

the global movement against fracking

Lessons from Bulgaria, the UK and New York State

This case study is published as part of the Democracy Center's series of Climate Campaign Profiles. These studies have been produced to gather lessons from climate activism in diverse places and contexts in order to share these with other campaigners and help build the effectiveness of their advocacy work. You can find the full series in the Climate & Democracy section of our website.

By Ben Castle

introduction

A new boom in natural gas exploration is underway. Recent advances in methods of shale gas extraction, known as hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking', are enabling the extraction of previously unobtainable gas in areas with no prior experience of hydrocarbon exploration. The fracking technique involves the use of explosives and the high pressure injection of water, sand and chemicals in order to fracture the bedrock and release the stored gas.

Fracking enthusiasts claim the method will bring huge economic and energy security benefits to countries where drilling takes place. It is even claimed that the recovered gas is good for the environment as it is far cleaner than coal. How-

ever, opponents of fracking are quick to point out that in reality fracking is likely to prolong our reliance on fossil fuels and delay a transition to cleaner, renewable forms of energy. Furthermore, [recent research by Cornell University](#) shows that shale gas is more carbon intensive than previously thought. While natural gas is often seen as relatively low carbon when compared to coal, the leakage of methane from fracking wellheads, combined with the energy used in transportation, means the lifetime carbon footprint of shale gas could be 30-100% higher than conventional gas.

There are also serious local environmental impacts associated with fracking. To date most experience of fracking has been in the United States, where thousands of wells have been dug. A recent [draft report](#) by the Environmental Protection Agency investigating contamination of a water aquifer in the town of Pavillion, Wyoming, has finally found evidence of what many residents have known for a long time. Toxic levels of chemicals, including benzene (a carcinogenic compound), were found in the water which, the report says, are likely to have come from the nearby fracking operations. The report states that contamination is likely to have occurred both at the surface, due to leakage from a number of

waste pits containing drilling cuttings and ‘flow-back’ (the waste water and chemicals brought back to the surface following drilling operations), as well as at lower depths as a direct result of the fracking process itself.

Many residents close to fracking wells have also complained about methane gas leaking in to their water, with some able to set their tap water alight. While there has been some dispute over the cause of such instances, a [2010 study](#) of 68 drinking water wells in shale drilling areas of northeast Pennsylvania and southern New York State found that water sources closest to gas wells contained an average of 17 times more methane than wells further from drilling sites. The report concludes that the findings ‘suggest important environmental risks accompanying shale gas exploration worldwide.’ There are additionally serious concerns over the potential for health impacts resulting from air pollution caused by the evaporation of flowback from surface waste pits.

Despite the risks associated with fracking and the clear implications for climate change mitigation efforts, there are currently plans for shale gas drilling in Canada, Poland, UK, India, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa and China. In response, a new global anti-fracking movement has sprung up, made up of groups from across the world determined to stop fracking occurring in their own countries. Here we take a look around the world - from Bulgaria, to the UK, to upstate New York – at how people on the front-line are taking on the fracking juggernaut.

Protecting Bulgaria’s land and water: how a coalition of individual citizens put a stop to fracking plans

the story

In June 2011 the Bulgarian Parliament awarded a permit to the US firm Chevron to look for shale gas in the Dobrudja region of the country using hydraulic fracking. Other companies were also lining up to begin drilling including Park Place Energy Corporation, Direct Petroleum and Rusgeokom. Once news of Chevron’s permit broke, it sparked one of the biggest social movements in Bulgaria’s recent history as concerned citizens from across the country began to organize themselves to stop the fracking projects from going ahead. After a series of actions and mass protests across the country Chevron’s permit was revoked and, on January 18th 2012, the Bulgarian Parliament voted 166 to six in favor of a wholesale ban on fracking in Bulgaria. While the campaign has been hugely successful to date, work continues to strengthen the legal prohibition of fracking.

the targets

Protests against Chevron’s drilling plans were initially held outside the ministries with responsibilities for environmental protection and mineral exploitation i.e. the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Economy. The protests received little response from these government departments, which claimed to be simply executing government policy. So the campaign switched its focus to the Bulgarian parliament as the body with ultimate responsibility for any decision on whether plans for fracking should be progressed.

As well as focussing pressure on individual Members of Parliament it was considered vital to get the support of the Prime Minister, Boiko Borissov, who represents the majority party, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria. In the Bulgarian parliament the Prime Minister holds significant power and influence over the voting intentions of MPs, so getting his support was crucial. Dona Pickard, a member of the main campaigning group the ‘Civil initiative for a ban of exploration and production of shale gas by the method hydraulic fracturing in Bulgaria’ (the Civil Initiative), explains the approach: “It is not so much that we were trying to get a majority of people in parliament to vote for this. We were trying to get the Prime Minister to tell his Members of Parliament how to vote.”

the strategy

Messaging Strategy

Proactive messaging:

for the good of the land and water

The campaign’s principal objective was to draw attention to the possible damage that fracking could cause to soil and water resources. The campaign also chose to focus attention on the potential implications for food production, as the region where the drilling was due to take place is the centre of Bulgaria’s agricultural sector. This focus on food resonated strongly with people and was key in helping to mobilize support for the campaign. During some protests marchers brandished loaves of bread to help reinforce the message that they were seeking to protect Bulgaria’s agriculture. As Pickard explains, “the region where there were plans to drill is what we call the breadbasket of Bulgaria. It is the most fertile, agriculturally productive area and pretty much half of our cereal crop production is there.

The bread symbolized that area and region that we wanted to save.”

As a country with a strong agricultural history the campaign’s focus on land and farming also tapped in to aspects of Bulgaria’s cultural identity. With much of the population having originated in rural areas and farming communities, agricultural land is highly regarded and there is widespread understanding that it needs to be looked after for future generations. Pickard explains that “the relationship with land is not so much one of property and something that you own and belongs to you. It is more like a responsibility that has been passed on to your ancestors and it is your responsibility to protect it and then pass it on to your children to care for.” Pickard feels that the focus on agricultural land, which is a source of national pride, also helped the campaign to be understood as a domestic movement against foreign companies. This was a powerful symbol which is likely to have touched a nerve due to Bulgaria’s history of interference by external powers.

Reactive messaging: for the good of who?

The campaign had to counter the arguments being made by vocal proponents of shale gas exploitation. Chevron chose to remain quiet, leaving the case for fracking to be made to the public by a small group of geologists, engineers and diplomats that included James Warlick, the US Ambassador to Bulgaria. The arguments in favour of going ahead with the drilling focused on economic and job growth benefits and improved energy security. Campaigners decided to meet these arguments head-on wherever possible, either through appearing face to face with fracking advocates on TV chat shows or distributing information through Facebook and other means.

Campaigners sought to demonstrate that the benefits claimed by those in favor of fracking were being exaggerated. They showed that most of the jobs that would be created would be highly technical and require expertise that would need to be sourced from outside of Bulgaria. Furthermore, economic benefits to Bulgaria would be limited due to the law on mineral resources which gives companies automatic ownership of any reserves they find, requiring them to pay only a small concessionary fee (a tax) to the government. A company extracting gold in Bulgaria pays only a 0.75% concessionary fee on the extracted ore.

With most of Bulgaria's gas currently coming from Russia's state owned company Gazprom, arguments over improved energy independence can potentially be very powerful in a country that lived many decades under Soviet dominance. However, the campaign pointed out flaws in the logic that assumed gas prices would automatically decrease as a result of allowing fracking projects. As Pickard explains, "nobody has yet produced a robust, scientifically sound way of calculating how exactly the price of gas will go down when the gas will belong to a private company and they've got the right to sell it at any price they want."

Campaigners also had to contend with a smear campaign and false rumours which suggested they were being paid by Russia to undermine Bulgaria's bid for energy independence. "They have called the campaign the green octopus because in Bulgaria the octopus is often associated with mafia. So we are the green mafia basically and we are paid by Gazprom and Russia and Moscow!" Campaigners have countered this directly by appearing on TV and in the press to deny the claims and to ask for evidence of

such influence, which has not been forthcoming. The popularity and success of the campaign so far suggests that most people have not been convinced by the claims that protesters are in the pocket of Russia.



Protesters march at one of the main demonstrations in Sofia. Circus artists on stilts and wearing butterfly wings became a common sight at the protests.

In order to help counter the influence of those advocating for fracking, campaigners recruited their own experts, including scientists and doctors, who have spoken to the media and helped increase the credibility of the campaign. Since, as Pickard says, these experts are "very good at what they know but they don't present it in an audience-friendly way," efforts were made to try and improve the clarity of the information they were giving and thus increase its impact: "we meet with them and they educate us and we try and formulate the message so that it is easier for people to understand."

Ally Strategy

The anti-fracking movement in Bulgaria offers a rare example of a genuinely grassroots initiative made up solely of individual citizens, mobilized and united by a common concern. One of the key strengths of the movement was its capacity to incorporate a diverse range of people. Accord-

ing to Pickard the group used a “very democratic way of deciding everything. Everyone had a say and everything was discussed and still is... It is not that we are not organized and don’t have structure, but everything has been happening very naturally and everyone has been fitting in whatever place they have been needed most.” Volunteers brought useful skills and capabilities to the campaign. For example, some individuals with backgrounds in advertizing and graphic design were able to add considerably to the development of slogans, banners and posters. In this sense, the most important alliances formed during the campaign were between individual protesters themselves.

Campaigners were cautious about forming formal campaign alliances. From the start opposition political parties were keen to support the campaign. The three main opposition parties even drafted their own versions of a fracking ban for consideration by parliament. However, organizers were worried that if they were seen as having specific political alliances the campaign would be distrusted by the public.

Similar care was taken in linking with civil society organizations and NGOs. Although some NGOs and green groups helped publicize the campaign, their involvement was limited because the Bulgarian public can be skeptical of the motivations of NGOs. As Pickard explains, “we managed to stay away from that help [NGOs and civil society groups]- not because we didn’t need it but because the general public would become suspicious if we had such support. The Civil Initiative is entirely made up of individuals - no organizations, political parties or lobby groups. We wanted to make sure we were an entirely grassroots organization that does not lean on any NGO or group support. If any one of us had

a party or organizational affiliation that was not demonstrated or manifested in any way - we were all in it as citizens of Bulgaria.”

Action Strategy

The most direct approach used to pressure the government was a series of mass street protests. Perhaps the biggest protests took place in towns and cities right across the country on January 14th 2012, just days before the parliament voted in favour of a ban. These were complemented by smaller ‘flash mobs’ on pedestrian crossings in large cities. Campaigners also made appearances on political talk shows and gave interviews to the media whenever possible, and posters, banners and leaflets were used to help build public awareness.

Facebook was initially the campaign’s principle organising tool. A [Facebook group](#) was set up during the summer of 2011 where people began posting articles on fracking and planned actions. While there was a small group of active campaigners, there was no formal central organizing committee. Following one large demonstration on 26th November 2011, a small group came together and adopted the name the ‘Civil initiative for a ban on exploration and production of shale gas by the method hydraulic fracturing in Bulgaria’, mainly due to legal requirements placed on petition organizers. This small group then became the principle organizers of the movement, orchestrating a wide range of activities and actions.

Petitioning for Support

A petition asking for new laws prohibiting fracking was launched to illustrate the strength of public support for the campaign. Rather than using an online petition it was decided to collect signatures in person on the streets. This

was largely due to laws which require hand written signatures to be provided when the petition is submitted. However, the more personalized approach also allowed for face to face explanations of the campaign which was important in building awareness and support. Undertaking the petition in this way also gave the campaign visibility in towns across Bulgaria, and helped to attract new supporters and recruit volunteers. “The petition was a big thing because we managed to inform a lot of people about this, we spoke to people out in the street and we were giving out brochures and leaflets”, says Pickard. The final petition with 52,000 signatures was presented to the government on 26th February 2012.

Taking the Argument to Parliament

Campaigners also spoke to MPs at a number of parliamentary committees. This allowed them to talk directly to those who would ultimately be making the decision on whether to implement a ban, while not favouring any political party. In this way campaigners were able to help inform MPs - many of whom were simply unfamiliar with the technique and potential problems associated with fracking. By going in front of the committees campaigners could demonstrate that they were well informed, that they had legitimate cause for concern and that they were not overreacting or scaremongering. “It was important for the members of the committee to see that we know what we are talking about and we are not just a bunch of crazy green hippies that can just shout” says Pickard. Committee members were also able to give feedback as to what further information or evidence they thought would be necessary to convince parliament of the need for a ban.

Timeline

June 2011 Chevron granted licence.

26th November 2011 Large demonstration in Sofia.

14th January 2012 Large protests in towns and cities around the country.

18th January 2012 Bulgarian Parliament vote in favour of a temporary ban on fracking.

26th February 2012 Petition handed in calling for new law supporting a ban fracking and changes to other laws.

A key moment in the campaign occurred after one of the large rallies when campaigners were able to meet directly with the Prime Minister, and get him to promise to look into the issue and ban the technology if there was even a slight risk of it causing harm. This appears to have been crucial, as the Prime Minister later played a vital role in getting parliament to strengthen the terms of the ban that was initially passed.

ensuring victory: next steps

While the campaign has been successful to date it is not yet over - as Pickard explains: “We haven’t won yet but so far we have achieved what we wanted to achieve. The first stage was about the ban... We want a law. At the moment we have something called a decision for a ban which is a parliamentary decision which could be overturned at any minute without any public discussion.” Campaigners are now pushing for a specific law which explicitly prohibits frack-

ing in Bulgaria, along with changes to the legislation governing the commercial extraction of mineral resources to try and ensure greater benefits are delivered for Bulgaria. In addition, they want a new law which gives citizens the right to initiate a check on any drilling sites. Having won the initial public debate in favour of a parliamentary ban the campaign is now in a new phase, engaging with the technical process of law making. Campaigners are watching political developments closely to see how the Bulgarian government responds to their demands. “We’ll continue protesting if we have to”, says Pickard.

Read on

[‘Bulgaria Mass Protests Against Shale Gas Exploration on January 14th, 2012’, CNN iReport](#)

[‘Bulgaria Bans Shale Gas Drilling with Fracking Method’, BBC](#)

[‘Bulgaria becomes second state to impose ban on shale gas exploration’, Guardian, by Mirel Bran](#)

Fracking Worldwide: Ongoing campaigns in other countries

The following two sections explore recent developments in anti-fracking campaigns being carried out in the UK and in New York State. These brief case studies offer interesting insights into the similar, and sometimes contrasting, ways in which fracking is being opposed around the world.

frack off UK: creating a public debate

The UK is thought to have significant stores of shale gas and is one of a handful of European countries which has caught the interest of fracking companies. Early exploratory drilling by [Cuadrilla Resources](#) has already begun in Lancashire in the north of England and there are plans for projects in a number of other regions.

Like the Civil Initiative in Bulgaria, [Frack Off UK](#) is the work not of NGOs and civil society organizations, but of small groups of unaffiliated individuals united by the desire to stop shale gas drilling in their country. Formed in August 2011, the group quickly decided to broaden the scope of the campaign so as to also oppose coal bed methane extraction and underground coal gasification, which are both potentially even more plentiful in the UK than shale gas. The campaign refers collectively to these unconventional sources as ‘more extreme energy extraction’, due to the greater difficulty and higher environmental risks involved in extracting them, compared with more conventional sources.

Many of the principle organizers of Frack Off have been motivated to act because of the implications of continued fossil fuel use for cli-

mate change. However, the group have chosen not to focus on this in their messaging strategy as they do not feel it is likely to resonate strongly with most people. While for many opposition to fracking is about potential damage to water and the local environment Mark Small, one of Frack Off's lead campaigners, explains that the hope is that "the message of these local groups [opposed to nearby fracking] will start to broaden more to climate change and a problem with the system that is pushing this stuff forward."

At present, Frack Off's principle objectives are to draw attention to fracking and extreme energy and to support the development of local opposition to drilling projects. Public awareness and understanding of fracking and other extreme energy sources in the UK is currently low. Frack Off has used eye-catching direct action and civil disobedience methods to increase media coverage and to stimulate public debate on the issue. The campaign was launched in August 2011 when protesters climbed and hung banners from [Blackpool tower](#), near to an area where Cuadrilla was undertaking fracking operations. Other actions in November 2011 included a protest outside an industry conference in London and occupations of fracking drilling rigs. The occupations halted production and were covered in a number of national newspapers and [online news channels](#).

Frack Off have increased press coverage of their activities by crafting press releases which clearly explain what they are doing and why, and by developing a database of journalist contacts. An [informative website](#) contains a wide range of resources and up to date information on activities being run nationally and locally, plus a range of videos and a library section with links to further reading. Frack Off have also developed

a range of downloadable resources including information fact sheets, flyers, posters, stickers and badges for local groups. A [Facebook group](#) is used to circulate information and keep members up to date on all fracking-related developments in the UK.

A key part of Frack Off's work is the development of partnerships with a growing number of local groups near to potential fracking sites. Small explains that "the other way we have been



Frack off UK protesters take to the streets of London to make their point outside a fracking industry event.

getting the message across [other than through direct action] has been just by going and talking to people and engaging with them, lots of leafleting, lots of speaking at public meetings... We have been going and giving presentations in community halls near where planning applications might happen and trying to get groups going and support them in what they are doing." By supporting local groups, such as [Ribble Estuary Against Fracking](#) and [No Fracking in Sussex](#) to take action, the hope is that a strong network of local opposition to fracking will develop right across the country. "We see ourselves more as facilitators of a movement" explains Small. With more informed and active local groups there is more likelihood of fracking being stopped early through the planning system. An added advan-

tage of this approach is that as more local groups become informed and active, the movement becomes less and less dependent on the work of the small number of national Frack Off organisers, and therefore stronger and more sustainable.

Frack Off does not represent one specific campaigning group, as Small explains: “It’s not quite clear what Frack Off is, or, who Frack Off are. Lots of different people use the name... It is a brand. The media and the general public want something they can relate to and a name people can recognize.” While the campaign is still very young it is growing incredibly quickly and has already been successful in helping to stimulate public debate and support grass roots opposition on an issue which previously hardly anyone had heard of and which received very little media coverage. “The campaign has grown so quickly it is almost overwhelming really!” says Small, though he is not complaining.

new yorkers against fracking

Large parts of south west and central New York State are home to the Marcellus Shale deposits, the same shale gas formation which has already been heavily exploited in neighboring Pennsylvania. There are only a few fracking wells so far in operation inside the state but there is potential for tens of thousands more. Determined to stop New York suffering the same fate as parts of [Pennsylvania](#), a wide coalition of [New Yorkers Against Fracking](#) (NYAF) has recently formed and has already succeeded in having a moratorium on horizontal drilling put in place.

The 2005 Energy Act, passed under the Bush administration, excludes fracking from a num-

ber of major national environmental regulations, including the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. This has effectively removed the regulatory remit of federal bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, leaving it to state-level bodies to determine how fracking should be regulated and controlled. This distinguishes it from the national campaigns in Bulgaria and the UK. As David Braun, spokesperson and senior organiser for NYAF and President for United for Action (one of the main NYAF coalition groups), puts it: “It’s a state by state fight here in the US and we feel very strongly that this is a state where we can win.”

Having already succeeded in getting both the State Senate and Assembly to pass a temporary moratorium on fracking, the campaign is now pushing for a full ban to be implemented. While the Senate and Assembly continue to be key targets for the campaign, the primary target is State Governor Andrew Cuomo. The Governor has the ability to veto any legislation emerging from the Senate or Assembly. He is also thought to have significant influence over how the State Department of Environmental Conservation chooses to act over fracking. There are also indications that the Governor is under pressure from the shale gas industry and may be [inclined to give fracking the green light in poorer counties](#). As Braun explains, “He [Cuomo] really is the person we need to move because he seems to be kind of the decision maker and the one that could stop the Department of Environmental Conservation from moving forward or could slow down the process [of implementing a ban] or halt it entirely.” With this in mind, on May 3rd 2012 NYAF delivered a petition calling for a ban (with over 200,000 signatures) directly to Governor Cuomo’s office.

The campaign has used multiple framings of fracking: as an environmental issue with a focus on water and land pollution; as a health issue with a focus on the potential linkages to instances of illness; as an economic issue with a focus on the potential local economic costs of fracking. Braun explains that “it really depends on the community we are speaking to. The issue is framed in different ways around the state and with different constituencies.”

Arguments over the economic costs and benefits of fracking have been particularly important when dealing with the state’s political decision makers. NYAF has challenged the claims made by the gas industry and supporters of fracking that new wells will bring huge economic benefits to the state. Research by NYAF coalition member [Food and Water Watch](#) found that one commonly-cited estimate of potential new jobs was exaggerated by a factor of 10. In April 2012 coalition member [United for Action](#) organized a

public event titled ‘frackonomics’, which demonstrated how the economic benefits claimed by the gas industry have been overblown. The event included presentations by well respected experts, financial analyst [Deborah Rogers](#) and economist [Jannette Barth](#). This approach has been very effective, as Braun explains: “They [the gas industry] are spending millions and millions and millions of dollars and we don’t have that kind of money...Thankfully we have been able to get experts to come out and share their expertise on the issue which has provided a very powerful counterpoint to the machine of lies and misrepresentations of the truth that the gas industry continues to put out to the public.”

Arguments over the economic implications of fracking were also important in considering how to grow the coalition. “It doesn’t seem that the Governor cares that much about environmental or anti-fracking groups that want to stop this,” says Braun. “We realized that we needed

to get businesses interested...Those are the groups who political representatives and elected officials will actually listen to.” As a result the coalition has reached out to local wine and beer makers, food co-ops and real estate companies, all of whom are concerned about the potential impacts of fracking on their businesses. One coalition member [Chefs for the Marcellus](#) has highlighted the potential impact on the quality of fresh ingredients for New York’s world class restaurants. The NYAF coalition has also reached out to a number of local faith-based organizations who are also concerned about fracking because, as Braun puts it, “the governor listens to the priest, the governor listens to the rabbi, the governor listens to religious organizations.”



A poster used by New Yorkers Against Fracking to promote the campaign.

In building a mass movement the campaign has benefited from the support of a number of high profile celebrities such as actors Mark Ruffalo and Debra Winger, whose voices “can amplify the voice of thousands” according to Braun. The campaign continues to grow from strength to strength. To help take the campaign mainstream and build further momentum a major music concert was held on May 15th 2012, with Natalie Merchant and Joan Osborne and a number of other artists.

Formed only in 2011, NYAF has grown extremely quickly and already has over [100 coalition member organizations](#). Braun explains that the ultimate objective is for the campaign to grow so big that influence is assured by the sheer scale of support the campaign attracts: “We want to wake up the people in the political process to make them realize that this is simply something they cannot ignore and they cannot placate and that they are going to have to engage with it and take a public stand on it. We are pushing for a critical mass where they are going to be so embarrassed that they have to take action on this.” The use of formal coalition partners to strengthen the reach and credibility of the movement is in contrast to the approach taken in Bulgaria, where the campaign was run by unaffiliated individuals.

Lessons

The importance of understanding your context

In Bulgaria campaigners decided to frame the issue as being primarily about the protection of agricultural heritage as they sensed this would resonate strongly with the public. They also decided to avoid any formal alliances with NGOs as they anticipated that would cause people to become suspicious of the movement. The very different cultural and historical context of New York has necessitated a very different approach. While the impact on land and water has also been highlighted in New York, it is the economic arguments that have taken centre stage. New Yorkers Against Fracking have also deliberately chosen to build a formal coalition with other NGOs and organizations, as they see this as key to strengthening their credibility and influence. In fighting the threat of fracking the two campaigns have taken quite different approaches. Both have been effective because campaigners have been able to read and respond to the specific political context in which they are operating.

Using good old-fashioned face-to-face communication

Internet-based communication tools undoubtedly offer huge potential benefits and have helped revolutionize campaigning over the last 10 years. There are countless recent campaigns which simply would not have been possible without the internet. Online tools have also been an important part of the campaigns run by Frack Off UK and New Yorkers Against Fracking. However, while Facebook was used in the Bulgarian campaign, the collection of signatures by face-to-face means helped the campaign to reach people and grow in a way which online tools could not have done. The setting up of petition stalls in the streets of Bulgarian towns and cities created

visibility for the campaign and it enabled campaigners to engage shoppers and pedestrians passing by on a personal level. A face-to-face explanation of the risks of fracking, by someone who is well informed and genuinely concerned, is likely to be far more powerful and motivating than an email request to join an online petition.

Building your base

Getting press coverage of protests and actions is an important part of increasing public awareness and applying pressure on decision makers. All three campaigns in Bulgaria, the UK and New York have also worked hard to build and widen their support base and to grow the number of people actively involved in their movements. In Bulgaria, the strength of support for the campaign right across the country was a key factor in getting a ban on fracking passed by parliament. In New York, campaigners have developed a wide coalition of over a hundred local organizations, with a focus given to developing relationships with the stakeholders that are politically most influential, including local businesses and faith-based organizations. Frack-off UK has focussed on supporting local groups who are opposed to fracking proposals near their com-

munities. This has been done through providing detailed online information and helpful resources, and by visiting and speaking at community events. By facilitating the development of local resistance to fracking developments right across the country, the campaign has generated a life of its own and has become far stronger as it begins to rely less on a core group of committed activists. While support for a campaign can be built in different ways, the development of a strong support base is always a crucial ingredient for a successful campaign.

Speaking directly to power

The campaign in Bulgaria made excellent use of parliamentary committees as a way of communicating directly with MPs and convincing them of the need for a ban. At the same time, efforts were made to target the Prime Minister in recognition of his personal power and influence. Activists were able to meet face-to-face with the Prime Minister and to get personal commitments from him. Both approaches appear to have been crucial in getting the parliament to vote in favour of a ban on fracking.

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Founded in San Francisco in 1992, The Democracy Center works globally to help citizens understand and influence the public decisions that impact their lives. Through a combination of investigation and reporting, advocacy training, and leading international citizen campaigns, we have worked with social and environmental justice activists in more than three-dozen countries on five continents. As The Democracy Center begins its third decade, a special emphasis of our work is strengthening citizen action on the global climate crisis and helping citizens challenge the power of corporations.