘disrupts the status quo, enacts equality and creates political subjects’ (García-Lamarca 2017a, p.423). This is particularly important in political struggles that emerge amongst disadvantaged communities, where community engagement is a political process that can enable people to overcome key social and financial barriers. In this case, without the efforts of Greater Manchester activists, local people would not have been able to act as political subjects in the struggle.
8 An anti-fracking siting struggle: The occupation of Barton Moss Protectors camp

8.1 Introduction

The first analysis chapter placed the anti-fracking struggle at Barton Moss in its urban context. It argued that the anti-fracking struggle emerged from activist groups in the city-region, and amongst communities near to the exploratory well who were marginalised from the CLG and whose grievances on ‘fracking’ were deemed to be insensible by the authorities. The second analysis chapter focused on organisational tensions within the anti-fracking movement, and showed how autonomous groups successfully articulated an emancipatory politics because of a shared ethos of egalitarianism, predicated on an acceptance of difference and the right of each person to have an equal voice in the movement. The third analysis chapter shifted the conceptual focus away from the political spaces of the anti-fracking movement and toward the communities who live near to the exploratory well. It argued that the community engagement efforts of autonomous activists were vital to ensuring the legitimacy of the anti-fracking movement, because they ensured it had a broad social base of support amongst local disadvantaged communities.

This chapter centres conceptual focus onto the political struggle that erupted outside the exploratory well, and examines how a heterogeneous multiplicity of actors staged their dissent there. To incorporate these actors into analysis, the research design includes all actors who engaged in Barton Moss Protectors camp. Importantly, this focus enables research to engage a relational understanding of ‘local’ opposition that does not marginalise key activists because of where they live.\(^9\) The chapter pays attention to the discursive and material practices of actors

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\(^9\) In interviews most activists who did not live near to the exploratory well still identified as local to the well, even if they lived in other parts of Greater Manchester. This is understandable given that ‘non-local’ people weren’t recognised as legitimate in the struggle by the authorities. In this context, it was important to create a research design that didn’t de-legitimise their voice as well.
at Barton Moss Camp, and the protest space that they opened up outside the exploratory well.

As with recent accounts of radical urban uprisings, that neither deify nor demonise them (Erensü and Karaman 2017; Kaïka and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017) analysis seeks to move beyond the ‘hard’ distinction between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ toward a more nuanced theoretical understanding of the different types of politics that are enacted. A key question raised in this chapter is whether events at Barton Moss were ‘political’ in the sense the term is used by Rancière, and to what extent they align with understandings of radical urban politics used to describe the Mediterranean and Arab uprisings. This question is answered with the argument that events at Barton Moss are political when understood in the local context from which they emerged, and that importantly activists were effective at staging and sustaining a political struggle through an English winter, in freezing conditions not suited to building a political movement outdoors.

The Protectors camp emerged as a space of encounter in which activists challenged fracking and slowed activity at the exploratory well, which its activists saw as the ‘frontline’ (Protectors camp 5) of the anti-fracking movement. Analysis builds on the argument that a common ethos of egalitarianism allows heterogenous actors to successfully stage dissensual politics in seemingly contradictory ways (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). As with the regional assembly, these contradictions do not come to the fore because dissent was premised on an acceptance of difference, allowing a heterogenous group to build solidarity around the common aim of stopping fracking. On a practical level, over five months of occupation and struggle, their efforts forced the dissent of activists into the view of workers at the site and enabled the anti-fracking movement to considerably disrupt activity at the exploratory well.
8.2 A rupture of the political? Establishing Barton Moss Camp

Rancière’s distinction between ‘politics’ and the political’ recognises there is permanent potential to achieve transformative radical politics through the potential for opening up new political spaces. This distinction has become particularly relevant in the context of radical urban uprisings and occupations globally since 2011 (Dikeç 2017) and is ‘useful for making sense of the spatialities of a ruptural event’ (Erensü and Karaman 2017, p.22). The ‘political’ is deeply spatial because it emerges in and through space (Dikeç 2005), disrupting the order of the sensible through the staging of dissent and experimentation with radical political imaginaries (for example: Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016).

At Barton Moss, anti-fracking activists put their politics into practice when they occupied the embankment of Barton Moss Road on 15th November 2013 (Figure 12) and began ‘the constitution of a place of encounter by those that have no place in that order’ (Dikeç 2005, p.172).
Figure 12: Camp in first week is a few tents on cleared land with kitchen (wood frame) under construction
They displayed a legal notice that detailed Section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, which protected their rights as occupiers, or ‘squatters’ of the protest camp. On their first night under the stars, they put out calls via Facebook for other people to join them:

> There was a lad there, first guy that turned up... from Sale, a local lad that had been against all the Manchester Air Quality stuff... he’s turned up and then a few of them [Balcombe activists] turned up and then started putting messages out on Facebook saying they were building a camp... and then [two other Greater Manchester environmental activists], just put all their tents up and pretended there was a lot of people there, took photographs and said look it’s growing, and then a friend of mine, a guy I know whose got contacts with ITV got organised for me to have an interview with ITV... so I just said [to them] just go to the camp and... it just sort of snowballed really.

Resident 3

As this passage indicates, the initial occupation of the embankment along Barton Moss Road was a spontaneous event that was not driven by actors from the regional anti-fracking assembly. The spontaneous nature of the camp’s emergence has similarities with the Syntagma Square protests, which began from an initial call via Facebook by three unknown men, ‘which succeeded in addressing large and diverse parts of the population, while simultaneously moving beyond all established political parties and existing social movements’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.60). In both cases, the activists that first initiate a call for solidarity acted autonomously from any organisation (Protectors camp 4; Karaliotas, 2017). A focus on social movement actors would overlook these key actors, because the ‘political movement’ they are a part of lacks the required recognition, legitimacy or organisational form to be examined as a social movement. Put another way, their ‘legitimate claims are delegitimised for not fitting into the established institutions or conventions of politics’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.14).
The Protectors camp, as it became known in the anti-fracking movement, was established on a grass verge along Barton Moss Road, leading up to the exploratory well. Both the camp and the exploratory well were constructed on land owned by Peel Holdings. As a developer, Peel Group has been involved in previous energy development projects in the region. These have included Scout Moor wind farm and the Davyhulme Incinerator (Industry 3). Each of these projects encountered local opposition during their development (BreathCleanAirGroup, 2011; Rossendale Free Press, 2003), but this was the first time that the company had experienced ‘full blown occupational protest’ (Industry 1). To the surprise of the activists the landowner did not immediately seek to evict the camp, hoping to avoid ‘a heavy handed approach’ (Industry 1).

The well had been fortified in the months leading up to its operation. Its security was tight, with a 24-hour guard, cameras and a razor-wire perimeter. For many people who visited the protest camp their first impression was that the exploratory well resembled a high security prison (Figure 13):

I’ve seen prisons with less security than this... it is a fortress! The Fort Knox type... it’s all the same fencing all the way round, which is razor wire. I mean razor wire, you have to pay a fine to use it, prisons use razor wire.

Protectors camp 4

The visual impact of the site distressed both activists (Protectors camp 4; Protectors camp 2) and some of the people who worked there (Industry 1). The visual effect of the site was also compared in interviews to ‘a concentration camp’ (FFGM 9). Setting up camp in the shadow of this high security site was a political act, intended to create an encounter with the nascent fracking industry before it could establish a foothold in the region (Protectors camp 6).
Figure 13: Entrance to Barton Moss Exploratory Well
8.3 ‘It’s not political’

During the early days, as the camp grew in numbers, members of social movement and political groups came into conflict with camp activists over their role at Barton Moss, because they were suspected of having a ‘political’ agenda (FFGM 11). Camp activists rejected mainstream politics and were wary of the motivations for involvement from NGO and political-party actors. As with the regional assembly, in which participants were not permitted to represent a group in meetings, they asked that people came to the camp as ‘human beings, as themselves’ (Protectors camp 4) rather than as members of any group.

The majority of activists both at the camp and in the regional assembly shared the belief that the anti-fracking movement should not be affiliated to any political party (Protectors camp 5; FFGM 14). At the camp, this anger was fuelled by a sense that politicians could not be trusted:

politicians do not speak for us anymore, so it’s not political, we need to leave them at the door and tackle the issue at hand.

Protectors camp 4

In the first few days activists from political groups came to the camp and offered their assistance (FFGM 11). Soon, however, representatives of these groups became the target of verbal abuse, as camp residents asserted their autonomy from the political system that promulgated shale gas exploration in the UK (Protectors camp 5). A collective abhorrence of politics was based in a perceived connection between fracking and the political groups that enabled its development (Protectors camp 3; Protectors camp 7). This understanding was justified by reference to evident connections between politicians and fracking companies:

There’s corruption in government... Everyone’s related to each other... Lord Browne is the chief advisor on energy for the government but he’s
also chairman with Cuadrilla, who are sharing drilling equipment with IGas.

Protectors camp 7

Key activists evoked examples of government and corporate collusion, which they referred to as ‘corporatocracy’ to describe ‘control of the state by the corporations’ (Protectors camp 6). In this understanding the people are marginalised from political power, which is shared between corporations and the state. Much as Rancière associates ‘politics’ with consensus building, for these activists it represented compromise and ultimately capitulation with the fracking industry:

The only way that fracking could be a political issue is if we had an all-round ban of fracking, and that would be a political stance, because we’d need a party to ban it.

Protectors camp 4

As this extract elucidates, activists were keen to distance themselves from the idea that what they were doing was political, since their dissent did not broach compromise. In line with their mistrust of political groups, the camp implemented a rule that progressive party members were permitted to enter the camp only if they were not carrying political, corporate or NGO banners (Protectors camp 7).

The exclusion of political groups creates an interesting parallel with the radical uprising at Syntagma Square, in which the upper and lower squares forbade participation by political groups or any banners bearing political party insignia (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016). At Syntagma Square, ‘the prevailing attitude uniting all involved was that all politicians were corrupt thieves’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.561) who were blamed for the economic crisis in Greece, and for capitulating with the demands of the European Commission on the country’s debt repayments. Common to both the ‘collective moaning’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.562) of the upper square and the more coherent political voice of the lower square was the
sense that politicians betrayed the people they claimed to represent. This sense of betrayal was also expressed by activists at Barton Moss Camp (Protectors camp 4; Protectors camp 7) and disaffection with ‘politics’ was a key factor in its spatialisation. It helped ensure the space remained heterogeneous in makeup and was not dominated by any single ideology.

Disaffection with mainstream politics translated into efforts to ‘do things differently’ (Protectors camp 5) at the camp. Activists sought ‘to find a way to be organised, within our non-hierarchical organisation’ (Protectors camp 6). Unlike the regional anti-fracking assembly, camp activists had limited success in building consensual politics, because they disagreed on key political issues. In Rancière’s terms, they engaged in ‘dissensual politics’:

> Political dissensus is... a dispute over the situation itself, a dispute over what is visible as an element of a situation, over which visible elements belong to what is common, over the capacity of subjects to designate this common and argue for it.

Rancière, 2004, p. 6

This dispute was evident in the multiple and often conflicting understandings of the term ‘fracking’ that were expressed at the camp. In the context of the camp, in which activists maintained opposing fracking was ‘not political’, environmental issues were used to express dissensus between activists about political issues, in terms of their causes, effects and solutions. A key example is anthropogenic climate change. Political dissensus around this issue will now be examined, with focus on the disagreements of activists on the validity of climate change science.

8.3.1 Anthropogenic climate change: dissensual politics and the acceptance of difference

A key example of disagreement between camp activists on the issue of fracking is the conflicting views on the impact a future industry would have on anthropogenic
climate change. Contestation centred on the validity of climate change science. While most activists at the camp believed ‘fracking is going to... accelerate climate change’ (Protectors camp 7), a significant minority felt that ‘manmade climate change is a myth’ (Protectors camp 6). These activists lived on camp and were on the ‘frontline’ (Protectors camp 5) of the anti-fracking struggle while the exploratory well was in operation. One in particular, who was known on camp as an ‘expert’ on fracking (Protectors camp 4; Protectors camp 7), had previously organised conferences on geo-engineering and chem-trails in which climate change was examined as ‘a conspiracy theory... [intended] for control of society’ (Protectors camp 6). Geo-engineering and chem-trail activism can be used interchangeably to describe:

the belief that the persistent contrails left by aeroplanes provide evidence that a secret programme of large-scale weather and climate modification is on-going, and is having devastating ecological and health consequences worldwide.

Cairns, 2016, p. 71

These activists shared ‘scepticism about anthropogenic climate change (as being a result of excessive carbon dioxide emissions’ (Cairns 2016, p.80). In an interview, when the chem-trail activist was challenged that there is 97% scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change, he responded:

I'm sorry, I disagree with that, I think that it depends on which circles you're mixing with, but I could pull together a group of academics in a heartbeat that do not buy into climate change, into anthropogenic climate change.

Protectors camp 6

This activist was acutely conscious that his views on climate change conflicted with those of many others at the camp. He avoided confrontation on the issue because ‘I
absolutely acknowledge that climate change is important for a lot of people here’ (Protectors camp 6). This was true and extended to the camp’s supporters, which included climate change activist group the Campaign for Climate Change (Campaign for Climate Change 2013). At the regional gatherings the issue of climate change helped unify the movement, because activists agreed that ‘linking fracking to climate change dangers is of the utmost importance’ (FFGM 12).

At the camp, disagreement over the validity of climate change science had the effect that it was perceived as an issue that ‘runs the risk of creating an opportunity for division’ (Protectors camp 6):

There’s one thing that everybody agrees on. The moment that you start tagging on other elements, we start to create the potential for the establishment to build on that division.

Protectors camp 6

What is important in this extract is that it illustrates awareness that to build solidarity in the camp activists needed to enforce some consensus on which issues were focused on, and which were avoided as too divisive amongst activists. In another example, a prominent climate change activist who believed that ‘to avoid the more drastic effects of climate change the fossil fuels we have should be left in the ground’ (Protectors camp 7) acknowledged that he avoided talking about anthropogenic climate change because of ‘a lot of arguments in the camp, [both] here and in Balcombe’ (Protectors camp 7). Instead, he argued, it was better to avoid the subject altogether and recognise that ‘we’re here for fracking, essentially, above everything’ (Protectors camp 7). Balcombe, referred to in this extract, is where an anti-fracking camp emerged in West Sussex over the summer of 2013 (Press Association, 2013).

It is not unusual to identify conspiracy theories and uncertainty in research on the public understanding of climate change, for example in the US 40% of Americans
reject the scientific consensus (Uscinski and Olivella 2017). In addition, it is not surprising that chem-trail and climate change activists argued about the validity of anthropogenic climate change. What is unusual is climate change sceptics on the frontline of an environmental movement. The observation that climate change was contentious in Balcombe as well as Barton Moss (Protectors camp 7) suggests that this is not a novelty that can be confined to this case.

A recent study notes that as well as having obvious differences, climate change and chem-trail discourses also have parallels, including ‘emergency rhetoric... such as ‘tipping points, ‘thresholds’ and irreversibility’ [which are used] as rallying calls for action’ (Cairns 2016, p.79). In this case, the call for action was answered by both mainstream and conspiracy theory activists who shared alarm at the threat posed by a future fracking industry in the UK. The alarm that activists shared proved sufficient to put aside their disagreement over the validity of climate change science and to focus on the common understanding that stopping fracking was imperative. A tolerance of difference emerged as a friendly collegiality that shaped the discourses and practices of activists at the camp. For example, during a TV interview an activist ‘held up a piece of paper that said ‘climate crime scene” (Protectors camp 6). Later that day she watched the interview with fellow activists and realising her error ‘she knew immediately, and she said sorry’ (Protectors camp 6). Pragmatic responses like this ensured that disagreements over anthropogenic climate change did not create conflict and demonstrates how activists enforced a level of consensus from dissensual politics.

The conscious avoidance of the issue of anthropogenic climate change by camp activists - who comprised both climate change sceptics and environmentalists - provides some insight into the politics of the camp. While activists’ opinions on climate change were antagonistic, they were also based in a shared mistrust of experts and politicians, and in common dissent against these actors’ claims to represent activists in the anti-fracking struggle. This position makes sense when viewed from the perspective of the voiceless, who recognise that ‘politics’
(Protectors camp 4), as they define it, supports a capitalist system which marginalises the majority while promoting the interests of a minority. In interviews, activists were keen to explain their opposition to this system, which creates and legitimises the continued and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. It was this shared concern that bound them together and placed them outside and against the police order that enables fracking development. In this context, a lack of trust in actors – including well-meaning politicians and experts – who operate within the police order is logical, because it places collective responsibility onto those who legitimise and work within an unsustainable system\textsuperscript{10}.

From a practical standpoint, the antagonistic environmental politics at the camp also helps understand how a focus on ‘fracking’ shaped anti-fracking politics at the camp:

it’s not as complicated as organisation, no-one’s organised anything, have they? It’s a consensus of minds that come together in a certain space, and in that certain space the catalyst is fracking.

Protectors camp 2

What is important in this extract is the connection made between politics and space, as activists ‘come together’ (Protectors camp 2) by engaging in Barton Moss Camp on issues for which ‘fracking’ acts as a catalyst. This connection is important because it illustrates how the political emerges both in and through space (Dikeç 2005). Through the shared practices of its activists, Barton Moss was transformed into a key locus in the struggle against fracking, where people explored new performative ways of acting and being in common, using horizontal organisational practices to overcome contested social relations and refuting mainstream politics and its ideologies.

\textsuperscript{10} Recently, Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old activist who led the school climate strikes, expressed a similar sentiment of collective responsibility when she said ‘Young people must hold older generations accountable for the mess they have created’ (Ocasio-Cortez 2018).
An acceptance of difference at the camp ensured that all activists who engaged in the space could speak as an equal, even where their beliefs created conflict with other activists. This enabled climate change sceptics, more accustomed to an online world of clicktivism and conspiracy theories, to learn collective, bottom-up, political practices within a broader environmental movement (in which most people did believe in climate change) and contribute radical and dissensual ideas to the movement. By joining the camp, they sought to contest and disrupt the order of the sensible. Their efforts to apply dissensual beliefs to practice contributed to the material and discursive practices of the camp as well as to the radical political imaginary that emerged during the struggle.

8.3.2 ‘Water’s important to us’: scaling up the anti-fracking struggle

Disagreements over the validity of climate change science did not come to the fore at the Protectors camp because of a tacit understanding amongst activists that they should put aside political disagreements to ‘shut [the fracking industry] down in the UK’ (Protectors camp 6). Instead, activists focused on the issue of freshwater pollution as a common grievance that they could converge around:

water’s important to us, a basic, basic requirement for a human being is fresh water, they’re taking our fresh water, they’re churning toxins into the land.

Protectors camp 2

Activists talked about water because they realised that everybody shares a concern for the protection of freshwater resources. Fracking poses local environmental risks and can cause pollution, for example when well casings crack and release methane into aquifers, and when waste water containing toxic chemicals and radioactive isotopes spills into streams and rivers (Osborn et al. 2011; Rozell and Reaven 2012; Vengosh et al. 2014). The focus of activists on these issues aligns with anti-fracking
movements globally, in which freshwater pollution is the most conspicuous environmental issue raised by opponents of fracking (Kinniburgh 2015).

The pervasive nature of water pollution meant that activists had different and sometimes conflicting agendas for focusing on this issue, but were able to articulate these around the common aim of protecting freshwater resources. Specifically activists converged around the environmental risks that fracking posed to freshwater, both through the drilling process and the disposal of ‘fracked’ water supplies. At an immediately-local scale, they highlighted the risk that fracking posed to the sandstone aquifer beneath Barton Moss. This concern was particularly important to farmers on the Moss, who drew their water directly from the aquifer:

nobody in this area’s on mains supply, actually, all the houses, farms, scattered about, they’re all on their own borehole.

Farmer 1

For farmers, using water from the sandstone aquifer to irrigate crops was necessary because rainfall had been ‘too unpredictable, over the past five years’ (Farmer 1). In addition, rural residents filtered the aquifer water and used it for drinking water (Farmer 1). Their concern with fracking was that a future industry could introduce contaminants into the aquifer:

It’s fairly pure water, because it’s flowed through, quite a lot of rock, and it’s relatively clean on the hills now, there’s not heavy industry up there, so it’s good clean water that could potentially be contaminated [by fracking].

Farmer 1

As this extract illustrates, farmers’ dependency on the aquifer made them particularly vulnerable to the risk of water pollution from fracking development. Their use of the aquifer, both for farming and for drinking water, provided a different perspective on freshwater pollution to urban residents, whose domestic supply was drawn from reservoirs.

Initially anti-fracking activists did not recognise this distinction, and spoke on nearby estates about the risk that fracking posed to drinking water in the city-
region. In talks, they referenced the ‘flaming tap’ clip from US anti-fracking documentary Gasland (Fox 2010), which shows someone lighting a tap in their kitchen, because of methane in the water supply following alleged pollution from local fracking development. Research on public perceptions of fracking shows that this video has had a significant impact and helped raise the profile of the anti-fracking movement in the US, where the industry has had an adverse effect on rural communities who depend on the local aquifer for farming and drinking water (Jaspal et al. 2014). During the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle, the film was known by activists in the movement, in part because screenings of the documentary had been held in communities across Greater Manchester for a number of years, sponsored by the Co-operative group (The Co-operative 2011).

The distinction between rural residents, who drew their freshwater from the sandstone aquifer, and urban residents, whose freshwater came from reservoirs, became a point of conflict when a member of the CLG attended a local anti-fracking meeting. He challenged the speaker, who had warned that polluted water from the fracking process remained in the ground and could migrate up into the freshwater aquifer:

[he said] what do you mean all the [polluted] water stays in the ground? Well, we won’t be using that water to drink cos ours [drinking water] comes from reservoirs.

Resident 3

The event where this occurred was held early on in the struggle. Shortly after this, activists stopped campaigning on the estates about the risk that fracking posed to drinking water. The issue remained a concern for rural residents, but because they did not play a vocal role in the anti-fracking struggle their grievances were not at the forefront of the movement.

The issue of freshwater pollution was also used to scale up the siting dispute, through focus on the treatment and disposal of ‘fracked’ water. A key grievance activists raised with fracking development was that wastewater produced from the hydraulic fracturing process could contain radioactive materials:
I know that we do not get our drinking water from the ground near Barton Moss, I know that you get it from reservoirs, I’m not going to just totally believe all the stuff about gas coming out of our taps and things, I know that’s not the issue, but... the fact that you have to use freshwater, then sand and chemicals go into it, I mean you do not need to know much to know that pouring loads of chemicals and sending freshwater through NORM, which is Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material underground, is a bad idea.

Autonomous activist 16

NORMS, referred to here, were a key source of concern for activists who feared a future fracking industry would create radioactive waste water that could not be disposed of safely. In January 2014 these fears were heightened when it emerged that until September 2011 wastewater from a hydraulic fracturing site in Lancashire11 was treated at Davyhulme water treatment works and then released into the Manchester Ship Canal:

they’ve [fracking companies] done one operation in the North West already, and have dumped [radioactive wastewater]... a third of it in the canal which borders where I live, they also tried to treat it three miles from where I live, at the water waste treatment plant.

Resident 3

As explained in this extract, both the water treatment site and the Manchester Ship Canal are within the city-region of Greater Manchester and are near to Barton Moss and its surrounding estates. At the time, the MP for neighbouring Stretford and Urmston took up the cause with the Environment Agency. In an interview with the local media the MP explained that ‘I am extremely concerned that radioactive waste water has been released into our local waterways’ (Banks 2014).

This statement reflects concerns of activists in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement that the effects of a fracking industry could extend beyond the site itself and pollute other parts of the city-region. The idea that radioactive water had been released into local waterways without people’s knowledge was understandably alarming to activists who had been campaigning on the issue of

11 The Preese Hall site in Lancashire, the only hydraulically fractured shale gas well in the UK to date.
water pollution from fracking. It reinforced the notion that the struggle was about issues that went beyond a focus on the exploratory well itself. ‘Water pollution’ connected a local development to regional and supra-regional processes.

As well as scaling up the struggle through focus on water pollution, activists also connected the exploratory well to the potential contamination of the food supply, via farms that used water from the sandstone aquifer to water their crops. As one activist argued, if there was a fracking industry in the UK then ‘I won’t be able to trust local food because of the chemicals that have gone into the water supply nearby’ (Protectors camp 4). In addition, the issue of industrial water usage was used to discuss the privatisation of natural resources. Activists connected industrial water use by the fracking industry with on-going efforts to privatise freshwater supplies, to argue that corporations believe ‘access to water should not be a human right’ (Protectors camp 6).

Water, then, was a suitable quilting point for activists to converge upon because of its role at the centre of questions on public / private ownership, energy, food production, pollution of the waterways and the contamination of drinking water. For rural, urban and non-local residents, these were approached from different perspectives, but each shared a concern with stopping fracking to protect freshwater in the region.

By focusing on water pollution, activists converged upon issues that fell outside the industry interpretation of ‘fracking’ which is focused on the subterranean processes of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (Evensen et al. 2014). Research shows that industry can use this interpretation to externalise surface environmental and social risks, including water pollution (Finewood and Stroup 2012). In this case, activists used the issue of freshwater pollution to connect the exploratory well to broader environmental impacts as well as the social impacts of a future fracking industry. This enabled them to challenge the multi-scalar neoliberal discourse of the instituted order, who argued that the exploratory well was not a ‘fracking’ development and that water pollution was not a relevant issue.
The convergence of activists on the threat of water pollution caused by fracking is in line with successful anti-fracking struggles in the US (Dodge and Lee 2017), Lancashire (Short and Szolucha 2017) and Europe (Vesalon and Creţan 2015), in which activists place the issue of water pollution at the forefront of their campaigns. For example, research on the anti-fracking movement in Romania notes that activists shape a radical environmental agenda in part around the complex risks that fracking poses to freshwater, and that these risks have been marginalised as irrelevant by the developer ((Vesalon and Creţan 2015).
8.3.3 Sustaining the Protectors camp: enacting a radical political imaginary

Over five months the camp became a locus for the anti-fracking movement in the region. By the end of November 2013 it was a vibrant place with around 15 tents, a live-in vehicle, a communal kitchen, compost toilets, a heated ‘bender’ structure with a log burner in it, a fire-pit, camp electricity powered by wind and solar and two communal caravans that had been donated to the movement (Figure 14). The camp grew into a functional and useful place for larger projects to be held, including one-day training courses, music events and public meetings. As one activist observed, the space created the opportunity for political engagement because of its ‘semi-permanence’ (Resident 5) as ‘a space where people can actually engage and learn about fracking, which is why it works so well as a protest space’ (ibid.).

Through the efforts of its activists, the camp became a centre for the anti-fracking movement that lasted until 18th April 2014 when it was disbanded and activists began a period of clearing the site. Holding the site for a stated period of time was empowering for activists because they ultimately left of their own accord, which set them apart from recent experiences with the Occupy movement in 2011:

ever since the Occupy movement, the Occupy movement set itself up as this kind of like open-ended occupation of space, but this was a struggle which it would never actually win, whilst what happened in Barton Moss is they set themselves up to say we are going to occupy space, oh we're going to camp on this space while they are drilling and once they are finished drilling we are gone, there was a kind of period of time in which they actually achieved something, so actually by not being evicted that was a massive victory for them, it was a victory for the campaign.

Resident 5

In this extract, a local resident who engaged in the Protectors camp makes an important distinction between the preceding Occupy movement and the anti-
fracking struggle centred on Barton Moss. The Occupy movement had been based around an ‘open-ended occupation of space... which it could never actually win’ (Resident 5). In contrast, the struggle at Barton Moss was focused on occupying a space while the exploratory well was operational. This meant that after five months of occupation and on-going actions, the camp was closed at the volition of its activists, because the exploratory well had ceased operating and the focus of the anti-fracking movement had shifted to other sites earmarked for development in the North West. The distinction is important and helps understand why the struggle at Barton Moss became a positive and inspiring example in the anti-fracking movement, from which activists could claim ‘a victory for the campaign’ (Resident 5) on the basis that they ended the occupation on their own terms.
Figure 14: wind power and semi-permanent structures at Barton Moss Camp
In its first few days though, the camp did not operate as a functional place for staging dissent. There were no clear organisational structures and activities occurred in a chaotic fashion, being broadly based around clearing the space, newcomers setting up tents, people eating separately and communal chats around a camp-fire in the evenings. As the camp grew, an initial melange of contributions by activists and residents gave way to a series of sustained efforts to organise the space through the formation of collectives and ‘you could see people taking on roles within the community – cooking, teaching, tech’ (Protectors camp 1). People organised themselves into working groups that included a first-aid group, a kitchen team, groups that ran the free-shop and cleaned the toilets, rubbish collection, a maintenance team and legal observers. A community engagement group was setup to coordinate communications with local residents. An events group planned regular events at the camp and liaised with the regional assembly to be part of bigger events that were held either on Barton Moss Road or in Manchester. In addition, covert autonomous groups planned direct actions intended to slow activity at the exploratory well by blocking access along Barton Moss Road.

Working collectives at the camp had loose membership and worked autonomously to maintain and support the camp. Many focused on the menial day-to-day activities that were essential to the upkeep of the space. For example, the maintenance team were often called on to fix electrics or help build a new structure needed at the camp. Their role proved essential over winter, when high winds twice damaged key structures at the camp and on one occasion the compost toilets (Figure 15) and kitchen were blown across Barton Moss Road into a ditch. After each storm, the media team put out a call on Facebook for help and the maintenance team would then undertake repairs, working with volunteers that responded to the call.
Figure 15: Compost toilets at Barton Moss Protectors camp
As with the insurgent practices of other contemporary environmental movements (Velicu 2015; Vesalon and Crețan 2015) ‘the political’ was expressed at the camp through the implementation of a radical political imaginary. This imaginary evolved from the powerful ethos of self-reliance fostered at the camp, as activists learnt to work together and put into practice alternative and low-impact ways of living collectively:

when we put a bender up, or dig a fire pit, or put a wood burner in, and it's the fruits of our labour, you know, we get warm and we, and I like that, and I'm learning, as we go along, how to sort of survive, without the luxuries, the niceties in life.

Protectors camp 5

The reference here to getting ‘warm’ in relation to the collective efforts of activists is important because it indicates how the place shaped the practices through which a radical political imaginary was realised. Activists occupied Barton Moss Road during a freezing cold winter, in which staying warm was a constant concern (Figure 16). In these freezing conditions, the exploratory well’s metal fencing, electrically-heated containers and towering drill provided a startling contrast to the impermanent feel of the Protectors camp, which was built from canvas, wood and nails, and was without mains electrics or gas heating\(^\text{12}\). The camp was constructed on an exposed terrain, with fields to the east and west across which chilly and strong winds often blew.

Returning to the argument that the political emerges both in and through space (Dikeç 2005), there is a clear materiality to the radical political imaginary that emerges – which is shaped, and to some extent limited by – the conditions and location of the camp. Its exposed nature and freezing conditions are unlike Mediterranean examples of radical urban uprisings, which were a source of inspiration for key activists (Protectors camp 7; FFGM 14). During the occupation of

\(^{12}\) There was a wood burner in the communal bender and a camp fire outside.
Syntagma square, Athens in June 2013, for example, the average temperature was 26 degrees Celsius (Timeanddate 2018a), with a low of 21 degrees Celsius, meaning that staying warm was not a primary concern.

By comparison, in November 2013, when Barton Moss Camp was established, the average temperature was six degrees Celsius, with a low of minus four degrees Celsius on 23rd November (Timeanddate 2018b). The cold weather, with conditions that included rain and snow, meant that the efforts of activists to live at the camp earned the respect of people who supported the movement. But it also meant that the camp’s potential as the locus of a broader struggle was limited because most people were not willing or able to live outside in winter (Protectors camp 8). The freezing cold temperatures clearly affected the demographic of the camp, and elderly activists said that they could not stay there because of the difficult conditions (Autonomous activist 17; FFGM 13). This brings into question the viability of the ‘squares movement’ as a model for countries like the UK (Karaliotas 2017, p.54) where living outside over winter is a dangerous and difficult experience that inevitably limits the demographic of the movement.

13 The anti-fracking camp in Balcombe, West Sussex was held in the summer of 2013 when cold weather was not an issue.
Figure 16: In sub-zero temperatures, Barton Moss Camp used gas stoves (pictured) to heat food and water.
The process of building and rebuilding the camp became an opportunity to learn do-it-yourself (DIY) skills and to evolve solidarity through working relationships. These formed a key part of the process of subjectivation that people underwent when they engaged at the camp. As weeks became months, the camp grew in size and became a place that an increasing number of people visited, and spent considerable amounts of time engaging in. Many of these came from areas within Greater Manchester, who identified as local to the site (Autonomous activist 17; FFGM 12). Others came from areas beyond Greater Manchester that were affected by fracking development, particularly from Lancashire (Activist2013A) and Balcombe (Protectors camp 2; Protectors camp 1).
8.4 Opening a space of encounter: dissent and disruption along Barton Moss Road

The occupation at Barton Moss opened a political space in which an ideologically and sociologically heterogeneous multitude (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Karaliotas 2017) came together to stage dissent, connected through common opposition to fracking development. In this understanding of political space, ‘the political’ is the radical disavowal of a hierarchical social order, and becomes the point where they meet (Swyngedouw, 2011, p.376). Their meeting can be understood spatially because it takes place through ‘forms of spatialization, of partitioning’ (Dikeç 2005, p.172). Space becomes the organising principle of politics, through which political subjects appropriate, configure and transform space in order to stage dissent, ‘for the coexistence of two worlds into one, becoming political subjects in and through space’ (ibid., p172).

At Barton Moss, ‘the coexistence of two worlds into one’ (Dikeç 2005, p.172) was evident each day that workers drove to the exploratory well past Barton Moss Camp, which had been transformed by anti-fracking protesters in order to stage their dissent. Because the camp was situated along the embankment of the only access road that led to the well, it became a bottleneck for the site's activities. Through this space, politically-engaged actors brought a second, alternative world into existence and forced two key encounters which challenged the running of the exploratory well, and more broadly, challenged the legitimacy of a future fracking industry in the city-region.

The first of these was with Greater Manchester Police, when activists sought to claim Barton Moss Road as a public footpath and to challenge the spatial configuration of its day-to-day use so that vehicles no longer had priority over pedestrians. The second encounter was with workers at the exploratory well, when activists expressed an anti-fracking political imaginary at Barton Moss Camp, which brought their grievances into the order of the sensible, both through signage and the presence of the camp itself. Both encounters were a tumultuous and
protracted experience for the workers (Industry 1) because their vehicles were being ‘slow-walked’ up and down the road each day.

Vehicle movements were part of the daily requirements of the exploratory well, to get the workforce on and off the site, replenish resources and to dispose of waste products. On the first day of the struggle a few activists sat down on the road and stopped vehicles from passing the camp and accessing the exploratory well site. The intention was to claim the space for Barton Moss Camp:

The Barton Moss Camp was trying to be a self-sufficient space... it is different from the miner’s strike because in a strike you are, the employer is taking money off you, so economically the employer is strangling you to get you back into work. At Barton Moss they’re saying we are not working, we are going to stop you from working. So, the aim is not to affect the politics directly but just to claim the space... protesters are saying we are going to make it so you can’t get to work.

Resident 5

Of particular interest here is the economic and political distinction made between the protests of workers who go on strike and activists who claim a space from which to stage their dissent. This distinction is important because it illustrates the different approach to political engagement that activists at the camp had when compared to the regional anti-fracking assembly. While the regional assembly campaigned with the intention of affecting politics through a horizontally-organised social movement (FFGM 10), camp activists did not identify themselves as part of this movement and instead sought legitimacy from the spatialisation of their own political imaginary.

The sit-down protest was a success and activists were able to ‘completely block the trucks from coming onto Barton moss Rd’ (Protectors camp 6). By ‘claiming space’ (Resident 5) on the road that ran alongside the camp, activists ‘that had no part in that order’ (Dikeç 2005, p.172) had created ‘a place of encounter’ (ibid. p.172) and
interrupted the order of the sensible. In practical terms, the encounter contained the possibility of the political because a significant minority of activists occupied the camp to interrupt ‘the natural order of domination’ (ibid. p.172).

The initial success at closing the well was short-lived, however, as the encounter escalated to a confrontation with the state. Police Tactical Aid Units (TAU), evidence gatherers and community liaison officers from Greater Manchester Police arrived en masse, and reopened access to the well.

8.4.1 Barton Moss Road: a public highway or a private road?

Activists claimed that they had the right to obstruct vehicles on Barton Moss Road because it was registered as a public footpath, but not as a public highway (Protectors camp 4). Their claim was supported by a sign on the roadside that stated ‘PRIVATE ROAD: Unauthorised vehicles prohibited, Public Footpath only’ (Figure 17). The public / private status of the road created confusion over who had right of way:

[Peel] as a private landowner and a private road-owner can grant people rights to use vehicles on that road. It [Barton Moss Road] is on the Highways Act... it is a highway, but it’s a highway only as a footpath... a lot of people got hung up about it, yes you can walk up and down it and yes you can drive vehicles as long as you have the right from Peel to do so.

Industry 1, emphasis added

This extract is from an interview conducted with an actor involved in the development of Barton Moss exploratory well. As the extract illustrates, the road was privately owned, along with a number of other roads on the Moss. This meant that vehicle access was only permitted with the permission of the landowner. Importantly, it also meant that although the road was a public footpath, it was not
a public highway. The protestors argued that this meant the police did not have the power to arrest people for obstruction of a public highway.
Figure 17: Road sign on Barton Moss Road which states the road is private and a 'public footpath only'
The police did not concur, however, and distributed leaflets to activists informing them that it was a public highway and that they would be arrested if they caused an obstruction to vehicles (Gilmore et al. 2016). Then, on 30th November 2013, the road sign which stated the road was a public footpath was taken down by persons unknown. Activists at the camp claimed they had witnessed the police removing it (FFGM 10). One of them submitted a FOI request to GMP asking for ‘a full disclosure of the communications requesting GMP to undertake the removal of the signpost’ (Whatdotheyknow 2014). In response, the police stated that they had not taken down the sign and that ‘Greater Manchester Police became aware of the council sign on the floor after it had been removed by an individual at the protest site. It was stored waiting for Salford City Council to collect it’ (Whatdotheyknow 2014).

The assertion that Barton Moss Road was a public footpath proved transformative because it enabled activists to claim right of way and so legitimately ‘claim the space’ (Resident 6). Although the police would arrest anyone who sat down on the road, they were less certain about arresting people who were walking along it. This shaped the manifestation of dissensus, as activists realised that a few people walking slowly could significantly slow the passage of vehicles on and off the site:

Today we held up a truck, there was 15 of us and they had gates [on the lorry]. We held it up for an hour, that’s going to have cost the company money, they had workers waiting to put the gates on, they need to be paid for an extra hour, the driver that was sat there, he needs to be paid for that extra hour, then they should be funding the police, we was outnumbered massively by the police, there was three tactical aid vans that were all full, that’s about thirty police, then were was two cars that were full, so that’s 38, and then they put the helicopter up, which is about a thousand pounds a minute, so that’s, what, sixty grand, for the helicopter to be up, over the hour, so that’s a lot of money just to get a gate on.
This extract illustrates the significant effect that a few activists were able to have on the operation of the exploratory well, both by limiting access and by increasing the cost of policing the operation, which in this example includes three TAU units and a police helicopter. The hope expressed by activists was that the costs of exploration would prove prohibitive and so the industry would not be able to move to a commercial scale of extraction (Protectors camp 4; Protectors camp 6). Slowing the trucks was intended ‘to hit the investors in their pockets, because if not, then no one listens, so we need to stop the money’ (Protectors camp 4). As another activist explained, ‘ultimately the way that we get this stopped is to destroy the political and investor will to support this industry’ (Protectors camp 6).

8.4.2 Forcing the marginalised into the order of the sensible

With the exception of public holidays, over the five months that the exploratory well was in operation the ‘slow-walks’ were repeated twice-daily, four days a week. They shaped the ebb and flow of life both at the camp and at the exploratory well. Importantly, they enabled the protestors to spatialise their dissent, voice their grievances and disrupt activity at the exploratory well. As such, the slow-walks became a focal point for the anti-fracking movement in Greater Manchester and ensured that Barton Moss Road, and activists incorporated direct action tactics including lock-ons and sit-down protests to further slow activity at the exploratory well Figure 18 A sit-down protest on a slow walk. In the language of Rancière, Barton Moss Road became the point where the (metaphorical) police and the political met (Swyngedouw, 2011, p.376).
Figure 18 A sit-down protest on a slow walk
A day-to-day praxis of protest took shape around the flow of vehicles, which were ‘slow-walked’ on and off the site. Each morning at around 9:00 a convoy of vehicles would arrive and park along the dual carriageway. The convoy could be up to forty vehicles long and included trucks, vans and cars. Collecting at the top of Barton Moss lane, protesters would stand in front of the trucks. They numbered between 5 and 60 people, depending on the day. The group was a mix of camp activists, residents from the surrounding estates, Greater Manchester residents and political activists from NGO and political groups, who had driven to Barton Moss for the slow-walk. Before the trucks could begin moving, police TAU would position themselves between the parked convoy and the protesters. Linking arms, they would push forwards against the backs of the protesters, shouting that the group needed to move along.

In response, the protesters would walk slowly towards the exploratory well from the dual carriageway along Barton Moss Road, pushed forward by the police (Figure 19). On some days the police pushed forwards at a speed close to a light jog, so that the walk was completed in less than twenty minutes. On other days the pace was slower and walks could last over an hour. In addition, autonomous groups of activists engaged in direct action on the walks, for example lock-ons and sit-down protests that slowed the walks considerably further.
Figure 19: A slow-walk viewed from the front
On their passage through the space, workers were confronted by the presence of anti-fracking activists and read the many placards written for them that dotted the embankment (For example: Figure 20).

As an activist from the camp explained, this brought the workers into proximity with people that they may not have been aware of previously:

They [workers on fracking sites] live in their cosseted boxes, driven by desire to enhance their status in this materialistic world, about how many toys and accoutrements they have, in complete ignorance of the people that are affected.

Protectors camp 6

What is important about this extract is that it shows self-awareness from activists at the camp that they are normally invisible within the lives of workers, who ‘live in complete ignorance of the people that are affected’ (Protectors camp 6). In Rancière’s language, this means that activists at Barton Moss fulfilled the primary function of politics to configure space so as to ‘disclose the world of its subjects and its operations... [through] the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one’ (Rancière et al. 2001, p.22).
Figure 20: One of the many placards facing Barton Moss Road that the workers would read on the way to the exploratory well
A sign that the slow-walks were having an effect on the workers is that they became uncomfortable with the disruption that the camp caused to their daily lives and job roles:

Working conditions for my staff have changed dramatically from actually going about their work in a peaceful way, enjoying being out in the countryside and knowing that what they are doing is a worthwhile environmental role, which is protective of the environment, to one in which they are subjected to abuse, called Earth rapists. Having to get up at 5.30 in the morning to be locked in as part of a convoy of trucks and then having to be onsite all day until that same convoy leaves is a serious impact on their lifestyle.

Industry 1

The extract above is taken from a worker who regularly attended the site. Until the camp was established, workers could come and go as they pleased. Once the activists controlled the road, vehicles could only get on and off the site with a police escort, which led all vehicles on-site in the morning and all vehicles off-site in the evening. This meant that even if workers only had a small job to complete they would have to arrive early in the morning and then wait all day until the police could escort them off the site in the evening. Workers had to adapt to a routine which trapped them inside the exploratory well all day, providing a sense that they were under siege in ‘a fortress... behind a steel fence, a steel panelled fence topped with barbed wire’ (Industry 1).

The spatialization of Barton Moss Road brought the marginalised into view by occupying a space that workers at the exploratory well had to pass through. For the worker, who looked out from within vehicles passing along Barton Moss Road on the slow-walk, it changed the space to one of encounter with the marginalised, who were normally invisible and voiceless to the workers. The encounter was experienced both through the physical presence of the activists and through engagement with value statements that expressed dissent against fracking development. As the extract elucidates, driving past Barton Moss Camp was an attack on the moral values of workers who (amongst other things) were accused of being ‘earth rapists’ (Industry 1). The encounter at Barton Moss provided a visceral, daily experience of playing the villain in an environmental controversy. This was hard to marry with the assertion of their bosses that they were ‘protecting the environment’ (Industry 1).
8.5 Closing down the political: efforts to suppress ‘the political’ at Barton Moss

Throughout the five months that activists sustained the Protectors camp and engaged in the slow-walks, they faced on-going efforts to suppress the political space that they had opened up (Protectors camp 6). These efforts were based in a discourse that portrayed activists as professional protestors who were a danger to the community. For example, in an interview with an actor engaged in the development of the exploratory well, the interviewee argued that activists ‘were not local people… they were all professional protestors’ (Industry 4). Another argues that activists are ‘ill-informed and deliberately misleading proponents, who have a completely different agenda to the real concerns of the local community’ (Industry 1).

8.5.1 Creating a dangerous place to protest

In statements to the media, the GM police stated that camp activists sought to ‘disrupt and intimidate’ local residents and ‘antagonise’ police (Manchester Evening News, 2014). They also claimed that a flare had been fired from the camp at a police helicopter as it was landing\(^\text{14}\) (Daily Mail 2014; Manchester Evening News 2014a). Activists denied firing the flare and the regional anti-fracking movement believed it was ‘a blatant lie… made up [because] they wanted an excuse to raid the camp’ (FFGM 12). Although there were no witnesses or evidence to show the event occurred, local and national media reported the police statement that firing the flare was an ‘unbelievably stupid act of criminality’ (Daily Mail 2014; Manchester Evening News 2014a). Police used the alleged event as a pretext for raiding the camp under section 43 of the Terrorism Act and searched the tents and communal spaces (Gilmore et al. 2016).

The most obvious attempt to suppress the political space was the targeted use of arrests, which succeeded in removing people from the protest space altogether. In total, over the five months of protest there were 231 arrests, 98% of which were for non-violent offences (Gilmore et al. 2016). For the first three months the majority of these were for

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\(^{14}\) This was of particular concern to Barton Moss airfield whose landing strip was in the field adjoining Barton Moss road.
obstructing a public highway, as the dispute continued over whether Barton Moss Road was a public footpath or road. Then on 12th February 2014 a Magistrate ruled that the space was a public footpath. Following this ruling, arrests continued but people were arrested for aggravated trespass rather than for obstructing a public highway.

While the power of arrest shifted, the practice of arresting key activists, ostensibly for walking too slowly, continued unabated (Gilmore et al. 2016). Sometimes people were arrested because they had stopped altogether, but more often they were arrested without an obvious reason. The lack of any set criteria for who was acting within the law meant that anyone could be arrested without warning:

it was a weird thing, because on the whole they'd [the police] be fairly even tempered about it except something would happen and they'd all rush over... and then their behaviour would become outrageous, and then they would go back to normal and just talk to us and shove us.

FFGM 12

The escalation of violent activity during an arrest was a scary experience for people unaccustomed to seeing police violence first-hand. One such experience was witnessed by an activist:

On the first visit she had to stand to one side because she was so upset by what was happening, the second visit she walked the length of the road and at the end I photographed her in floods of tears with [activist] just putting her arms around her, and... she was saying, you know I’m not political, I do not go to protests, I vote because of going through the process of voting, I do not understand politics in the global sense... yet I can see that this is just wrong, I cannot believe the state is acting in this way.

Resident 5

As this extract illustrates, the slow-walks could be an unexpectedly emotional experience. It was not uncommon to see people crying as police officers pushed forward to grab someone and take them away to be arrested and processed. The seemingly unpredictable
nature of arrests limited the potential for Barton Moss Camp to become a heterogenous space, since it made the place less safe to visit.

Once an activist was arrested, a key tactic used by the police was to impose bail restrictions that prevented their return to Barton Moss. As a camp resident explained, police would target an activist and then push into the protestors to make the arrest, following which ‘[they] take you away from the site, [then] they’ll bail you with the restriction that you stay away from site’ (Protectors camp 4). This was seen by activists as ‘illegal’ (Protectors camp 7) because ‘effectively what they’re doing is they’re revoking your civil right to protest’ (Protectors camp 4). When applied to local residents the bail restriction also removed their right to use Barton Moss Road in their day-to-day lives. As a protestor from the Irlam and Cadishead estate explained ‘[I was] bailed from going to Barton Moss, from December to January... this meant that Barton Moss Road, which I actually did use all the time, I could not use it’ (Resident2014A). The restriction stayed in place until the first court appearance when ‘the magistrates dropped the bail thing straight away’ (Resident2014A).

As with the Rosia Montana movement, in which people felt ‘that [they] could easily be removed by the police outside the domain of the visible or the legible’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.309), activists felt that they were being picked out and removed from the slow-walks ‘so then [we] can’t protest’ (Protectors camp 4). In Rancière’s terms, this had the effect that they were no longer visible from within the order of the sensible and their protestations were no longer heard by workers driving into the exploratory well.

In the face of continued police oppression (Gilmore et al. 2016) the anti-fracking movement engaged material and discursive practices geared toward creating a protest space that was open to a heterogeneous multitude of people. Key practical measures included the use of legal observers on the slow-walks and creating a ‘code of conduct’:

**Code of conduct for peaceful direct action at Barton Moss**

I will treat each person (including workers, police and medical staff) with respect
I will connect with people and attempt to win hearts and minds

I will not use violence, threats, or insulting language

I will protect opponents from insults or attack

I will not damage equipment, apparatus or property of others

I will accept responsibility for my actions

If I am arrested, I will behave in an exemplary manner

I will assert my right to protest and my right to silence before the law

I will know the limits of my anger or despair, and will develop strategies to manage and channel these emotions constructively

Kingston (2014)

Activists carried copies of the code on the slow-walks and it was distributed to people who were attending for the first time. By setting a code of conduct that was based in an ethic of non-violence and the acceptance of difference, activists sought to spatialise their dissent peacefully and ensure that the space was open to anybody who wanted to protest against fracking. In particular, they wanted to reassure vulnerable people, for example elderly protestors, that they would not be threatened by anything that the activists did in the space (Protectors camp 4; FFGM 14).
8.5.2 After Barton Moss exploratory well ceased operation

The impermanence of the anti-fracking struggle led some to question how long its political effects could be sustained:

once it [the anti-fracking movement] goes away, people are left with, oh what do I do with my life now? You know, they had a focus, they had a community, that was very strong, and then it’s gone.

FFGM 14

This thesis is centred on the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle, but its third research question, on the effects of political action, touches on what effect political action had beyond the five-months that the exploratory well was operational. From a Rancièrian perspective, the expectation is that actions would be dismantled and re-absorbed by the pre-existing social order, as the ‘political’ moment of struggle passes. However, recent research suggests that political actions can be sustained beyond the moment of a political event through community engagement efforts (García-Lamarca 2017a). Certainly, in this case, local residents were hopeful that the energy of the anti-fracking movement would invigorate other struggles:

the impact is high and is more significant than the riots politically. Definitely, at this moment in time it has changed the way that people are engaging with politics. I hope that it’s a long term thing. But whether it is or not I’m not yet convinced.

Resident 5

This extract is taken from an interview conducted shortly after the exploratory well ceased operation and activists left Barton Moss. Unlike the riots, which emerged over a few days across the cities of Salford and Manchester in 2011 (Clifton and Allison 2011), the Barton Moss case is potentially more significant because it ‘changed the way that
people are engaging with politics’ (Resident 5). The hope expressed is that these changes are a ‘long term thing’ (ibid.).

Shortly following the closure of the well and Barton Moss Protectors camp, some activists moved to other anti-fracking sites including an anti-fracking camp squatted at Davyhulme in Trafford (Figure 21), where IGas had applied to explore for coal bed methane (Scheerhout 2014). Activists also had an impact on other struggles, unrelated to ‘fracking’. For example, a year after the events at Barton Moss, some of the activists who had lived at the camp contributed to the next significant wave of dissent in Manchester, which was the homeless occupied camps in the city centre (Hibbert 2015). This exemplifies that the dissent of the campers was not only toward ‘fracking’ development and that the effects of the struggle were not contained to events at Barton Moss. As well an environmental protest, the struggle at Barton Moss should be understood as an emergent frontline in an on-going struggle against inequality, which inspired key activists to take the fight into the city centre and help homeless people occupy the streets, squares and buildings of Manchester.
Figure 212: The anti-fracking site at Davyhulme in Trafford, setup shortly after Barton Moss Protectors camp disbanded
8.6 Conclusions

This chapter addressed how a heterogenous multiplicity of actors staged their dissent along Barton Moss Road. Analysis is focused on actor engagement in the space opened by anti-fracking activists outside Barton Moss exploratory well, who acted autonomously and did not identify as part of a broader anti-fracking social movement. Analysis of interviews with activists and residents reveals that the camp was not led by social movement activists, and the space predominantly comprised people who did not identify with the Greater Manchester regional assembly. This means that many of the activists at the Protectors camp would be overlooked by a focus on social movement actors. This makes it particularly important that analysis is conducted within a research design that allows study of both the autonomous activists who opened-up the space and the social movement actors who helped sustain the broader anti-fracking struggle in Greater Manchester. In this regard, this thesis goes beyond previous studies on urban uprisings, which acknowledge the presence of social movement actors but do not include them in their analysis.

A key contribution this chapter makes to the wider literature on the contestation of fracking is to help understand how ‘the political’ (Rancière 1999) emerges – and is suppressed – in practice, in the context of a contemporary urban environmental struggle. An important element of distinguishing ‘the political’ in moments of insurgency is separating it from the everyday politics of urban governance (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). To do this, analysis in this chapter was focused on actor engagement in the Protectors camp, which was sustained for five months along the embankment of Barton Moss Road by the anti-fracking movement. Particular attention was paid to the discursive and material practices of actors at the camp. Close analysis of interviews with activists is used to argue that they were effective at staging and sustaining a political struggle through an English winter, in freezing conditions not suited to building a political movement outdoors. As the camp grew and the struggle on Barton Moss Road intensified, it became a place where local environmental and humanitarian grievances were connected with a universal ideal of equality that enabled solidarities with a humanitarian group in Afghanistan and an indigenous movement in Canada, for instance.
Measures taken by activists to ensure that the protests remained peaceful indicate that they were ‘more than mindless and violent outbursts of impotent acting out’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.15). In the face of continued oppression and police arrests (Gilmore et al. 2016), the movement became an unarticulated social justice movement that sought to expose ‘structural dynamics of discrimination and oppression’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.15). While this enabled them to find solidarity with an international audience, as well as garner the support of local campaigners and anti-fracking activists, it did not catalyse a significant level of local support.

In the language of Rancière, the camp opened an opportune space to give voice and visibility to the marginalised (Rancière 1999) and to explore ‘the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time’ (Rancière 2006, p.13) through ‘disruptive engagement with the police order’ (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016, p.559). Activists opened a space of dissent that challenged fracking per se, and undermined the developer’s assertion that the exploratory well was not a fracking site (Industry 4). This allowed them to speak on grievances that had previously gone unheard, and to raise issues with the political project that underlies fracking development.

I argue that events at Barton Moss are political when understood in the local context from which they emerged, which both shaped and contained the politics of the camp. Activists built a radical political imaginary from day-to-day practices shaped in-part around surviving and keeping warm, creating a materiality shaped by the conditions and location of the camp. These practices produced a ‘bubble’ in which people experimented with alternative practices and ideas, living with minimal dependence on fossil fuels. This builds on the argument made in chapter seven that key activists in the anti-fracking movement drew on experiences in radical urban uprisings for both tactics and the implementation of organisational structures, occupying public space and basing their struggles in horizontal modes of organisation that speak to a commitment to universal equality.

However, while activists adopt tactics from radical urban uprisings, the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle is not an obvious choice as an example of ‘the political’ in action. It is ostensibly a struggle that combines anti-fracking activists with local
opposition to new energy infrastructure development, that did not develop into a political uprising as some of its proponents had hoped that it would. Importantly, the demographic of the camp – and its potential to become the locus for a broader political movement – was limited by the freezing weather conditions in Greater Manchester that winter, which meant that vulnerable and elderly people could not live at the camp and would normally only visit for a few hours. Their experience brings the Mediterranean ‘squares movement’ model into question for more temperate climates like the UK, in which outdoor spaces are difficult places to live and organise for much of the year.

This raises the interesting question, does it matter that this thesis focuses on an anti-fracking struggle, in which activists are focused on stopping exploration for shale gas? This is the focus of the next – and final – analysis chapter, which asks whether the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement was a ‘radical’ urban struggle.
9 The emergence of the political in contemporary environmental movements: was the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement radical, and why is this important?

As the first case to focus on the political potential of a UK anti-fracking siting struggle, a key function of this thesis is to provide an initial contribution to the emergent literature on the radical politics of contemporary urban environmental struggles. This chapter clarifies this contribution, developing empirically-based theoretical insights into the different forms of protest that emerged in the struggle, which contribute to recent geographical research on contemporary urban environmental struggles\(^{15}\). Insights illustrate both the merits and limitations of applying a post-foundational conceptual lens to study of an anti-fracking siting struggle.

Importantly, the radical tactics and organisational practices of activists examined in this case\(^ {16}\) align with a shift in contemporary environmental movements toward radical urban struggles. In these struggles activists increasingly engage in a dissensual politics to make universalised demands for socio-ecological change (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017; Velicu and Kaika 2017). There is currently very little post-foundational research on environmental movements\(^ {17}\), however, which has led to calls for more case studies that ‘address the emergence of ‘the political’ in contemporary environmental movements’ (Velicu and Kaika 2017, p.305).

This case is situated within this emergent literature, and this final analysis chapter makes a key argument, which pulls together empirical material examined in the previous analysis chapters. It argues that the heterogeneous makeup of an urban environmental movement\(^ {18}\) presents an opportunity to research the emergence of a political struggle in a broader terrain of protest, which – in this case - includes the failed efforts of key activists to engage communities in ‘ordinary’ politics\(^ {19}\). Practically, this means that the

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\(^{15}\) For discussion of the emergent post-foundational literature on environmental movements see section 3.7.

\(^{16}\) See chapter 6 on the organisational practices of the regional assembly and chapter 8 on the tactics of the Protectors camp.

\(^{17}\) For a discussion of social movement literature that notes the increasingly radical tactics of social movements see section 3.5.

\(^{18}\) In this case, the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement.

\(^{19}\) A concept used by Haughton et al. (2016), in contrast to the ‘extraordinary’ politics of radical urban uprisings. For examples of ‘ordinary’ protests in the literature see section 3.4.
interpretive framework adopted shouldn’t glorify any particular form of social contestation or reduce the meaning of the struggle to ‘socio-economic or political-economic conditions that are contingent, local and contextual’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.4). Instead, it should explore how tactics and organisational tensions within the political and across the broader terrain of protest shape the unfolding of politics in the struggle.
9.1 An unarticulated justice movement? Conceptualising political struggle in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement

Analysis of the struggle that emerged outside Barton Moss exploratory well\textsuperscript{20} shows how an ethos of egalitarianism and dissensual tactics provide visibility and voice to marginalised actors and their grievances. The recognition of key activists that the anti-fracking movement could become a platform for a political movement is cognizant of the radical struggles that erupted around the world in the years leading up to the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle. In 2010 the so-called Arab Spring saw public spaces occupied, people demanding change from their leaders and the staging of radical and peaceful dissent (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017). In 2011 and 2012 these were followed by the London and New York Occupy movements (Bassett 2014), the Spanish Indignados (García-Lamarca 2017a), the Greek Indignants and the Turkish rebels of Tahir square (Erensü and Karaman 2017), which have each been examined as ruptures of political struggle. In each of these cases, local ‘extraordinary’ political movements (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017) occupy public spaces and engage in multiple spatial practices to express political dissent and create new political imaginaries. Out of their struggles arose an emancipatory politics that went beyond a local concern and connected disparate movements globally.

These ruptures of the political are important because they open up spaces in which people produce claims for democracy, equality and freedom. Although they can begin from a social movement focused on an emblematic local grievance (for example the development of an exploratory well, or the loss of a public space such as a park), where there is a rupture of the political they quickly universalise their claims to challenge the inegalitarian social order through which this initial grievance was legitimised, and become political movements. As Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017) explain, their claims ‘embrace a desire for a fullyfledged transformation of the political structuring of life, against the exclusive, oligarchic, and consensual governance of an alliance of professional economic, political and technocratic elites determined to defend the neoliberal order by any means necessary’ (Wilson and Swyngedouw, 2017, p. 3).

\textsuperscript{20} See section 6.3 and Chapter 8
The theoretical understanding of political struggle that Dikec and Swyngedouw (2017) present is arguably evident in this case as the opening up of horizontally-organised dissensual anti-fracking spaces and an ethos of universal egalitarianism. Unsurprisingly, in interviews, activists do not explain their efforts using post-foundational concepts, but they do explain their opposition to fracking as part of a crisis of democracy and of capitalism. A key argument that emerges from this case is that stopping fracking was a suitable quilting point for an egalitarian struggle because it conflated a local siting protest with a broader struggle to create a democratic space from which marginalised actors could be seen and their grievances could be heard. This reflects other local anti-fracking struggles in the UK, in which ‘unconventional fuel extraction has become strongly intertwined with the crisis of liberal representative democracy’ (Szolucha 2016, p.75).

The political nature of the struggle was also recognised by industry actors interviewed for this thesis, who argued that the movement had become political and was guided by an ‘anti-capitalist agenda’ (Industry 1). To some extent this was true, because activists were cognizant of a connection between stopping fracking development and opposing the capitalist system through which it is legitimised, as a regional assembly organiser explained:

I think my opposition to fracking is encompassed in a general opposition to capitalism as a whole. Personally I feel very pessimistic about being able to stop fracking without being able to stop capitalism.

FFGM 12

The admission here that opposition to fracking is part of a broader opposition to capitalism is one that was shared by key activists interviewed for this thesis. These activists believed that the anti-fracking movement contained radical potential because it connected a local siting struggle with the broader socio-political grievances that people have with capitalism. As a key activist explained, contained within the movement was the hope that the anti-fracking struggle would build on previous radical uprisings as part of a common struggle against capitalism:

I always say r-evolution, because look at what was done to Egypt because of the mass demonstration, look at what is going on in France and Northern Africa because of the Arab spring... those communities have felt the backlash for what they did. And now it’s [radical struggle] here, we need to think, what

21 See 7.4.1 for further analysis of how industry actors described the anti-fracking movement.
can we learn from them? The fact that they've brought this [radical struggle] home [to the UK] is very indicative of the state that capitalism's in, I think. Cos I think that capitalism has actually already collapsed, but the illusion is that it's still going.

FFGM 14

This extract is interesting because the activist isn’t talking about the struggle as a local environmental struggle. Instead this activist – who played a key and visible role in the movement – saw in the anti-fracking movement the hope of a political movement that built on the experiences of previous radical urban uprisings globally. The description of capitalism as having already collapsed, and being an illusion, is spoken from a position of dissent that challenges the legitimacy of the established order through which fracking is authorised and developed.

Activists also conceptualised their struggle as opposition to the hierarchical structures through which fracking is legitimised. For example, in this interview with a camp activist, he reflects on why radical urban uprisings are increasingly common:

I think that this is something that we're seeing in terms of the change in consciousness, you know, where people are breaking free of the hierarchical society... that's why we're seeing the uprisings in Brazil and the Ukraine and Egypt and everywhere else, they are fighting against it because there's nothing else, there's no other way they can bring about the changes, so the only thing they can do is fight against it.

Protectors camp 6

For this activist, people who engage in radical uprisings do so because they recognise that their voices are being ignored within dominant social orders and feel that that dissent is the only way to ‘bring about changes’ that challenge the hierarchical system itself. In Rancierian terms, through their dissent they seek to expose the absent foundations of the power relations that they are marginalised from (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014, p.8).

The intertwining of fracking and a crisis of liberal democracy means that the anti-fracking movements are speaking on issues of justice that make claims against capitalism and the unequal social hierarchies that it is based in. These claims were not articulated as demands, however, because the movement did not make demands or seek compromise and instead maintained its critique of fracking and its proponents. Returning to the literature, one way to understand this is that the anti-fracking struggle is an unarticulated
justice movement that seeks to ‘expose and respond to structural dynamics of discrimination and oppression’ (Dikec and Swyngedouw 2017; p.15).

The common commitment to universal equality and the challenge of hierarchical social structures expressed in interviews and observed during the struggle reflects the basis of democratic engagement in the squares movement, in which Karaliotas observes ‘the firm belief in the collective deliberation of the people as the mode for organizing democratic politics’ (Karaliotas 2017, p.63). It is their shared perspective on the potential for the opening of democratic – or political – spaces to effect radical change that connects theorisation on the political with the people who engage in and sustain the dissensual spaces of contemporary environmental struggles – such as Barton Moss anti-fracking camp – through which marginalised actors force themselves and their grievances into the visible domain.
9.2 Overlaps between politics and the political: re-centring the focus of research between the ‘ordinary’ and the ‘extraordinary’

Each of the analysis chapters so far contains insights that show the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle was not just about the exploratory well, or about seeking justice for local people who had been marginalised from the development process. Instead, people opened up a dissensual space outside the exploratory well from which they raised environmental and humanitarian issues that challenged the legitimacy of the system through which fracking is developed. In addition, activists rejected political groups from anti-fracking spaces and experimented with democratic organisational practices that were based in an antagonistic politics and a common ethos of universal egalitarianism, that were expressed through the quilting point of stopping fracking.

While the focus of this thesis is on the political struggle of the anti-fracking movement, the theoretical framework is designed to situate this within a broader terrain of anti-fracking protest in Greater Manchester, which contained examples of both ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ politics. In chapter 5 of this thesis analysis examined the historical relations of both the local communities in the development process and urban activism in the region, to set the stage for the terrain of protest, or ‘theatre of urban politicized struggle’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) that is the focus of the chapters that follow. Placing the struggle that emerged in this broader anti-fracking terrain of protest helps determine who was marginalised from processes of development and who engaged in the anti-fracking struggle. In particular it illustrates how, at a local level, the post-political tactics of the ‘instituted order’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) marginalise people from processes of development in relation to the exploratory well.

A visceral example is when people from estates neighbouring the development were prevented access to the CLG. These people felt that they were shut out from the community engagement processes for the development. Their subsequent efforts to engage with their councillors also brought into sharp focus their lack of voice in relation to the development. As Chapter 7 details, their efforts were subsumed by the post-

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22 See section 5.3
23 See section 7.4.
political governance processes of the council who had decided to apply a policy of non-engagement (Councillor 2):

when you said the words ‘we’re not sure’, no we’re very sure, that’s our very clear policy, we refuse to jump off the fence until we’ve gone through planning.

Councillor 2

In this extract a local councillor explains that refusing to take a position on fracking development was a tactic rather than an indication that they weren’t sure whether to support the technology. It explains their intransigence during the struggle in the face of lobbying and demands from community actors that they speak out against the development, since their position on fracking was not based in uncertainty or a lack of information, but was a considered tactical choice. The ‘planning’ referred to is for future exploratory wells which had not yet been through the planning process, meaning that councillors were refusing to take a position on fracking development until after the struggle was over and the exploratory well completed.

In interviews with people from estates neighbouring the exploratory well and with the activists who engaged with their communities, participants expressed feelings of disempowerment that went beyond a concern with the exploratory well, and were borne from past experiences with local development processes. Analysis of their efforts to engage with the council and the disempowerment they expressed builds on the argument made in Haughton et al. (2015) that activists risk weakening their position in a local siting struggle where they seek to engage with and make demands of the authorities. In this case, post-political tactics are misunderstood by activists who believe that councillors can be persuaded to act if they are provided with more information. Importantly, they did not realise that the post-political tactics of their councillors meant that their efforts would prove to be futile and that their voices would be marginalised and ignored.

This analysis can be extended further to question the tactical decision of these community groups to make demands for justice of councillors who had already decided that they were not going to engage with the anti-fracking struggle. A post-foundational conceptual lens is well suited to this task, and helps to see how different forms of politics play out in this case. Viewed from this perspective, their lobbying and surveys operated

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24 See section 7.3 for more detailed analysis of their reasons for disempowerment.
from within the social order that promotes fracking development and so didn’t challenge its legitimacy or seek to expose its absent foundations. This meant that their efforts to seek recognition and justice from councillors were unlikely to succeed, because within this social order their communities had already been marginalised from the development process and their voices were not recognised as legitimate by the authorities, unless they went through particular channels.\(^{25}\)

Viewed from this perspective their unsuccessful tactics provide an illustrative counterpoint to the successful tactics of activists in the regional assembly and anti-fracking camp.\(^{26}\) In contrast to the community actors, these activists chose not to make specific demands or to focus on the techno-managerial issues related to the exploratory well, choosing instead to focus their dissent on opposing ‘fracking’ development. This led to a very different approach toward engagement with the council. A key example is the stand that camp activists took at a council meeting. The event was related in an interview with a local councillor:

[activists said] this is a terrible system here, who does it represent? I had to say actually there’s forty or fifty people who are not active politicians and they turn up every few months and they have done for nearly ten years, and you walk in and say you lot do not represent anybody? Well they do not really... [but] how else can you set up a community meeting? You invite all the local organisations and a lot of these people are elderly and it’s a bit nosy parkerish or whatever, but 90% of people in Irlam do not want to go to a meeting. So, you can’t say they’re representative but they’re the nearest we’ve got to being representative. And the mistake the anti-frackers made was to say you lot do not represent the locals, surely we represent them? Well, all that did was wind everybody up [laughs] cos they’re the only people that commit any of their time.

Councillor 3

From the perspective of the councillor the meeting was interrupted by activists who ‘could not get beyond we’re right and you’re wrong’ (Councillor 3). Rather than engage in the proceedings, they challenged the legitimacy of the people who claimed to represent the community. Although the council member acknowledges that this challenge was

\(^{25}\) See section 5.3 for analysis of the development process and how this marginalised local communities &

\(^{26}\) See section 10.4 for a discussion of the effects of the anti-fracking struggle.
justified, he argues that the meeting represents ‘the nearest thing we’ve got to being representative’ (Councillor 3). Activists refused to recognise its authority, however, and felt empowered to demand the right to speak for the voiceless and the marginalised. Their empowerment was demonstrated through their actions when the leader of the meeting threatened to call the police, as a local journalist who attended the meeting related:

they were like, sarcastically, oh no he’s going to call the police, what are we going to do? ... so people are just carrying on doing what they want, they’re not scared of them anymore, that is what Barton Moss did.

Resident 5

The point being made here is that these activists did not recognise the authority of the state or feel threatened by it. Through the space opened at Barton Moss they had disengaged with their former subject positions and felt empowered to act as political subjects. As activists, they questioned the authority of existing community groups to speak for them with the council and voiced their discontent by trying to engage in meetings themselves. In particular, they challenged the legitimacy of the CLG for the exploratory well and the Labour Irlam and Cadishead group.

While engagement with the council proved fruitless, this example illustrates how political engagement empowered local people as they realised they ‘have got the power to make a difference’ (FFGM 14). Through their actions, activists demonstrated their equality and were able to voice their dissent against the system of representative democracy through which fracking is legitimised. These activists were quick to reach out to disadvantaged local communities and establish a broader social base there, encouraging them to engage with and help sustain the dissensual spaces that were opened up. As the analysis in section 7.4 shows, activists framed the struggle as an anti-fracking struggle, rather than a local struggle against an exploratory well, allowing them to escalate up wider claims on fracking, democracy and politics. At the same time, the connection with a local development allowed them to invoke local community support for their struggle, and they highlighted that people who lived near to the exploratory well had been excluded from the development process and did not have access to the CLG.
The success of activists who engaged in dissent and the countervailing failure of activists who made demands from within the system provides a key insight into the argument made by Veliku and Kaika (2014) that there has been a shift in key contemporary environmental movements towards politicised struggle. In this case, political struggle is clearly based in tactics that are more effective than engaging in the post-democratic politics of local governance. In interviews, activists were aware of this and expressed disillusionment with representative politics and the lack of voice that they had within this system. At the camp and in the regional assembly, activists experimented with democratic politics and sought to remake urban spaces on the basis of an infinitely exclusive equality. Their focus on opening up a dissensual anti-fracking space proved successful, and they were able to reframe the struggle as being over stopping fracking development, rather than the particulars of an exploratory well. This opened up new political possibilities within the city-region\textsuperscript{27}.

\textsuperscript{27} Following on from the struggle there have been no further exploratory wells drilled in the city-region and there is now a presumption against ‘fracking’ developments (including exploratory wells) in the city-region’s planning guidance (Hayhurst 2019). This was unthinkable within the police order in 2013, when exploratory wells were not acknowledged as ‘fracking’ developments.
9.3 Conclusion

This case has applied a post-foundational lens to the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle. It uses a theoretical framework that extends the conceptual focus to include activist engagement in neighbouring communities and the – ultimately unsuccessful - efforts of local community groups who conducted surveys and lobbied councillors. This means that the post-foundational theoretical framework of this thesis is different to studies of radical urban uprisings that focus on radical spaces, because it places the emergence of a political struggle within a broader terrain of anti-fracking protest.

As this chapter illustrates, placing political struggle in a broader terrain of protest provides key insights into the ways that different forms of politics shape the political spaces that emerge. Analysing the Protectors camp and regional assembly, analysis of the failed efforts of local community groups to campaign and lobby councillors is important because it illustrates how, in this case, both ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ politics are part of the same struggle, and brings into the focus the efficacy of different tactics applied in the struggle.

The observation that there are both ‘extraordinary’ and ‘ordinary’ politics within a single case is unusual within post-foundational research on political struggle, because its cases are either focused on radical politics (for example: Karaliotas 2017), or – in one case - on the politics of an ordinary protest (Haughton et al. 2016). In this case, the conceptual focus is on an anti-fracking struggle in which the political space that emerged was part of a broader regional anti-fracking movement. Placing study of the anti-fracking camp in this broader context moves the literature forward, because it provides opportunity to examine how different types of politics emerge within different spaces across a single social movement, allowing research to acknowledge tensions between a plurality of politics within a single case. Put another way, it examines a rupture of the political within an urban space controlled by the established order, or police order. This is important because post-foundational theorists recognise that the political is not disconnected from the everyday politics of urban governance, and this case provides two key illustrations to support this this point. First, it is evident in the different tactics of activists who engaged in the anti-fracking struggle, which can be separated into engagement from within the
police order and dissent against it. Second, it is evident within the political spaces of the movement, in which there are tensions between ostensibly horizontal and less visible organisational modes of practice.\(^\text{28}\)

Understood in this way, this thesis makes an important contribution to the literature on radical urban politics, because it demonstrates the utility of applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to a broader terrain of protest than the space in which the political emerges. Importantly, while this broader focus is unusual in post-foundational research, the framework remains based in the underlying concepts applied by geographers who connect Rancière’s theorisation on the political with the spaces through which the political is enacted. In particular, it conceptualises politics as a spatial practice that locally constructs a place of universal equality, to challenge the established order. In this case, this understanding of politics, or ‘the political’, shifts conceptual focus onto the dissensual spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement. As this thesis illustrates, while maintaining this focus, analysis of a contemporary urban environmental movement can benefit from taking a conceptual ‘step back’, to place political struggle within the police order that it is inevitably enmeshed with.

Following on from this argument, there exists a blind spot within post-foundational literature on the key roles that social movement actors play within political struggles, which needs to be addressed. To go beyond a focus on the ‘heroic’, as its proponents argue that it should (Dikeç 2017; Swyngedouw 2017), a post-foundational analytical framework should include the role of social movement actors in its conceptualisation of radical urban struggle. The focus of this thesis on an anti-fracking struggle has provided opportunity to make this contribution and to draw insights from tensions between the ‘ordinary’ politics of community activists and the politics of the dissensual space that opened up outside Barton Moss exploratory well. The Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement contained tensions and overlaps between different forms of political organisation that meant it could not easily be categorised as either a radical urban uprising or a social movement. This complexity is inherent to radical environmental movements (Velicu and Kaika 2017).

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\(^{28}\) See chapter 6 for analysis of these organisational tensions.
While these findings are primarily of interest to researchers who focus on the political struggle of contemporary environmental movements, they also have implications in terms of the ways in which infrastructure controversies, and in particular on-going struggles around fracking, are conceptualised and studied. In particular, researchers who focus on anti-fracking siting struggles – but aren’t necessarily interested in the political struggle of contemporary environmental movements – will need to think carefully about how they frame their research, and which actors are marginalised by the conceptual framework that they implement. As this case demonstrates, focusing on either the politics of communities or the political struggle of activists who engage in anti-fracking dissent will marginalise actors – and the different struggles they engage in - across the broader urban terrain of protest in which the anti-fracking movement is situated. Put another way, to incorporate the plurality of politics examined in this case requires that researchers use a theoretical framework that incorporates the radical urban politics of activists whose politics is expressed through their practices, as well as the efforts of community groups who make the claims of social (justice) movements, which are articulated through their demands.
10 Researching an urban anti-fracking siting struggle: insights and reflections

10.1 Introduction

This thesis sets out a critical case study of an urban anti-fracking struggle, and analyses ways that activists engage a radical urban politics through their organisational practices, both in the regional anti-fracking assembly and through the day-to-day practices of Barton Moss Protectors camp. It is the first study of an urban anti-fracking siting struggle, what with the industry’s expansion into urban areas in both the US (Dermansky 2013) and UK (Pidd and Vaughan 2013) being quite recent. The empirical chapters considered the contestation of a proposed ‘fracking’ development in Greater Manchester. They initially examined the development of Barton Moss exploratory well, the emergence of the anti-fracking movement and tensions between organisational practices within the movement and then shifted focus to the protest space that opened up outside the exploratory well, where activists setup the Protectors camp and co-ordinated twice-daily slow walks, controlling the flow of traffic on and off the development site. In the previous chapter, the discussion focused on the different forms of protest that emerged in the anti-fracking struggle.

This concluding chapter returns to the summaries of the empirical chapters to reflect on the theoretical framework that was applied to analysis and to discuss potential avenues for research on expected future urban struggles against fracking development, both in the UK and abroad. Here, the discussion returns to the three research questions set out in chapter three. They are as follows. First, in what ways were spaces of dissent in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle ‘political’? Second, how did people engage in the struggle? Third, what effects did political action have in a broader context of neoliberal development and the transition toward unconventional energy extraction in the North West of England? In answering these questions this thesis has yielded the following insights:

- The heterogeneous makeup of the anti-fracking movement presents an opportunity to research the emergence of a political struggle in a broader terrain of protest. In this
case this includes the failed efforts of key activists to engage communities in ‘ordinary’ politics.

- Key struggles between activists and the authorities were over competing understandings of what was being contested, who was able to engage in the struggle and which grievances were recognised as legitimate.

- Activists used ostensibly horizontal and less-obvious vertical organisational modes of practice to organise the anti-fracking movement.

- Activists shared a collective commitment to universal equality, implemented through their organisational practices and articulated as respect for difference and the right of every individual to have an equal voice.

- Local nodes of protest such as Barton Moss Protectors camp can articulate with a transnational network of concerns that coalesce as an emancipatory struggle.
10.2 Contextualising political struggle by taking a ‘step back’: researching actor responses and organisational tensions in an urban anti-fracking struggle

This section reflects on the implications to political theory of including analysis of both politics and the political within a single study to research on radical urban politics and contemporary environmental movements, and the limitations of this approach. As the first study of the politics of an anti-fracking movement, analysis in this thesis arguably demonstrates the utility of applying a post-foundational theoretical framework to a broader terrain of protest than the space in which the political emerges. As chapter 9 illustrates, taking a conceptual ‘step back’ provides opportunity to discuss the ways that different forms of politics shape the political spaces that emerge across the terrain of protest. Practically, in this case this means that analysis extends beyond a conceptual focus on the political, to include activist engagement in neighbouring communities and their efforts to conduct surveys and lobby councillors.

While this re-framing of political struggle makes a key contribution, it also sets this thesis apart from previous studies of radical urban uprisings that focus on radical spaces, because it examines the emergence of a political struggle within a broader terrain of anti-fracking protest. This makes it particularly important to identify how analysis contributes to geographic research that examines environmental movements (for example: Velicu and Kaika 2017), and why this broader perspective helps incorporate into analysis the efficacy of different tactics applied in the struggle. First though, it is worth reflecting on what the theoretical framework shares with previous studies of radical urban uprisings.

Importantly, the broader conceptual focus of this thesis remains centred on political struggle, which means that analysis can draw on research that examines more-radical spatial ruptures of the political, particularly to understand tensions in organisational practices, subjectivation and the radical potential of political struggle (Karaliotas 2017). Also important is that the broader focus provided by the framework remains rooted in Rancière’s post-foundational theorisation on ‘the political’, which is used to build a research design that incorporates activists into research who would be marginalised by a conceptual focus on social movements or local communities. This means that analysis of
the discursive, organisational and spatial repertoires of activists contributes to literature on post-foundational research on radical urban uprisings – reviewed in chapter three – that examines activist efforts to implement horizontally organised politics within these struggles (Kaika and Karaliotas 2016; Erensü and Karaman 2017; Zemni 2017). In particular, it helps to understand actor engagement – and non-engagement – in the spaces opened up by the anti-fracking movement, which allows analysis to go beyond simple interpretations of ‘fracking’ and community opposition to the siting of new energy infrastructure projects, toward theoretically grounded understandings of actor responses and the reasons for differential reactions.

A key example of how a focus on the political across a broader terrain of protest helps understand the emergence of the political is the analysis of the organisational practices of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement in chapter 6, which places particular focus on the organisational tensions that marked its protest and meeting spaces. As with the squares movement (Karaliotas 2017), activists work together through ostensibly horizontal modes of organisation which both include and are supported by vertical, organisational structures. Through engagement with the empirical material collated from interviews and meeting minutes, analysis identified tensions between horizontal and vertical organisational practices and between nationalistic and emancipatory performative and discursive narratives.

A key argument that emerged from this analysis was that activists were able to realise an emancipatory politics because of a common ethos of egalitarianism, predicated on an acceptance of difference and the right of each person to have an equal voice in the movement. This came to the fore when the movement was confronted by a far-right group whose efforts to join FFGM were rejected on the grounds that their nationalistic politics conflicted with the regional movement’s commitment to universal equality. This is worth reflecting on, because it shows how important the commitment to implementing a universal politics was for the regional anti-fracking movement, and that this went beyond an intention to stop fracking, which could have conceivably been aided through support from a further – albeit nationalist – anti-fracking organisation. This provides evidence that universal equality defined the boundaries of the anti-fracking movement as well as shaping its internal organisational structures.
This is important because it demonstrates the importance of implementing a commitment to universal equality to enabling convergence on a common cause and building a movement with international solidarities that can achieve ‘multi-scalar political action’ (Routledge 2003, p.333) from contested social relations. As such, the analysis in chapter six puts into practice Harvey’s argument (Harvey 1997; Harvey and Williams 1995) that a universalist politics allows movements to connect across space without departing from their respective militant particularisms. Understood in this context it was both inevitable – and correct – that activists would come into conflict with nationalist activists, whose underlying political philosophy is based in a particular and exclusive struggle for equality.

As this example illustrates, a focus on actor engagement across the terrain of protest helps to understand how ‘the political’ (Rancière 1999) emerges in practice, in the context of a contemporary urban environmental struggle. Put another way, the empirical material uncovers the materiality of the radical political imaginary that emerged at the Protectors camp. Addressing the first research question, a key argument that emerges is that events at Barton Moss were political when understood in their local context as a contemporary urban environmental struggle. This supports the argument, made in Dikeç and Swyngedouw (2017), that ‘Extraordinary politics emerge within particular historical and geographical contexts and find their meaning only in relation to them.’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.13). In this case, radical protest emerged in a place where post-political tactics were used by the ‘instituted order’ (Dikeç and Swyngedouw 2017, p.3) to limit and close down local oppositional voices.

This understanding of political struggle in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement also contributes to research on social movements that examine the radical nature of contemporary urban environmental struggles (for example: Routledge 2017), in two key ways. First, it demonstrates how a post-foundational perspective brings actors into view that would be marginalised by a focus on social movements and their networks. Chapter eight argues that these politicised actors – who do not identify as part of a social movement – played key roles in the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle, and that this thesis demonstrates the utility of a post-foundational research design for incorporating them into study of a place-based contemporary urban environmental
struggle. Second, analysis offers new ways of thinking about contemporary urban environmental movements, where they draw on the tactics and politics of radical urban uprisings for inspiration. Specifically, research provides insight into how actors in an urban environmental struggle become politicised, connect local concerns with environmental, political and economic grievances and create a platform for marginalised actors to be seen and to be heard.

Overall then, the broader perspective of this case, which places the political struggle of anti-fracking activists in a broader terrain of protest, sets it apart from studies of more-radical urban struggles, but remains in keeping with these studies because the conceptual focus remains centred on the political. It also advances an emergent literature on the radical politics of contemporary environmental movements, by providing an initial study of the politics of an anti-fracking movement. In the context of on-going discussions on the merits and limitations of using Rancière’s theorisation on the political to examine urban uprisings, the case is important because it addresses a key concern put forward by critics of post-politics, which is that a focus on ‘radical’ politics marginalises and discounts the benefits of ordinary day-to-day politics (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; Beveridge and Koch 2017b). By focusing on a contemporary urban environmental struggle that arguably contains both radical and day-to-day politics, the discussion builds on the argument put forward in Karaliotas (2017) that equality in practice must always hybridise with non-equal practices. As such, the thesis uses a research design that is not focused solely on ‘the political’ in a narrow sense and allows the researcher to examine tensions between different forms of politics that unfold across protest spaces within a single critical case. This means that the study contributes to the argument that a focus on ‘the urban political’ is not intended to discount the importance of the politics of social movements.
10.3 What were the effects of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle?

This final section returns to the final research question of the thesis, which asks what the effects of the anti-fracking struggle were in a broader context of neoliberal development and the transition toward unconventional energy extraction in the North West of England. It uses this question to reflect on the connections between the efforts of activists in the struggle and the abstract theorising of Rancière on the political. In particular, what relevance do the concepts used in this thesis – politics, the political and subjectivation – have to people who are activists in an anti-fracking struggle? And, what do these concepts tell us about the effectiveness of the anti-fracking struggle in Greater Manchester?

10.3.1 Reframing the struggle and giving voice and visibility to the marginalised

A key argument that runs through the analysis chapters is that the anti-fracking struggle was most effective at reframing the scale at which the development well was legitimised, and on this basis challenging its proponents’ claim to have a social license to proceed. The Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement converged on an exploratory well in the city-region, and the struggle that emerged became a frontline for broader environmental and political struggles, for example on anthropogenic climate change, energy transition and democracy. Each of these addresses issues that are largely marginalised from the development process, which is concerned with the immediately ‘local’ effects of the exploratory well rather than the broader effects of a future fracking industry.

This means that in a sense, the struggle was based in competing understandings of what was being contested, and which grievances were recognised as legitimate. Across interviews with industry stakeholders, a shared complaint is that it was unfair and disingenuous of activists to make the struggle about ‘fracking’, and to emphasise issues – such as the risks posed by a future fracking industry – that were not immediately connected with the development itself. At the heart of this complaint is disagreement over whether the exploratory well was a ‘fracking’ site at all. As research on public perceptions of fracking shows (Finewood and Stroup 2012; Evensen et al. 2014), this disagreement is based in competing understandings of what the term ‘fracking’ refers to.
Activists from Greater Manchester connected the exploratory well with the broader aims of stopping fracking in the city-region and the UK, while the industry sought to contain legitimate debate to ‘local’ issues that pertained to the development itself. The movement’s success connecting the exploratory well with ‘fracking’ galvanised the anti-fracking struggle in Greater Manchester, because it presented a local and present-day connection to a future fracking industry in the city-region. More broadly, this connected the siting struggle with what Kinniburgh (2015) terms ‘the global revolt against fracking’ (p.62), enabling them to campaign and voice grievances about the risks an industry would pose to anthropogenic climate change, water pollution and the industrialisation of the countryside.

‘Fracking’ then, was an issue that activists converged on because a future fracking industry carries with it the promise of further neoliberal development and a transition toward unconventional energy resources. As climate change experts explain in a study on the UK shale gas industry (Broderick et al. 2011), this envisioned future is difficult to square with the government’s commitment – legislated in the Climate Change Act – to ensure that the UK’s carbons emissions are 80% lower than their 1990 baseline by 2050 (Act of Parliament 2008). In the absence of a national debate on whether a future fracking industry is conducive to this commitment, the anti-fracking movement proved effective at opening up and sustaining a protest space in which justifiable grievances like this could be heard.

In this context, the most immediate effect of the struggle was to provide visibility to the dissent of anti-fracking activists and to open up a protest space from which they could express their grievances and experiment with the implementation of a dissensual politics. The camp that activists setup was sustained for five months, and during this time activists from multiple social movements joined with local communities to organise an anti-fracking movement that drew in support from across the country, and shared solidarity from indigenous rights and environmental activists fighting their own struggles in other parts of the world. Their ultimate success sustaining the struggle and leaving the site of their own volition contributes to a politics of hope for those who seek to open up protest spaces from which to stage their dissent.

Yet it was also a struggle over whose voices were heard, and future research should think carefully about whose – and which – grievances are recognised as legitimate in relation to
a siting struggle. In this case, the efforts of activists to voice dissent against fracking – rather than the particulars of the exploratory well - connected a local siting struggle with a broader anti-fracking movement. As such, the efforts of activists to open up and sustain an anti-fracking space outside the exploratory well are an inspiration to others who seek to open up protest spaces.

More broadly, the emancipatory politics of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement suggests that local nodes of protest such as this one can articulate a transnational network of concerns that coalesce as an emancipatory struggle. Importantly, while the space opened up on Barton Moss Road was necessarily temporary, the experiences of activists and the solidarities that they formed during the struggle are likely to be sustained and – since activists’ dissent was not primarily against the exploratory well - will be carried into successive struggles. In this context, the thesis shows how an emancipatory politics is mobilised to overcome militant particularisms and how political action can be sustained beyond a siting struggle.

**10.3.2 How does theorising on the political help understand the effects of the anti-fracking struggle and what relevance does it have to activists?**

Post-foundational theory helps to understand the anti-fracking struggle in two key ways. First, as Dikec and Swyngedouw (2017) emphasise, a post-foundational conceptual lens shifts focus onto the political spaces opened up by political struggle, and incorporates into analysis people and voices that would have been marginalised by a focus on social movements, or local communities, for example. Second, the concepts that Rancière engages, which are drawn on this thesis, provide a toolkit with which to analyse and understand the efforts of activists. This thesis examines a terrain of protest that includes the failed efforts of community activists to engage with their democratically elected politicians. Rancière’s theorisation on the political provides a toolkit with which to articulate why their efforts were not successful and conversely why the dissent of anti-fracking activists was – on their terms – a success. Recent work by Karaliotas (2017) on tensions within the political also provides a language with which to analyse organisational practices within the regional anti-fracking movement.
These two points are primarily of use to researchers rather than activists, who may engage themselves in radical politics without interest in how their struggle can be conceptualised. This was clear from interviews with key activists at the camp who were engaged in the struggle, who emphasised that they did not consider themselves to be political, and did not base their efforts to engage directly in democratic practices in a particular philosophy. On reflection, their focus on practice rather than theory shows that people who engage in political struggle are applying their dissensual beliefs to practice, rather than applying theory to practice. This distinction is important because, when viewed through a post-foundational conceptual lens, activists are challenging the legitimacy of the hierarchical social orders through which fracking is legitimised and their city is organised, and are exposing the absent foundations of these social orders by putting into practice alternative, and arguably more egalitarian ways of being together. To do this doesn’t require an in-depth understanding of egalitarianism, and instead is based in the rejection of hierarchical social orders and an experimentation with horizontal organisational practices.

As this case demonstrates, this means that activists can challenge the legitimacy of mainstream ‘politics’, open up spaces in which they experiment with alternative forms of direct democratic practices and find solidarity with humanitarian struggles around the world, and yet not recognise their struggle as political. In addition, they may be engaged horizontal organisational practices for practical rather than theoretical reasons, for example because they are the best way to ensure everyone has an equal voice, and to stop any one person or group from taking control of the anti-fracking movement.

One way that speaking with activists about abstract theorising on the political could prove useful is by providing them with a conceptual toolkit with which to understand their struggle. In particular, the separation between politics and the political could be useful for conceptualising their dissent as political, yet separate from the forms of ‘politics’ that their dissent innately challenges. In this way, the interest that post-foundational theorists share in the potential for radical change through political struggle is arguably one that would be of interest to activists.

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29 See section 8.3
30 It will be interesting to find out whether this is the case when disseminating this thesis to anti-fracking activists.
10.4 Reflections on thesis and the potential for future research

The data and information collected for this thesis and the on-going exploration efforts of the fracking industry in the UK present multiple avenues for future research. These are significant intellectual opportunities in themselves. They will provide deeper understanding of urban struggles and how solidarity and an emancipatory politics can emerge from disparate groups with seemingly discordant perspectives. They also inform on-going anti-fracking struggles in the North West of England and emergent urban struggles across the UK – such as self-organised homeless people and squatting in Greater Manchester (Manchester Squat! 2017) – on how to open up political spaces for radical action and dissent.

Given the potential influence of energy-related research on policy, and the national imperative of a low carbon transition before 2050, there is a pressing need for further case studies that seek to better understand the complexities of actor responses in these struggles (Bridge et al. 2013; Calvert 2015). This means that research should be designed to go beyond a focus on ‘the characteristics of neighbouring communities’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2623) and examine the historical relations that underpin responses to development by affected populations.

This case is an initial attempt to provide such depth of analysis, which, as Bickerstaff (2012) argues, is often lacking in accounts of ‘community’ opposition. It is a critical case study of an urban anti-fracking struggle, focused on the dissent that emerged outside Barton Moss exploratory well in Greater Manchester. It places this struggle in the broader context of activists from pre-existing urban social movements, who form regional assembly group FFGM and galvanise local opposition to fracking development. These include activists with experience in previous urban struggles, for example the 15th May anti-austerity movement in Spain (FFGM 14). Through ostensibly horizontal organisational practices, activists try to organise the anti-fracking movement without a top-down organisational structure, both in the regional anti-fracking assembly and through the day-to-day practices of Barton Moss Protectors camp.
Whether the success of the Greater Manchester anti-fracking movement is thus dependent on in its urban context is a pending question. As argued in chapter five, framing the struggle around stopping fracking in the city-region allowed activists to conceptualise anybody who lived in the city-region as ‘local’ to the development. This broad conceptualisation of local people connected the experience, resources and organisational capacity of pre-existing urban social movements in Manchester with the disadvantaged communities that neighboured the exploratory well. Importantly, activists recognised the importance of making this connection – between the regional and the local – and invoked local support to legitimise their dissent.

The importance of invoking local support in anti-fracking struggles is also highlighted in a recent study on the Irish anti-fracking movement, in which the authors argue that activists emphasise their local ties in order to be heard in the media and recognised as legitimate by the industry (Steger and Drehobl 2018). Given the uncontainable risks that fracking development is associated with, more research is needed that is designed to look beyond ‘local’ communities in its analysis, and gives careful thought to how local ties are invoked by activists to claim legitimacy, and are used by media and industry to determine whose grievances are heard.

Some of the more interesting arguments made in this thesis emerge from my efforts to incorporate into research people who did not engage in the siting struggle, even though they had a vested interest in doing so, because they lived near to the exploratory well. To do this, I initially sought inspiration from Bickerstaff’s (2012) study on controversy around the siting of a Geological Disposal Facility for nuclear waste in the North West of England. The study draws into its analysis ‘the absent ‘Others’ (the distant actors and events) that ‘live on’ in local debate’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2613). I was drawn to the study because of its ‘concern to make visible the physically absent, the unacknowledged, and the silent, in ways that fracture dominant orderings and narratives’ (Bickerstaff 2012, p.2612).

While I did not ultimately apply the methods outlined in Bickerstaff (2012), I did remain focused on the task of making visible the physically absent, recognising that in this case non-engagement was an important element of the siting struggle. To do this, I examined the historical context from which the struggle emerged, both in terms of social movements and the development process of the exploratory well. In addition, I investigated the absence of key rural actors from the struggle, who related to me that
they were concerned about the development but could not engage in the anti-fracking movement due to their precarious situation as tenant farmers. Their non-engagement shaped the siting struggle that emerged in important ways, as others stepped into the breach as ‘local’ actors. Given that non-engagement is not currently a research priority in social movements or energy geographies research, and can be used by industry to claim social license for a development, more research should be conducted that seeks to understand reasons for non-engagement, identifies absent voices, and investigates the engagement of working class communities in environmental social movements. The difficulty – which I address here but do not entirely overcome – is how to build this into a feasible research design.

One interesting area of research that is only touched on here is the central roles played by women in the struggle, both FFGM and on the slow-walks at Barton Moss. There is currently very little research on the roles that women play in anti-fracking struggles, which explains why this is not addressed in the literature reviews, since findings only emerged during analysis of the interviews. In chapter eight I focus on the importance of ‘Mother Nature’ to the radical political imaginary shared by camp activists, and the maternal role extolled by key women activists in interviews. The importance of women in the anti-fracking movement is also identified – although not addressed in detail – in a recent study of the Lancashire anti-fracking movement (Szolucha, 2016), in which the author notes that ‘women in Lancashire took leading positions in the majority of local anti-fracking groups and played a prominent role throughout the planning process and during campaigning’ (Szolucha 2016, p.107).

From a post-foundational perspective, this thesis raises some interesting points that merit further research on the extent to which anti-fracking struggles can be ‘political’, in the Rancierian sense. In chapter seven, close analysis of the anti-fracking movement reveals that activists drew on radical political uprisings for both tactics and organisational structures, occupying public space and basing their struggles in horizontal modes of organisation that speak to a commitment to universal equality. This supports the argument, made in Veliku and Kaika (2017), that there has been a radicalisation of contemporary environmental movements, which engage in political struggle to make universalised demands for socio-ecological change.
Despite evident similarities, however, the occupation and slow-walks at Barton Moss sit uneasily alongside radical urban uprisings in the Mediterranean and with the Arab Spring, and the Greater Manchester anti-fracking struggle is not an obvious choice as an example of ‘the political’ in action. It is ostensibly a struggle that combines anti-fracking activists with local opposition to new energy infrastructure development, that did not develop into a political uprising as some of its proponents had hoped that it would. In this case, I draw on the concept of hybrid subjectivation, expounded in Karaliotas (2017), to investigate the vertical and horizontal modes of organisation that shape the anti-fracking struggle. As a preliminary study, the case demonstrates the merit of applying the concept to a contemporary environmental movement, to better understand the organisational tensions that emerge where siting struggles are shaped by the politics of social movements yet adopt the tactics of radical urban uprisings.

In closing, this thesis provides a critical case of an urban anti-fracking struggle, in which activists experiment with horizontally organised practices, both in the regional anti-fracking assembly and through the day-to-day practices of Barton Moss Protectors camp. The case is a continuation of existing research streams on radical urban uprisings, contemporary environmental movements and local opposition to new energy infrastructure development, which for the first time are applied to an urban anti-fracking siting struggle. As set out in this section, analysis opens up exciting future avenues for research, both on the anti-fracking movement and more broadly on other forms of new energy infrastructure siting struggles. While this study investigates differential responses to the development of Barton Moss exploratory well, it is important to also recognise that these coalesced as an emancipatory struggle that found solidarity with environmental and humanitarian movements around the world, and – its activists believed – had the potential to become a broader political movement that challenged the capital driven dynamics through which fracking is enabled. In opening up and sustaining an anti-fracking space outside the exploratory well, activists provided inspiration and contributed to a politics of hope, both for the UK anti-fracking movement and for the people that they found solidarity with around the world.
References


Hall, N. et al. (2015). Social licence to operate: understanding how a concept has been translated into practice in energy industries. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 86, pp.301–310.


Appendix 1

Fields and licences in North West England

Adapted from: DECC (2013)
### Appendix 2

#### Table of potential case, compiled in June 2013

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## Appendix 3

### List of interviews and recordings

#### Activists

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* Interview not recorded, notes taken in fieldwork diary
Appendix 4

Interview schedule

Section I: On participant position, region, Barton Moss, ‘fracking’

1) For recording, who am I talking to? Age / Occupation type?

2) How long have you lived in the North West? More locally? Why live here?

3) What are your roles / responsibilities in relation to the siting struggle at Barton Moss? E.g. energy, jobs, technology, environment, social movement – don’t lead, have conversation. Also identify and discuss affiliations.

4) If I say ‘fracking’, what does it bring to mind? Do you think it is safe? How does it make you feel? Can you tell me why? What are the issues that you associate with fracking? e.g. water / industrialisation / climate change / jobs etc. (don’t prompt) What are the risks and how can these be managed?

5) What changes do you think fracking will bring to the area? For the stakeholder / personally / at what scale?

6) What sources of information are used to develop your picture of what’s happening? How do you decide what sources to trust? How trust / rely on different sources?

Section II: Organisational practices: tensions and convergences

1) How did you find out about fracking? How did you become involved in the struggle at Barton Moss? How became involved in activism / in job (for industry participants)? What groups involved in that connect to the struggle? How are these organised?

2) Tensions / convergence: How do you regard the experts on fracking, related issues? Who does [stakeholder] trust on fracking / unconventional energy development, what people, institutions? What issues create tensions between actors? What issues are focused on?
3) Why do you think that this is happening here? Both fracking / unconventional energy development and the broader struggle. Should it happen anywhere else? What scale? Do you see this as an isolated issue?

Section III: On engagement in the struggle

1) How has [actor] responded (or not) to proposed fracking development? Start at the beginning. What is its significance to [actor]?
2) How / where / when has actor engaged in the development process and the anti-fracking struggle?
3) What other responses do you know of in this siting struggle? Which companies / groups / communities are you aware of opposing or supporting fracking? Doing what? Any not active or less so? Why? Any in favour? How do you understand the broader response to the exploratory well, and what do you think will be the effect of dissent?
Appendix 5

Interview with FFGM member

C: Who am I talking to please?

X: You are talking to [name omitted].

C: And you’re a member of anti-fracking group Frack Free Greater Manchester, is that right?

X: Yes, I go to all of the Frack Free Greater Manchester meetings. It is a very loosely organised organisation but doesn’t have a formal structure. I have chaired a number of meetings but that has been a matter of who is least reluctant rather than anything. For me if it was a proper organisation it would have a much more formal structure because I think the job of chairing is not just about meetings but also lots of functions that I would expect a chair to do and I don’t really. It is much more an ad hoc thing/ it is so informal it doesn’t even have positions. We have a treasurer. That is the only elected position that we have funnily enough. There isn’t an official convener or secretary or Chair and I think from the next meeting we will also elect a minute taker. The last set of minutes was taken by a young man who took an absolutely excellent set of minutes they were all that a minutes should be and I wrote to him congratulating him and telling him that really it would be lovely if he did it permanently, and he has agreed. So merely by trial and error we have found our minute taker which is actually quite an important function in the sense that I think it pulls everything together. So I am very pleased about that.

C: So it sounds like you have had experience organising meetings before.

X: Yes I have been active on the socialist wing of British politics. Up to very recently I was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and now I am a member of a group that calls itself Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st century. I’ve been in a number of organisations that have come and gone over the years so yes.

C: How did you find out about Frack Free Greater Manchester?
X: There is a largely dormant organisation in Manchester called Greater Manchester against Climate Change and that was something which a small number of us started quite a number of years ago now. The starting date was quite possibly in the nineties and I've been a campaigner on the question of climate change for a long, long time. It's the organisation in which as a socialist I was most active in. The ‘Frack Free’ thing was really just a natural follow-on from that, in the sense that fracking is about environmental danger and a turning away from the development of clean renewable energies, which is obviously the way that I think we have to go if this civilization is to survive in its roughly present form. Because otherwise I think the physical nature of the collapse of the climate system and the reconfiguring, I think this is going to be a major, major disaster. The world now is nine billion people and I don't think the earth can support that if climate change goes ahead.

C: Your background in climate change is interesting because I have seen a lot of people avoid talking about climate change in the anti-fracking community. Do you see it as a divisive issue in the anti-fracking movement?

X: I think the anti-fracking meetings have shrunk considerably since I first started. When they started drilling at Barton Moss we could count on 30 – 40 people at a meeting. Now in May [2014] there were six people. At the last meeting in July there were 14. So perhaps it will pick up again and perhaps the activity will move closer to where the drilling activity is occurring. I don't know if you know that the camp at Davyhulme had to move out because people were becoming ill. I think they have now moved to Upton in Chester. But I don't know what the political people in Chester are doing because I think it is very important to bring the experience of people who are used to organising on the left and their experiences and techniques to bear. There was the camp, which considers itself the main thing and thinks that the locals are only there to support it, but I differ from that, I think that raising the question of fracking, what it does, and linking it to climate change dangers is of the utmost importance.

C: When you say locals do you mean in the Barton Moss area or Chorlton?
X: Well, I would say, I suppose I am being a bit loose there. When the drilling at BM was mooted, that were a small number of us from the activity around climate change, I'm not sure that the Greater Manchester Frack Free Greater Manchester has enough of a formal presence to ascribe that activity, but there were several of us who essentially decided that we would leaflet every house on a local housing estate, and from that a number of things emerged, certain meetings were held and certain films were shown, and I thought that did rally some of the local people into understanding the danger and also made sure that the Barton Moss Camp did get supported, I think it was supported quite well.

C: Was your leafleting conducted before the camp setup?

X: I think so yes, it was when they proposed the drilling, not when they had started, but we covered the whole of that estate, but then we were meaning to move on to other estates and continue that, but I think we ran out of steam really. It is very hard work. There are something like only half a dozen people who actually do the work. I think the borough is Eccles, I can't remember the name of the estate.

C: So you said there were about six of you, were they all people from the climate change action scene?

X: I think the first meeting I went to wasn't held by us, it was at the Friends Meeting House in Eccles, and it was a large and well-supported meeting so I don't think I was on the starting line on that one, because I think that by the time I went there, there was already obviously a group of people who had got together and decided to organise [these were the activists who acted autonomously from FFGM]. The leafleting came out of those meetings. They organised a meeting in which they brought down some of the people in the Fylde area in Blackpool, where fracking had already taken place and caused earthquakes, had been suspended and was restarting. I know that they already had experience of organising as well.
There was also a time when we actually went up there. There was an event at camp which was set up where there were a lot of the people, possibly linked to the Campaign Against Climate Change. You say you had experience of people being frightened of linking climate change and fracking. I have never actually had any hostility from within the group that I was working in, but I did find at the beginning that was enormous email traffic around these issues. I certainly was annoyed by the time I spent in front of my computer reading this stuff. I think possibly quite a number of people, there were problems about people quarrelling about what’s the best way to go was, some people took themselves off in a huff, which really distresses me quite a bit but there is very little you can actually do about it. Anyway this is a very common problem on the Left.

C: How long have you lived in the North West [of England]?

X: I came to Manchester in 1968, a long time ago. Before that I was in London and what brought me up here was the fact that I got together with my now-husband and one of us would have to move and he was more important to Manchester than I was to London [laughs], so I moved.

C: What happened that got you involved in activism? You mentioned you’ve campaigned on renewables?

X: I think my opposition to fracking is encompassed in a general opposition to capitalism as a whole. Personally I feel very pessimistic about being able to stop fracking without being able to stop capitalism, and that is a bigger project obviously and will require a revolution, so I call myself a revolutionary socialist, but although one works as much as possible to spread these ideas around it is something at the moment that is fairly low. Although we have had a number of demonstrations about fracking and climate change in Manchester. The last one was very well attended so it isn’t a completely dead subject and it will flare up from time to time wherever these drillers settle. I feel outraged that somebody on the BBC in a news item about fracking is able to say to camera there is no evidence that fracking can lead to the contamination of drinking water and it is not challenged. That he is allowed to say this to camera and then they move on and talk about something else. The experience in America has a multitude of examples of really heavy dangerous water
contamination, air contamination radioactive contamination. The earthquakes from fracking itself are apparently small beer compared with the earthquakes when they try to inject the waste water with its multitude of contaminants – most of them very dangerous – and they try to inject water down into deep wells. Apparently causes more earthquakes than the fracking does.

C: So, do you see fracking as a lens for bigger issues?

X: Yes of course.

C: ...and, if you had a vision it would be changing the social system.

X: Yes, yes to a world to a world where, where people control what happens rather than the Camerons. I mean I think we have a system with democratic features, I think calling it's a democracy is exaggerating rather.

C: In this case Peel Holdings is quite a strong stakeholder.

X: Yes obviously, the whole new neoliberal system, which is how people are increasingly able to characterize it, especially since the crisis in 2008, I think. I have been trying to work out in my mind what it means – ‘neoliberalism’ – and I think it is probably best encapsulated in the notion that money is the only thing that matters that makes worth, and that what society is organised for the benefit of, is money, and people are worth very little and I think that is an outrageous state of affairs. Peel Holdings, its power is rooted in the fact that it has a lot of money and land, land being one of the things that it does with its money, but to have a system where money means everything and people mean nothing, it just makes me feel very outraged.

C: It overlooks the social and environmental concerns.

X: Yes, and if you look at the research by those to whom the book on inequality refers... it is undoubtedly the case that as inequality has increased in Britain, and not only in Britain, over the latest period from about the seventies, a whole raft of social ills rise in-step with that and can be linked as partners of a lack of equality. Do you know the book I’m talking about? It's called The Spirit Level. Basically they looked at all of the various features in society, sickness rates,
death rates, all sort of indicators, crime rates, and linked them to the level of
inequality in society, and the link in feature after feature is extremely strong.

C: I see. I’d like to talk about the Union involvement with the [anti-fracking]
movement. They have been helping in a few ways, the Bakers Union provided
bread to the site and they’ve also voted and said that they don’t support
fracking and do support the anti-fracking movement.

X: Unite has recently reasserted its support for anti-fracking movements and I
hope that soon we are going to be able to take advantage of that, you can
actually join Unite’s social branch when not actually working like myself and I
think one of the things I’m planning to do in the near future is to join up and
possibly try to use some of their resources to spread, really, I suppose,
knowledge about fracking and what it involves and what it might mean and
what the stages are in both directions, using the union to back us in that
message and also spreading the message inside the union. One of the people
who is active in Manchester occasionally lends a hand with anti-fracking work
and is on the Unite executive… [name omitted]. Certainly, the strength of the
unions is something that we would definitely go after, even though it’s not what
it used to be.

C: It seems like they take more of a partnership role within environmental
movements, rather than leading the group.

X: Yeah.

C: Is that a shift from 20 years ago?

X: I think sometimes, when I was still speaking with climate change as the main
topic, and I had a number of invitations from various union branches to speak
to them on, that there was in some unions particularly a fear that jobs would be
lost, it was one of the main motivations that that campaign against climate
change had in producing its pamphlets about a million climate jobs. There’s a
new edition of that coming out more or less as we speak because it’s been a
very successful pamphlet and of course fracking will come into that, I’m not in
the group that’s updating it but I suspect that fracking will be more of a feature
in it, since anti-fracking is really where the struggle now is.
C: It’s offering an alternative.

X: Oh yes.

C: It seems to me that the union support has been there, financially as well, I know some funding has been provided.

X: Yes, [name omitted] is particularly good at that, but I think that there’s more that we can do collaborating with the unions.

C: I find it interesting they have taken more of a back seat role so some in the camp didn’t even realise their involvement was there.

X: That doesn’t surprise me since the camp has a tendency to be peopled by people with this sort of autonomist, brand of left politics, and I think probably they would, they’re not particularly in favour of unions, so that doesn’t surprise me at all. There’s different people who have come together in the anti fracking movement, there are three identifiable strands, you might put it, there is the campers, who have a sort of anarchist autonomist type of politics, there's socialists like me, then there's what you might call ordinary people, the kind of people who would respond to us leafleting the entire estate but they would come to meetings, but they're not the kinds of people – although some of them are – it's Brookside estate by the way. On the Brookside estate there was this Polish man we encountered and he was immediately, he talked the same language as we did and he's recently come over from Poland and of course Poland has a big history of the Solidarnosc movement and I don't know if he was a bit young to be directly involved in that because of course it is now upward of 30 years since all those events, but, you could feel that there was an immediate rapport, what we were talking about, about fighting this, and he got quite involved in the Barton Moss thing.

C: So, what about the mainstream political parties, have you had any experience with them?

X: I've not been involved in any of the main political parties, since there is support for fracking, I think by all three of them. It was funny, did you go to the event we had at the Mechanics Institute, it was a day where in the morning, and it was before the local elections and we had a morning, we had Jonathon
Neil and somebody from the Tyndall centre, what it [fracking] is and what it does and what we should be doing and in the afternoon we had a hustings. That went very well, it was well attended, the hustings, the room was pretty full. This was held in central Manchester in the Mechanics Institute, which is one of the places that has rooms for hire. There was [name omitted] who did the organisation of that, and you could do worse than interview her because she’s been, I mean the two of us together were active in this and she practically single handedly got that day organised, but we had a Tory, we had a Lib Dem and a Labour man and a Green and a couple of people from socialist organisations. There were a couple of far-left people, of the same sort of jib as my own, and to tell you the truth the Tory made the meeting, I think it would have been a dull affair if it hadn't been for him and he did very well in the sense that he gave as good as he got, but it kept the meeting very lively and very well, it was a good meeting. I mention this because a whole number of them, I think probably both the Lib Dems and the Labour party people said in a nutshell I’m against fracking but my party isn't, right. So it was kind of, they wouldn't take responsibility for their party and I thought that was, well it was probably true but it was a bit feeble.

C: There is the Salford planning line that councillors can't engage or take a position on fracking because it could mean they can’t sit on planning panels for developments in the future.

X: It might well be true, but why should that be a reason for them not to take a position on fracking, let it go, if they want to take a position on fracking then I think there's really nothing stopping them except the Secretary of State will take the money, and finances are quite an important part of these negotiations. I think, the bribes [to local government] have gone up in value and I think it is quite an important factor. But I don't know that that is a fact, I am just surmising that that is probably a fact. So, I think it is, you may think of it as a get out, but I don't, I don't think that absolves them from blame at all.

C: The [national] elections should be interesting as well, do you will fracking e a centrepiece?
X: I don't think it will because it isn't something that divides the parties, that's part of the problem.

C: There's not much that does.

X: That's true [laughs], neoliberals to a man. It's not good, it's not good at all.

C: They represent a small space on the political spectrum.

X: That's right, it's the power of money.

C: One of the things I've been thinking about is where communities and individuals are able to intervene in the development process, to make a difference.

X: Well there have been a number of victories, there have been a number of places where drilling has started and in the end they've decided to cut their losses and bugger off. I think, I've heard of one in Poland, and I think there have been partial victories where people have... but on the other hand, the main thing for the government, it's always been a matter of them cutting their losses because opposition actually costs them money, I mean the way that [at Barton Moss], day-in, day-out the lorries had to take an hour or more to go from the main road to the fracking site because of the scrum ahead of the lorries which we maintained. Did you ever go on the Barton Moss walks?

C: I did, what about you?

X: Of course, yes. Apparently the presence of people like me and [name omitted] especially helped, cos she's about ten years older than me.

C: Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

X: I'm 74. She, I think, must be in her eighties now, and she was a stalwart, and the presence of people like us I think actually modified police behaviour to some extent, it was a weird thing, because on the whole they'd be fairly even tempered about it except something would happen and they'd all rush over and there was a lot of shouting and messing about and then their behaviour would become outrageous, and then they would go back and just talk to us and shove us and... you knew the scene there.

C: I know what you mean, for me, I felt it was emotional at times.
X: Yeah, and of course there was a fair amount of verbal provocation from our side as well, we were fairly rude to the police and that kept the tension up, but I think, there was the blatant lie about rockets fired at helicopters, that is quite obviously something that was concocted somewhere in a policeman’s imagination and I am absolutely certain that was made up, they wanted an excuse to raid the tents and raid the camp, so they invented one. There were stories, like there were some people who were under some kind of injunction, not to be on that road, but the injunction didn't prevent them from being inside their own tents and I heard – again I didn’t see this happen – but I heard of people being dragged out of their tents by the police and then arrested for being in the road, outrageous things like that.

C: All the charges were thrown out of court in the end.

X: Yeah. There were quite a number of broken bones as well as the arrests, there was a guy who broke his arm, there was a woman whose face was pressed into the gravel and then was dragged along, but as I said, the presence of people with walking sticks, I suppose there was [name omitted], she was a bit younger than me but is now obviously above retirement age, there's [name omitted], and that did tend to kind of calm the police down a bit, they weren't quite so nasty and so rough when we were there. There was a time when I found myself being taken out of the scrum by one policeman on each arm, they weren't violent with me they just took me by the arm and walked me away and wouldn’t let me go back.

C: Why?

X: They didn't give a reason, they were obviously, they weren't sure about whether they were arresting me or not, and I didn't particularly want to be arrested, so I didn't immediately start screaming and hollering and protesting, in the end, what we did was, since we'd been taken out of the scrum we just took some placards and waved them at motorists passing on the big road, because [name omitted] came out with me because she saw me being taken out and she came out with me and we said ah, not going to bother, the thing was already nearly at the camp, nearly at the gate, so we just stood there with
placards, waved them at passing motorists and got honks of support so that was time well spent as well [laughs].

C: I suppose that is the sort of thing that could put off some people thinking of coming.

X: You can only guess at how many people that will put off and how many it would encourage [laughs].

C: So where do you get your information from, what sources do you trust?

X: I get quite a lot on the internet. There's a woman who started Frack Free Chorlton, called Joanne, and she obviously spends quite a lot of time on the internet and posts things on the Frack Free site and quite often they're interesting, like today I was reading a report which is 70 pages long about the dangers and harms of fracking, and in detail, scientific surveys from America, and that is the sort of thing she ferrets out and puts online, so quite a lot of my information comes from that, in the end, I suppose you have to make a judgement about what you trust and what you don’t and you have to say to yourself what is this person’s bias? There is evidence that comes from researchers and academics and you do tend to trust that rather than not.

C: One of the things I've been thinking about is how you've got a conflict of fracking with other ways that land around Manchester is used. We can't do everything and so fracking will conflict with people’s ideas about what they want to happen in the area.

X: Yeah. Especially since the problem with fracking, apart from anything else, is you get relatively little gas from each well and so you have to cover the countryside with wells, and some of the pictures from the United States, with the kind of densities that you get, I was reading a report today, about 40000 wells in Pennsylvania, and the leakage rates out of those and basically the American scientists are saying virtually every well eventually leaks, some of them, about 5% [leak] immediately, 50% in 5 years and practically all of them if you wait long enough. And what comes out of them of course is methane which is a powerful greenhouse gas anyway and the dangers of it getting into the water supply, you know, methane in the water supply, everyone has seen a
running tap catch fire. So there are now a number of really quite powerful
protests, there's one where there's about 12 pages of prominent people and
organisations in America which are trying to present the evidence to the United
States government and are forming quite a powerful lobby. Of course the
damage there's already done.

C: Whereas here it's not.

X: Then you get this clown on the BBC saying there is no evidence that it
contaminates the water and nobody says hang on a minute, what about this,
what about that, what about the other, what about this report, that report, the
report, what do you mean no evidence?

C: Yeah the narrative is managed very tightly.

X: It is isn't it!

C: I'm going to interview someone at the BBC next week.

X: That'll be good.

C: He does radio shows.

X: Yes, I've been on local radio a couple of times, there's a station called AllFm,
have you heard of them? They are a local radio station based in Levenshulme,
I've been there about twice. They are good people.

C: I do know it, one of their shows is an anarchist show, I think?

X: That's right. They let me talk about the campaign at Barton Moss. But it was a
late night show; it wasn't just an early show. No, it was good; they're a nice
little radio station.

[pause]

X: I'm not sure that I've been as clear and as thorough as I could have been, I've
got another one of these [interviews] from somebody else, probably next week
[laughs].

C: You've been very helpful! There's no pressure, I'm really trying to understand
how different groups have responded to the development at Barton Moss.
X: There was an awful lot of friction within the anti fracking movement, what people wanted to do and how they wanted to approach it. I don't think it did us any good at all. There's a couple of men who are pretty active. One is a man who is at the centre of an Eccles group called [Name omitted]. Also [name omitted], and sometimes I find them extraordinarily irritating because they can dominate a meeting to the detriment of the meeting. They are, they vary, sometimes they're useful and sometimes they're not. I think particularly [name omitted] is somebody who, I find it quite difficult to take him seriously. I suppose, for example, there was an instant where he said what was needed by the campers in Barton Moss was if anybody had a telephone that could be used as a dedicated kind of organisational way. I had my own old telephone, which was lying around, still perfectly good but I'd moved on a bit, and so I said yeah that's fine you can have that and all you need to do is buy a Sim card and bingo you're away, and the trouble I had trying to get hold of [name omitted] and deliver this bloody thing to him! He just didn't seem interested anymore. He must have flung that out without really treating it seriously at all. I felt like I'd done a lot of running around to no good purpose.

C: Did they get the phone?

X: Oh they got the phone in the end [laughs].

C: Yeah.

X: Phoning him, emailing him, over and over again. He just didn't want to know.

C: There's a lot of politics I don't understand, to do with the left and the in-fighting between the groups. There is [name omitted] and they don't get on with the people who run the [name omitted] and then there are breakaway sections of [name omitted].

X: Oh I think it's, I'm afraid it is sectarianism and is something that afflicts the left enormously and it made me cry sometimes I must say. Of course we had a big crisis in the Socialist Workers Party, what do you know about the Socialist Workers Party?

C: I have a good friend who was in it but left around about when the scandal came out.
X: Well the scandal came out a long time ago, I mean there was a period of about 18 months and it wasn't the scandal itself that made me leave the party, it was the way that the party dealt with it, or didn't deal with it and the manoeuvres that happened within the organisation which made me in the end despair that it was no longer the organisation that could take us forward because RS21 is so tiny that it still hasn't made up its mind what it is.

C: What is the RS21, is that a national organisation?

X: What, RS21? No, that's just a couple of hundred people who all left the Socialist Workers Party at once and are trying to maintain an organisation because they don't want to be in the wilderness.

C: I think a lot moved to the International Socialist Party?

X: The International Socialist network. I think that's what [name omitted] belongs to doesn't he? I don't know, I try not to be an expert on the various groups.

C: But the Socialist Workers Party haven't had a lot of involvement in the anti fracking movement.

X: They never really gave it prominence, but [name omitted] was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, I think she has left and is in RS21, but is married to somebody who decided to stay in the Socialist Workers Party, but we still have very friendly relations with him. And err, there are some people who decided to stay merely because they were too thin on the ground and if you're in big cities like London or Manchester then if two or three hundred people leave at once then you need a group of at least six or ten that can still have a meeting. If you're in Huddersfield, or places like that, little tiny towns, then you're likely, if you get out of the Socialist Workers Party, you're on your own or there might be two of you and that's a very, very lonely place for a socialist and so they stay in, better that than nothing. So, I think the problems in the Socialist Workers Party will still multiply I mean there was this very stupid thing with this poor man that got eaten by a bear. You know the accident that I was talking about? There was an expedition to northern Norway I think? They were within the Arctic Circle. They were, it was, the thing I think they were all in Eton, they were
Eton sixth formers on an expedition into the arctic and one night a starving and angry bear got through the supposed bear alarm which turned out to have been fixed with a paper clip, and dragged a sleeping boy out of his tent and killed him. A week or two ago? I didn’t see the Socialist Workers Party article about it but apparently they took the line that, good, this a ruling class toff that's got dispatched. I don't know how they could do that. So there was quite a big debate about it on the web. Something like a hundred and something comments, with most people being extremely angry and I was thinking I'm glad I’m not a member. How could they be so stupid?

C: Perhaps with the collapse of membership, the ones that are left aren’t the most intelligent or media-savvy?

X: Even so.

C: Yes. So, I know we’ve touched on this already, but what is the significance of the anti-fracking struggle to you?

X: I’m taking it for granted that you know that's what motivates us all really, the concern for the environment and the poisoning of the globe, I mean, all the stuff about how many lorries it takes to set up one of these damned wells and then you go several hundred yards down across the fields and you have to drill another one. And err, I mean it's horrific, the poisoning of the water table, I mean it's not just that you can set fire to your water but the fact that it will have all sorts of carcinogens in it that weren’t there before, the fact that the gas can collect under your house and then detonate.

And we can’t trust the law to protect us, or regulations. I think a big problem is that laws can be changed and that governments who are in favour of fracking, if they find a law that stands in their way will change the law. There's a story from Poland that I got, that in Poland in a number of places the companies would have historical problems of ownership because of some arcane system in Poland, a given field can have a dozen owners and you would have to have multiple permissions from all of these people and the companies were finding that very hard so of course the government changed the law, you don't have to ask permission anymore. So I'm sure what the British government can do is
change the law as well, and it is a little naive to say the law will protect us, it is against the law so they won't do it [laughs]. There is a quotation from Gerrard Winstanley who was an activist in the 17th century, there's a lovely song about the diggers, one of the verses goes, based on the writings of Gerrard Winstanley, who was one of the Diggers, 'they make the laws to chain us well.

C: I've heard of him, his politics is still relevant today.

E Yes, although there is only so much you can take from someone who lived hundreds of years ago. Look up Leon Rosselson on Youtube, there's probably some of his stuff there, he's one of my favourite song writers, very political. I've just been to the street choir festival which this year was in Hebden Bridge, about 40 choirs come together, there's a mass sing, busking, concert, and one of the best things I heard was an East Lancs choir singing a song that Roy Bailey wrote about Palestine. So look up Liam Rosselson and Roy Bailey.

*Interview ends*
Interview with camp activist

C: What was your last work?

X: I was a dispatch supervisor in a factory.

C: Nice.

X: I hated it. It was easy. It was the easiest job. I was on top of it and I knew what I was doing and I was very good at it. But I don't want to come in in the morning, to make someone else rich. I like to enjoy the fruits of my labour, so when I chop wood, I get warm. You know what I mean.

C: Yeah. Yeah, I do.

X: So when we put a bender up, or dig a fire pit, or put a wood burner in, and it's the fruits of our labour, you know, we get warm and we, and I like that, and I'm learning, as we go along, how to sort of survive, without the luxuries, the niceties in life.

C: How long were you doing that job for?

X: 11 years.

C: 11 years? And then you left it to come here.

X: Yeah. It's not only, it's not just about fracking for me. As I said before, I'm more of a, I'm here to resist corporate fascism, jobs-for-the-boys, you know the Tories giving out contracts for people to bleed this area dry and they've not put anything into this area, that's what I'm here for, the environmental issue albeit important to all of us, is just another part of it for me, rather than for some people involved, it's just the environment, but it's just, for me that's an enclosed view. I look at fracking as part of a bigger picture, which is, we get rid of this, all the rest will take care of itself, so I wouldn't say smash the state as such as it used to be, people from generations before that were more like smash the state, I want to reduce the state, bit by bit, until we all realise that
we don't need it anymore. You know, because there's a difference, because many anarchists believe that we should just get rid of it all, but for me there'd be far too much chaos and bloodshed to do that, there are people that are still indoctrinated.

C: So have you always been an anarchist?

X: Do you know what? Yep, I reckon I have, but it, I've gone through seasons in my life, as a child I was a rebel, as a teenager I was an anarchist, but because of music and because I'd gone off the rails from the loss of my mother at 16, I was pretty much out on my own, at 17 I was fending for myself doing what I needed to do, so I sort of went off the rails a bit, so through my twenties, I flitted from job to job, and then I gradually, I started getting a bit mainstream, got into the job that I was in, enjoyed some of the nicer things, like you know, a nice house, things that I want, do things for the kids, that kids want to do, buy them things that they want, we didn't live on the breadline. But, it's just so stifling. You know, so for the last four and a half years, five years, I've been living a lie, really, what I really wanted to do was get off the grid, not even particularly off a protest site, you know, maybe, go to islands off Scotland and maybe live off-grid up there, you know, so this is sort of a next step for me, I will be spending a lot of time on the protest camp, but I'm not a protestor, we do call ourselves protectors, but for myself, I'm a resistor. I don't think we're gonna overturn the government anytime soon, but I'm not going to just bend over and take it.

C: So you're stepping outside the system.

X: Yeah. I am outside the system. I am completely outside the system. I quit my job, I've left my house.

C: What was the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak?

X: Well, fracking. Yeah, this. I see an opportunity now to get a grip and do something worthwhile, save these guys’ water. It's not just a Barton Moss problem, you know? And, the more resistance we get in all of the areas where they're earmarked to do it the more chance of them going 'it’s just not viable'. Just hit them where it hurts, hit them in the pocket, because I bet we've cost
IGas millions, Cuadrilla millions, so, and it's a wonderful feeling to you're having an impact on a despicable criminal organisation such as IGas, that will go through the courts to get gagging orders, because companies like in America and in Australia, put gagging orders on doctors so the doctors can't share information on how to treat illnesses because it might have been come [inaudible] and we all know that fracking caused all these, problems, you saw on the films the other night that [name omitted] showed, you know, those kids don't stand a chance in life, and once the damage is done it's irreversible, so those kids that were harmed for profit now, they will have that affliction on their life, just for the greed of some people, you know?

C: So you think fracking is driven by profit?

X: Yeah for profit. It should be people over profit, it should be environment over profit. People have stopped caring, there's that much divide and rule goes on in society these days, that nobody's into looking after each other, making sure that your neighbours alright, let alone coming from one town in another county to another one and living on the side of the road, there are not many of us that are willing to go out and do it for another area, and I'm not trying to build myself up on that score, I'm just trying to say that we need numbers. We need people to come and join us.

C: Right, so you need numbers, you say?

X: Well we do need numbers because these fracking sites, they're gonna be popping up all over, so the idea of getting in the community, like when we went down to Irlam the other day, I needed to be a part of that because I wanted to speak to the local community and say look I'm here for the long haul, I want to help you guys to help yourselves, I'm not an expert, although I'm definitely more so than I used to be before I came here, I know how to deal with the police, I know how to make sure that more often than not you won't get arrested if you do it in the way that I'm suggesting, because they won't target you, if they know what to do, they only target certain people, you know?

C: Have you seen, after that meeting, have you seen a change in who's going down?
X: Yeah, some more faces, you know, people have brought supplies and things, but what we really need, like I was saying before, is people to come round in the morning and walk the wagons in, help us do that. That’ll help, massively in fact, if locals, more locals turn up and do that, because they can’t lie about it. We don’t deny that we’re from elsewhere, and that there are some people on-site that have been protesting against the system for years, the media seem to want to use that as, well, these aren’t even local people! Well of course, the local people haven’t been educated in what’s going to happen, whereas mainly people who protest against the system are well researched in what the system is up to. But that doesn’t make us any less passionate or any more passionate. It’s just media spin. You know how that works.

C: So, how did you first hear about fracking?

X: On the net.

C: On the internet?

X: Yeah. Well mainly on the net, you know, I knew other people, I used to be a keyboard warrior, for a number of years I was a keyboard activist, erm, and I used to, and obviously when you do that you get to talk to a lot of people. I watched films online, so that’s where I found out about fracking, which is the passage of, it’s a way of communicating, the passage of information on the internet, it’s instant, you can talk to people all over the world.

C: What about the mainstream media? You know, BBC, that kind of thing?

X: I hate the mainstream media and, just simply because the mainstream media is a state sponsored mouthpiece to keep people dumb. Some independent media’s like that as well.

C: Do you mean on the internet?

X: Yeah.

C: So how do you decide what to trust?
X: What, how do you decide what’s legitimate and what’s not? Well, over the years you sort of learn the signs anyway. But, if you can compare this with this information and then with that information and then compare it with the mainstream media, eventually you’re going to get somewhere near the truth, then you’ve got to find out what you can. Look at people’s sources. Look where they’re getting their information from. Follow it up. Go and have a look on there, have a look at their sources, just keep going back to, you know, and usually you can get to somewhere where you feel quite confident that you’re somewhere near the truth. Sometimes it’s just about joining the dots up and then sometimes you can just look at it and go well I don’t actually really need any rock-solid proof of that, that’s feasible and I can see the, what’s going on as a result of some people’s actions and you go that’s definitely what’s happening, you know you pick it up over the years, you know?

C: So, you get your information [on fracking] from the internet, would that be any particular website?

X: All over the place really. Many, many different websites that I use, some of which I don’t think have that much legitimacy to them but I used to watch people’s broadcasts for other reasons as well, you know, like for instance when I was still sort of in the matrix and, don’t laugh at me here, but I used to catch up with snippets of Alex Jones’ videos, right?

C: Who is Alex Jones?

X: Alex Jones is a fat Texan. Thinks he’s the spearhead of the truth movement.

C: Ohhhh… did he talk to Russell Brand recently?

X: Yeah, that’s him, yeah. But I don’t take much information from the likes of those, but sometimes he had some good points. It’s just a shock jock, you know? He makes a lot of money out of it.

C: So what is the truth seekers movement?

X: That is a good question. The truth movement – there are people who are aware that there are problems with our species who claim to be people who
are attempting to find the actual ultimate truth about where the problems lie. There are also people who put this info and mis-info on the net to try to steer that away, Russell Brand for one.

C: So he isn’t in the movement?

X: He’s not part of the truth movement. He’s a, well if I was to say that his girlfriend’s father is a member of the banking elite, he has a vested interest in people looking in the wrong places for the truth. I’m not part of the truth movement, but I did go through a time when I used to call myself that but really, I’m just an independent human being now, if I get half a chance, I’d love half a chance to get in front of a PC for one day, I would love to be able to you know, I would love to be able to sit in front of a pc and do my own thing, with a bottle of rum, a bottle of coke and a bag of weed or whatever right, and just trawl through all the stuff that I’ve missed out on, but this is more important, at the moment, yeah?

C: So, that’s an online community really, isn’t it.

X: Yeah.

C: But when you came here to this site [Barton Moss], did you recognise that community there?

X: It’s an amazing community. Anywhere else, usually, in society, if you’re running low on something you won’t get help, but I’ve got crumbs of baccy in my tin, right, and if someone asks me for a rollup I’ll just pass it over to them, just use that, cos we share, everything is shared, and for me that’s really important because I’ve been preaching that is what we need to do in society, for so long online. You know I mean, this world has more than enough to go around, nobody should go hungry in this world, but the state causes scarcity, to make sure the people run around after the pound sign or the dollar sign, which then means also that people go hungry, because if people aren’t going hungry they won’t strive to make the people at the top of the pyramid richer, yeah? So, sharing is what I’ve wanted to do for so long and I’ve been living in this sort of environment where people have got the same idea towards life.
C: So, how have you engaged in the struggle at Barton Moss?

X: I might not be at liberty to say everything.

C: Oh yeah, I understand, just don’t give details.

X: There’s nothing criminal, it’s just that it could incriminate me because the local councils and the GMP [Greater Manchester Police] and what have you are, how shall I put it, they’re not adverse to breaking the laws, to get their pension fund sorted out, because you know there’s a lot of money tied up in IGas.

C: That’s what you see this as... they’ve got a vested interest in the pensions fund?

X: Yep. Well I’m led to believe that many people’s pensions including the Greater Manchester police’s pensions have invested in IGas in dodgy investments which conflicts with their interests. But I, I’m a direct action person, with regards to, I have a tendency to let superglue slip onto my hand and then sort of fall into the middle of a tube and then just accidently sort of stick myself to somebody else, and then sit down somewhere and it causes a bit of disruption. So, you know, that’s what I do. And I chop wood. I’m a wood chopper, sometimes.

C: But why, do you think it’s necessary to take direct action?

X: Well as I said earlier on, you’ve got two choices in life, you either bend over and take it or you resist, whether you’re going to win or not, it doesn’t matter, as long as I’ve got a hole in my arse I’m going to resist, it’s as simple as that. I’m not going to bend over and take it from these people. I don’t ever expect to see my utopia in my lifetime, but I want to be a good example of somebody whose striving for a utopia which has no corruption, which has no hierarchy, and which has people living alongside each other with proper agreements that make sure that we get along nicely, without hurting each other, and common law in this land, I mean it’s vital that we keep hold of common law.

C: What do you mean by common law?
X: Well common law is the law of this land. Legislative law is what parliament puts together and adds to on a regular basis to try and criminalise people, because the criminal justice system in this country is a corporation run for profit. The prisons are private, run for profit, so the more people they have in the prisons the more money they can bleed from the public purse into private pockets, same with the NHS how they’re privatising that, yeah? I’ve veered off a little bit there, you asked me a specific question.

C: About what common law is.

X: Yeah so common law is the legislative system, like the concept of the governed is actually law, so no harm or loss, some people have breach of the peace in there as well, but for me breach of the peace is covered by harm and loss. But that’s common law, in the Magna Carta, if you go and read what the basis of law in this country is, it belongs in common law. The legislative rules of society, our acts of parliament, are only keeping the force of law by the consent of the people. But because, how they try and sort of get around that is they make out that because you’ve voted for somebody going to office, therefore that is consent for them to make legislative rules for you to adhere to.

However, if you look at the wording of the rules in this situation, ‘by the consent of the governed’, now if I don’t consent then it doesn’t apply to me. You get what I’m saying? However, they’ll say, ‘well you’re part of a collective, you don’t have the individual choice to opt out, because this is a democracy’. There hasn’t been a democracy in this country for – I’m not sure if there ever was a democracy in this country, we have a hierarchy, a very corrupt hierarchy of people that place politicians in front of them to vote for, but you don’t get the choice to vote for say yourself, or that gentleman over there, you know, because what you’ve got is this guy, this guy or this guy, you know it’s party politics, and these are the only people that can afford to do the campaigns, because the people with the money and the power, with the real money and the power, give them the money, then they say right well if I do this for you, if I give you this money for this campaign then you’re going to have to sort it out so I can frack the fuck...erm, that’s corporate fascism. Was it Mussolini that said
the merger of politics and commerce, or politics and business is corporate fascism?

C: What about, because obviously in the camp, people talk about water pollution, air pollution, but I haven’t heard that much about climate change.

X: Well, I’m not one for believing the bullshit that is man-made climate change. I don’t buy it, no. There are a lot of people who will disagree with me on camp and I don’t really broach the subject with them but, erm, manmade climate change is a myth as far as I’m concerned.

C: How did you get to that conclusion?

X: Common sense! Well, at first they didn’t call it climate change they called it global warming. The reason why they changed it to climate change is because the globe stopped warming, right. So, that’s what started the alarm bells ringing anyway. You’ve got understand that for global warming, to be an actual thing, it needed to be for 15 years, warming up, gradually, for 15 years, now I might be murdering this because it’s been a while since I read about it, but that didn’t happen, right, so they then changed it to climate change, so that they could still carry on this bullshit taxation, because that’s all it is, it’s a stealth tax, they make money out of carbon footprints, making people feel guilty. To know what I’m saying look at two jags [John Prescott]!

C: Oh yeah?

X: Yeah? You’ve got cycle to work and he’s got two Jaguars. That thing, it was years and years ago, but it’s a good example of the hypocrisy of politicians, that Prescott.

C: I see. Well what about; what do you think about experts and scientists? I mean we live in a world where the 97% of the scientific community agrees that climate change is real, and they have peer-reviewed papers to support their position.

X: Peer-reviewed science?

C: Yeah, peer-reviewed science.
X: Well, peer reviewed science for me is probably the catalyst of the way that people, or the powers that be, those with the real power and influence, can veer people away from their own true spirituality, because there’s a lot in peer-reviewed science that’s just bullshit, right, you know, are we really the first ever intelligent-to-this-level of species that’s ever walked this planet? I don’t think so, there’s evidence to prove otherwise, there are many books out there, but because of peer-reviewed science, what you have to do, say like with the pyramids, for instance, if you want to know about the pyramids and study them, there are only certain people that are allowed to study them up close and personal, and if you put forward a different idea about what this is, poo-pooed by peer-reviewed science, because obviously they need to keep people believing the bullshit that it’s just simple evolution or whatever, you know the way forward, but we’re spiritual beings as well, we do have a spirit, it’s obvious, once you know where you’re pineal gland is and once you know how to meditate.

C: Where is it?

X: Its slap bang behind your eyes, just above your nose in the centre of your brain.

C: That’s where your mind eye is, isn’t it?

X: It’s your mind’s eye, and that’s where I believe your consciousness is. Can’t prove it is yet, but I do know how to meditate and I can watch my thoughts, I can read my thoughts, act upon my thoughts, so we are spiritual people, and peer-reviewed science helps to curb that because if people realised just exactly how powerful we are, those that hold all the cards at the moment, money and power-wise, you know the house of cards would just come falling down, because people would know how powerful they are. People [living] on the side of that road know how powerful they are, or most of them, you know what I mean, most of them know, they’re looked upon or frowned upon as people that are mad or people that are naïve, but those are the, some of those people are the cleverest most intelligent people I’ve ever met, because they’re aware of
the power that we small people have got over those very few that pull the strings, that will create this illusion.

I don’t know if you know if you’re a royalist or not, I mean obviously I’m anti-royal, as far as I’m concerned, Elizabeth is the largest benefit scrounger we’ve got in this country and so are her clan, yeah? Their tribe, and they’ve got away with it for too long, she can keep all her shiny stuff and all that lot, she can sit and polish it all she wants but she’s not my fucking queen, and all this bullshit about turning your back on her and all that, if she walked in here right now, right I would tell her where to get off, wouldn’t be bothered about the consequences, because she’s not my queen, and no I don’t think she’s a large shape shifting reptilian alien from another dimension, right, she’s just another human being as far as I’m concerned, don’t get me wrong, if David Icke is proven to be right about that, which he won’t be, I want to put that on the record, her clan, her tribe, has got away with ripping us off, £36 million for the upkeep of her property! It’s about time she lived in a tent isn’t it.

C: I think I understand, pretty much, what you’re saying.

X: I’m not the best at articulating how I feel you see, and sometimes I might sort of veer off on a tangent but that’s only because all of these problems in the world today that we face are all connected, they’re interconnected, they’re the same, a few people right well let’s say a few people, we might be talking about a million, but that’s a few compared to the billions of other people that we’ve got.

C: You tie this into a bigger narrative?

X: Yeah. To me it’s not a group of individuals sat around a table going right what we need to do is to keep control of the masses is this, this and this, it’s an interlocked group of companies and aristocracy and all these people work together. It’s harmonious criminal activities even without, even though they might not even talk with each other, but they know that what they do benefits them, and this sort of web of deceit of large corporations, , if we don’t stop the large corporations soon, well.
C: But isn’t there a worry as well, that if you take away the state, eventually then what you’re left with is corporations. I mean, some corporations are bigger than any country.

X: Well, we’ve already got that. The corporations are the state now, so when you say we need to take away the state, for me, when I say we need to reduce the state, that’s what we need to be getting rid of, I’m quite happy to have a free market, if it’s a real free market, but at the moment what we’ve got is monopolies, of people, I don’t know if you know but a company called Norbett Dentressangle, are a massive haulage firm, right, they could close Stobarts down like that, because they could take their patch like that [flicks crumb off table], fuck them off, right? That’s the kind of people we’re up against, you know, these are multinational, very powerful very influential people, and they’re calling for meetings in big hotels, a few days long, and they’re calling politicians from all over the world, right, to find out what policies they’re going to push. And that’s what the Bilderberg meetings about. Big CEO’s call on our politicians, our elected officials, and tell them what they’re going to do! Where’s the democracy? You know, so they are the state, so, once you’ve got rid of them, that’s no problem.

C: So how about, this whole fracking thing, in the UK, what do you think will affect it, how could you, is there a way you can imagine it not happening?

X: We’re working on it. Yeah, we’re working on it. It’s a learning curve. At the moment I think we’re doing really well, yeah, we’re winning the hearts and minds of the people around here, we’re winning the hearts and minds of the people, on the whole, not everybody’s going to get behind us, you know, people believe the bullshit that they’re told about jobs, but that’s the main thing, winning the people over, getting the people to stand up for themselves, getting the people to join together, rather than be divided by the bullshit, because divide and rule is a tool that the powers-that-be use very effectively. So yeah, that’s the way I see it, it’s getting to the communities, but also, just causing as much disruption as possible, for the companies that are doing it, you know if it’s costing them millions more than it should do to get the stuff [shale gas] out of the ground, they’re not getting as much profits out of it and all that
lot, so that means it’s not viable, so it’s making sense for us to be here, you know, because it’s troublesome, if we get better at what we do, that way we can try and stop them.

C: I see. How do you understand the response to fracking development? Do you think that local protests can stop a future fracking industry?

X: I think, I think eventually it’ll be banned, maybe when it’s too late, but eventually it’s going to be banned in this country.

C: Due to democracy?

X: Well, due to public pressure.

C: On who, exactly? Are we talking about the local government? Or about MP’s?

X: All. All concerned. But I think what’s going to happen will happen too late. Eventually, when they do start fracking properly in an area and people see the wells failing, when they see the damage that it causes, by that time, too many people will be poorly, too many people will be ill, for my liking, that’s why I’m taking action now. Trying to get people in the community involved, that’s why you saw me down at the meetings to talk to people in the community and actually get them to come to the camp. I want to help them help themselves, then I want to move on and help someone else help themselves, I’ve already woken up to it you know?

C: What is it you mean though? Do you want them to help on the issue of fracking or other things?

X: At the moment it’s fracking. That is the immediate threat, yeah. But yeah, on the protest, I will be a full time resistor for the rest of my life, I’ve devoted my life to it.

C: You and [name omitted], for example, would you identify him with your struggle, I know you don’t agree with each other.

X: We don’t always agree, but I don’t always disagree with him either.

C: But, would you say that you share his politics?
X: I definitely don’t share his politics. I definitely don’t share his politics. I’m an anarchist.

C: But he’s not?

X: I don’t believe he is, no. He, bear in mind that he is an [job omitted for anonymity], I don’t disagree with him, I just don’t agree entirely with his approach to certain things. There is a time when you do have to fight fire with fire.

C: So what you’re saying is that you have a common enemy?

X: We have a common enemy. Because there’s a lot of things that people could disagree on in the camp but don’t. If I disagree with somebody on camp about something that’s vitally important, I keep it to myself until I can find a way of talking it out with that person, you might have noticed that there is a little bit of tension on the camp when you arrived, no?

C: I had noticed, yes.

X: Well, sometimes when somebody new turns up, and they’re not used to how things happen, that creates tensions.

C: So, maybe they crash around and want to do things a different way?

X: Yeah, and that’s what’s happened, recently. I’m a bit worried about what I’m going back to really. I’m more of a sort of get-along-nicely-with-each-other kind of guy, maybe I’m not as hard on people that fuck up as other people are.

C: We’re almost done, I missed a couple of questions at the beginning I’d like to run through, if that’s alright?

X: Sure.

C: Thanks, so if I say fracking what does it bring to mind?

X: Hydraulic fracturing.

C: Do you think it’s safe?
X: No. It’s not safe. It’s been proven to be not safe. It’s been proven to be not safe, and the lies and the deceit going on in this country to rape our land in the name of profits from multinational corporations, its despicable.

C: How does it make you feel?

X: I don’t need to answer that one, do I? It’s obvious.

C: So, how do you think it affects the community?

X: You mean right now or in the long term?

C: In the long term.

X: In the long term it’s going to poison the community, we only have a certain amount of fresh clean water on this planet and injecting chemicals at high pressure to break rock can never be a good idea. Leaving, once you’ve injected those thousands and thousands of gallons of water and chemicals and leaving forty-odd percent of it in there, to then migrate into all the water table and aquifers.

C: It’s crazy.

X: Madness, absolute madness. So yeah, it’s dangerous. So yeah, it will affect them, in that way.

C: But in the present?

X: In the present, the disruption that we’re causing may be a bit of inconvenience, so it’s a fine line, it’s a balance, but also necessary.

C: I haven’t spoken to the locals that live on the Moss, but there is maybe a tension there, they feel like you guys are there for them, but that you’re blocking their access road as well.

X: Some of them do, some of them are slowly just, not people actually on the Moss, you know but I’ve been out and about on Manchester and it’s obvious who we are, we’re pretty well known around Manchester now, or if we’ve had a protest or some actions somewhere, or you know when we’ve been singing at Salford precinct, we’ve had a few people come up and gesticulate and say you
know, in a certain manner, stick twos up and tell us to get a job you scruffy whatever.

C: I suppose you can’t please everyone.

X: No. But on the whole, people are supportive.

C: What about on the Moss?

X: On the Moss, sometimes it can be a bit, you know, if somebody’s been stuck behind some wagons for a while, for a couple of hours they’re not happy you know, but then also on the flip side of that when you stand on Barton Moss road with your banners out, say on that Solidarity Sunday where over a thousand people on two occasions have come along and shut that road down on the A57, and you’re still getting people that have been sat there for ages and ages and they beep their horn and go ‘yeeaaaahh’ you know? So, on the flip-side, there’s always going to be a divided community you know, because the state creates divided communities for a reason, because that’s how it keeps us fractured, under control. No pun intended.

C: So, yeah, you said that there are not many people at the camp but there’s been a lot of support from the communities in different ways?

X: Oh, absolutely, we get, the local people dropping off donations of food, clothing, all of which are essential, but then also businesses turn up. Smaller businesses, you know I mean guys coming in vans and saying we’ve got all this wood in this yard so it’s going to be cold, you need to stock up on your wood, can I drop off a wood pile? You know, because it helps them to get rid of the scrap wood that they don’t want, so that’s lovely, that is really nice, when you get someone like that, you know like, proper guys that turn up and do it for the right reasons.

C: Looking at the anti-fracking movement it seems like quite a mix of different groups and people and not like social movements from years ago, I mean unions are smaller and like you said there are more tensions, even in the anti-fracking movement. Do you think that we’ve got the organisational capacity to stop something national like fracking?
X: Not in the same way as we used to, definitely not. You can’t do it through the Trade Unions. The Trade Unions are in the pockets of the state. Labour is Conservative. I can’t remember the exact quote but once Thatcher said something about ‘can you tell me the best thing you did for the Conservative Party?’ and she said ‘Tony Blair’. Now what does that tell you? New Labour, Old Conservative. But, it doesn’t matter because it’s all a sham anyway. The whole political structure is a sham, right, and it has been for so long that they all work for the same people above them, to rob us blind, so the trade unions are impotent. They’re still there but they’re impotent.

C: They are there though, in FFGM and things like that.

X: When they come along we go, ‘fuck off’, don’t come in with your bullshit, don’t tell us what to do, don’t tell us how to campaign, don’t tell us how to protest, you know, we’re the ones on the front line, we should be telling you, and I don’t mind saying that, even on the record tonight, like the Green Party for instance as well, ringing the police for permission to do this and permission to do that, I mean fucking hell, don’t ask on our behalf!

C: On your behalf?

X: On our behalf, yeah, can we shut the road down, can we do this, can we get some cones out, can we protest here? I don’t want permission from the state to do anything. I’m telling the state that they’re going to behave themselves and I’m going to make it happen, so why would I want permission? When we went down to Watford for the Bilderberg meeting last year, at the back-end of the summer, last year, they herded us all into a press area, I wanted to be running across that field and getting myself up there super-glued to the hotel, proper protest, proper resistance, not none of this herding here, yeah you’re alright as long as you’re in this little area. Piss off.

C: They’d say they’re facilitating your protest.

X: Yeah, that’s that they call it, but it’s really controlling the protest. It’s become known as, the technique is ‘Russell Branding’. [laughs]. The control of the revolution. The control of the revolutionists. And some of them don’t even
know they’re being controlled. Alex Jones was there actually, and there were loads of people just gravitating around him. Wherever he went they walked, it was like it was hero worship. Those of us who are in the know were just sat there like going what the fuck are those people doing? I have no doubt, because my face and my actions are plastered all over the internet, when I go back, sort of dabbling my toe in the matrix, when I go home and see the wife and kids and whatever, when I get on a computer, I’m going to be pretty well known, right, but it’s not about fame for me, for some people it’s about the fame. Yesterday’s action, for instance, down at the council buildings, Charlie Veitch turned up.

C: Whose that?

X: You must know Charlie Veitch. He’s the guy who did the BBC roadshow on 9/11 and did a U-turn on 9/11. Proper fame, or he used to be, the guy with the megaphones in London? You’ve seen him, surely, you must have. Well he turned up, he’s a fame whore. I don’t really, I mean I’ve met him before, I mean I’ve been active in these circles that I’ve been in for years, I just haven’t been quite the activist that I am now. I wasn’t always a keyboard activist, you know, I did get out and get my feet on the street, but when he turned up yesterday, I was super-glued to a pipe and thought he’s going to start filming me, I’m going to be on his Youtube channel and he’s going to make money out of my action. That’s all I could think. But then, I thought about it as well, I thought it’s... I don’t want to do that, I don’t want to be the famous [name omitted] or whatever, I just want to be me and get out there and do what I need to do to change what’s going on, it’s not about getting hits on internet or making money out of donations or stuff like that. I don’t get anything for being here, if I asked for camp funds, if I go over there right now and ask for camp funds right then I’d better have a bloody good reason for needing it. You know, that’s what it’s about, you know, it’s like, I’d probably get told no anyway.

C: So, do you think that you need to organise collectively, as an anarchist?

X: Have a look at the footage of yesterday’s action and tell me that it’s not organised. We shut the council down for hours. It was organised, but we don’t have an elite. There are rules but there’s no ruler. Simple as. There’s no
hierarchy. But, they’re not all anarchists. So I’m only speaking for myself here, I’m not speaking for the camp in this interview. The anti-fracking movement is an amalgamation of all sorts, walks of life, people from all sorts of backgrounds and places in society.

C: It’s not a middle class movement, is it?

X: No! But there are middle class people involved in it.

C: You were at Balcombe as well, was it different there?

X: Yeah, well we’re in the north of England here, a predominantly working class neighbourhood, right, that’s why my heart will always be at this camp, whenever I move on, if something turns up at Barton Moss, Barton Moss will be my priority. No two ways about it, I can go down south and do that but Barton Moss will be my priority. If they say we need you here, my mates up here call me up and say [name omitted], there’s this going on, there’s that going on, you know, we need numbers, I’ll be there in a shot, it’s Barton Moss, it’s where my heart is now, you know, because it’s a working class environment, and the people coming in from local areas are mainly working class, whereas you know some of the old school protestors that have been up here, some of them are from middle class backgrounds, you know, one of my friends’ fathers was a barrister, you don’t get more middle class than that do you? But erm, I rub shoulders with all sorts of people from all sorts of walks of life, it’s an education.

C: You can’t choose what you’re born into. Well, that’s it [name omitted], cheers.

X: I hope it’s useful.

*interview ends*
You are being invited to take part in a study. This study forms part of my PhD Human Geography at the University of Manchester. Before you decide whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.
Who will conduct the study?

Craig Thomas: PhD Candidate, School of Environment and Development, Arthur Lewis Building, Oxford Rd, Manchester, M13 9PL.

Title of the study

The geography of responses to proposed shale-gas development at Barton Moss, Salford.

What is the aim of the study?

The main aim of the study is to describe responses of stakeholders, individuals and communities to proposed shale gas, or ‘fracking’ development on Barton Moss and explain how these responses differ.

Why have I been chosen?

You are a potential participant because of your knowledge of housing co-operative and energy issues and knowledge of events at Barton Moss.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You would be invited to take part in an interview. The interview would be concerned with the development of shale gas in the UK. The interviews would be up to an hour long.
What happens to the data collected?

Any information obtained at the interviews will be used for research purposes only. The data will be used by the researcher in a PhD project at the University of Manchester. It will be analysed and presented in a set of academic papers that will be published in academic journals. All data will be anonymous and there will be no mention of individual participants.

How is confidentiality maintained?

The data will be collected anonymously. It will be stored on a secure university server which is password protected and accessible to the researcher only. When the data is analysed it will be done anonymously so that no links can be made back to the original participants.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without any given reason.

Will I be paid for participating in the study?

You will not be paid for your participation.
**What is the duration of the study?**

Your part in the study would be up to an hour in an interview.

**Will the outcomes of the study be published?**

The results will be published in a set of academic papers, printed in academic journals. In addition, an anonymised summary of overall findings will be compiled at the end of the PhD that participants can receive on request.

**Contact for further information**

Craig Thomas: craig.thomas-2@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

**What if something goes wrong?**

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Coordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Coordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093
Appendix 8

Participant informed consent

Craig Thomas has explained the nature of the research project he is carrying out. I understand that in agreeing to be interviewed my identity will be kept confidential and that all necessary steps will be taken to safeguard this confidentiality.

I agree to take part in the study and to have my interview recorded [and transcribed].

Date:

Print name:

Signed:

\[31\] This form was attached to the original PIS sheet. It was then emailed to the participant two weeks later or else following their agreement to interview. In the event that they had not signed their consent before the interview date it would be brought to the interview and they would be asked to sign it before the interview commenced.
Appendix 9

DECC 13th licensing round, PEDL licences

Adapted from DECC Onshore licensing map, 2013
Subject: Environmental Information Regulation Requests

Dear Mr xxx

I refer to your request for information dated 15 December 2013. We should advise that we are providing our response under Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). The appropriate regime for information that is “environmental” is the EIR. Environmental information is defined by regulation 2 of the EIR. Briefly, subparagraph 2(1)(a) of the EIR defines environmental information as material on the state of the elements of the environment including the land and landscape. Subparagraph 2(1)(c) extends this definition to include information on measures such as policies, legislation, plans and activities affecting or likely to affect the elements described in paragraph 2(1)(a) as well as measures and activities designed to protect those elements.

We also wish to apologise for the delay in responding, Regulation 5(2) of the EIR requires a public authority to provide a response to a request under the EIR within twenty working days. We accept that we have breached the 20 day limit and apologise for the delay.

Please find your questions and our responses below:
I am requesting all minutes of meetings of the IGas community liaison committee in Irlam and Cadishead. As these meetings are held behind closed doors and between members of both IGas and Salford City Council, I would like to know full details of what was discussed on behalf of myself as a local resident.

Any meetings concerning local council and such companies should be transparent and available to the general public. To Clarify, I require the full minutes of meetings for ALL meetings that have been attended by either a councillor or a council representative. I require the dates of these meetings as well as if possible a list of people who attended. I require all minutes of meetings from the day that the committee was formed up until present day (The date this request was processed).

Your request is a request for information about minutes from meetings which are a condition of the planning permission 10/58590/FUL. We can confirm The Community Liaison Group was setup following a requirement provided for by condition 25 of the Planning permission granted in 2010. I have provided an extract from the condition for your information.

“Aim

The aim the Community Liaison Group (CLG) is to provide a forum for discussion between IGas Energy and the local community regarding the plans to explore for and extract Coal Bed Methane (CBM) at the Barton site in Irlam. The CLG will provide an opportunity for the exchange of information regarding the construction and operation of the site, as well as establish and maintain channels of communication
between IGas Energy and interested parties.

Remit

The CLG is intended to provide two-way dialogue between community members interested in the development and IGas Energy. It will enable IGas Energy to provide the community with progress updates on the construction and operation of the site and address any issues regarding site activity. In turn, the community representatives will be able to feedback IGas Energy responses to the wider community.”

The intention is that those on the Group represent the local community and provide an opportunity, for representatives to ask questions and for them to be kept informed on progress in implementing the planning permission. IGas has the responsibility of ensuring that the meeting fulfills its function. The local representatives have no role in monitoring the site. That responsibility lies with the Environment Agency and the Minerals Planning Authority.

The liaison meetings are not Council meetings, they are arranged by IGas and any invites and minutes are provided by IGas. The requested information is not held for Council business and is the property of IGas in their capacity as monitoring liaison, to carry out condition Section 25 of the Planning Permission. We cannot provide copies of the minutes as they are not held for Council business. However, we can inform you that points raised at the meetings are provided for the Irlam and Cadishead Community Committee meeting and the minutes from that meeting can be found on the following webpage:

https://www.salford.gov.uk/ccmeetings.htm
Appendix 11

Meeting report of CLG meeting, 26\textsuperscript{th} June 2013

See next page for report.
Meeting Report

Attending:
Chris Williams, local resident and Acting Chair of the CLG (CW)
Councillor Christine Hudson, Salford City Council (CH)
Councillor Jimmy Hunt, Salford City Council (JH)
Councillor John Walsh, Salford City Council (JW)
Ann Cavanagh, Irlam & Cadishead Community Committee (AC)
Erica Woods, local resident (EW)
John Stringer, local farmer (JS)
John Blaymires, IGas Energy Plc (JB)
Dave Kerr, IGas Energy Plc (DK)
Leah Cope, IGas Energy Plc (LC)
Jackie Nally, Lexington Communications (JN)
Peter Toon, IGas Energy Plc (PT)

Apologies:
Councillor Joe Kean, Salford City Council and Chair of the CLG
Thomas Kean, Moss Vale Tenants and Residents’ Association
John Morley, Community Committee
John Martin, Salford City Council
Adele Steward, Salford City Council
Ursula Sossella – Iredale, Irlam and Cadishead Neighbourhood Team
Councillor Roger Jones, Salford City Council
Gladys Marshall, local resident
Nick Duriez, City Airport
Sybil Norcott, Irlam Women’s Institute

Date:
Wednesday, 26th June 2013

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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcome, Introductions and apologies&lt;br&gt;CW advised members that he would be Chaising the meeting as Councillor Joe Kean had sent his apologies.</td>
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<td>JN listed the apologies she had received for the meeting. Referring to the absence of attendees from Irlam &amp; Cadishead College and Salford City Academy, CW questioned whether these had been contacted to participate in the Community Liaison Group. JN advised that Irlam &amp; Cadishead College has been engaged with and that Mr Ferguson, Head teacher, is always informed of the meetings and issued with the Meeting Reports. JN advised that she had further contacted his PA (Vashil MacMurray) to remind him of the meeting. With regard to Salford Academy, JN advised that Julie Larkinson and Mike Cording are always invited to attend, highlighting that Julie Larkinson normally attends the CLG and had confirmed attendance for the meeting.</td>
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| Review Meeting Report of 26th February 2013 Referring to the meeting report, CW questioned whether contact had been made with M44, a magazine distributed to households in Irlam and Cadishead, to disseminate information about IGas’ activities to the wider population. JB advised that IGas is committed to engaging with the community, but emphasised the need for this to be at the appropriate juncture. He advised that this would be discussed further with the Group following the presentation. |

| Site update and timescales for activity The need to inform local people about IGas’ activities prompted a discussion regarding recent comments made by Andrew Austin, Chief Executive Officer at IGas Energy Plc, in respect of estimated shale gas resources in the North West. JB explained that IGas has estimated the volume of gas associated with the shales in the North West and stated that the low estimate suggests 15Tcf in the Bowland Shale, with the upper estimates as high as 170Tcf – it was noted that most likely estimates suggest 100Tcf. JB highlighted that the North West has significant shale gas resource that offers exciting opportunities for the Region. Citing Centrica’s purchase of imported gas from the United States in a deal worth £10billion, JB emphasised that this is a substantial amount of money to be lost from the UK economy into the US economy to supply the UK with gas. He also explained that the gas will be transported to the UK via ship, but that this might be delivered to those who will pay the most. He went onto inform the CLG that as a result of the extraction of shale gas in the USA, gas prices have reduced to $4 per 1,000cft compared to $9-$10 for the UK market. |
He went onto emphasise that the UK is heavily regulated to address environmental concerns, noting that the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC), the Environmental Agency (EA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) all regulate the exploration and extraction process. Furthermore, JB referred to the ‘social license to operate’ from local communities that will be required to allow companies to operate.

With regard to the Company’s activity at Irham, JB stated that IGas is seeking to drill a well in accordance with the existing planning consent to explore and evaluate what is present. He noted that IGas has no intention to frac at this stage and explained that if the results from the drilling are positive, IGas will need to apply for separate planning consent to progress with any proposed hydraulic fracturing (fracking) activity onsite if that were to be the recommendation.

At this juncture, a power point presentation [Appendix 1] was shown to members, with DK providing a narrative. Echoing previous statements made, DK explained that drilling exploration is planned to gather data, but reiterated that no hydraulic fracturing and no gas production will occur. He advised that an analysis will need to be undertaken to interpret the data, taking 3-6 months at a specialist laboratory. He stated that only if the results are positive will IGas seek permission for further development.

Members were informed of the exploration well timeline and the process of drilling. It was noted that IGas needs to understand the environmental conditions before drilling commences and that data will be regularly collected to continually monitor activity onsite. DK explained that the drilling rig will be transported to site and provided details of the equipment requirement to support the drilling operations, such as power generation, pumps and facilities for the crew.

The need to maintain well integrity was emphasised to members and JB explained the construction of the well to prevent the contamination of the water supply. Representatives from IGas acknowledged that the explanation of the well construction is complicated and technical, so advised that a video or other suitable aid would be provided at the next meeting to assist the CLG’s understanding of the process.

Explaining the well depth, DK advised that this is over 2000m and demonstrated that this is equivalent to 200 London buses stacked end-to-end or 12 buildings the height of Beetham Tower in Manchester City Centre.

Outlining the next steps, DK advised that the baseline monitoring
commenced on 4th June would continue, with site preparation by 31st July and the ‘spud’ well currently targeted for early October. He informed members that they would be provided with regular updates regarding site activity and that there would be an opportunity for CLG members and interested stakeholders to visit the site.

A number of questions were raised by members regarding IGas’ activity, specifically:

- **Drilling Process** – JW sought clarification with regard to the exploratory drilling process and whether this is undertaken horizontally. JB confirmed that this is done vertically, not horizontally. He clarified that horizontal drilling is typically used in the development phase in a CBM well and in shale development wells in conjunction with hydraulic fracturing.

- **Monitoring** – Referring to the collection of data to monitor the operation, JW questioned how local people will know if any changes have occurred. JB explained that monitoring is undertaken before, during and after to ensure transparency of activities. He also referred to the strong UK regulations and the need to obtain a ‘social license to operate’ that will ensure all activity is disclosed to address any public concerns.

Addressing the suggestion that IGas could ‘cut corners to get the job done’, JB stressed that IGas would not take this approach and that safety is of paramount importance. He reiterated that the operation will be open and transparent throughout to ensure IGas can be held to account.

- **Informing the Community** – Describing Ingham as a ‘close-knit community’ AC emphasised the importance of keeping local residents and stakeholders informed of IGas’ activities. Referring to the earthquakes in the Fylde, she suggested that IGas should ensure the community is reassured that the drilling programme will not result in seismic activity and provide local people with information about its plans.
- **Ownership** – Assuming IGas’ exploration is successful and the potential for shale gas identified, CW asked who owns the gas. JB explained that the Crown owns the gas and explained the procedure for applying for licenses. It was noted that commercial agreement would then be reached with purchasers.

- **Distribution** – CW asked how IGas would distribute the gas, if found. JB explained that gas could be distributed directly into the grid, used to generate electricity, or direct to major industrial users. JB sought to reassure members by noting that IGas would not be exporting the gas and emphasised that extraction of gas in the UK could prevent the UK having to import gas from such places as Norway, Russia and Qatar.

- **EW expressed concern that companies, such as IGas, could ‘sell out’ to rising economies such as China, rather than allowing the UK to benefit from its own gas. JB explained that in light of the rising price of gas in the UK, it should be expected that companies will sell into the UK market and create the knock-on benefits associated with this, such as job creation. Subsequent development of the resource can result in both direct and indirect job creation and/or protection. The Institute of Directors has published figures of some 74,000 jobs being created as a result of shale gas development in the North West alone.**

- **Employment Opportunities** – CH questioned how many jobs are expected to be created by the drilling process. She was advised that the initial exploration will only require a small number of employees, but that operations onsite can have knock-on benefits for local businesses, for example hotels.

- **American Gas Supplies** – Members asked how much of the gas used in the USA is derived from fracking. JB suggested 35 – 40% and rising. He went on to explain how America’s Carbon Dioxide emissions (CO2) have decreased due to the decline in burning coal,
whilst the UK and Europe’s is increasing.

- **Corrosion** – Following the explanation of how the steel tubing (casing) is set in the bore, JW asked whether there was risk of the pipe corroding, JB advised that the steel tubing is designed to last between 20 and 30 years, with precautions taken to prevent corrosion occurring.

At this juncture, the Group had a 10 minute break.

JW left the meeting.

## 4 Question & Answer Session

A number of questions had been raised by members of the CLG that IGas responded to:

1. **How often will the sampling and analysis of ground water, ground gas and soil condition be conducted [commence in June 2013] and who will have access to the results?**

Referring to previous comments made regarding the collection and analysis of data, DK stated that samples would include soil, ground gas, water, and that air samples would also be taken for analysis. It was noted that data would be available to interested parties, as discussed earlier in the meeting.

2. **Are there any plans to flare off methane gas which may escape from holding tanks or pipelines at Barton Moss? Are there any plans to capture escaping gases and use them as fuel?**

DK explained that the question assumes that gas will be taken back to the surface during the exploratory drilling phase which is incorrect unless a subsequent permit for testing is issued. DK advised that gas will not be produced to the surface until/unless the site is developed. Prior to this, IGas need to be convinced of the production potential and all necessary permits and consents must be in place including planning permission from the local authority to proceed with the next phase.

3. **Horizontal drilling - What is the expected number of wells at Barton Moss? What is the usual space between wells?**

Members of the group were advised that consent exists for up to 2 wells at present. The current site could possibly accommodate a maximum of six wells in total should development proceed and were provided with an
explanation of the drilling process. Attendees were informed that
development wells may be drilled vertically and then horizontally to
maximise exposure to the producing formations. This results in a small
surface footprint thus minimising impact.

4. Several American states have experienced pollution of drinking
water and air from fracking chemicals. In the event of a process
comparable to fracking being used on Barton Moss, would IGas
confirm that no hazardous or toxic chemicals, or any substance
that the Health Protection Agency classifies as an irritant, will be
used?

JB explained that the frac fluid used consists of 90% water, 9.5% sand and
0.5% chemicals and explained the process of pumping the water to cause
the rock to fracture. Addressing concerns relating to the type of chemicals
used, JB cited a number of examples and highlighted the common uses of
these, such as for household cleaners and swimming pools.

A discussion was had regarding the disclosure of chemical solutions and
that IGas will voluntarily provide details of the chemicals used in its
operation; the transparency of the use of chemicals emphasised. UK
Operators are obliged under agreed guidelines to publically disclose the
proposed fracture fluids and any chemicals that are used.

5. Climate change is affecting the availability of clean fresh water.
   How much water will be used in the CBM extraction process?

The CLG was informed of the differences between shale gas and CBM,
noting that very little water is extracted from the coal seam. With regard to
shale gas extraction, DK stated that higher volumes of water are pumped
into the well to initiate the fractures but the volumes required and the
source(s) of the water will not be determined until some time after the
exploration well is completed and the test results are known.

6. Chat Moss Herbs is located on Barton Moss Road and employs 22
   people. Do you think there is any risk to that business?

DK told members of the CLG that there would not be a risk to the business
and it would be unlikely that Chat Moss Herbs would be aware of activity at
the site.

7. Will residents living in close proximity of the site be unable to
   insure against fracking damage and will their property price fall?

Answering the question, which was prompted by comments made by
Barbara Keeley MP in the press, DK stated the prospect of damage to houses or other surface locations caused by gas production operations was highly improbable. He advised that IGas expected no damage to properties and questioned whether properties in former coal mining areas have higher insurance premiums.

Referring to the expected impact on the community, members of the CLG were informed of the benefits associated with drilling operations for local people, including knock-on benefits for businesses.

JB advised of the regional opportunities of CBM and shale gas as a feedstock for industry, such as manufacturing, and compared the potential with Aberdeen which has become a global centre for oil and gas due to North Sea. He also advised that the Institute of Directors released a report, ‘Getting shale gas working’, into the economic impacts of UK shale.

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<td>Wednesday, 26th September at Boynes Golf Club at 6.30pm was agreed as the date for the next meeting.</td>
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<td>It was noted that members of the CLG would be updated prior to the meeting, if required.</td>
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<td>Commenting on the previous suggestion about disseminating information about activity to local people, such as via the M44 publication, it was also suggested by members that a press release be issued to the local media to inform a wider area. JB advised of the need to provide information at appropriate junctures and that local people would be kept informed. He explained IGas’ intention to hold a public exhibition about the proposed activity. Members suggested presenting to the Irland &amp; Cadishead Community Committee in September ahead of the public exhibition. It was also suggested that the school would be an appropriate venue for an exhibition.</td>
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<td>Referring to the IGas Energy Community Fund that groups can apply to for funding to support local projects that benefit the area, AC informed attendees that she had secured £15,000 funding to improve a footpath within Princes Park and £10,000 for a multi-use games area in the Silver Street area of Irland. It was noted that IGas had extended the application deadline following an administrative error that had meant the Irland &amp; Cadishead Community Committee hadn’t been aware of the Fund until it</td>
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JN to book venue
was raised at the last meeting.

Members reiterated comments made at the previous meeting that the Irlam & Cadishead Community Committee should administer the fund given the absence of a Parish Council. JB also informed members that Penketh South Primary School had received £4,000 from the Community Fund in relation to the Doe Green site for a greenhouse for an allotment to enable pupils to grow flowers, vegetables and keep chickens. JB explained that residents of the neighbouring residential care home have been invited to participate.

CW thanked IGas representatives for the presentation and closed the meeting.
Appendix 12

Data used in this thesis

1) Interviews. See appendix 3 for a list of interviews and recordings.

2) A desk review of grey literature including anti-fracking literature (physical and online), local history accounts for Barton Moss, council documents (including planning documents) and literature from the developer.

3) Field notes and minutes taken at FFGM meetings.

4) Field notes taken at NW anti-fracking meetings.

5) Field notes taken from participation and observation at Barton Moss Protectors camp.

6) Field notes taken from participation and observation at Davyhulme Protectors camp.

7) Field notes taken from participation and observation at protest marches in Greater Manchester and Barton Moss.

8) Field notes taken from observation at protests outside Manchester Magistrates court.

9) Field notes taken from court cases of protestors at Manchester Magistrates court.

10) Field notes taken from local anti-fracking meetings in Irlam and on Brookhouse estate.

11) Photographs taken at Barton Moss Protectors camp, outside the exploratory well and on anti-fracking marches.