

# *The 'People's Movement'*

'EU Critical Action & Irish Social Activism'

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## **Abstract**

*This thesis focuses on 'EU critical' social movement activity in Ireland through the lens of one social movement group against the backdrop of three referenda on European treaties over a four year period. I illustrate how grievances are produced and focus on the underlying factors which motivate individuals to engage in collective action against the European Union and its reform treaties. In addressing this issue, I provide an ethnographic account of a group of Irish activists called the 'People's Movement' who campaigned against the introduction of the Treaty of Lisbon in Ireland and who subsequently challenged the European Fiscal Treaty. I examine how the People's Movement organisation collectively engage with the EU, the State, civil society and other social movement actors in their struggle for recognition and to communicate the organisation's message. My ethnographic research is undertaken with reference to broader contextual issues, such as modern social movements, globalisation, Europe, meaning and discourse. I illustrate how the main contentious issues being debated by Irish social activists on the streets of Dublin against EU reform resonate with global social activists. I contend that Irish left-wing social activism, as a micro-movement, forms part of a greater collective and a globally networked movement of modern protest against the discontents of global capitalism. Social activist struggles in Ireland against the introduction of the EU reform treaties, while local and national in its form, can be transnational and paradoxically 'European' in its nature. In examining where local forms of Irish 'activism' are situated within modern social movement theory, I debate whether local Irish activism against the EU is post materialist in its nature, forming part of what Alberto Melucci termed as 'new social movements', or whether such activism against the EU is grounded in traditional class and labour struggles. I also address the historicity of such activism and reveal how such struggles form part of a fluid and continuous 'movement' of the Irish Left.*

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## *Introduction*

This thesis is multi-faceted in its focus. It looks at collective action and social movements and analyses how and why individuals collectively join in opposition to further EU political and economic development. In addressing these issues, it takes as its unit of analysis a small group of Irish activists called the People's Movement who campaign "against any measures that further develop the EU into a federal super-state and works to defend and enhance popular sovereignty, democracy, and social justice in Ireland".<sup>1</sup> During the period of my research (2008-2013), the group actively campaigned against three referenda in which the Irish public was asked to vote on further EU political and economic reform. In 2008 and 2009, the group campaigned against the introduction of the *Treaty of Lisbon*<sup>2</sup> and in 2012 against the *EU Fiscal Compact* (otherwise referred to as the 'Austerity' Treaty).<sup>3</sup>

When I first began writing this thesis I was overwhelmed by the amount of literature available. While the main focus of this thesis is collective action and social movement opposition to EU referenda, it is simply not possible to provide an accurate assessment or ethnographic account of social movement actors without first contextualising their forms of protest against the backdrop of both local and global economic and political developments.

I have divided this thesis into two parts. Part I looks first at social movement theory and modern social movements, but more importantly it discusses a broad range of topics which provide an important setting for my ethnographic research and findings in Part II. As my ethnographic analysis relates to social activism in Ireland with reference to a specific social movement organisation, the People's Movement, the topics I refer to within Part I of this thesis provide a structural framework for the reader to understand and make sense of this ethnographic analysis. Within Part I, I make references to such matters as social movement theory, globalisation, neoliberal economic reform, contemporary Ireland, Europe and social

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.people.ie](http://www.people.ie) website.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B

theory on meaning and discourse. As the subject of my ethnographic analysis is the People's Movement who are engaged in collective action against the EU and its institutions, it is important for the reader to understand how grievances are produced and the underlying factors which motivate individuals to mobilise. These issues which are addressed in Part I of my thesis are macro issues, that is, they are discussed to indicate broader and wider theoretical understandings and a placing of the movement organisation in a broader context of relevant studies.

I shift from a macro to a micro analysis in Part II of this thesis, that is, I focus on the movement organisation itself and engage in a deeper 'on the ground' ethnographic analysis. I focus on how the group was formed and developed, its members, networks and communication, campaign activity and discourse, protest strategy and tactics. While certain chapters are specific to the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, in my final chapter I focus on the post Lisbon period, the EU Fiscal Treaty and sustainment issues for the organisation in the absence of referenda.

Notwithstanding the division of this thesis into two parts, I also make repeated reference throughout to the views of my informants. While the movement group is not specifically discussed until Part II, short case studies and introductions to my informants voices can be heard throughout my thesis.

While the topic I have chosen to study and research is complex, I see this thesis as a fluid piece of work rather than a division of topics into heading and subcategories. As this thesis is based on participant observation research and data collected during intermittent periods from March 2008 to October 2013 it is my intention to provide the reader with a clear understanding of why individuals engage in collective action against the European Union and reform treaties, such as the Lisbon Treaty & EU Fiscal Compact. Throughout the thesis and where appropriate, I have made references to activists feelings and thoughts and, in several instances, I have supported and reinforced my arguments and points by using direct comments from activists themselves.

I also wish to illustrate how the main contentious issues being debated by Irish social activists on the streets of Dublin against EU reform, resonate with social activists on the streets of Europe and indeed worldwide. I contend that Irish left-wing social activism as a micro-movement forms part of a greater collective and global networked movement of modern protest against the discontents of global capitalism and a modern culture of materialism. Social activist struggles in Ireland against EU reform, while local and national in its form, is both transnational and paradoxically ‘European’ in its nature. I also seek to address where local forms of Irish ‘activism’ are situated within modern social movement theory. Is local Irish activism against the EU post-materialist in its nature, forming part of what Alberto Melucci (1980) coined as ‘new social movements’? Or is Irish activism against the EU grounded in socialist struggles and embedded in Marxist and class ideology of the ‘old’ Left?

I hope that this thesis will be a useful guide for three audiences. First, as a tool for fellow academics in their understanding and study of social activism. Second, for an independent reader who wishes to gain a greater understanding of the motives and concerns of EU critical campaigners. Finally, I hope that it will be a testament to the activists themselves, whose tireless and unselfish work often goes undocumented, unreported and without due credit. It is hoped in some small part, that this thesis can tell their story and do their cause and effort some justice. Without these activists, this thesis would never have been written. Finally, I emphasise, that this grouping of activists, while referred to as the People’s Movement, is not a ‘social movement’. It is, rather, a social movement organisation or social movement group. I consider the People’s Movement organisation to be one component of a broader ‘movement’ or coalition of social movement actors both in Ireland and beyond.

## **Social Movements**

Before I go any further, I want to add a few words on the study of social movements, and why collective action as a subject is worthy of our attention. There has been much debate about social movements that challenge the authority of the state and their struggle to create

an autonomous space. As the state is seen as socially and politically constructed, it therefore should not be seen as a permanent or natural institution (Kirby 1997).

In this respect, an organisation such as the People's Movement', who challenge the authority and hegemonic<sup>4</sup> position of the state should be studied and treated as legitimate social actors. There are also arguments that if this is to be so, then social movement actors and their agendas need also to be investigated to ensure they undergo a critical analysis (Steinberg 1997). In this way all social actors, both state and challenger are afforded equal space in their struggle for shaping social organization.

Social movements have assumed a more stable position within modern social structures (Esteves, Motta & Cox 2009) and over the latter half of the twentieth century, have increasingly been studied as a normal part of mass politics (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:14). The study of social movements has developed into a multi-disciplinary subject and has benefitted from anthropological, sociological and political science research. Collective action has been recognized by Melucci (1988) as the "product of differentiated social processes." He argues that the starting point of any study is the individuals who act collectively within what he terms as a "multipolar action system" (1988:331). Such individuals are the subject of this thesis, and through my ethnographic research I illustrate how and why these activists organize and take collective action. This system is comprised of events in which individuals act collectively to combine different orientations and operate within a changing environment which influence and shape their relations. Essentially, what Melucci is stating is that collective action is a fluid process. Actors continually "negotiate and renegotiate" aspects of their action based on how actors perceive and interpret their surroundings. The "social construction of the collective" according to Melucci, is "continually at work" (1988:332).

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<sup>4</sup> Williams (1977) recognises that the term 'hegemony' can have multiple meanings and that the term itself has been extended and redefined by Marx & Gramsci. A traditional interpretation of the term is understood to refer to a dominant order or a sense of political predominance of one state over another. My application of the term is applied in this form, which as Williams (1983) states "has come to include cultural as well as political and economic factors ... the idea of hegemony in its wide sense is then especially important in societies in which electoral politics and public opinion are significant factors, and in which social practice is seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which in fact express the needs of the dominant class."

Collective action comes in many forms and manners. It is well documented by social movement theorists that such collective groups have blurred boundaries with no distinct parameters. They have loose, informal and unstructured organisational frameworks, and may often appear to an outsider to lack clear and coherent strategies (Meyer et al. 2002:289, Kriesi 1988:350). Meyer et al. (2002) note that “movements are not reified or static. Instead they contain multiple, shifting, sometimes contradictory collective identities, and they contain and give rise to multiple meanings and discourses” (2002:306, See also Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:15).

Throughout this thesis I consider it beneficial to keep in mind Alberto Melucci’s comments when he described collective action acting as a ‘symbolic multiplier’ in that it challenges and questions the existing apparatus and gets them to reveal their logic and rationale, that is, “it makes power visible” (1989:88). The study of the mobilisation of social movements has also been referred to as the “study of social change” (Kriesi 1988:349) because through their struggles such movements are directing change within social structures. (McCarthy & Zald 1977, Curtis & Zurcher 1974). I agree with these definitions, but also agree with the views of Alf Gunvald Nilsen (2008), who recognises that while social movements can exist from below, they can also emerge from above. Collective agency in the form of dominant groups may be mobilised to maintain or extend a particular order of social organisation aimed at sustaining a hegemonic position within society (Nilsen 2008:309).

Cox and Fominaya (2009) make the important observation that ‘social movements’ produce knowledge about the social world and “... a crucial aspect of movement practice is making known that which others would prefer to keep from the public view” (2009:1). Crossley (2002) notes that “part of the movement in social movements is a transformation in the habits, including linguistic and basic domestic habits, that shape our lives ... movements are important because they are key agents for bringing about change within societies” (2002:8). It is through this challenge that people’s perceptions are changed, and we begin to change the way we think and feel. Collective action is therefore a stimulant to this change, as it creates the conditions upon which further social action and movements may develop (Crossley 2002:29).

Finally, I wish to illustrate the positive social contribution that collective action can enable. Activists themselves are well aware of how their struggles can be misinterpreted and in some cases delegitimised by political or media discourse. Social change, according to Jessop (1972), can involve a “reorganization of established institutions” (reform movements) or may “contribute to a breakdown in the peaceful co-existence of social order” (revolutionary movements) (1972:6). It should be remembered that while social movements and their activists seek change in the social order, participation in collective action at a personal level is compelled by a strong sense of social justice and it is only through such action that activists can discharge their social and moral obligations.

## *Methodology*

According to Spradley (1980:3), fieldwork “involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak and think and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.” In doing so, it is the ethnographers task to make sense and to unravel the ‘complex meaning systems’ which individuals use to make meaning of the world in which they live (Spradley 1980:5). It is hoped that this thesis will illustrate how activists within the People’s Movement create and understand meaning in their struggle against the EU through their challenges to reform treaties. I also hope that this paper will provide an insight into the ‘complex meaning systems’ of Irish social activism. Geertz (1973:9) explains that “in order to gain a truer understanding of the meaning and ‘signification’ of such actions which we observe, we need to sort out and decipher structures of signification and codes.” The interpretation of meaning and understanding symbolic acts is essential to what Geertz refers to as ‘thick description’. For Geertz, ethnography is about ‘finding our feet’ and “trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines” (1973:13) and through ‘thick description’ in ethnography, it enables the reader to understand and apply meaning to the symbolic actions of others. Without ‘thick description’, the collection of data and observance of acts would simply be events without context and meaning.

### **Participant Observation**

‘Participant observation’ is the well-established and preferred methodological tool of the ethnographer insofar as it permits the researcher to immerse him/herself into the group of individuals being researched. Indeed this form of data collection is exactly what makes anthropology so distinct from other disciplines (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:2). I first volunteered to work with the People’s Movement in March of 2008 during the organisations campaign for a ‘No’ vote for the Lisbon Treaty referendum which was to take place in June of that year. I was therefore an active member of the organisation in the campaign build-up and aftermath of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum (June 2008), the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty

referendum (October 2009) and the EU Fiscal Treaty referendum (May 2012). While it is important to focus on the three referenda and the group's campaign against these treaties, it is also critically important to observe and document how the group sustained itself during 'non-contentious' periods between referenda. While my principal data collection methodology is participant observation, it has been an evolving process since my first interactions with the People's Movement group in March 2008. Research and observations in the field have enabled me to understand how the People's Movement is organised structurally, and also to understand how it functions as a social movement group. It is also important to position the group in the overall context of Irish social movement organisations campaigning for a 'No' vote on EU Treaty reforms.

There are several reasons which will determine the selection criteria for participant observation analysis, namely simplicity (single unit of analysis), accessibility (gaining access), and unobtrusiveness (ability to blend into the 'crowd'), all of which were considered by me when undertaking this research project (Spradley 1980:45-52). Being a member of the People's Movement group was certainly advantageous insofar as I was familiar with the activists and the key individuals within the organisation. While certainly excellent results can be obtained through 'observation' as a methodological tool, the ability to go deeper into 'participatory' observatory research and beyond will no doubt greatly enhance research findings. Spradley (1980:58) notes, that within this methodology there are numerous types of participation: non-participation (collection of data by remote observation alone), passive participation (present at the scene of action but does not participate), moderate participation (ethnographer balances between an 'insider' and 'outsider'), active participation (ethnographer learns the behaviour and gains acceptance by learning cultural rules) and complete participation (ethnographer is already immersed in the activity and simply makes systemic observations). In this context, my 'participation' with the organisation could be classified as either 'active' or 'complete'.

Lofland & Lofland (1995:47) note how ethnographers often have feelings of 'deception' and 'fear of disclosure' and with this fear comes great anxiety and emotional stress. As data is being collected and observations are being reported upon, there is always the feeling among

ethnographers that “a direct and discomfoting challenge” from individuals is just around the corner. I was also concerned with gaining permission to observe and record data in the group, which is of course always a concern for first time ethnographers. A certain level of trust must be achieved before credible research data can be obtained and I was quite fortunate that this was an ethnographic obstacle I could avoid. I believe my role as an ‘active’ member of the organisation adds value to my findings. As an ‘engaged observer’ (Sanford & Angel-Ajani 2006), my personal membership of the People’s Movement group has enabled me to collect otherwise unseen or unobserved data compared to forms of ‘passive scholarship’ (Kellett 2009). In many respects my ‘active engagement’ as an observer resonates with well-established forms of action and advocacy in anthropology dating back to the 1970s. Although such engagement may raise questions of responsibility towards the community or group (Kirsch 2002) and the impact of such study on anthropology as a discipline (Hedican 1986), in many instances simply remaining ‘neutral’ is not possible. In recognising the contribution that anthropologists can make to alliances concerning political activism, Kirsch contends that ethnographers need to recognise ‘structural inequalities’ such as dominant political or business interests which may silence “opposing voices” (Kirsch 2002:175). I will focus on these structural inequalities later in the thesis and illustrate how activists struggled against such dominant forms.

## **Data Collection**

Although my primary unit of analysis is a group known as the People’s Movement, I found myself resorting to analysis at individual level to gain a deeper understanding of the motives behind activist’s participation in collective action. While ascertaining a ‘unit of analysis’ is critical, research in the field opens up a wider range of complex issues to be addressed (Bernard 2006, Rucht & Niedhardt 1999).

In terms of sources of information, I identified the key organisers and members of the organisation. These individuals are considered ‘core’ members who had more than simply ‘attendee’ roles at meetings. These individuals not only organised and chaired regular meetings, they spoke at public meetings, they logistically organised materials, ran websites,

managed the campaign office and controlled financial resources. Additionally, they wrote pamphlets, designed slogans and organised fund raising events. Notwithstanding this, it would be wrong to focus solely on such individuals with ‘defined roles’ as at the heart of any social movement organisation are the grassroots activists who lend their support and help at a variety of levels to the group’s activity. My data collection also focuses on individual members, and indeed where possible non-members who supported the organisation, to ascertain their personal motives for participation. When collecting data through observed practice and behaviour, one must choose their topics in such a manner so as to produce a piece of work which is representative of the unit of analysis. Some individuals are more vocal, expressive and colourful than others. In this respect, it is important to gain information equally from those who are willingly offering information and those who are less vocal and ‘obvious’. I feel that my data and interviews provide a fair and credible ‘sample’ of data collection on which the ethnographic section of this thesis is founded. Glaser & Strauss (1967:164) compare fieldwork to standing in a library and having to choose between a large selection of resource data. The “effective researcher ... ought to embrace the library’s resources with equal delight.” The collection of data from core and peripheral subjects, has enabled me produce findings which are more meaningful and well balanced. I also believe that data collection through observations and discussions with activists has led me to openly reflect on my own actions and motivations for participation in the People’s Movement campaign. Interestingly during interviews, a number of activists noted that such data collection ‘sessions’ were quite self-reflexive and enabled them to personally ask questions and understand concepts of their activism within social movements which was otherwise unconsidered.

Sources of ethnographic research data are wide and varied and can exist in many forms. The collection of data for this ethnographic research has been obtained from notes in the field through observations, interviews and reports, performative versions of arguments (public meetings, lectures and debates), published versions of documents (pamphlets, posters etc...) and oral forms (stories, feedback, and recollections) (Warren 2005:219). My formal data collection is also supported by informal data collection, which Glaser & Strauss (1967:163) refer to as ‘discovery’. In this respect, the fieldworker can “stumble on conversations and

scenes” which can be collected and used as recordable data in research. While ethics during research is also a central concern to the researcher and anonymity has been afforded to participants as much as was possible, I am conscious that this research focuses on a small identifiable group. Pseudonyms have been used when making reference to individuals. However, certain statements by key figures within the group, or acting on behalf of the group, have been expressly stated where such information is already documented in the public domain. As the focus of my research was a small social movement organisation, I took additional steps to ensure that my writing was protecting my informants. These steps included the following: sharing my work with core activists/participants within the group at intervals during my fieldwork; regular discussions with certain key participants throughout the term of my fieldwork regarding the status of my research; re-checking with certain informants on certain sections of my writing to ensure anonymity was protected and my interpretation and findings as a researcher were accurate; and sharing my final work and findings with activists within the group. As my thesis contained short personal stories on activists themselves, I considered it prudent to take extra steps to re-check my data with informants and provide my informants the opportunity to assess my writing and provide clarification/corrections where appropriate. This re-checking and invitation also provided me, as a researcher, with positive confirmation and approval of my work. The issue of strict ethical guidelines applying to research of this nature in some manner inhibit the findings, an issue recently documented by Gillen & Pickerill (2012). Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that the findings are presented in accordance with ‘ethical’ guidelines without detracting from the substantive issues of the thesis.

### **Contextual Analysis**

Marcus (1986:166) illustrates that certain ethnographers are more interested in ‘cultural meaning’ than social action and “have not generally represented the ways in which closely observed cultural worlds are embedded in larger more impersonal systems.” I agree with Marcus that ethnography needs to be written “in the context of historic change: the formation of state systems and the evolution of the world political economy” (1986:165). I hope that this thesis will provide the reader with such a contextual framework which I

believe is critical to understanding and interpreting my findings. Pelto & Pelto (1978) argue that the preservation of the freedom of ethnographers to study and inquire into other areas outside of their primary unit of analysis is one of the tenets of the discipline of anthropology. The results, which such research has yielded, has been a strong counter argument from anthropologists to defend their work against those who are critical of anthropology and the social sciences for its non-scientific analysis (Kuznar 1997).

When first undertaking this study, I was particularly overwhelmed at the amount of contextual literature which I needed to reference in order to support my ethnographic research. In order to provide an ethnographic account on the People's Movement group, it is necessary to understand where this group is positioned in regard to other social movement organisations on the political Left who are also EU critical in their outlook. It is also important to study the group's position within a wider framework of the nation state and the EU, which many activists contend is progressing towards a supra-national or federal European State. Notwithstanding academic research sourced from ethnographic and anthropological journals, I found myself researching articles in the field of Irish and European Union political studies, economic policy, cultural studies, and sociology, in order to gain a greater understanding of social movement theory and collective action and the contexts in which the People's Movement group were operating. These contextual matters are addressed within two fields in this thesis and in doing so I discuss a range of theoretical influences. As a starting point, I make reference to theory on globalisation, modern capitalism, neoliberalism and in particular the rise of supra-national forms of governance. That is, the development of the EU as a global and hegemonic power. Addressing these matters sets the framework for my analysis. I also focus on the social actors within the political field at a local level, namely the public with who the group wishes to engage, other social movement organisations, civil society groups, corporate interests and finally the state itself. References and discussion centre on theories of meaning and signification, political discourse and social movements. To ignore these elements would result in the production of data and interpretation of recorded facts without context and meaning. Snow, Morrill & Anderson (2003) also remind us that it is important to 'root' our projects in theoretical relevance and that the objective of ethnography is to "discern, grasp and understand the

world at hand from the standpoint of its members and practitioners; to acquire an insider's view" (2003:182).

A historical materialist approach in ethnographic analysis is well documented (O'Laughlin 1975, Roseberry 1997). While social movement theory may look at such matters as structure, organization, resources, and mobilisation, it is important to pose these questions whilst having regard to the position of various actors on the social field and their relationships with each other, "structurally, spatially and historically" and also with regard to the structure and role of the state (Roseberry 1997:39). This is particularly relevant in terms of the relationship between the state and civil society (Roseberry 1988). An ethnographic analysis of the People's Movement organisation should not be considered simply as a structural or organizational analysis of a political actor or a static social movement organisation. It needs to be studied by looking at the individuals who comprise the social movement organisation and their connection and relationship to the old Left, that is, class/labour based struggles. By taking these factors into account, we can then undertake what Roseberry referred to as placing "anthropological subjects at the intersections of local and global histories" (1988:179).

Melucci notes that, "without a reference to the systems of action that explain the complexity of the actor and the actors relations with the whole of the social field, analysis of collective action will not be able to achieve a clear grasp of its subject matter" (Melucci 1996:54). In regard to ethnographic research where one is concerned with 'global processes' such as this present thesis, it is worth noting the comments of Maxine Molyneux (2001) who argues that although such ethnographies "cast light on the workings and effects of some aspects of this process in a particular country at a particular time ... many questions may remain beyond the scope of a particular ethnography requiring more information and evidence, more context and theoretical argument" (Molyneux 2001:273).

I must also point out at this stage that my analysis in the field did not extend beyond the People's Movement group and its activists. This thesis does not purport in any manner to represent a broad analysis of the entire spectrum of EU critical groups in Ireland. While a

number of these groups are quite distinctive in their reasons for objecting to the EU and its reform treaties, I feel that the findings of this paper will resonate with activists in other groups who also adopt an EU critical position.

### **Qualitative Interviewing & Analysis**

I support my participant observation with qualitative interviews. I undertook a number of extensive qualitative interviews with eighteen activists, many of whom I would consider instrumental to the campaign and the ‘nucleus’ of the organisation. The activists interviewed represent the heart of the Dublin branch of the organisation and four regional branches. I am delighted that I had the opportunity to extend my interview research outside of the capital. I felt it was important to gain a cross sectional analysis and an urban/rural divide to identify any significant shifts in strategies or defining traits.

In terms of interviewing techniques, these were both formal and informal. Formal research through one-to-one interviews with individual activists was undertaken in post-referendum periods and allowed for a time of reflection on the campaign and its events. Informal interviewing occurred on a regular basis throughout my ethnographic research at demonstrations, meetings, events, leafleting, and post event discussions. It also included informal conversations, utterances and discovered data (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

I chose qualitative interviewing as a methodology during formal interviews because it facilitated a more ‘open-ended inquiry’ (Spradley 1980:34), and such interviews produce much larger testimonies and information (Weiss 1994). While qualitative interviewing will not provide the reader with the statistical data commonly seen in scientific research or data to enable the plotting of information onto bar charts, graphs and spreadsheets, there are a number of acute advantages to qualitative techniques. It allows time for respondents to tell ‘their story’ and provides interviewing ‘depth’ not achievable through non-qualitative interviews. Weiss (1994:7) refers to this as ‘emotional functioning’. The researcher can gain a ‘human’ and ‘emotional’ signification from the interviewee on their perception of events and experiences.

Such human and emotional signification is represented in my data collected formally through interviews and informally from discussions at group meetings and events. This, in turn, has been utilised to provide ‘personal stories’ of activists which I have inserted throughout this thesis. While personal stories and commentary from activists is important to provide a richer ethnographic grounding for my work, it is hoped that it will also provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the group demographic, and an illustration in the words of activists themselves on why they campaign against the EU, and their personal histories. Throughout this thesis I make repeated reference to core group activists, such as Fergus, Eamon, Kenneth and Patricia who I see as leaders/figures for the People’s Movement group. I also make reference to interviews and discussions with activists such as Michelle, Julie, Miriam, and Jim (from regional branches of the organisation), Paula & Richard (former activists), David, Mairead, Mark, Eddie Ciaran, Maurice, Matt and Patrick (core and peripheral members/supporters). It is through the words of these individuals that I reinforce my points of discussion and debate. In many ways, ethnographic research is not simply participant observation but ‘engaged listening’ (Forsey 2010).

## **Objectivity**

Michael Agar (1980) notes that when the researcher begins ethnographic fieldwork, he/she carries with them “implicit assumptions about the nature of reality” having grown up in one’s own particular culture. From this, Agar notes that “idiosyncrasies” and “biases” develop within us (1980:41). Agar notes that such biases and assumptions can and will change for ethnographers over the course of their own research as they will be personally affected in some profound way through their fieldwork experience (1980:2). Bourgois (2006) notes that, “core methods and practices of anthropology often involve long term interpersonal contact across major social power parameters” and scholars are often “jolted emotionally by the human face of their research topics and sometimes break out of the bourgeois intimate apartheid that define common sense in academia.”

I want to take a moment to comment on participatory observation and objectivity, particularly as my own ‘participation’ with the organisation predates the collection of data for that analysis. The importance of documenting an independent and factual account while maintaining objectivity is well noted by commentators on ethnographic research. Although the experience of the fieldworker can yield valuable data, it can also severely circumscribe the knowledge which is obtained (Gupta & Ferguson 1997:15). Friedrichs & Ludtke (1975) note that observation and experience within the field is largely determined and structured by the individual who is undertaking such research (1975:25). The feelings and perceptions of the observer to events which unfold can and do have an impact on what data is collected and recorded.

Making observations about a group of individuals with which one is familiar can have both advantages and disadvantages. It has been argued that a researcher can be impeded by ‘going native’, that is, the longer one is active and participant within a group, the less that individual will be able to observe certain categories of events (Friedrichs & Ludtke 1975:35). Bevington & Dixon (2005:200) note that “direct engagement may lead to emotional attachments or create pressures on scholars seeking to maintain good relationships with movement participants.”

I understand, and expect, the accusation that my own involvement and personal connection with the People’s Movement may place me in a position whereby my ‘starting’ point for research purposes is less than ‘independent’. I believe that this thesis offers a credible and representational account of activists motivations, concerns and challenges, during periods of mobilisation at referenda and also ‘non-contentious’ periods between EU referenda. I also wish to stress the importance which a personal narrative can contribute to ethnographic accounts (See Pratt 1986:32). Meyer (2002) notes that “scholars often start by looking at a movement that they have some personal stake in, perhaps as a sympathizer, target, or activist” but he warns that “we need to be wary about generalising from any single case and to test theories aggressively across alternate cases and contexts” (2002:5). Adopting a more ‘active’ position, Dana-Ain Davis (2006:236) sees anthropological research as one which “can be posited as a more indirect form of activism”, but the measure of our success in the

struggle is less measurable and transparent. Anthropologists primary concern is detailing the lives and realities of 'others' and in doing so there has been a strong overlap between anthropology as a discipline and involvement in issues of ethics, development, human rights and activism (Turner 2006).

Notwithstanding, and perhaps pre-empting, claims of lack of objectivity, it is hoped that this thesis will add value to social activism research and provide a reference tool for individuals and social theorists who study and research 'collective action'. Bevington and Dixon (2005), note that a researchers 'connection' to the movement "provides important incentives to produce more objective research to ensure that the researcher is providing those movements with the best possible information. The engaged researcher has more of a stake in producing accurate findings than one with no stake in the movement." (Bevington and Dixon 2005:192).

Bevington & Dixon (2005) citing the work of Piven & Cloward (1977) also note that it is wrong to provide an uncritical account of a 'favoured' movement, and there is no value to be added in simply reiterating the movements 'pre-existing ideas'. Turner (2006) illustrates the strong link between Anthropology as a discipline and social activism. "Anthropological activists who have engaged themselves in these movements have played a leading role in developing a critical theoretical understanding of the historical forces and transformations that have underlain the emergence of new cultural and social realities." (Turner 2006:22)

## PART I

I intend focusing on a number of themes in Part I of this thesis and have therefore divided my discussion into five main chapters. In chapters one and two, I outline some of the main schools of thought on social movement theory but focus in particular on the two main branches of social thought which have developed within the American and European schools. That is, the development of the ‘resource mobilisation’ model based on a rational cost/benefit analysis and the development of the more cultural ‘new social movements’ model. Although I make reference to both of these models, the concept of ‘new social movements’ forms one of the underlying themes of this thesis. My main focus rests with this model and in particular on the work of Alberto Melucci (1985, 1988, 1995, 1996).

It is important however to place this thesis and its findings within a local context. While my focus of study is a social movement organisation, that organisation needs to be examined within an Irish context. While Part I of this thesis, situates my discussion within a broader theoretical framework, it is important to ask whether Ireland can be considered just another Western European polity to be studied or does the Irish context require a different analytical frame? While chapters one and two of this thesis focus on the study of social movements, a significant level of theory derives from American and European scholars. Diani (2006) notes that within Ireland there are a number of factors, such as the Catholic Church, the economy, Irelands rural society and weak middle class, which all together are unique factors which contribute to our understanding of social movements and indeed our perception of whether new social movements could flourish in Ireland. Connolly and Hourigan (2006) specifically address these matters in their study of ‘Social Movements and Ireland’. While recognising that Irish society has experienced its own distinct development, they argue that international theoretical debates on social movements need to be applied to Irish debates and issues (2006:3).

In this respect I also pay attention to the rising trend of activism across the world in what has been termed the ‘anti-globalisation’ or ‘anti-capitalism’ movements. In chapter three, I discuss the focal point of modern social movement action, that is, globalisation and global capital. In particular I focus on the historical emergence of Europe as a regional global power and how this power has manifested itself in the EU through an integrated political and economic model. I also look at the role of the state, and other supra-national and trans-national networks as integral components of a globalised system. In chapter four, I focus on ‘Europe’ and the EU and how such concepts are both ‘imagined’ and ‘invented’. I also address issues as ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ and illustrate how activists contest the top-down imposition of new values, which often conflict with local cultures and traditional practices. The study of social movements in Ireland needs to be undertaken against the backdrop of wider theoretical discussions. Connolly and Hourigan (2006), while noting Ireland’s mix of Catholicism and nationalism in a newly formed post-colonial state, emphasise that Ireland’s new social movement activity did not develop in a vacuum. They acknowledge that, in addition to most Western countries, Ireland too was seeing a rise in ‘new social movement’ activity during the 1960’s (2006:6). However, while recognising these commonalities they also note that the development of Irish social activism has been largely determined and influenced by local social, political and cultural changes. Within chapters three and four, I highlight these changes and illustrate how contemporary Irish society has undergone significant and profound transformation over the past few decades and how in many cases social movement organisations have mobilised to counteract the negative effects of these transformations.

My final chapter in Part I is dedicated to meaning, and more importantly how meaning is constructed and signified according to dominant codes and hegemonic forms. I make reference to the importance of language and symbolism as a signifier of meaning. I also outline the concept of ‘framing’ and how social movement organisations adopt ‘frames’ of action to create identity as a tool for mobilisation.

## ***Chapter 1            Collective Action & Resource Mobilisation***

Social theory on collective action and social mobilisation has made incredible advancements over the latter half of the twentieth century. It was only in the past few decades that mainstream sociologists revised their approach to collective action and participation in mass movements. Historically, such action was dominated by ‘breakdown’ theories and was considered to be irrational (Hoffer 1951) and a product of deviant behaviour (Le Bon 1896). It was largely those in society who were marginalized, alienated and unattached to any social class who participated in such movements (Kornhauser 1959). This resonates with the concepts of anomie and alienation (described by Durkheim and Marx) which were interpreted in uniformly negative ways. Such behaviour models simply regarded social movements as “irrational expressions of social dysfunction” (McDonald 2002) or as acts of a crowd, that is, mob mentality (Gerth & Mills 1953:436). In many cases an individual psychoanalytical approach was required as acts were seen to be simply irrational and socially undesirable (Turner & Killian 1972, Gamson 1975, Crossley 2002:11).

New studies throughout the 1960s studied such action, not as an expression of ‘distress’ or ‘dysfunction’ but within a rational framework focused on the achievement of particular goals (Smelser 1963 and Blumer 1971). Although commentators are sometimes at variance in determining the importance and significance of these shifts in social movement theory (Curtis & Aguirre 1993:1, Scott 1990 and Crossley 2002) this period is regarded by theorists as representing a considerable advancement on collective action theory put forward only a decade earlier which considered individuals ‘dysfunctional’ for partaking in collective action. Notwithstanding this, there are certain social theorists, such as Useem (1998), who are slow to dismiss breakdown theory completely. They contend that modern social movement theory did not replace breakdown theories as both theories explain different kinds of collective action.

## **Modern Social Movement Theory**

There has been significant development in the field of social movement research over the past few decades and a number of theories and models have been developed particularly around rational actor, political opportunity and resource mobilisation models (Mayo 2005:72). It is quite debatable, however, whether theory can be categorised easily under such headings. First of all, the various theories and models which I make reference to, do not describe different ‘types’ of social movements, but rather the different methodologies applied to the study of such movements. In other words, each model or theory is simply a new or different way of researching and studying the same social movement organisation. Secondly, I strongly contend that academics are wrong to simply categorise the study of social movement groups in a taxonomic manner. The study of certain social movement organisations, such as this present thesis, illustrate that not all organisations can be studied under certain ‘labels’ (Oliver 1993:293). When one undertakes micro studies on such groups, the findings based on individual accounts reveal that not all members ‘fit’ into such descriptive categories. Some commentators (Bevington and Dixon 2005) argue that the time has come to focus on a ‘movement-relevant’ approach, that is, the production of theory by activists and participants (2005:194). In this respect, I contend that ethnographic research by participant observers has much to contribute to the development of social movement theory. It is important that we use all social movement theory when looking at social movement organizations and adopt a holistic and empirical approach to our findings. Such an approach is supported by the work of Meyer, Whittier & Robnett (2002) who also emphasise a greater interconnection between movement structures and their meanings (2002:302). Other commentators, such as Maheu (1995), note that theory can be inadequate not because it looks at why certain individuals participate in action, but it fails to address why the entire population is not mobilising including those who are most affected (Maheu 1995:3, Hardiman 1998:133).

In the following pages, I provide a short overview of various theories within modern social movement studies. It would be incorrect, however, to view such theory as developing

chronologically. While in some cases theory has built upon and developed former theories, it has also been greatly influenced from multiple disciplines. Some parts have been rejected and others borrowed from fields such as 'political science' and 'cultural studies'. There is no right and wrong and there is no 'one size fits all'. In this respect, social movement theory is very much 'culturally relative' (Scott 1990:129). In other words, no particular theory or model is in any way irrelevant. Indeed, in many respects the workers' movements of the pre 1960s industrial era are as relevant today as they were fifty years ago. My analysis of the People's Movement as a social movement group supports this contention and will illustrate the influence of the workers' movement and 'class' in their struggle.

### **Resource Mobilisation Theory**

Unlike breakdown theories, resource mobilisation theory is based on the principle that pre-existing organization and networks exist and facilitate collective action (Useem 1998:218). Oliver (1993) notes that prior to the 1960s social scientists typically assumed that people would instinctively or naturally act on common interests. Resource mobilisation theory states that, while there may always be discontent, this alone is not sufficient to justify the process of mobilisation (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988). Resource mobilisation theorists, rather than assuming that discontent inevitably leads to mobilisation, instead emphasise the importance of 'resources' to facilitate the process of mobilisation. Therefore, post 1960s social scientists assume collective 'inaction' and they emphasise that it is collective 'action' that needs to be explained (Oliver 1993:273-274). Rather than viewing protest as the expressions of those poorly positioned in society to participate in conventional means of action, the resource mobilisation perspective looks at organizational characteristics and strategic choices (McAdam 1988, Meyer 2003, Boykoff 2007, Klandermans & Tarrow 1988). This concept has been reiterated by numerous theorists but McCarthy & Zald (1977, 1987) are largely credited with the development of this theory.

The main tenet which resource mobilisation theory applied to mobilisation and collective action was a focus on the costs and benefits for participants to take action (Oberschall 1973) and also the resources which are available to the social movement organisation at the time

(Gamson 1975). This approach utilizes the 'rationality' model which can be seen strictly applied through the work of Mancur Olson (1965) (See also Oliver 1993, Scott 1990, Crossley 2002). According to this approach, individuals cannot be taken for granted to participate in collective action, but they may do so under persuasion or through constraints and inducements (positive or negative sanctions). McCarthy and Zald (1977) saw that attention needed to be paid to incentives to mobilise, such as cost reducing mechanisms and career benefits (Jessop 1972:39). In doing so, one needs to study resources (money and labour), organization, and external factors. This is very much a supply and demand approach. Crossley (2002) notes that for resource mobilisation theorists the social movement sector is seen a cost/benefit model and one which is simply competing with the "public, private and voluntary sectors for available societal resources" (2002:86).

Due to the 'rationality' aspect of this school of thought and its "continued adherence to economic models", critics have considered the approach of resource mobilisation theory 'handicapped' and have illustrated its failures to address the content and context of social movement activity (Scott 1990:110). Melucci (1988:342) notes that collective identity is both a resource and a benefit which cannot be rationalized in terms of a unit of cost/benefit analysis. It is part of a process which requires continual investment. Other theorists (Turner & Killian 1972, McAdam 1988, Klandermans 1988) departed from the adoption of a very strict resource mobilisation approach as they felt it had gone too far in rejecting social-psychological factors. On the contrary, some felt that resource mobilisation theorists focused too much on formal organizations and did not account for loose collective actions (Piven & Cloward 1977). Commenting on resource mobilisation theory, Scott (1990) notes that it has a "narrow ... impoverished, interpretation of human motivation which reduces it to instrumental rationality" (1990:118). Scott further argues that humans, can, do and will "break out of civil privatism" and act in the best welfare of the common good which may be an act which is not in their self-interest. While not disagreeing with these criticisms, it is worth noting that McCarthy & Zald (1977) quite clearly state that their attempt was to develop only a 'partial theory' (1977:1237). It is easy at this juncture to be overly critical of such theory in light of the development which has taken place within social movement theory over the past 30 years. It is also important to bear in mind the new avenues of study

and research which resource mobilisation theory opened up and the link that was made between Sociology, and such disciplines as History, Political Science and Psychology.

### **Other Theories**

We have seen how resource mobilisation theory focused primarily on organisational ability and cost/benefit analysis. Later developments, which focused on external factors and opportunities at political level were seen by Klandermans & Tarrow (1988:6) as moving resource mobilisation theory closer to an analysis of politics and political interaction, overlapping therefore with the work of political scientists (Oberschall 1973). They also note that Charles Tilly's (1978) study on 'repertoires' of collective action and Sidney Tarrow's (1998) study on 'cycles' of protest activity shifted the attention from simply studies of unstructured collective action by movements to studies which focused around mass politics. Tilly's studies illustrate how forms of protest activity assume particular styles and norms, that is, 'repertoires' of action. Tarrow's studies focus on how contentious action and heightened conflict events occur at certain temporal junctures, while at other times activity is much lower (Tarrow 1998:142). He also illustrates how collective action is prompted by 'early risers' who 'trigger' more action and reaction among groups, that leads to more rapid spread and diffusion and ultimately a high engagement of protest and action. In one sense, these analyses are insightful for students of social movement studies, particularly for the study of how some social movement organisations, which may begin as 'radical', gradually become institutionalized (or perhaps compromised) through the adoption of political norms (Scott 1990:113).

Another approach is referred to as 'political opportunity structure' or 'political process theory'. Such an approach illustrates how political opportunities can influence the success or failures of activist's mobilisations. A changing political environment can open up key opportunities for activists or indeed governments and 'interest' groups to take advantage of shifting political changes (Tarrow 1998, Tilly 1978, McAdam 1988, & Meyer 2004). Tarrow (1998) notes that "when institutional access opens, rifts appears within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities

to advance their claims” (1998:71) (McAdam 1988:130, Crossley 2002:110, Rucht 1988:305). The key element of ‘political opportunity structure’ is the fact that it represents a resource which is an act or event external to the movement. Critics of this approach illustrate how certain social movement organizations may become dependent on ‘external’ resources for success (McAdam 1982), or may become patronised or sponsored from above, which may result in the organization becoming institutionalized (Crossley 2002a:84). Political ‘cleavages’ or ‘opportunities’ are particularly relevant within my own ethnographic account of the struggle of activists during campaigns against EU reforms. I discuss this further in Part II of this thesis and illustrate how such ‘opportunities’ can be exploited from above to the detriment of a social movement organization’s efforts.

Resource mobilisation theory, and the development of rational actor models of mobilisation, predominantly derived from the American school of social movement studies. Klandermans & Tarrow (1988) have done excellent work on analyzing the different schools of thought in social movement theory (See also Connolly 2006). They note that in Europe, much research focused on larger structural issues, that is, structural causes of social movements, ideologies and their relation to the culture of advanced capitalist society. Such studies determined why mobilisation occurs in the first instance, structurally speaking, rather than focusing on how this converts into action (Kriesi 1988) and how collective identity is in fact created. The American school on the other hand, developed research at the group and individual level by looking at forms of action and the motivations of individuals (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:3). It tended to take structures for granted and focused instead on how mobilisation and action is created from the resources of a movement (Kriesi 1988:361).

Melucci (1995:111) while recognizing that collective action is “constructed by means of social relationships within a system of opportunities and constraints”, is keen to point out that a strict rational approach to the study of social movements can lead to ‘political reductionism’ (Keane & Mier 1989:23) which “focuses only on the political dimensions of collective action and ignores the creation of cultural models and symbolic challenges”. Melucci does not see resource mobilisation theory as effective as it fails to examine ‘meaning’ and ‘orientation’. As such, the very reasons why activists engage in struggles are

not provided with critical examination. The concept of 'new social movements' overcomes these issues by providing a greater focus on the causative factors which facilitate mobilisation, and in particular, it illustrates how 'grievances' are formed and maintained among activists.

## ***Eamon***

*From my first encounter with Eamon at one of my early People's Movement meetings in 2008 it was clear that he was well educated, well read, and had years of experience in social activism and political campaigning. When he spoke at meetings, he came across as very experienced, articulate and knowledgeable. I immediately got the sense that he could not only captivate a group when he spoke but he also provided clarity and direction to other activists. When I met up with Eamon for a coffee and a chat in a bookstore in Dublin city centre, it came as no surprise to me to find out that he has been politically active since the 1970s and has been involved in many previous referenda campaigns that have taken place against the European Union.*

*One of the key differences in interviewing Eamon compared with other activists was the political focus of our discussion. Eamon spoke at length about his views of the European Union, democracy, education, raising political consciousness and the pursuit of a political and economic agenda which had a negative effect on the Irish people. It was probably one of the most detailed, lengthy and intensive discussions I have had with any of my informants. When Eamon spoke, he generally did so as an 'organisation' rather than as a person. He spoke on behalf of the group and what the group think and how the group act. When I read back over my transcripts, it is clear to see why Eamon has a major input into the key decisions made in the People's Movement both in terms of the organisation, of its events and how the organisation frames itself in its posters/slogans and literature.*

*Eamon, now in his 50s and living in Dublin, tells me that he came from a small country town in the north of Ireland and was active in the civil rights movement. He notes, however, that his family had no particular interest in politics.*

*"Where I was from ... there was always a strong republican tradition. When I went to work in Belfast I was aware of the labour movement, Sinn Féin and the Worker's Party. I came to*

*Dublin as there was no work in Belfast and I came into contact with the Communist Party ... I joined in 1974”*

*Eamon illustrated that he has particularly deep and meaningful understandings of culture and nationalism. However, he feels that terms such as ‘republican’ and ‘nationalism’ carry with them too many connotations and representations. Instead he emphasises the importance of democracy and sovereignty and sees the People’s Movement as a platform for these issues.*

*During the campaigns, Eamon’s role principally involved logistics: ensuring that posters and leaflets were designed, commissioned and delivered. Eamon advised me that he also had input into the poster/leaflet content and slogans to be used. He advised me that he has a long background in political action. He utilises his experience from past struggles, and draws on his experience, memory and history when undertaking his role in the People’s Movement organisation. In this respect he feels that he has much to contribute to the group. Eamon feels that it is very important that messages are framed properly and that the slogans or images used resonate with the people. In terms of ‘on the ground’ action, Eamon was also involved in door to door leafleting and postering.*

*While he sees the People’s Movement as occupying a very specific space in Irish politics, to educate and inform the public, he does not necessarily consider the group to be on the ‘Left’.*

*“There are people in it from different political parties. There are farmers involved. There are fishermen involved. They may not necessarily categorise themselves as ‘Left’ but what unites us all is we believe the decisions affecting our lives should be made by us ... it’s a democratic organisation ... Objectively, the People’s Movement is an organisation which is anti-establishment and that’s the most important thing. The Irish establishment is part of the problem because it’s linked to the EU and has sacrificed the sovereignty of our people and country to the powers of the EU, all for their own self-interest”.*

## *Chapter 2*

## *New Social Movements*

“We have experienced a culture over the last 30 or 40 years of ‘don’t be active’, ‘don’t be involved’ ... they have created this idea of ‘look after number one’. You are considered a consumer rather than a citizen, so you have more rights as a consumer than you do as a citizen. We are battling against the dominant view that’s perpetrated ... people may not even recognise that they have been demobilised and neutralised in the process ... people think change can be brought about by the top, but that’s what we have been told ... just leave it up to others, so we have to say ‘no’. You are an active agent for change yourself. You must empower yourself”. – Eamon, People’s Movement Activist.

Crossley (2002) notes that “the new social movement approach considers the problems and issues around which movements tend to mobilise while the resource mobilisation and political process approaches tend to reflect upon the conditions which enable and facilitate mobilisation” (Crossley 2002:153). New social movements theorists contest and dispute the claim that grievances are a constant and a given within society, and claim that different types of societies and factors give rise to different types of grievances and strain (2002:167). I mentioned earlier how the European approach to social movement studies was somewhat different than the American school of thought. It sought to explore systemic conflicts within a post-industrial model (McDonald 2002) and attributed the rise in collective action to “political, economic and social strains that have accompanied the modernization process in postwar Europe” (McAdam 1988:126). This approach was referred to as ‘new social movements,’ a term coined by Alberto Melucci (1980). Klandermans & Tarrow (1988) distinguish ‘new’ social movements from ‘old’ movements in a number of key areas. New social movements had new values which were anti-modernistic and displayed new action forms by preferring decentralized structures and having a general antagonism to politics. The constituency of new social movements was also different. While the marginalized and those impacted materially were active, these movements also attracted a new middle class who were predominantly young and educated. Finally, new social movements are considered to represent a fundamental shift to postmaterialist values set forth by Inglehart

(1971, 1977) (Diani & Lodi 1988). Conflict therefore arises when these new values were emerging in a political and social system which was essentially materialist and ‘competitive’ (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:7). New social movement activists stress the importance of individual rights and identities and saw industrialization and bureaucratisation as ‘self-destructive’ (1988:8).

For Crossley (2002) the key figures connected with new social movement theory are Melucci, (1986, 1996), Alain Touraine (1981) and Jürgen Habermas (1987). Crossley makes a number of points in regard to what is ‘new’ in new social movements. He rejects the notion that they are ‘new’ simply because of their apparent rejection of politics, and argues that movements in the past have rejected politics in a similar manner. What he sees as crucial is the break and fundamental paradigm shift from Marxist thought. He notes that “the workers’ movement is the social movement of capitalist societies. The ‘new’ social movements argument is a rejection of this very specific historical thesis”. (2002:150). According to Crossley, societies have developed and changed, and the labour movement once seen as occupying the revolutionary role in industrial society has now been pacified and institutionalised (2002:151). New social movements, according to Klandermans & Tarrow (1988) “... are thought to be a reaction to structural changes in western industrialized societies” (Klandermans & Tarrow 1988:7).

While there is a general consensus among theorists that new social movements represent a departure from classical Marxist thought, it would be incorrect to draw the conclusion that such a departure implies a rejection of Marxism. This I believe is a fundamental and critical point, particularly in the context of my own ethnographic research of the People’s Movement. New social movement struggles are not defined by class and materialism, but rather individual rights and values in a postmaterialist society. Notwithstanding this, certain theorists such as McAdam (1988) have noted that the factors which drive new social movements are often “couched in terms of a broader Marxist view of the State” (1988:131). Scott (1990) notes that new social movements are primarily social and cultural rather than political. They are located within civil society and do not challenge the state directly and are an attempt to change values and lifestyles (1990:17).

Martin (2001) sees new social movements as identity based rather than class based, as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, multi-located rather than localized and multi-cultural. A plurality of meanings and orientations is evident. Identity and individual rights take on new meaning as social movement actors seek recognition (Pichardo 1997) and rights to personal liberty. That is, acceptance of the right to live differently and in turn, create new autonomous space. What we see with new social movements is individual empowerment which therefore resists greater bureaucratic control. In a sense, new social movements are engaged in 'cultural politics'. Social movement actors contest dominant understandings of events and consider their position in opposition to a hegemonic order. This is done through the creation of collective identity and the establishment of lifestyles and communities (Melucci 1988, Nash 2001). In this respect new social movements have been associated with those campaigns and struggles relating to gender, the environment, race, ethnicity, minority rights and peace. As these movements have multiple identities and diverse membership, they do not represent typical partisan politics and are global in their outlook (Nagle 2008). Three main groups of individuals are said to make up the social base of 'new social movements': a 'new middle class' who enjoy relative economic security and are highly educated; those with a marginal position in the labour market, such as students, housewives, and retired people; elements of the independent 'old middle class' such as farmers and craftsmen (Melucci 1988:344, Offe 1985). Commenting on the composition of new social movements, Rucht (1988) notes that they are not defined by "class interests, economic deprivation or political exclusion" (1988:317). In other words, these are not dominated by activists who are marginalized socially and suffering from economic pressures as could be said for many involved in class or labour based collective actions.

Most social movement scholars are generally in agreement with Melucci that a shift has taken place within struggles and social action, but commentators and theorists diverge in terms of their diagnosis (Starr 2000:30). There has been much debate about the term 'new social movements' and debates largely relate to criticisms about whether such movements are 'new' or whether they form part of historical process and continuity. Melucci (1988) acknowledges these criticisms but he does note that if one merely compares the 'old' and

'new' movements in a political reductionist manner, "it underestimates the social and cultural dimensions of contemporary collective action" (1988:337). Melucci argues that we need to look much deeper than this and focus on a cultural model and symbolic challengers. Dismissing resource mobilisation theory, Melucci argues that "collective action does not result from the aggregation of atomized individuals. Rather it must be seen as the outcome of complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging" Melucci (1996:18). According to Melucci, collective action only appears unstructured or irrational "when set against the dominant norms of the social order and against the interests which that order wishes to maintain" (1996:18). In his rejection of a traditional sociological analysis of protest and systems, he argues that we need to understand the 'reference systems of collective action'. Social action is therefore defined by Melucci as "the result of relationships which tie together a plurality of social actors producing meaning for what they do" (1996:26).

### **New Social Movements and Identity**

Expressions of identity, or 'Identity Politics', are defined by Chesters and Welsh (2006) as "the pursuit of political recognition for aspects of the social and cultural specificity arising from his or her particularistic identity based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, age and so on" (2006:131). European scholars were the first to focus on the importance and centrality of identities to social movements. By challenging the American school of thought, social movement theory took a 'cultural turn' (Mueller 2003:275).

I have already noted that the unique characteristic about new social movements is how their struggle and mobilisation centres on symbolic and informational issues rather than material ones (Starr 2000:30). Through this approach, we see the actions of social actors who are dominated and challenge the established order by opposing a social adversary in an attempt to appropriate control of historicity, that is, the main orientations of community life (Wieviorka 2005:2). In new social movements we see an emphasis on individual identity and its expression. In turn, social theorists saw that 'identity' itself was both a resource and something which could be 'framed' (Starr 2000:31). New social movement identities were

created around the struggles of students, gender, disability, sexual orientation, the environment, ethnicity and race. While these new identities could be considered as threatening traditional 'class' based actions, Marxists and other social theorists saw these new social movement identities as existing within the same realm as class. While not 'class' driven they were firmly rooted in 'class' action in that they were struggling against a dominant political class for self-expression and rights. Identity and expression of the 'self' is explicitly cultural. Activists, while emphasising identity, are not only struggling against dominant discourse they are simultaneously creating new ways to live and socially organize. In this respect, what we are seeing in new social movements, is a counter cultural expression of identity and autonomy.

Mayo (2005) illustrates how some human rights and environmental organizations have developed into a mass membership group. They have come to be operated along corporate lines including the adoption of business strategies to remain 'competitive' and ensure 'organisational survival' (2005:69). It needs to be stated that there are clear differentiations between new social movements of this nature, who clearly operate in an institutional formal manner within politically created and permissible civil society spheres, and other, more 'cultural' groups, which Melucci sees as clearly operating and functioning outside the political sphere by creating new cultural 'autonomous' space for new ways of life. I believe it is important to recognize this distinction, as it is not possible to simply outline in a carte blanche fashion the characteristics of new social movements. Institutional and formal new social movement organizations certainly display distinct characteristics when compared to the new social movements outlined by Rucht (1988) which "combine a militant countercultural emancipatory and radical democratic current with a defensive anti-modernistic current" (1988a:317). Indeed, it could be argued that several new social movements have become institutionalised within mainstream civil society and traditional politics, even though such movements were originally non-political. While some commentators have claimed that protest action is on the decline (Frederic Royall 2000) others contend that the 'normalization' and 'institutionalization' of protest have created barriers to mobilisation and have made protests less visible in the public eye (Van Aelst & Walgrave 2001).

## **New Social Movements – Culture, Politics & Structure**

Melucci places emphasis on the importance of the existence of a public space away from the government and the state, which are crucial for the existence of collective identities. However, it must be borne in mind that such spaces are fluid. While such spaces are essential to prevent the institutionalisation of the movement, they are spaces which are controlled and determined by the state, and their shape and form depend on the flexibility of “the gate keepers and agendas” (Melucci 1995:115).

I outlined earlier how resource mobilisation and political process theorists have taken on board the concept of culture into their research, but commentators have pointed out that although culture has entered into their discussions, it is relegated to instrumental terms under which individuals can be mobilised. It is important therefore to differentiate this notion of ‘culture’ from its use within activism. It has been recognized that “culture may be a means to political ends for resource mobilisation and political process advocates but it is not yet fully recognised as an end in itself” (Crossley 2002:152). In other words ‘culture’ is merely seen as a resource. For activists however, cultural politics is the essence of new social movements insofar as it represents how activists construct their social world. It provides the narrative and code through which they engage in social exchange and interaction. Habermas (1987) sees the rise of new social movements as a response to the ‘colonization of the lifeworld’ and ‘cultural impoverishment’ (See also Crossley & Roberts 2004). His key concept revolves around the ‘public sphere’ which is where discussion and debate takes place within society over quality of life issues. It is this public sphere which no longer exists and public participation in political life is thereby reduced. Crossley (2002:156) notes that the effect of this is that “most citizens, most of the time, are more concerned with their own private domestic interests and projects than with politics and public issues”. According to Crossley (2002), Habermas sees greater bureaucratic control and state governance contributing to a “loss of both freedom and meaning” and the “cultural narratives and symbolic forms which give existential meaning and ethical direction to our lives are increasingly trampled into the ground” (2002:158). Essentially, what Habermas, Melucci,

Touraine and other new social movement theorists argue is that the state and market forces are having a direct impact into areas of their lives once considered private and personal. This is what Habermas refers to as 'colonisation of the lifeworld'. Market forces and corporatism have made significant inroads into our social lives and in many respects control and dominate our social interactions and social exchanges. Coupled with this is the decline in public space which has been re-appropriated by market forces following the retreat of the state. Crossley notes that "The state is akin to a nanny doling out rewards and punishments to children who have become dependent upon it .... Genuine public opinion is drowned in the sea of manufactured opinion generated by the pollsters and image consultants" (2002:160).

New social movement activists, and indeed theorists, see these new struggles as offering hope because individuals are creating space outside the political realm and are encouraging and stimulating public debate. One of the striking characteristics of the social actors involved in new social movement struggles is that they seek personal rights and cultural space, but at the same time are not mobilising to gain access to the corridors of power. Such social actors campaign for cultural rights and seek new and better ways of living together. Activists create public spaces that are independent of political parties and the commercial logic of the mass media (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005:14). Melucci refers to these symbolic actions and resources as cultural 'codes'. Such 'codes' enable new identities to be constructed and new social relations to develop. "The form of contemporary movements is the most direct expression of the message collective action announces to society. The meaning of the action has to be found in the action itself more than in the pursued goals: movements are not qualified by what they do but what they are" (Melucci 1985:809). Similarly Wieviorka (2005) notes that "these actors wanted to invent a new way of living together; they thought that increasing production was not necessarily a sign of progress, and they were concerned about what sort of planet their generation would leave to those following them ... these actors were much more culturally than socially oriented" (2005:6).

While I feel that it is incorrect to refer to new social movements as non-political, they certainly do not align themselves with established political parties and seek to operate

outside of the political field, preferring instead to create their own space, raising counter demands for autonomy and mobilising principally to preserve identities by appropriating symbolic resources (Nagle 2008). In other words, while new social movements are considered non-political in the traditional sense, it is generally contended that they are highly politicized in the cultural sense. Indeed, such movements are instrumental in the creation and formation of new cultural politics, and it is for this reason why such movements are so problematic for governments (Keane & Mier 1989:41). Scott (1990:153) also recognizes the political ‘non-negotiable’ character of such movements but argues that this view assumes that workers’ movements of industrial/capitalist society have now moved into the institutional political structure and in this respect he tends to be more critical of claims that new social movements are not political in their form. In a similar vein, Klandermans & Tarrow (1988:23) still view the actions of new social movements as conditioned and formed within national political traditions and alignments, regardless of how much they operate outside the political sphere.

Discussing networks, Melucci (1995:114) states that “submerged networks in everyday life create and practice new meanings ... they emerge only on specific grounds to confront a public authority on a given issue”. ‘Latency’ and ‘visibility’ are, for Melucci, the two “interrelated poles of collective action” (Keane & Mier 1989:70). Various new social movement organisations have many common features, such as social bases from which to recruit and mobilise activists from, organizational patterns and general values and ideologies. One of the key structural features of new social movements is their unstable form, and the fact that such organizations do not have clearly defined boundaries (Rucht 1988:313). They are loose, unstructured and informal. In terms of organisational forms, Rucht (1988) also notes that new social movements operate in a horizontal and decentralized form “compared to the hierarchical and formal structures of industrial enterprise, public administrations and large membership associations” (1988:309). New social movements also tend to rotate leadership and vote communally on all issues (Pichardo 1997).

Within the new social movement network, individual social movement organizations have a tendency to see themselves as allies or “affiliated forces” (Rucht 1988:307). My own

ethnographic research supports these findings. Rucht notes how movement organisations may fundamentally agree on matters, such as greater participation at the political level against bureaucratic governance (enhancing democracy) and also the struggle over quality of life issues (1988:307).

### **Post-materialism**

One of the key questions which I set out to address when writing this thesis is whether a group, such as the People's Movement could be considered a 'new social movement' actor or a class/worker based movement actor from the 'old' Left. In addressing this question, it is necessary to look at what we understand by post-materialism, which is regarded by social movement theorists to be a fundamental characteristic of new social movements (Pichardo 1997). Indeed Touraine (1981) saw society as moving beyond the industrial age into a post-industrial society, and he felt that the vacuum of the space once occupied by the workers' movement would be filled by a new type of movement. Over thirty years later, it is questionable whether this vacuum has been filled and if society is indeed living in a post-materialist world. Inglehart & Welzel (2005) contend that socioeconomic development brings with it cultural and political change. While modernization brought with it a change in society from secular to rational thinking through industrialization, it also brought a rise in 'self-expression values' in a post industrialized age (2005:20, Inglehart 1990, Inglehart 1977). They further note that "people become materially more secure, intellectually more autonomous, and socially more independent. Thus people experience a greater sense of human autonomy" (2005:24 See also Fahey, Hayes & Sinnott 2005:141, O'Connell 2001:51). However, this autonomy, coupled with the retreat of the welfare state, can result in increased material hardship for certain individuals. It is these individuals, whose personal socio-economic development has not kept pace with society, who may still be addressing 'material needs'. This results in the continuation of the old Left/Right divide in modern nation states. Inglehart and Welzel note that the post-materialist age does not result in a decline in consumption or material desires. They simply contend that such consumption habits are reshaped and are now more a question of 'lifestyle' and 'choice' (2005:33). It is thought that in a post-materialist society, the material needs of society are generally

satisfied, and while individuals continue to have needs these are of a non-material nature. New social movements are often considered to represent social actors' struggles for 'higher needs' in the Maslowian sense (Maslow 1954). According to Maslow (1954), individuals are motivated to act based on a series of stages which first address core physiological needs, followed by other material and psychological needs. The final stage which individuals reach is one of aestheticism and intellectualism where their motivation is towards post material needs such as fairness, justice, democracy and civil liberties. Inglehart (1990) illustrates that what social actors were struggling for in the 1960s, simply reflected the emergence of post materialist concerns and ideals. Of course certain theorists, such as Galbraith (1958) contradict Maslowian theory contending instead that individuals do not in fact reach a higher level of post-materialism. Galbraith, according to O'Connell (2001), does not see materialism leading to post-materialism but rather materialism begets materialism through increased "patterns of consumption" and "widespread and continuing obsession with production in already over productive societies" (O'Connell 2001:53)

I referred earlier to the social base of new social movements and how several activists are young, well-educated middle class people (Rucht 1988:308). Cox (2003) notes that historically the social movements of the mid-nineteenth century were "not middle class reformers seeking to ameliorate the anger of the poor, but it is the movement which includes the poor themselves". 'Class', according to Cox, is the driving impetus within the movement. Those materially impacted by class differences were those individuals who were active in the struggle. This 'class' aspect has been, and continues to be, a decisive and integral component in terms of mobilisation. What has changed dramatically in the latter half of the twentieth century according to social movement theorists, is that 'class' played less of a prominent role in determining and forming social action. Social commentators are generally agreed that new forms of social movements were emerging, based on culture, identity and post materialism rather than historical class/material based action (See also Wieviorka 2005:5). While Cox (2001) does acknowledge the new character of these social movements, he instead argues that 'class' itself is in fact the 'movement'. Whether such struggles are from labour or identity based actions, such as women's rights or the peace movement, these can all be considered actions from below against a powerful ruling class

(2003:9). Cox sees 'class' in terms defined by E.P. Thompson (1966). In this sense, the entire struggle for social change is one continuous historical struggle of one 'single movement' which has simply been "embodied in different themes ... at different times and places, sometimes formed into complex alliances, sometimes fragmented and isolated but developing and changing" (Cox 2003:14).

The arrival of post materialistic concerns developed alongside old socio-economic concerns and in many cases overlapped. This parallel development therefore led to a general increase in issues generating protest (Van Aelst & Walgrave 2001). While this may be the case, Martin (2001) considers the growth in new social movements detrimental to the cause and struggle of more 'traditional' issues such as "material redistribution and inequality" (2001:361).

### **The 'Old' and 'New' social movements.**

For individuals, whose struggles are grounded in material/labour concerns, new social movements do not in fact represent a radical departure from their own belief system. New social movements simply represent the next 'step' or another 'phase' in raising social 'consciousness' on the implications and consequences of capitalism. Scott (1990) notes that the highly charged political events of the 1960s were not class based in political and economic demands, but he illustrates how class relations have been 'diversified' into regional, political, ethnic and gender divisions (1990:57). In this respect, one can view new social movements as simply a diversification or extension of the old Left. (See also Hobson 2003:2)

Other theorists, such as Calhoun (1995), are critical of new social movement debates around new identity and are keen to illustrate that campaigns for rights are not 'new' and have a long and fruitful history which cannot be overlooked. Therefore, all identity struggles cannot be viewed in isolation of their historical trajectories. The tactics employed by new social movements are in some ways similar to those employed by 'old' social movements. New social movements did not simply replace previous social movements. While social

movement theorists are generally of the belief that the growth of new social movements arose out of a decline in traditional labour related struggles and an increase in postmaterialist forms of struggle, this does not imply that labour related movements simply retreated and played no relevant part in the struggle of social movements since the 1960s. Labour movements continued to play a critical role but did so in the shadow of an increase in post materialist issues (Martin 2001). The new struggles which were centred on quality of life issues and identities could not be addressed within Marxist explanations as contemporary movements were always defined (Pichardo 1997).

While new social movements may not represent a radical departure for those of the old Left, we have seen how new social movement theorists draw a line to differentiate 'class' actions by attributing such action to industrial capitalist society. Unlike Cox (2001, 2003) Melucci believes that "in contemporary society classes as real social groups are withering away" and new concepts are required which are not economic reductionist in their nature (1995:117 See also Urry 1995:169). According to Urry (1995), society has come a long way from 'base and superstructure' models of class, and in modern society today, "global flows of images, people and information seem to undermine most of the conditions for class action" (1995:180). Others such as Eder (1995:41) do not see 'class' in the industrial sense correlating to the ideology of today but do nevertheless still regard 'class' as an issue. New social movement struggles over 'identity' are regarded as the making of the 'middle class' in advanced modern society.

In Europe, traditional political groups and organizations are credited with providing the groundwork for the emergence of new social movements. Klandermans & Tarrow (1988) note that new social movements "would have been far less effective had they not had those older groups to compete with and to catalyze into new models of action and more aggressive programs" (1988:24). This recognition of the historicity of models of action was also acknowledged by Melucci who states that it is "impossible to address and analyse social movements as empirical phenomena without referring to concrete historical settings" (1996:197). Scott (1990) considers Melucci and Touraine's focus and application of a 'cultural emphasis' to new social movements, that is, post-industrial movements, as a 'false

dichotomy'. I would agree with Scott's analysis that the old Left did not collapse when the new Left, that is, new social movements emerged. The new Left is a continuation of the old Left. It is merely represented and framed under different banners and flags. It may no longer rally around class and labour issues due to its diversification and division but 'cultural elements' are just as evident in older workers' movements, than within new social movements (Scott 1990:126). Indeed for Scott, "many of the developments to which the label 'new social movements' later became applied, were in fact revivals of earlier movements" (1990:13).

Crossley (2002), in discussing new social movements, offers some comparisons with the old Left. He illustrates the high number of middle class 'service' workers who make up new social movements and sees this as a suggestion that the 'old politics of class' is alive and well (2002:164). The incorporation of a number of 'socialist' movements and fringe 'left' organizations provided a "seedbed" for the growth of new movements (2002:165). He also acknowledges the considerable 'overlap' and mutation between the two strands of activism, and further notes, to a certain extent 'new' movements emerged from the 'old'. This, he attributes, to the disgruntlement and conservatism with the old Left (2002:165). According to Scott (1990), the question of the relationship of new social movements to the class based actions of the old Left has been quite contentious. He notes that some movements have attempted to distance themselves from movements of the Left "to prevent the hijacking of movement demands" (1990:22). He does, however, recognize the struggles of new social movements as being of a political nature and raising political questions and demands. I concur with Scott's analysis that new social movements are indeed political in nature. I also agree with his criticism directed at Melucci for de-politicising the struggles of new social movements and not further recognizing the greater link and connectivity to the struggles of older movements (1990:23). The struggles of new social movements are 'socially' and 'culturally' defined whereas movements of the 'Left' are defined in 'political' and 'economic' terms. While each of their struggles may be considered unique, both movements are working towards a common goal in parallel to each other. If new social movements are successful in bringing about social change, it will be welcomed and celebrated by activists from left-wing class based movements and vice versa. Both movements overlap. The

‘causative’ factors which underlie their struggles are the same. They simply differ in their form and how they direct and frame their actions.

Where then, does the People’s Movement organisation fit within these definitions of new social movements? There is no clear answer to this question. While the People’s Movement is not strictly a new social movement organisation in Meluccian terms, it does, nevertheless, possess a high number of characteristics which are often attributed to new social movements, such as a well-educated activist base, support from a new middle class and certain ad hoc and informal organisational structures. Its struggles, in many respects, could also be defined as cultural and focused on identity politics. The struggle of the People’s Movement, however, is not necessarily ‘new’, and activists themselves recognise the historical trajectory of the struggles against the European Union which many have engaged with since the early 1970s. Activists’ struggles are also clearly political and could not be described as post-materialist action, as new social movements have very often been referred to. The People’s Movement therefore is a hybrid form of old and new. The birth of the People’s Movement is part of a chain of activist struggle against the European Union dating back over forty years but this phase of the struggle has certainly adopted new forms. Core activists, who historically engaged in working class and labour struggles are now campaigning alongside middle class activists and independent campaigners. The organisation’s framing of actions is reflective of this new and changing demographic. I noted earlier how Scott found that new social movements sometimes distanced themselves from ‘left’ groups and organisations. During EU Treaty referenda campaigns, I observed that the People’s Movement wished to create its own political space and distance itself from other political left groups. The Peoples Movement was a new organisation and activists did not wish the group to be identified with strong political left/right affiliations, but rather one which was focused on local democracy. At times distancing was required as it enabled the organisation to campaign under its own banners and symbols without becoming subsumed into a larger collective of political ‘Left’ groups who campaigned for a ‘No’ vote. Activists also did not wish to view the organisation’s struggle in Left/Right terms and preferred that the organisation not be identified with Left discourse and political rhetoric and slogans.

As I mentioned above, there is no clear answer as to whether the People's Movement organisation can be considered a 'new social movement'. This is compounded by a lack of clarity by social movement theorists and academic scholars on what can and cannot be considered to be new social movement activity. In a similar vein to Scott (1990:132), I advocate a 'pluralist' model which reflects both a cultural and political interpretation and analysis of social movements, but such a model must also take cognisance of the historicity of social activism, and how certain forms of struggles can be reframed and realigned to suit emerging political opportunities. While certain commentators view new social movement activity operating outside the sphere of politics, Scott validly points out that many of the struggles of new social movements are essentially political in their nature, insofar as they are quite clearly struggling for political recognition, access and integration (1990:134). According to Scott, "new movements carry on the project of older movements in a vital respect: they open up the political sphere, they articulate popular demands and they politicize issues previously confined to the private realm" (1990:155). In a similar fashion, Mayo (2005) notes how social movement organizations on the Left now "pay more attention to issues of culture and identity, and how to relate these to other struggles", and these 'identity' based issues are "firmly on labour and trade union movements' agendas" (2005:64).

### **From New Social Movements to Global Activism**

I have already made reference to how class based and workers' movements continued to mobilise alongside the emergence and growth of new social movements. Indeed, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the former working class movements, and what remained of the new mobilisations of the 1970s, remained active. Some social actors had however been institutionalized and others were not collectively strong enough to make challenges and others had been radicalized (Wieviorka 2005:8). The 1990s however saw a rise in new forms of struggles, which involved both new actors and also others who were an extension of former struggles. What was unique, however, is that these new struggles were positioned not within a nation state structure, but a global network, combined within an overall master frame of anti-capitalism and anti-neoliberalism. That is, an alternative global movement.

Della Porta & Tarrow (2005) support this view and contend that there has been a “shift in the locus of political power” and a shift from national to both supra-national and regional levels with the increasing power of international institutions, especially economic ones, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO), European Union (EU) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (2005:2).

McDonald (2002) puts forward the point that ‘collective action’ by social movements against industrial capitalism has strong historical roots, for example, in labour movements. He notes that what we are witnessing today is a more networked and individualistic capitalist structure. This therefore needs to be challenged by a different social movement model. Action, he notes, “needs to be understood in terms of a shared struggle for personal experience” (McDonald 2002:125, See also Della Porta et al. 2006:18). Mario Diani (2005) supports this view and similarly notes that new elements are required to define the dynamics of collective action when we consider social movements of a global nature (Diani 2005:50).

Other theorists, such as Wiewiorka (2005), place global movements and working class movements on two ends of the social movements spectrum due to the fact that unlike working class movements, global movements are based on a loose “conglomeration” of networks who challenge a “vague, impersonal and poorly identified opponent”(2005:10). Global movements are therefore seen as being neither political, social (workers’ movements) or cultural (new social movements) but rather based on individualization and personal choice (2005:11). While the global movements of today are transnational, there is a valid argument that working class struggles have evolved and are simply amending their strategies to directly challenge the increasing mobility of capital. As capital has become mobile, so too have workers’ and class struggles. They now represent and position themselves within a more loosely connected transnational anti-capitalist network. Indeed, the challenge of activists who campaigned against the Lisbon & EU Fiscal Treaties reforms was a challenge to the EU and its neoliberal economic agenda. These campaigns, notably the Lisbon Treaty campaign, saw both traditional working class groups of the old Left and elements of new social movements campaigning side by side. While new social movements may not be channelling their actions within a Marxist framework, both components of the movement

recognise that their struggles are shared, while at the same time maintaining their own autonomous spaces.

A number of theorists conclude that with the dawn of global activism, the era of new social movements has now passed (Wieviorka 2005, Crossley 2002). According to Wieviorka, new social movements “correspond to a transitional phase between the working class movement of yesterday and the ‘global’ movements of today, between industrial society and the societies which we now refer to as network societies rather than post-industrial societies” (2005:8). Crossley (2002) does qualify this by noting that, on the other hand, many new social movements “are now in a period of latency, if they have not disappeared altogether, and others have achieved a foothold in the political system and/or the more local sites of struggles in which they emerged” (2002:149).

In terms of identities, Della Porta et al (2006) note that a large majority of global activists generally identify themselves with a social movement which is critical of certain aspects of globalisation (2006:234). The People’s Movement do not frame themselves to be an anti-globalisation group, nor are they regarded among their peers as such. They could, however, be considered a group which are critical of globalisation and its negative effects, as indeed could several groups/organisations on the ‘Left’. Indeed, if one were to undertake a closer analysis of movement actors in Ireland who challenge globalisation and global capital, the findings may reveal a high number of groups from the political left who campaign within ‘socialist’ and Marxist frames rather than strictly definable new social movements as outlined by Melucci. I agree with Della Porta et al (2006) who see the struggles of the anti-globalisation movement as being a “blend of the ‘Old Left’ attention to issues of social justice with new social movements focus on differential rights and positive freedoms” (2006:235). In this respect the People’s Movement, as a social movement organisation, squarely fits within Della Porta’s definition of a component within a wider anti-globalisation movement.

## **Fergus**

*I first met Fergus in a hotel in Mullingar Co. Westmeath a few months before the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. I had driven down to Mullingar that evening from Dublin, about 80km away, to see what the People's Movement was all about and what they were saying about the Treaty. I was not an activist with the group at this stage. I had attended bigger and wider discussions in Dublin city where there were participants from both the 'No' and 'Yes' camps in attendance, but this was my first time going to a meeting organised by the People's Movement. While they were a new group and I knew nothing about them, I knew that Patricia McKenna (who is a former MEP) would be talking that night on behalf of the organisation so I made the extra effort to attend. Following the meeting, I met with Patricia and had decided that I wanted to get involved, to do something, and help with the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. Five years later as I write this thesis, I continue to be involved with the group. During this period I have seen many new faces at meetings and events and I recall others who I have not seen since the initial campaign against the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty in 2008.*

*One individual named Fergus, a man in his 60s and a native of north Dublin, is one of the core individuals in the People's Movement group. I was first introduced to Fergus during my meeting in Mullingar early in 2008. Since then, I have become a regular attendee and participant at People's Movement meetings, campaign events and actions. I quickly came to understand that Fergus was one of the key principal drivers of the group. Over the past number of years I have come to know Fergus quite well, both through the organisation and personally. As well as a fellow activist, he has become a close personal friend and is also one of my key informants for my ethnographic research for this thesis.*

*Fergus advised me that he is a long-time activist and had campaigned for a 'No' vote on previous EU referenda before the Lisbon Treaty referendum in 2008. During 2001 and 2002, Fergus co-founded a group called 'Democrats against Nice' which was a small group established to challenge the Nice Treaty. Prior to that, Fergus was also active in*

*campaigning against the introduction of other EU reform treaties such as the Amsterdam Treaty, the Maastricht Treaty and the Single European Treaties. Fergus mentioned that in the past he participated in campaigns with Anthony Coughlan<sup>5</sup> and the 'National Platform', an EU critical group who have since dissolved. Fergus credits this group with having produced very insightful and well researched critiques of the EU.*

*While Fergus is a former member of the Worker's Party, and life- long trade union activist, he has been a strong critic of the European Union as a project since Ireland first joined the EEC in 1973. Fergus was one of the key founders of the People's Movement group following the defeat of the campaign to reject the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nice Treaty referendum in 2002. He continues to play a key role in the group's campaigns and mobilisations. Indeed, several of my informants acknowledge the great deal of work and time he contributes to the group. Fergus is regularly involved in the organisation of meetings and mobilisation events for the group. Fergus is also a significant contributor and researcher for the People's Movement publication, 'The People's News'. He also has a significant input into the group's literature and documents. While informants have great respect for his activism, some have questioned whether the group could sustain itself without his commitment and leadership.*

*In the past, Fergus was also active in peace movements such as CND and later PANA (Peace and Neutrality Alliance<sup>6</sup>). He was also on the national committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement group in Ireland. From working alongside Fergus, it is clear to see that he has a long history of social activism, and experience in campaigning on issues relating to democracy, rights and social justice.*

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Coughlan is a Retired Senior Lectuer Emeritus in Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin & Secretary of the National Platform for EU Research and Information. (See [www.nationalplatform.org](http://www.nationalplatform.org) Last accessed 28.10.2013)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pana.ie/> PANA advocates an independent Irish foreign policy, seeks to defend Irish neutrality and promotes a reformed United Nations as the institution through which Ireland should pursue its security concerns.(Last accessed 28.10.2013)

### *Chapter 3*

### *A New Europe*

“Some groups of people are authors of globalisation processes, some recipients; some are winners, some losers. Globalisation, its possibilities and benefits, has varying aspects across the world. Not all people are equally involved” (Garsten and Jacobsson 2007:143)

This chapter focuses on Europe and the European Union, its historical development from a collection of autonomous member states into an ever increasing integrated federal model and geopolitical powerhouse. I look at the region’s development against the backdrop of globalisation and in particular increased mobility of global capital. Through my analysis of the European Union’s transformation in a global age, I address the consequences of such transformation for localities within Europe. I illustrate that such developments are not always democratic and have been met with resistance from individuals who claim that such globalisation, and increase in hegemonic power, brings with it increased inequality, widening division of class and a neoliberal model of economics.

I wish to outline the importance and relevance of these discussions in the context of a larger debate on social movements, in particular for ethnographic research. Firstly, anthropological studies have taken a specific interest in the topic of globalisation insofar as the subjects of ethnographic research are increasingly studied against the backdrop of greater interdependence in the global market. It is the impact of such interdependence from a social and economic standpoint which has met with critical commentary in many ethnographic contexts, including this present thesis. Secondly, anthropologists are keen to highlight a historical perspective rather than see globalisation and neoliberalism as a ‘fait accompli’ (Kingfisher & Maskovsky 2008:115, Kiely 2005:189). Allman (1999) recognizes that there exists an “illogical logic that there is no alternative to capitalism”, and this is becoming increasingly widespread (1999:2). Thirdly, anthropologists frequently encounter and study the micro ‘social and cultural effects’ which result from globalisation and macro-economic policy. The anthropologist looks at frameworks and structures within localised societies and

economies. This is a critical point, as it is these very factors which need unpacking to reveal how and why activists challenge dominant forms of global capitalism which in many respects become embedded in national and supra-national levels of governance. Social and cultural structural changes are studied as part of a process which increasingly identifies globalisation and market forces as being key factors in social change. Scientific processes, the division of labour, technology and capital mobility replace or alter local work practices, traditional markets and norms (Mathur 1998). The unequal consequences produced as a result are critical for anthropologists and sociologists in their understanding of collective action and social movement struggle to remedy this structural strain in society.

This thesis is primarily concerned with an ethnographic account of one particular social movement organisation, the People's Movement, who collectively organize in opposition to EU reform, and any attempt to further develop the EU into a federal super state. It is relevant therefore to look closely at the EU itself, its formation as a trading bloc and its development into a political and economic force within global and regional governance. In particular, it is important to illustrate the transformation of Europe into a vehicle for capital, within the framework of globalisation, through the adoption of a neoliberal economic model. It is also important to emphasise the EU's position within a structural framework vis-a-vis other nation states and its role in supporting and maintaining, what activists would regard as, a system which lacks transparency, democracy and accountability and which inherently creates greater social inequality and injustice.

### **'Europe' – A Fragmented Past to Political Unity**

What is Europe? Where did Europe begin? Is Europe merely a continent, born out of political fragmentation and conflict in the subsequent centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire? We do know that Europe as a geographical region has a long distinct history. It is a continent of many traditions and heritages. It is a continent with rich cultural diversity and linguistic variety. But how can we do justice to an account of Europe and its history in such simple terms? Even in contemporary society, there exists confusion about the terms 'Europe' and the 'EU'. The terms themselves are now being used interchangeably.

Historians, such as Perry Anderson, date the emergence of Europe back to the middle ages “as an arena of a distinct civilisation” but the concept of ‘Europe’, as a distinct regional entity, had played no significance during this period. He also notes how Mediaeval Europe also displays a unity of certain “religious beliefs, social practices, cultural and political institutions (Anderson 2009:475).

It is difficult to trace back to where ‘Europe’ began in a ‘political’ sense. Certain commentators begin this discussion with reference to the 1648 Westphalian Peace Accord which marked the end of a number of regional conflicts, including the European Thirty Year War. This accord demarcated the boundaries of European states which over time provided what we know today as the ‘political’ map of states. It is for this reason that the Westphalian Peace Accord is regarded as a critical juncture in modern history. It also represented much more than simply a peace accord, in that it became the first ‘European’ conference of states and is therefore seen as the first step in modern diplomatic international relations of nation states at a European level.

It is important to be clear that the Westphalian Peace Accord was not aimed at the creation of a European governing system. It was merely a settlement which defined boundaries and borders of states. Indeed, the term state may be too strong a word to use, insofar as many of these borders simply demarcated regional principalities. The drawing of political boundaries and the mapping of territorial regions did however have the de facto effect of establishing a recognisable system of states within Europe. Christianity was the defining territorial symbol of identity in Europe. Religion therefore acted as a marker for the borders of ‘Europe’. Its borders demarcated frontiers which historically separated imagined ideologies such as the ‘East’ from the ‘West’ (Delanty 1995:67). Following the signing of the Peace Accord and the formal mapping of national territories, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (and the Napoleonic wars) marked a period of ideological nationalism throughout Europe and states began to play a more central role particularly in mediating between capital and labour within their defined territories (Lithman 2004). While some commentators refer to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the period of ‘enlightenment’ (which saw the separation of Church & State) as the birth of

European cultural identity (Llobera 2003), politically Europe remained firmly divided by national boundaries. Anderson (2009:476) notes that “it was only with the secular turn of the Enlightenment, that there emerged a strong sense of Europe as such, as the designation of a unitary civilisation”. This unitary civilisation was wrapped up in three commonalities: religious beliefs, public laws and customary manners. Anderson notes that this unity “included a political dimension, formally at odds with itself. For what also defined Europe were the virtues of its division” (2009:476). Indeed, it was the division of states which predominated Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the form of nation building. The growth of nationalism resulted in states focusing inward to develop and define their national frameworks (Scott 1998). While this period strengthened the concept of the ‘nation state’, any form of political unity at a European level remained a distant reality. Europe as a geopolitical entity did not exist. Within Europe, its states were being redefined and shifted by civil wars and interstate wars leading up to the two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century.

Lithman (2004:87), in fact, regards the Westphalian state system as coming to an end with the culmination of the two World Wars. The emergent Europe post World War II, was intended to overcome the shortcomings of the nation state system which was seen as being at the root of Europe’s past internal conflicts and wars. It is often claimed, through political discourse, that modern Europe is built upon peace, solidarity and democracy. In reality however, Europe’s history reveals one of conflict and instability, a view which is supported by Delanty (1995) when he notes that “it was colonialism and conquest that unified Europe and not peace and solidarity. Every model of Europe ever devised always generated an anti-model. Europe has tended to be a divisive phenomenon; it is not inherently connected with peace and unity” (1995:7).

Today, it is quite common to use the terms ‘Europe’ and ‘EU’ interchangeably, but this also has its flaws. Unlike the political demarcation of sovereign states the ‘EU’ has its beginnings in a project originating among a small group of European member states. While initially created as a ‘vision’ rather than a ‘political’ project, in many ways its principle is claimed to be the promotion of political harmony through economic means (Clayton 2004). Its

beginnings grew out of an economic and trade agreement referred to as ‘The European Economic Community’ (EEC) which was created in March 1957 (which in fact emerged out of a former Treaty called the European Coal and Steel Community Treaty of Paris April 1951). While French political economist Jean Monnet is regarded as the principal architect of the European community, there were a number of forces behind integration. While Monnet and his ‘federalists’ wished to create a European order immune from nationalist wars which had devastated Europe twice before, French economic interests following the war years, played a strategic role. The U.S. also wanted a strong Western European bulwark against the Soviets (Milward 1992, Anderson 2009). The common interest of all parties was economic stability. The EEC operated with a membership of only 6 nations, Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Netherlands. This continued until the 1970s when the Community began gradual enlargement. Membership doubled over the next two decades with Britain, Denmark and Ireland joining in the 1970s & Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1980s. The Single European Act (SEA) of 1987 marked the first significant transformation of the European Economic Community. It not only provided the legal basis for European Monetary Union but it also changed the title of the group to ‘European Community’ reflecting its growing political unity rather than a pure ‘economic’ focus. Political unity at this stage was far from a reality, but the SEA paved the way for further reforms. Due to a lack of harmonization, each nation continued to act, when possible, to protect its own national industries (Clayton 2004). The 1990s saw further fundamental shifts in EU governance. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union or TEU) reconfigured the ‘European Community’ into a ‘European Union’. The TEU is generally seen as the major stepping stone to a political and federal European governing system in so far as it specifically creates EU Citizenship. It also provides for a single currency framework and expanded European law into new areas of social and economic policy previously legislated for by national parliaments. The ability to harmonise legislation across member states was also made easier through a change in voting procedures to ‘qualified majority’ rather than by consensus. It has been further argued that the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 represented a further shift in the consolidation of political power in Europe, a point which Perry Anderson (2009) notes was compounded by the fall of communism in the countries of Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany. (2009:26). Indeed it has been argued that

the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 represented the end of the main Left/Right Divide in Irish Politics over EU integration in so far as the event marked the entry of the Labour Party and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) into the debate on Europe as pro-Treaty advocates (O'Mahony 2009:436).

Three new countries (Austria, Sweden & Finland) joined the European Union in 1995 bringing the total number of member states to 15. Two subsequent treaties introduced substantial changes to the Treaty of the European Union. The Amsterdam treaty (1997) provided for significant changes to policy, whereas the Nice Treaty (2001) provided for an extensive institutional overhaul of EU structures and voting mechanisms, paving the way for further enlargement. Since the Treaty of Nice, the European Union has expanded from 15 to 25 members in 2004 and to 27 members in 2007. Croatia is the latest member of the EU, having joined in July 2013. It currently has 28 members, and according to Eurostat, a population of c.500 million 'citizens' (although greater 'Europe' is estimated to have a population of over 820 million). The European Union has numerous economic trading agreements with peripheral and neighbouring countries and also has a number of 'candidate' (and potential candidate) countries in its sights for membership. As a political bloc, it has the potential to expand to 35-40 members in the not so distant future. Indeed only recently the leaders of both France and Germany both called for the dream of an EU Utopia and a European federal state (Pop 2013). Anderson (2009:62) sees the EU of today "in no position to recall the dreams of Monnet". "Monnet's strategy", according to Anderson, was an "incremental totalisation ... a democratic supranational federation". Monnet's vision represented an "enterprise of unrivalled scope and complexity" which ultimately relied on slow and drab institutional steps, but one which ultimately led to a project which "disconcerted and foiled the intentions of its architects" (Anderson 2009:24). The result, therefore, is a political union of 'unintended consequences' which emerged out of the tensions between federalists and inter-governmentalist visions of Europe, but Anderson questions what kind of a political order is in fact developing post Maastricht (2009:25).

People's Movement activists claim that in many ways the EU is becoming both an economic and political powerhouse similar to that of that U.S. One activist tells me, "I do believe that

democracy is best served when it's kept within small boundaries and for reasonably small populations. Anything that is trying to serve democracy for over 450 million people seems absolutely doomed from the outset as the politicians become too far removed from the populations they are meant to be serving.” Anderson (2009) similarly notes that “the distance between ruler and ruled , wide enough in a Community of nine or twelve countries, can only widen much further in a Union of twenty seven or more, where economic and social circumstances differ so vastly.” (2009:62)

It is also claimed by activists that the EU has become more federal and centralist and its economic policies have followed a neoliberal line. The creation of an ever closer ‘political’ and ‘economic’ union in Europe and its emergence as a hegemonic bloc has led to much debate and discussion over EU power and its position in global governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Leonard 2005). Susan George (2004) notes that outside of the US, Europe is the only place “with the economic and symbolic power as well as the historical and cultural experience to assume leadership at this point in history” (2004:112), but she questions whether Europe can offer an “alternative model” to the world, rather than acquiescing to the American model.

### **Europe – A new economic model**

“Back in the 80s the EEC was ‘left leaning’ or ‘social democratic. Thatcher and the UK Conservatives were very anti Europe based on this model. Europe has shifted its model since the late 80s and early 90s, since the single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty, and now Europe is on a neoliberal path. I refer to this as the ‘Thatcherification of Europe’ insofar as Europe has adopted a neoliberal model.” - Richard, People’s Movement Activist.

Anthropologists Weiss and Wodak (2000), in their analysis of globalisation economic rhetoric, raise two interesting perspectives. Firstly, they argue that the real fact that we should be concerned with is not the global nature of capital but rather the deficient political control of capital. They contend that the economic discourse has the result that the “financial market is being made into the universal horizon for the whole of the economy”. Coupled

with the de-politicisation of the markets and the ‘inevitable destiny’ which has been attached to the reach of the financial markets, the result is that political action no longer questions the framework in which it operates. When treated as an inevitable, political actors merely guarantee “competition and flexibility” to ensure the framework is in place. While there are numerous definitions for what ‘globalisation’ is, it can be broadly taken to mean an emergent system of interdependent capital markets in an increasingly technological and communication age.<sup>7</sup> Market integration not only applies to finished products but also services and processes of production, which have in turn lead to a rapidly integrated world trade system (Mayo 2005). Weiss and Wodak, drawing on the arguments of Thurrow (2006), state “it is not the case, however, that the development of the financial markets can be traced back to divine influence. It is rather a result of political decisions taken in the 1980s to deregulate the financial markets” (Weiss and Wodak 2000:78, Thurrow 1996). This deregulation and other ensuing factors are generally referred to as a ‘neoliberal economic model’.

Globalisation, and the neoliberal economic model, have become a much debated topic within social movement circles and have, according to Natrajan (2003), become a “hook upon which everyone can hang an argument about the cause or effect of any political, economic or cultural phenomenon” (Natrajan 2003:213). But what exactly is this model and what prompted its implementation? The term ‘neoliberalism’ is a modern term applied to the free functioning of markets and trade and the institutional and political arrangements implemented to ensure the functioning of such a system. It is claimed to have originated with the philosopher-economist Friedrich Hayek at the University of Chicago and developed by one of his students Milton Friedman (Mayo 2005). It is incorrect to state that this economic model is new. The seeds of Hayek’s economic model did, according to Anderson (2009), attract certain interest in the 1950s. These seeds remained latent for almost thirty years before they took life during the early 1980s during the Reagan and Thatcher regimes. According to Harvey (2005:64) the neoliberal state favours strong individual property rights, the rule of law and the institutions of freely functioning markets and trade. Harvey notes that

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<sup>7</sup> While I discuss the topic of globalisation in this chapter, this field of study is quite significant. My discussion on globalisation has benefitted from a vast amount of research in literature ranging from the works of Manuel Castells (1996), Anthony Giddens (1991,2002) Laxer (1995) and Hardt & Negri (2000).

in a neo-liberalist model, matters such as labour and the environment are simply treated as mere commodities and state interference and regulation (even such regulation to provide a social safety net) is frowned upon unless it is considered to be creating a more favourable climate for business interests, such as legislation promoting free market competition (Harvey 2005:76). Neoliberalism also means the privatization of state enterprises and the opening up of new investment opportunities for transnational corporations. It frees up corporations from obligations to wage earners and citizens by simply reducing the autonomy of nation states. In effect, it overtakes or 'rolls back' the remit of the nation state (See Laxer 1995, Mayo 2005). As Europe turned towards the neoliberal American type *laissez faire* system, Berend (2010) notes that this "eliminated most state interventions and regulations of the financial market as well as those of the mixed economy that characterised the period of post war prosperity" (2010:170). Berend sees neoliberal ideology having serious implications for the European model of a mixed economy and welfare system. He further notes that, "neoliberals attacked the state owned sector as a parasite and inappropriate to the new global environment. Privatisation became a universal agenda" (Berend 2010:174)

Weiss and Wodak (2000) argue that through discourse the state has been deconstructed under the neoliberal economic model. "The nation state is said to be overburdened, or powerless and supra-national entities such as the EU must take its place ... the snag with this is that an effective and integrated supra-national entity of this sort does not yet exist" (2000:78). The effect therefore, according to Weiss and Wodak, is that the uncertainty between nation state and supra-nation state creates a political vacuum that permits financial markets to be played unregulated and "liberated from the uncomfortable corset of the welfare principle" (2000:78). In their discussion on 'globalisation rhetoric', Weiss and Wodak (2000) note that the difficulty in the application of the term, as it appears to be a word which has received great prominence and use through academic research, media and the establishment. The difficulty in defining the term globalisation however rests in the fact that it is "invoked in different processes: economic, political, cultural, media-related and so on" (2000:77).

Berend (2010) notes that the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s was the catalyst for change and the “opening of a new paradigm of economic development for the West” (Berend 2010:161). He further notes that as cold war divisions came to an end in the late 80s, in Europe “this created a more favourable political environment for further globalisation, opening up large new markets and resources in the significantly enlarged laissez-faire system” (Ibid). But there were also other factors. Berend notes that Europe’s response to a more rapidly advancing globalised world was against the backdrop of both U.S. economic power and the rapid economic success of Asia in the 1980s. He notes that from the 1980s and as a result of reforms to adapt to a neoliberal economic model, “Europe emerged as the strong third pillar in the global system. By 2004 Europe became the most globalised region in the world” (2010:168).

Neoliberal theory essentially espouses a specific policy of free mobility of capital between sectors, regions and countries and the removal of all barriers to this trade/exchange is tantamount to the success of the neoliberal agenda. Negotiations in trade discussions essentially involve granting corporations ‘citizen-like’ rights and using the state to then entrench their monopolizing positions (Laxer 1995). These corporations are now protected by ‘rights’ and legally enforceable mechanisms which far outstrip ‘human’ rights and the ability of individuals to seek redress (Starr 2000). Activists within the People’s Movement contend that the articles of the Lisbon Treaty further enhance a neoliberal economic model and provide a legal framework for such rights and mechanisms, and enshrine a neoliberal economic framework into EU law. Berend (2010) too notes that EU reform treaties, such as the Single European Act of 1987, were inspired by the transformation in the world system. This reform was the European Community’s response to keep pace with global developments. The Maastricht Treaty of 1991 further created an EU framework which paved the way for a common currency, a central bank, the integration of new member states, common foreign policy, citizenship and a constitution. (Berend 2010:162).

Deregulation was critical to enable free market mechanism to develop, as well as nation states actively pushing down their rate of inflation, reducing public expenditure, increasing privatization, and introducing payments for health and education (Mayo 2005, Stiglitz

2002). Neoliberal policy was promoted by advocating increased consumer choice and diversity but in reality this was ‘corporatized choice’ in so far as the choice on offer always benefitted and served corporate interests. (Starr 2000, Klein 2001, 2007)

Touraine (1995) notes that we now live in a social world which is ‘babelian’ and segmented and “where markets, communities and mass culture are no longer politically related to each other in a national society.” He sees global culture as being defined “independently of social and political organizations” (1995:265,270). In this respect, individuals are no longer defined by their ‘labour’ but rather their “geographical and cultural origin” and their “consumption patterns”. It is these factors which Touraine sees as “concrete definitions of a post-industrial society” (1995:270). Cohen and Kennedy (2007:44-57) identify a number of traits which are associated with globalisation. They note that, with the changing concepts of time and space, distinct local identities are affected by events occurring simultaneously in other parts of the globe. They further note the commonality of problems throughout the world, such as environmental concerns, which often have global repercussions and require global solutions. Finally, they make reference to increasing levels of interaction among cultures and a growing interconnection and dependency through the emergence of transnational political and economic organizations (2007:44-57, Della Porta 2006, Giddens 1990). The EU has emerged as one such geopolitical entity on the global stage, with a particular emphasis on one dominant form of an economic model.

Neoliberalism often gives the impression that a level playing field is created because it is culturally neutral , that is, it glosses over power imbalances which exist and which historically and politically created forms of oppression (Jackson & Warren 2005:553). In terms of ‘developing’ nations of the Global South who were (and continue to be) enslaved through ‘debt’, neoliberalism means having to open up their economies through the liberalization of trade, by reducing tariffs and enabling the free circulation and mobility of capital and investment. International power imbalances and issues which impact on ‘developing’ nations such as forms of EU economic hegemony, also strike powerful chords with People’s Movement activists in their campaign for a more just and equitable global system. In highlighting such imbalances, activists see the increased militarisation of the EU

and the forging of stronger links with ‘Western’ military alliances such as NATO as a factor in this imbalance<sup>8</sup>. Governments are keen to argue that the benefits of neoliberalism will ‘trickle down’ to the people (Mayo 2005:19) through the ‘invisible hand’ of the market (Elyachar 2005). Ironically, the EU and the U.S are well known for not providing an open market when their own ‘indigenous’ industries need to be protected and subsidized (Mayo 2005:26). Critics of ‘modernisation’ theory and the new emerging economic order (such as Cardoso & Faletto 1979 and Gunder-Frank & Gills 1996) have illustrated the unequal political and economic imbalance inherent in global financial institutions and the social implications of failed development global economic policies. It is to a degree a form of economic colonialism but under the guise of ‘Western’ corporate interests rather than politically defined Western ‘nation states’ (Starr 2000:23). Power has shifted from nation states to ‘market forces’. The EU as a political institution and economic powerhouse has been instrumental in this shift and reifies and solidifies ‘free market’ economic policies and grants specific autonomy to corporations and transnationals in political and cultural space once reserved for the nation state. It is for this very reason that such institutions are challenged ‘from below’ by social activists in local and regional locations such as the People’s Movement campaign in Ireland.

Berend notes that with the advent of neoliberal economic agendas throughout European member states in the mid 1980s, “Europe eliminated one of the main characteristics of its post-war economic model: the mixed economy. The blind neoliberal belief in a self-regulating market ... helped prosperity in the short-run but meanwhile they paved the way towards the 2008-09 financial crisis” (Berend 2010:175).

### **Ireland and Globalisation**

What, therefore, are the implications for member states within a new European economic model? More importantly, what have been the impacts of such rapid globalisation and

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<sup>8</sup> See the text of Chomsky (2003) for additional reading on global hegemonic power and influence. Chua (2003) has written an excellent account of ethnic conflict which has resulted from increased globalisation and regional hegemonic power interests.

economic reforms for the people of Europe? Wilson (1998) notes that Ireland's entry into the European Community was followed by a growth in media influence which essentially widened up our views of 'Europe' by "encouraging processes of secularisation, modernisation and internationalisation" (1998:111). From this period on, Wilson considers it unthinkable for ethnographers to "characterise rural villages as sociocultural isolates." Anthropologists, he notes, had to revise their approach to Ireland and other member states, and the analysis of rural communities had to be in the larger context of how such communities were "tied to social formations and economic and political structures external to the locality" (1998:111).

Wilson (1998) notes the growth in anthropological investigation into aspects of the European Union and how its policies are experienced at local level, defining and transforming social identities. He explains that while the concept of 'being' or 'becoming' European is important to Irish people, he notes that this has particular relevance to anthropologists "because of the discipline's goal of chronicling and understanding the social and cultural formation of everyday life" (Wilson 1998:115). But in order to address this, one must ask the question, how has the social and cultural formation of everyday life changed under the guise of the European Union, and in particular a European Union which continues to shift and evolve dramatically itself? Indeed, the European Community which Ireland joined in 1973 is significantly different from the European Union in 2013. What has been the impact of globalisation, and the adoption of a neoliberal economic model, on 'quality of life' issues in Ireland over the past two decades?

General criticisms of the capitalist system and the negative effects of globalization have regularly been raised by activists on the political 'Left' and in the People's Movement, during the campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Fiscal Treaty, in light of a deterioration in economic stability across the EU. Notwithstanding these criticisms, activists are of the opinion that realisation has been slow among most sections of the Irish public of the negative effects of a more globalised and capitalist system. I want to outline here the extent of such globalization and the dramatic change it brought to Irish society and its 'cultural' impact on Irish values and belief systems. While this enquiry echoes the approach

of Wilson (1998) to understand local communities and their ties with the external, it also draws attention to the very issues which prompt and motivate activists to campaign and participate in collective action. In particular, a number of activists in the People's Movement, who may not have participated in former social activist struggles around class and workers' rights, or did not have activist experience, were drawn to the movement based on its attempts to critique the negative impacts of capitalism and globalization on Irish society, which operate essentially under the guise of the European Union. Indeed, Wilson (1998) notes, that it is ethnographic research which provides a perspective of local reactions "to ideas that originate in distant capital cities". He further notes that "in the Irish context, the dictates of policy have had a wide range of effects on youth culture, the informal and illegal economies, and new social and political movements" (1998:116).

In the post-war era, when European states were undergoing significant transformation, Ireland too was to undergo transformation but at a considerably slower pace,<sup>9</sup> and the shift from protectionism to outward orientation was gradual (Laffan & O'Donnell 1988). Despite these developments and the gradual liberalization of markets, the 1970s and indeed the 1980s continued to represent periods of economic stagnation for Ireland. As global positive economic sentiment rose, Ireland experienced considerable foreign capital inflows, which by the early 1980s exceeded net national savings. However, according to Laffan & O'Donnell (1988), "Irish development quickly became dependent on inward investment as indigenous industry withered in the face of international competition" (1988:158). Multinational companies entered and played a key role in creating modern, export oriented sectors. It is noted that by 1980, there were fifty five foreign firms in Ireland, which produced 20 per cent of industrial output and delivered two-thirds of all Irish industrial exports.<sup>10</sup> Ireland's dependency on foreign investment and capital continued to grow and as a result economic strategy came to be tailored towards attracting such investment to stimulate economic growth. Ireland's exports to Britain fell from 75 per cent to 33%, as continental Europe became Ireland's most important market. Traditional sectors such as engineering, food, tobacco and metal declined, giving rise to new industries in medical equipment, precision

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<sup>9</sup> Ireland was late joining the UN (1955), and the IMF and World Bank (1957) and GATT (1967) and the EU (1972)

<sup>10</sup> See Berend (2010:192)

and optical instruments, electrical machinery, commercial equipment and chemicals (Berend 2010:192). A political and economic climate positively disposed to attracting foreign investment and capital was encouraged through favourable taxation measures and a liberalization of markets (Sweeney 2004). Ireland's economy experienced considerable growth throughout the 1980s and 1990s and in many years the economy was expanding by 7-10% per annum. However, it was the positive economic growth of the 1990s which brought significant change to Ireland. While industrial output grew, unemployment fell, and Ireland began to experience positive net inward migration. But changes were not merely occurring on the economic front. Kuhling and Keohane (2007) note that the significant changes which Ireland witnessed throughout the 1990s brought with it secularization, liberalization, a new cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. They refer to this as the "emergence of the Irish cultural renaissance" (2007:1). O'Connell (2001) notes the change in Irish attitudes, which became completely focused on work and economic success "to the exclusion of virtually all else" (2001:3). Cronin, Gibbons & Kirby (2002) argue that through discourse a new Irish culture came to be attached to new terms and priorities such as individualism, entrepreneurship, mobility, flexibility, innovation and competitiveness both as personal attributes and dominant cultural values. These have displaced earlier discourses around prioritization of national development, national identity, family, self-sacrifice, self-sufficiency and nationalism. (Cronin, Gibbons & Kirby 2002:13, Kuhling & Keohane 2007:5).

In many respects, the change which Ireland experienced was one of 'decolonization', a term Kuhling & Keohane (2007) refer to as, breaking off the shackles of economic dependency with its former colonial trading partner and experiencing its entry into global markets on an equal footing with its European neighbours. In doing so, however, Kuhling & Keohane (2007) see Ireland's transformation as a result of its complicit involvement "in the neoliberal relations of the so called New World Order" (2007:17). They also make the important point that "as a decolonizing nation" we are "simultaneously being recolonized (and colonizing others) by global capital" (2007:27). Kuhling and Keohane (2007) provide an excellent illustration of the cultural change which Irish society has experienced over the past two decades as it made rapid transformation into a globalised world (See also Coulter &

Coleman 2003). They compare the experience of living in contemporary Ireland to “living in an in-between world, in between cultures and identities, an experience of liminality ... speed and mobility are becoming the new form of capital in global society” (2007:14). The transformation of contemporary Ireland, therefore, has a social and cultural impact on individuals and their ‘quality of life’. This transformation to “cultural cosmopolitanism” has brought about a personal detachment and a “disembedding of identities from particular times, places and traditions” (Kuhling and Keohane 2007:26).

Despite being a small nation, Ireland was ranked the most globalised nation in the world between 2000 and 2002 (at the height of the social movement campaigns against globalisation) and continued to occupy a high ranking position in subsequent years (Kuhling and Keohane 2007). At the turn of the century, Ireland was considered to be part of the “northern European area of prosperity” rather than a “lagging region of the European Union” (Girvin 2008:457). What is particularly notable is the pace at which Ireland has ‘internationalised’ its economy into a global network of trade and capital mobility (Cronin 2009). Ireland also recorded the most significant increase in the globalization index between 1995 and 2008 (Carswell 2010). Indeed, the level of Irish incomes rose to among the highest in the world (Fahey, Russell & Whelan 2007:1); although there has been continued debate about the unequal redistribution of such wealth and an ever-widening class divide. Although the globalisation index measures a country’s openness to trade, capital movements, exchange of technology and ideas, labour movements and cultural integration, Ireland’s high ranking is attributed to the strength of its technology sector due to positioning itself as a hub in the global exchange of technology (Hennessy 2010).

Modern Ireland has changed from being a rural community based on simple social exchange and kinship to one governed by ‘economists’ and determined by ‘technical experts’. Life is increasingly viewed through a rational economic lens where decisions are made with reference to business logic and short term maximization of profits and not to its social consequences. Kuhling & Keohane (2007) ask questions such as “are we in danger of commodifying ourselves?” and “does the fact that we appear to be happier mean that we have a better quality of life?” O’Connell (2001) certainly feels that the degree of change

which Ireland has undergone economically, politically and religiously is difficult to fathom (2001:3) Hardiman & Whelan (1998) too feel that the modern Ireland that has emerged is an “increasingly polarized society” (1998:70) The neoliberal economic model has brought with it, vast social inequalities and a strong decline in social cohesion (Kuhling & Keohane 2007:207). There does appear to be a debate within contemporary social science on this point. Kuhling (2008) feels that recent publications based on ESRI data (Fahey, Russell & Whelan 2007) is part of a “broader tendency towards consensualism in Irish political culture” (2008:163) and she stresses the need to champion the role of social critique and political contestation (See Coulter & Coleman 2003) as a means of contesting social inequalities that result directly from neoliberal economic policy.

On the one hand, while it is clear that Ireland has made substantial gains in wealth and capital, this has come with even greater poverty (Nolan & Maitre 2007:27) and the disappearance and loss of more ‘social’ elements which impact our quality of life, such as a ‘sense of community’, social bonds, and family. The new is compared to the old. The high powered competitive business environment is compared to the simpler cooperative based community existence. It is also true that the religious demographic profile has changed significantly over the past number of decades with the result that religion no longer holds the role in Irish society it once did (Coakley 2002). There has been excellent work completed on European Value studies research by Fogarty, Ryan & Lee (1984) & Fahey, Hayes & Sinnott (2005), to illustrate how values and beliefs have changed significantly in modern Irish society.

### **Europe and Globalisation – An Anthropological perspective**

Parman (1998) notes that, “Europe has been present in the anthropological imagination for as long as there has been anthropology ... Europe exists as a conceptual contrast, as a vehicle of Occidentalism, to define and enforce the boundaries and hierarchical inequalities of Occident and Orient (West and non-West). It has also been used to define and serve as a testing ground for the distinguishing features of anthropology itself.” (1998:2)

But, although present in the anthropological imagination, how have anthropological approaches been refocused and redefined? How, then, if at all, can one study ‘Europe’ or the ‘EU’? The region’s rapid transformation and development since the 1940s has been an era of considerable and significant transformation. Its political and economic transformation against the backdrop of globalisation since the early 1980s is yet another phase in the continent’s long, and at times, fragmented past. This has added to the debate on how to define ‘Europe’ as an area of study, and the approaches for anthropologists who undertake such study. Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994:29) note that “anthropologists have wrestled for generations with the problem of relating the local to the national or the global”. Within anthropology there have been several reasons for the growing interest in the study both in Europe, and of Europe, including: imperialism, capitalism, urbanisation, industrialisation, class conflict, state formation, national integration, bureaucratisation, and commercialisation (Wilson 1998a). Through anthropology and ethnographic research, Wilson notes, attempts have been made to “understand the transformations wrought on localities by people and institutions in wider society and to understand the ways in which local communities can *affect* and in some cases *effect* that change” (1988a:150).

Developments in Europe over the past 60 years, and more notably since the 1980s, are having increasing and profound effect on its people. Wilson notes that “the EU will define the new world order and transform everyday life in Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond” (1998a:151). He further notes that for people, membership of the EU has the result that “all political action, economic decision making, social movements and the production of culture ... are now firmly within the expansive arena of the largest interstate and international political system in the world” (1988a:151). During the last two decades of the twentieth century a new chapter opened up in world economic history which led to the globalisation of the world economy. In a similar vein, historian Ivan Berend (2010), in his analysis of Europe since 1980, notes that “internationalisation has a long history in Europe ... however the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s became the real watershed for its breakthrough. Globalisation emerged as new policy that replaced colonialism for the leading economic powers but it also had an objective economic base in the new technological and corporative managerial revolution” (2010:158)

Anthropological approaches to EU studies recognise a shift in how the EU can be studied since the 1980s. A number of factors for the shift have been recognised such as the fall of soviet communism and the shift in the dominant principles of organisation in Europe centred on market economies and liberal democracy. Bossevain (1994) argues that “these developments have resulted in the emergence in Western Europe of an impoverished under-class of structurally un-or-underemployed, many of whom are forming loose communities and developing distinct subcultures” (1994:44). He further notes that “respect for, if not legitimacy of, European states is being weakened by their inability to provide for a growing segment of their citizens with work, shelter and the level of benefits to which they have become accustomed” (1994:44).

Noting how the idea of ‘Europe’ both as a political ideal and a mobilising metaphor has risen to such prominence in the late twentieth century, Goddard et.al (1994) note that “much of the catalyst behind this has undoubtedly been the movement towards economic and legal union among the states of western and southern Europe” (1994:26). Drawing on the work of Turner (1975) they argue that Europe might be considered a master symbol that is “an icon that embraces a whole spectrum of different referents and meanings. But Europe is also a discourse of power and a configuration of knowledge shaped by political and economic institutions that are themselves embedded in disciplines and practises of government.” (Goddard et.al 1994:26)

Boissevain (1994) notes how social and cultural anthropologists in Europe, twenty years ago, were turning away from functionalist inspired community studies. New approaches moved beyond individual communities in an attempt to understand the configurations they formed with higher levels of integration. Previous studies were “down to earth monographs which dealt with specific political and economic themes and from a historical perspective focused on power relations. Generally they paid relatively less attention to ritual or symbolic activities” (Boissevain 1994:43). Noting the shift in anthropological approaches in the 1980s, Boissevain recognises an increased focus on ritualism, symbolism, and symbolic behaviour. He further notes that much of social anthropology has evolved into cultural

anthropology. He sees the growth in interest of ritual and symbolic activity reflected in the societies in which anthropologists themselves lived and worked. “Social developments taking place in Europe today will influence the anthropology of tomorrow” (1994:43). He sees it important to look at the social processes affecting contemporary European societies today: changing patterns of production; movement of people; and nostalgia.

Notwithstanding the general acceptance among social scientists and anthropologists that that the last three decades have fostered a new economic model, the question and debate within anthropology is how to further adapt the approach to an ever-evolving Europe and EU system. It is almost twenty years since Boissevain wrote about the transformation of social anthropology to cultural anthropology. There continue to be many challenges for today’s anthropologists in studying the EU and Europe. As Europe and the European Union transform and enlarge, anthropological approaches must adapt to keep pace with developments. The difficulty for many anthropologists is that there is a lack of definition around their subject of analysis.

Bellier & Wilson (2000:14) note that European project and its ‘world’ is “rendered opaque because its dimensions escape most ordinary citizens ... The EU in fact seems to be a Faustian object, which, once created, is endowed with its own dynamic which cannot be controlled by any one member state, or even necessarily by the majority of member states” The dramatic reforms of the European Union have led to some commentators referring to it as the ‘New Europe’ (Bellier & Wilson 2000:13). They note that the “new institutional Europe, is a product of its time, brought into existence by a generation of politicians who are now called the ‘founding fathers of Europe’. They conceptualised the dynamic required to overcome nationalist passions and decide on precise steps and measures to produce economic interdependence and national convergence, to stimulate unity through consensus and to reshape nationalism through liberalism. The European project has matured as it has been progressively deepened and widened through the incorporation of more and more countries” (2000:13). The EU, according to Anderson (2009), “is a caricature of a democratic federation”. This, he claims, is due to its undemocratic structures and closed door discussions and debates. He refers to its decision making centre as a “maze” and an

“obscure zone” within institutions which are “impenetrable” (2009:61). Comparing its functioning to the symbolic façade of the British monarchy, Anderson claims that “what the core structures of the EU effectively do is to convert the open agenda of parliaments into the closed world of chancelleries” (2009:61).

Certain anthropological approaches, advocated by Bellier and Wilson (2000) take two forms – a study of the EU ‘from above’ and ‘from below’, although they too admit the challenges that these forms can bring. Other approaches distinguish between, ‘an anthropology *of* Europe’ as distinct from ‘an anthropology *in* Europe’. Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) contend, at the outset, that two sets of questions need to be answered. “Firstly, what exactly is this entity called ‘Europe’, how should we conceptualise it, and what are the distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from other regions of the world? Secondly, perhaps even more problematic, to what extent does the concept of ‘Europe’ constitute a meaningful object of anthropological enquiry?” (1994:23)

The task of defining ‘Europe’ or indeed the ‘EU’, while challenging for anthropological researchers, is also a challenging one for the EU itself due to its constantly evolving nature. Abeles (2000) notes that, “the political aim of the European project has never been clarified. But what is most interesting for the anthropologist, is that it *must* not be clarified” (2000:35). Abeles contends that despite over fifty years of development of an economic and political union, there remains much confusion and debate internally around its projected path. What is interesting is not that this path is undefined but rather the unwillingness or inability to define it. Is the EU on a path towards ‘federalism’ or a loose ‘federation’ of states? What components of ‘supra-nationality’ will be afforded to it? While Abeles notes the confusion, he recognises that some member states may find the term ‘federalism’ hard to swallow. This demonstrates, according to Abeles, “that the European political leaders do not wish to give a name or a definition to the European political system as it is constructed” (2000:35).

Bellier & Wilson (2000) note that, “for most Europeans, the EU is an indistinct entity, a contradictory conglomeration of words and actions, of symbols and policies, of intrusive and liberating values” (2000:5). As Neumann (2001) asks, where does ‘Europe’ begin and end?

In this respect the boundaries of Europe are imagined and contested spaces. He notes that definition of Europe, in particular 'Central' and 'Western' Europe are shifting and are being redefined.

Notwithstanding these shifting terms and redefinitions, Goddard et.al (1994) outline that Europe can be treated as a unit of analysis for anthropological research not simply due to increased economic interdependence between European states and the increased information exchange in the mass media and movement of people, but also as these exchanges are all intensifying at a global level. "Perhaps the most significant fact, to apply to Europe specifically, is the increasing integration at a political level through agreements and treaties" (Goddard et al. 1994:24). They further note that this is compounded by intensification towards legislative and institutional standardisation within the EU.

Notwithstanding difficulties in defining the terms Europe and the EU, strands of anthropological theory are couched in historical frameworks and are greatly influenced and shaped by Marxist thought. Wolf (1982) and Mintz (1986) provide excellent analyses of the political economy, and the impact of early mercantile capitalism in the development and foundation of Europe. In this respect, Europe and the EU can be studied as a subject, which is continually evolving and redefining itself. Bellier and Wilson (2000) note, that "the task at hand for the anthropologists who study the evolution of local and national European societies is not to label the form of institutional arrangements which the EU develops ... rather it is to describe and analyse the cultural articulations between local, regional, national and EU levels, and to inform both insiders and outsiders alike about the EU structures and functions" (2000:5). In this respect, anthropological approaches are beneficial as they provide explanations and findings in terms of processes and relationships (Gledhill 2005).

In a similar vein, Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) note that, "it is essential to persevere not only in locating the local within its wider context but in tackling the very institutions and practices which define and constitute the national and the supra national levels in question. A historical dimension is important here not only in terms of coming to grips with the native

and shape of groups and institutions but also in defining the overall subject of study itself, that is ‘Europe’” (Goddard et.al. 1994:29).

Wilson (1998a) notes that, historically, anthropological research in Europe had a preference for the analysis of small communities and isolated locations within the context of the EU and wider power relations. Small and local communities, however, do not have a defined notion of the EU itself, its remit and power, and how their community fits in to the wider total society that the EU represents. Wilson notes that this can result in their role in the EU often appearing “reactive rather than proactive” (1998a:153). Such reaction is often reflected in the political arena, through community activism and social protest. The distance between the periphery and the centre continues to exist, but individuals are now further removed from the corridors of power and the decisions being taken which are ultimately determining their lives. This thesis illustrates the concerns of activists regarding, not only how far the EU has developed as a regional and global power, but also about its future development. It is a concern, not founded solely on such issues as economics and militarisation, but also the increased transference of powers from the nation state to the EU, which is seen as a direct attack on sovereignty and democracy. It is these factors which underpin the struggles of the People’s Movement organisation. Activists’ views on global capital are echoed in Kiely’s (2005:166) comments, where he notes that, globalisation leads to intensified exploitation, an increase in social and political inequality, cultural homogenisation and an intensification of environmental destruction.

### **Social Activism – The nation state and the EU**

Wilson notes that an anthropology of the EU is an anthropology of power in Europe. “One thing is certain”, he notes, “many national elites and state governments and bureaucracies are losing power in and to the EU” (1998a:156). How then, has this impacted on local structural relations of power, and more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, on social activism?

According to Barkin (2006) “Globalisation results from, among other things, changes in technology, communication and economics that make states more interdependent. In other words, the policy options of states are becoming increasingly constrained by the policy choices of other states” (2006:3). Globalisation has limited the power of states, and their roles vis-à-vis their own citizens have been transformed and redefined. Jessop (1997), in his discussion on the future of capitalism and its impact on the structures of governance, notes that there are three primary changes to how the state is being redefined. He notes that there is ‘denationalisation’ in so far as nation states are ceding powers to higher governing economic or political bodies such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) or the EU (See also Mann 1997 & Starr 2000). He also notes that there is a ‘destatization’ of the political system, as governments are retreating and being replaced by the facilitation of ‘governance’ by non-state and civil society actors through NGOs and ‘partnership’. Finally he notes there is an ‘internationalisation of policy regimes’ which relate to dominant orders (such as neoliberalism) introduced by extra-territorial transnational factors and processes.

Kiely (2005) does not believe that globalisation has killed off nation states, but he does argue that in several respects some states can be seen as ‘agents’ for globalisation. Hegemonic forms are solidified and reinforced through a globalised system. Blau (1989) argues that what is required is strong social opposition to ensure that such systems are challenged and reformed as existing institutional arrangements are in place merely to defend hegemonic interests. (1989:335)

In this respect, social movement organisations and EU critical groups such as the People’s Movement, while opposing EU governance and its institutions of power, direct their challenge and protest at state actors and ‘local’ political figures (Rootes 2005:25). While the focus of activists is ‘European’, their action is directed at local Irish State actors. European institutions such as the Parliament and the Council are largely invisible and not open to influence, so it makes more sense for groups to target their own national representatives. While EU institutions are often remote and inaccessible, national and local targets are tactically appropriate as well as identifiable (Rootes 2005:27). In many cases the first avenue of protest is a ‘local’ adversary, the State which is seen as an agent of emerging

transnational structures. The master frame is global, the adversary is transnational, and the site of collective action is local. The nation state according to Kiely has therefore “been central to the promotion of globalisation which has further intensified the globalising processes” (1995:279). He also notes that the retreat of the ‘public sphere’ has also contributed to globalisation insofar as social life has been increasingly marketed and oppositional politics have been eroded. Commoditisation and rationalisation “have so triumphed that resistance has become localised or meaningless” (1995:281). Kate Nash (2001) sees today’s nation states not as fixed entities, but rather ‘fluid’ with ‘unstable boundaries,’ as they are “constantly engaged in negotiating their tasks and capacities” with other state actors and social and economic groups on the international field. (Nash 2001:87). This is similar to Kiely’s contention that nation states are losing sovereignty and that “no one single state has absolute power as the nature of (unequal) interdependence compels all states to adapt to a globalising world” (Kiely 2005:17).

Notwithstanding the structural shift in the position of the State, Tarrow and McAdam (2005) on the other hand argue that the role of the nation state in a ‘globalised’ world is still very relevant and as such “nation states remain the dominant actors and loci for all manner of politics including contentious politics” (2005:121). Mayo (2005) also stresses the need to keep the nation state a target of our focus as “states can and do play key roles, too often facilitating the pursuit of the interests of transnational capital at the expense of the interests of labour” (2005:17). Kiely (2005) does see nation states as relevant but only those who play hegemonic roles and who may in fact be actively promoting globalisation (2005:31). Other states are simply swept up in the tide of globalisation. Notwithstanding this he does appear to support Mayo’s (2005) contention that rather than rigidly dichotomising the sovereignty of the nation state and globalisation processes “we should recognise the fact that the nation state is a central agency in the promotion of contemporary globalisation”. (2005:34) Della Porta et al. (2006) sees the nation state ‘mutating’ into a political system comprised of “overlapping multilevel authorities” (2006:12). It is these very multilevel authorities which People’s Movement activists are struggling against.

An important point worth illustrating, and supported by my own ethnographic research, is that social movement organizations such as the People's Movement' who campaign against aspects of globalisation will usually frame their struggle by emphasizing local democratic structures and national sovereignty. However, as Della Porta et al. (2006:235) have indicated, activists clearly are not advocating nation state politics. Indeed, activists clearly see the nation state as an instrumental and critical actor in its role to implement and support EU policies. Della Porta et al. (2006) argue that paradoxically "there is a widespread belief that the problems produced by neoliberal globalization can be solved only through global politics" (2006:235). Indeed, the dramatic rise of international organizations in the political field in the twentieth century illustrates how micro politics is being replaced with macro governmental policy and greater federalism (Barkin 2006).

In terms of the Irish State, Laffan & O'Donnell (1998) argue that membership of the EU "represents the world's most extensive and intensive form of regionalism" which "alters the external environment of the traditional nation state and the internal dynamic of public policy making" (1998:156). They also note that following EU membership, "Irish public policy making and politics became embedded in a wider arena of policy making at the European level. The allocation of public goods is no longer confined to politics within Ireland" (1988:165).

### **Global Social Activism**

Finally, I wish to conclude by discussing social activism on a regional and global scale. In undertaking social struggles, activists should not view local events and problems in isolation and "those engaged in local struggle need to understand the global significance of what they do" (Allman 1999:6). People's Movement activists campaigning locally throughout Ireland sought to link the local impact of events to global forms, in this case further EU governance and EU policy contained within the Lisbon and the EU Fiscal Treaties. Activists do not see themselves operating in a vacuum of local politics, believing that the issues being contested in rural regions of Ireland are equally as relevant to the people of Europe as a whole and indeed the struggles of social movement organisations on a global scale.

It is contended by Dreano (2004) that mobilisation of social movements organisations on a pan-European scale against the European Union are not yet a reality and it is only within nationally defined concepts that such challenges exist (2004:154). This is true to a certain extent. While he does recognize the potential of pan European mobilisation he regards such movements as “heterogeneous” and “imbued with the peculiarities of their different political cultures and histories” (2004:158). During the course of my fieldwork, there were a small number of instances where People’s Movement activists engaged in demonstrations outside of Ireland, notably at EU buildings in Brussels. Such actions, however, were organised solely by the People’s Movement in Ireland and did not form part of a mobilisation of pan-European EU critical activists. While the geographic location of Brussels, as the centre of EU power, is symbolic, the organised demonstrations on the streets are very much centred on the Irish political representatives within the EU and the challenge focuses on the impact of EU decisions on Irish democracy.

My own findings revealed that while a cross-national coalition, within Europe, did exist among certain groups campaigning against EU referenda these alliances were rather based on loose linkages. While transnational linkages exist, the extent of such networking could not be considered a pan-European movement network in the strict sense. In many respects such alliances are simply vehicles for co-operation, exchange of information, and exposing democratic deficiencies within the EU rather than a driving force to organise mobilisation throughout member states<sup>11</sup>. Part II of this thesis will provide more detail on these findings. Dreano also recognizes recent high level mobilisations by anti-globalisation/anti-capitalist networks against the G8 meetings and EU Summits and notes that for such demonstrators “attacking the European Summits of Nice and Gothenburg is the same thing as attacking the IMF in Prague or the G8 at Genoa” (2004:158). Such protestors see attempts at regional and global governance in the form of the European Union as simply another cog in the wheel of global capitalism and neoliberalism, and in turn the European Union, its institutions and summits therefore become targets around which to mobilise and demonstrate. While my

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.teameurope.info/> which is an alliance of 49 organisations and parties across 18 member state of the EU.

fieldwork did not extend to engaging with anti-globalisation or anti-capitalist activists, there are notable similarities between the value and belief system of such activists' struggles and the struggles of activists within the People's Movement. Before discussing these, I wish to discuss the rise in global social activism in more detail.

Globalisation and the free mobility of capital (assisted by neoliberal economic policy) are relatively modern developments, yet the emergence of these systems, has been coupled with a dramatic rise in global social activism (Klein 2001, Juris 2008). While new systems have emerged and adopted new forms, social activism too has adapted to these new forms and this is particularly evident in new transnational linkages and networking enhanced by modern communication and technology. In many respects networked transnational social activism is countering global capital through new movements<sup>12</sup>. While social movements are not inherently opposed to a more globalized world per se, it is the effects of 'capital' globalization (largely driven by global political and financial institutions) which have resulted in the rise of recent social activism. They do not simply oppose neoliberalism but actively support new political and 'just' solutions (Kolb 2005). Klein (2001a) firmly sees the formation of global social movements as direct outcomes of globalization itself. She notes that "multinationals have grown so blindingly rich, so vast in their holdings, so global in their reach, that they have created our coalitions for us ... activists are piggy backing on the ready-made infrastructures supplied by global corporations" (Klein 2001a:84, Nash 2005). Klein (2001a) notes that "organizers around the world are beginning to see their local and national struggles ... through a global lens" (2001a:84). In order to challenge the global forces that are the direct cause of local issues, activism and social organization has therefore began to transcend national and political boundaries and create its own global network.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Global social activism has been aptly referred to as the 'anti-globalization' movement, the 'alternative global movement' or 'Movement of movements'. Klein (2001a:81) notes that the 'movement' has also been referred to as anti-corporate, anti-capitalist, anti-free trade, and anti-imperialist". It has also been described as a 'globalisation from below' or a 'grassroots' movement in so far as the social actors range from local independent activists, community groups to larger NGOs on the periphery of the State.

<sup>13</sup> This network contains alliances and linkages across borders, which has been described as the emergence of a 'global civil society' (Marden 1997:49). Starr (2000) provides a detailed account of the various sectional interests which the movement has come to represent such as environmental groups, labour unions, socialist organizations, Anti-Free Trade Agreement groups and Anarchists (2000:83).

This web of localized activism has essentially morphed into a movement on a globalised scale.

The diversity of the social actors is a testament to the movement's ability to appeal to such a multi-faceted support base. Notwithstanding this, global social movements have been criticized for lacking a central theme or coherent strategy, for opposing all forms of structure and organization (Graeber 2002) and for their disjointed and disorganised appearance (Klein 2001a:86). Kiely (1995) questions the role labour and the working class have to play in the anti-globalisation struggle and asserts that 'Labour' and the working class struggle may need to reframe their positions outside 'class' boundaries and beyond the central paradigm of 'workers' rights (1995:285). Certainly my own ethnographic results would concur with such a view. I found that 'class' or 'Marxist' frames were not overtly applied to the People's Movement campaigns, although certain activists would have a disposition towards the class/labour struggle.

Do these struggles, however, have any relevance to the demonstrations by small social movement organisations in EU member states, such as the People's Movement? I contend that many commonalities do indeed exist but there are of course differences. While anti-globalisation social activists campaign against institutional structures of capital (such as the IMF, World Bank etc.), challenging the EU and its institutions is part of that mobilisation process, it is not, in itself, its master frame. As the EU has developed into a regional economic power, it has been instrumental in the promotion of a neoliberal economic form of economic governance within member states. The EU, its institutions and summits have therefore become a focus for anti-globalisation protests among anti-capitalist activists. While activists within the People's Movement share these struggles with anti-globalisation activists, the scope of the People's Movement action against the European Union has subtle differences. The Peoples Movement struggle, while directed at both the EU and the Irish establishment, is primarily focused on the loss of democracy and sovereignty from member states. Its struggles are therefore not framed strictly in anti-capitalist terms, although very often arguments and criticisms of the European Union may be quite often focus on the economic impacts of EU Treaty laws for Irish people

Notwithstanding these differences there are also many similarities which People's Movement activists and anti-globalisation activists share, such as common values and beliefs. In general, activists share a strong anti-war and anti-capitalist standpoint, and promote the values of local democracy and global justice and equality. My purpose, in making reference to the 'Alternative Globalisation Movement' is to draw parallels and illustrate the commonalities between 'global' social activism and local 'Irish' struggles which are represented and reflected in individuals taking to the streets to campaign with the People's Movement. Anti-globalisation activism is targeted at international summits including World Economic Forum gatherings, IMF and World Bank meetings, EU and UN summits and free trade area meetings (Mayo 2005). As well as being critical of their policies and 'development' objectives, activists are also critical of their undemocratic operation, complexity, bureaucratic style, power imbalances, lack of accountability and transparency (Barkin 2006:93,94, Molyneux 2001:277). Barkin (2006) considers the EU to be "the most wide ranging and comprehensive International Organisation" (2006:10). One could contend that the EU as a project is also "collective action" at state level in so far as it is twenty eight member states meeting and forming common ground and policy. From a rationalist perspective (in a model similar to that of resource mobilisation theory which I discussed earlier), international regimes are created to minimize costs and maximize benefits (Barkin 2006:43). A structural shift to neoliberalism in one sense is analogous to a 'movement from above' in so far it is being achieved through economic hegemony and supported by global mechanisms which are essentially dominated by US and EU regional. Other such mechanisms and projects include regional trade and fiscal agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), plans for a Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), a European single market and a common currency system.

Many of the struggles of groups within the ant-globalisation movement combine themes of anti-capitalism and anti-war, and various struggles throughout the past few years have used EU summits and institutions as focal points of social action. The combination of these themes is also similar to personal social activism undertaken by People's Movement

activists during their lives. The 'Call' of the European Social Movements (ESF 2002) was declared in November 2002 in Florence, Italy which expressed opposition to a European Order based on corporatism, neo-liberalism and which contributed to environmental degradation, social injustice and exploitation of the global south. I make reference to this text simply because I found this 'call' to resonate very much with the values and beliefs of the People's Movement activists. This is an excellent illustration of the commonalities between forms of counter EU struggle at global and local level. The question of anti-globalisation arose during a number of discussions with my informants and I was curious to see whether activists within the People's Movement in Ireland saw themselves as part of a greater global movement.

In terms of broader and loose networks globally, Fergus feels that the People's Movement organisation is part of a "progressive trend towards anti-capitalism and anti-globalisation". While he acknowledges that the organisation does have a particular narrow focus, he feels that the organisation does fit in to a broader collective of groups who challenge EU hegemony and global capitalism. Eamon also sees the People's Movement as taking part in anti-globalisation struggles but notes that "we are guided by a particular political persuasion". Eamon feels that general political discontent has given rise to increased mobilisation but is critical of what this mobilisation can achieve. He notes that "people don't really want to join up to a political party or organisation as they are all the same. It feeds into deactivating people not to get involved. People then move towards social organisations as they are not hierarchical or not a political party but in actual fact they are shaped by actors who are from political parties. If you have a defused social forum in many ways it ceases to be effective. It lacks focus. Most social forums are dominated by NGOs and we know that they operate within political structures. They are not outsiders but insiders". While he does see the People's Movement as part of a larger collective of groups who challenge globalisation and capitalism, he is quite critical of larger groups and organisations participating within the anti-globalisation movement that he regards as politically co-opted and unwilling to challenge existing political structures for real change.

Maurice feels that the People's Movement "are a small cog in a larger machine which could be considered the anti-globalist/anti-capitalist machine". In a similar vein to Eamon, he is critical of certain components of the movement who may challenge the EU on the basis of its free market policies but they may not be fundamentally opposed to the EU as a project. Maurice stated that "You act as locally as possible while thinking globally. It's important for democracy that people have access to the levers of power, that the levers of power aren't so remote that they feel just totally disempowered and incapable of influencing what's happening. But it's also important from the point of view of maintaining diversity, cultural diversity and political diversity." Maurice notes that there are many local and regional societies within the EU who are "coming up with their own local solutions to their problems rather than having a harmonised approach from the top down. There is more experimentation going on and you can actually learn from that". Maurice argues that Irish and indeed other people of Europe are having policies imposed upon us from above. He contends that autonomous local and regional governance is preferred. Despite our regional and cultural differences within the Europe, he argues that we can learn from each other, and apply solutions, based on what is right for our locality.

Other activists such as Paula, Richard and Eddie are more qualified in their opposition to the EU and globalisation. Paula states that she is "for anything that supports the people" but feels that the EU in its present form is not designed with people and democracy in mind. She feels that the EU is being driven by elitist interests. She notes that "one size doesn't fit all". She states "if the laws suit everyone that's fine but that's an ideal scenario and it's not like that ... you have to make regional differences and this has to be recognised". Paula believes that wishing for all member states in the EU to be socially minded and all perfect is 'idealist' and for now she believes "we should just keep politics local".

Eddie feels that while the People's Movement objectives and struggles are certainly part of a greater global movement, he sees the group demographic as being different. "The People's Movement has more contact and association with academics, electoral representatives, whereas those movements [anti-globalisation groups] are a collection of activists. The People's Movement is more an intellectual group than a 'take to the streets radical group' ...

it's more of a think – tank. Ideally you would like to have the resources to take to the streets but with the numbers we have that's not possible. I don't know why this is ... maybe it's because young people are too busy to get involved or they don't see the relation between their own circumstances and politics.”

Richard on the other hand is quite candid about his support for a more globalised world. Despite voting no against every one of the EU reform treaties put before the Irish public, “I still consider myself one of the most pro-European and pro EU people I know. I do believe in the idea of the EU”. While Richard acknowledges that his view may not be shared by other activists within the group, he tells me that he is not against globalisation per se. He tells me that, “it's just a fact that the world is becoming a smaller place and more interconnected”. Richard sees himself as an ‘internationalist’ and feels that a more global and interconnected world is inevitable. This he regards as a positive thing. On the other hand, he does feel that the economic model with which the EU operates is not working. “We need to change direction and be less competitive and more cooperative ... internationalism is that we all work together in harmony and cooperation.” Richard argues that his fundamental objection to EU reform treaties such as the Lisbon Treaty was the speed of development. He felt that the changes were being introduced too soon, and because it was being forced upon us, democracy was being impacted. He states that it was “trying to do too rapidly what I want to see done” and because of this it will “undermine the credibility of the EU and ultimately slow up getting to where it's supposed to take us.”

### *Matthew*

*Matt, originally from Sligo in the west of Ireland, but now living in Dublin with his wife and young child, was one of the younger members in the group. Now in his early 30s, he tells me that he has been politically active since he was 16, when he first became active with the Labour Party.*

*Unlike most activists who I interviewed, Matt explains that his family background is very political and it was clear from speaking with Matt that politics had been quite influential on him. He speaks of his father's political activity with the Communist party in the 1960s and 1970s and his position as an independent councillor. Matt tells me that during his time as a Labour party member he was involved with both the Sligo and Limerick branches of the Party. "I was chairperson of the National Youth Committee and I was involved in the National Executive. I also stood for the Labour party local elections in 2004"*

*After leaving school, Matt studied at the University of Limerick for a number of years completing his primary degree in Arts, studying Sociology, Political Science and Economics. During his student years, he explains that he was also an activist in a number of peace and anti-militarisation events organised by the Irish Anti-War Movement. During this time, he was involved in struggles at Shannon Peace camp and anti-nuclear demonstrations in the U.K. at Sellafield & Faslane Nuclear Base.*

*Following University Matt received an internship and worked in the European parliament while completing his Masters in European Integration*

*"I have always had an interest in the EU. When I was in the [Labour Party] youth section, at a European level I would have went to a number of conferences. I was quite EU critical while others were pro-EU so I would always have stood out from the crowd. When I was chairperson of Labour youth I opposed the Treaty of Nice in 2001 and 2002. Labour Youth didn't oppose it, but I campaigned against it at the time."*

*Matt tells me that he went on to further his education in recent years by completing another Masters, studying Local Development in DIT Dublin.*

*It was evident from interviews with several informants during my research that activists in the People's Movement were very well educated. My discussions with Matt supported this. While a number of activists held postgraduate educational qualifications such as Matt, others had studied at third level education, while others were participating in some form of further education.*

*Matt acknowledges that by the time he came to Dublin he was actively seeking to get involved in something, but he admits that by this stage he already had a very strong political background.*

*"I never went to the big G8 meetings. I was always involved in elections and referenda ... there was always something I was busy with. When I came up here to Dublin I was still involved with the Labour party but I fell out as the Labour Party said they were going to go into Government with Fine Gael. That was it for me. I had enough ... that was my breaking point. I still have good friends in the Labour party."*

*Matt emphasises the importance of networks and linkages among activists. His own involvement with the People's Movement is a result of connections made at former mobilisations and events. He explains that he keeps himself up to date on current campaigns and actions through mailing lists & public debates. "In Dublin, I would have always gone to talks and events and activities, particularly stuff organised by the Communist Party, so it was a natural thing. The People's Movement his is a good organisation, some good people involved, they are grounded, it's not sectarian, there are people from different viewpoints, so that's why I decided to get involved"*

*Despite Matt's criticisms of the European Union, due its neoliberal agenda and lack of democracy, he explains that initially he saw many positives about European integration.*

*However, he feels quite strongly that “the EU political ‘elite’ were not willing to bring the people with them.” I asked Matt if he still felt there were positive aspects to the European Union. “Yeah, I definitely think there are some positive elements, but there are so many negative things now. On some issues, for example, on the environment, free movement of people and goods ... we do need to have some co-operation ... many issues are cross border and cannot be solved on a country by country basis. The level of cooperation is not what we want. The democratic deficit is a huge problem. Europe’s relationship with the third world, it’s military role. You would have to question all that and where’s it going. It doesn’t have a mandate for that”.*

*Matt also recalls the wave of social democratic parties who held power in EU member states over the last two decades. Matt notes that despite this, “the dynamics of a social Europe did not come into existence.” He feels that political discourse on ‘Social Europe’ has proven to be simply rhetoric and an abstract concept which has been used to mislead the public. “If we have social democratic parties in power across Europe and there is no change where Europe is going, then something else is at play. This project is not going in the right place. Social Europe has never been delivered on, but it was talked about very strongly.”*

## ***Chapter 4 Europe & Identity – ‘Imagined and Invented’***

This chapter focuses on two critical concepts of ‘Identity’ and ‘Culture’. It looks at how Europe is both imagined and perceived. I discuss how ‘Europe’ is, in many respects, an ‘invented’ concept and one which continually needs to be shaped and moulded politically and culturally through discourse.

“Europe has been united ... the Europeans have yet to be invented”

- Gerard Delanty, Sociologist (1995:8)

How individuals apply meanings to ‘Europe’ can differ depending on whether it is geographic, political, social or cultural. To understand the ‘European Union’, which is an entirely politically created conception, one has to understand and acknowledge theories of power and state, that is, how nation states were created and developed. Barkin (2006) points out that although the European system of nation states dates back to 17<sup>th</sup> Century, internationally these nations were perceived to be the properties of the ruling class. Barkin illustrates that it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and more recently that citizens within states, rather than being ‘ruled’ came to be ‘represented’ (2006:6). The ‘European Union’ therefore takes the concept of the nation state to a higher level. The EU, as a political European Union of nation states, has developed as a political transnational ‘super-state’. Theories of state building and power are therefore just as relevant. Like the concept of states and nations, ‘Europe’ is an imagined political reality. Carolyn Nordstrom (2004) sees states as conceptual categories in so far as they exist only by virtue of the fact that people believe in its laws, geographical designations and imagined communities. “A state is an abstract notion that is given substance by virtue of being recognized as substantive. A state needs academics to theorize it into being” (Nordstrom 2004: 92). Some commentators however, do not see Europe as an alternative to nation states. Delanty argues that “Europe is meaningless without the nation state” and a political European Union paradoxically reinforces the concept of nation states (1995:157). Similarly, James Anderson (2009) argues that the EU does not

have the features of ‘empire’ simply because of the fact that it is made up of heterogeneous cultural and economic entities “moving at variable speeds”. As the EU does not have the central elements characteristic of a super state (military and taxation), it is a political project which retains individual “nationalist trappings” (2009:86).

If Europe is therefore an invented political construct, what do we consider and understand by the term ‘Europe’? Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) argue that “like the nation state (against which it is identified), Europe can be seen as much a creation of literature and myth as it is of power” (1994:26). Political interpretations of ‘Europeanization’ generally refer to member states becoming more adaptable to demands of EU membership and a greater development of governing structures at European level (Murphy and Hayward 2009) but such explanations do not provide any significant social or cultural meaning. Being ‘European’ extends far beyond the institutions of the EU. How the idea or concept of ‘Europe’ is portrayed will result in different meaning perceived and understood by its citizens.

In the forthcoming section, I want to discuss ‘Europeanization’ and how the ‘meaning’ of this term is both constructed and applied. This is particularly relevant in the context of the current thesis. The debate about ‘Europeanism’ and indeed the signification of the term ‘Europe’ and ‘European’ is critical to how established business and political interests frame discourse to counter social activists’ claims and criticisms aimed at the European Union and its institutions.

### **Anthropology & European Identity**

“Anthropologists are well positioned to contribute to discussions about identity in relation to European integration. Anthropology has a long history of contributing to social science research in identity construction and identity politics.” (Wilken 2012:125).

It has already been noted in Chapter Three, that approaches to the European Union within anthropological studies, took a historic turn in the 1980s. This, as already noted, was to take

account of an evolving EU system, which was redefining itself to assume new political and economic frameworks, against the backdrop of a more globalised world. This was undertaken through institutional reform, policies, but also treaty change. In tandem with this, there was also an emerging interest in identity politics and the nationalisation of states (Wilken 2012, Boisseavin 1994). By the early 1990s, the issue of ‘identity’ and ‘culture’ were for the first time being examined formally by the EU itself.

Anthropological studies, therefore, needed to take account of how ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ were being redefined and constructed from within EU politics itself. Wilken (2012) claims that new approaches within anthropology have contributed to our understanding of identity construction at the supra-local level. “Anthropologists often strive to understand the social world from the perspective of the people they study. In the case of EU studies, this translates into an interest in the ways that various actors engage in, make sense of, and position themselves in relation to the integration process” (Wilken 2012:125). Drawing on the work of Boisseavin (1994), she further notes that “anthropology was for a long time oddly out of sync with the macro-political and macroeconomic developments taking place on the continent ... by focusing on small-scale local communities and attempting to identify the cultural rules that regulate local life, anthropology created an image of a ‘tribalised continent’” (Wilken 2012:126). The reason for the shift in an approach is as result of the changing nature of the EU itself, not merely its expansion to new member states, but also its preparations for an inner market, which includes the movement of people, money and goods, harmonisation, and the introduction of specific policies on culture and identity following the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. (Wilken 2012:128). In a similar vein, Wilson (1998a) notes that the “EU has had an important effect on a wide range of social and cultural identities in Europe, forcing many groups of people to reconstruct their notion of nation, state and sovereignty, and to renegotiate the many symbolic markers to the boundaries between groups, that the EU as a postmodern political structure, has transformed” (1988a:154).

Wilken outlines the main anthropological approaches in undertaking study on identity culture. She notes two approaches which focus on attempts to engineer a European identity ‘from above’, which is largely driven by the EU institutions, but also from officials within

these institutions. Attempts to construct identity ‘from below’ can be examined in the exploration of how people and organisations increasingly define themselves in relation or opposition to the European Union (2012:126). While ‘Europe’ as an analytical unit for anthropological research is complex, and despite needs to be examined, it must be borne in mind that it is not ‘stable’. Abeles, reminds us that “Europe has to be studied as a process, not as a product. It cannot be reified under the categories of community and of identity. Community in the EU is a dream or a metaphor rather than a concrete reality” (Abeles 2000:51). It is therefore, for the time being, a fluid concept. It continues to evolve and change, reinvent itself and adapt. This, of course, makes the subject of analysis more complex and difficult for the researcher. While EU cultural identity needs to be examined, as Goddard et.al (1994) note, “in terms of institutional structures, historical geography, or observed patterns of social, economic and political interaction”, the problem remains that Europe will continue to evolve as a mixed collective of cultural values. I contend that the imposition of a ‘top-down’ approach to the creation of a European cultural identity is only secondary to, and ancillary of, a larger economic and political project. It therefore begs the question: If European culture is not the principal and primary objective of the EU can its leaders expect a true European culture to emerge and flourish? Until this takes place, it appears that the EU will not achieve the formation of a shared culture, but rather a shared mixture of cultures loosely wrapped together, formed by linkages in the economic and political. Wintle (1996) too, struggles with the question of cultural identity in Europe. He sees any discussion on the topic rendered meaningless due to so much diversity, and terms such as ‘identity’, ‘sameness’ and ‘Europe’ and ‘culture’ losing all of their meanings. In attempting to answer his questions, he brings his discussion on cultural and identity back to the level of the nation and the state, which he notes are both intertwined. He differentiates between ‘nation building’ and ‘nation formation’. ‘Nation building’, he explains, is the establishment of the state vis-à-vis external states, and then realising the state structure both internally and externally. ‘Nation formation’ on the other hand, involves a deeper process. “It is a largely internal and cultural process, on the road to a common perception of the nation and is only incidentally in tune with the expansion of the apparatus of the state. To arrive at this stage of affairs and its further refinement, the cultural community is moulded

by the 'top-down' initiatives from the centre and by more-or-less spontaneous 'bottom-up' movements and developments" (Wintle 1996:17).

While recognising that the EU does indeed have a cultural heritage, albeit based on partially shared historical heritage and experience, Wintle notes "it is not however, some sort of blueprint for the EU" which has a very short and selective shared experience (Wintle 1996:24). Neumann (2001) too, recognises the fluidity of identities which are in constant need of re-inscription. He notes that "there cannot be such a thing as European identity in the singular but only a plurality of European identities that will clash and reconstruct one another in the process that is identity politics" (2001:160)

As the European Union evolves and changes, so too must anthropological approaches. While there has been a shift in anthropological approaches in the 1980s and more notably post Maastricht, it begs another question, do anthropological approaches need to be redefined post Lisbon, particularly in the wake of the economic crisis?

Perry Anderson (2009) notes that, in political terms, the European Union is a 'virtual reality' but remains an "unfathomable mystery" to the majority of its peoples who have recently become its 'citizens' (2009:3). Gerard Delanty (1995) has undertaken excellent work in outlining the creation and growth of 'Europe' as a conceptual reality but also one which is imagined and reinvented over and over again. According to Delanty, Europe is essentially a "historically fabricated reality of ever changing forms and dynamics ... It is erroneous to regard Europe as merely a region for the simple reason that it means different things to different people in different contexts. Europe does not exist anymore naturally than do nations ... European identity did not exist prior to its definition and codification" (1995:3) In a similar vein, Castiglione (2009) too makes the important and critical differentiation between what it means to be a 'European' and what it means to have a 'political' European identity, the latter being the result of a social and historical construction. 'Europe' both as a region, and an imagined and constructed 'identity,' will signify different meaning and interpretations for different individuals.

I contend that modern 'Europe' as a concept and an ideology is politically signified and this signification is being challenged by social movement organizations such as the People's Movement in their struggle to appropriate meaning. European political leaders are engaged in an on-going process to create and construct a 'European' identity, above that of the nation state. This process involves reinventing notions of culture and identities through discourse embedded in cultural codes of modern society. Medrano (2009) argues that "Europeans have strong national or subnational identities and a weakly developed sense of being European" (2009:85). A strong European identity, however, needs a positive and emotional attachment to a set of values. This attachment is regarded by many commentators as being a "rather moderate and unstable way", and in reality the term 'European' "cannot be associated with any form of identity at all" (Antonisch 2008:694). Fligstein (2009) sees 'interest' and 'identity' as two inseparable terms. He argues that if the EU has benefitted an individual's class and material interests, it is logical that they would in turn be more likely to consider themselves as 'European' (2009:146). The problem according to Fligstein, is that these individuals are the "privileged" few and "there are not enough of them to have a big effect on creating a mass European identity" (2009:156). Fligstein argues that "for blue collar workers and service workers, the EU has not delivered more jobs and jobs with better pay, but rather deindustrialization and globalization" (2009:157).

The creation of 'European' identity can also be a form of exclusion on two fronts. First, for those citizens who are geographically positioned within Europe, but their state is not a member of the EU. Second, for those individuals not within the accepted boundaries of Europe who are therefore resigned to an identity of 'the other'. There appears to be extensive debate on the issue of where Europe begins and ends (Scott & Van Houtum 2009:273). Others note that it has a 'plurality' of borders (Rumford 2009) and these are not necessarily agreed upon by consensus. Indeed the lines of demarcation are shifting so regularly it has been noted that "today's borderlands may be tomorrow's internal spaces" (Rumford 2009:84). Berdahl (1999) sees such boundaries as merely symbols through which states and nations define themselves, both politically, socially and culturally in opposition to other social groups (1999:3). Symbolically boundaries can only construct social identities, loyalties and allegiances in so far as individuals interpret and apply its 'meaning'. The

concept of EU citizenship is a further illustration of how boundaries are constructed between citizens and non-citizens (Eleonore Kofman 1995). Others such as Hintjens (2007) see the imposition of 'identity' as a particular concern for individuals and minorities within the EU's borders who do not 'fit' within an ascribed identity set forth by EU member states. Likewise, Dreano (2004) notes that in the EU enlargement process, new countries gaining entry to the EU have no option but to adhere to a particular model, which happens to be neoliberal and capitalist in its form. This in effect represents a 'structural adjustment' to a dominant economic model (2004:150) Political geographers such as Joshua Hagen (2003), Marco Antonsich (2008) & Adrian Smith (2002) have produced excellent work on how 'Europe' and being 'European' is defined and shaped through language and meaning. The appropriation of 'names' and meaning to places "are attempts to characterize and often control the people, society, culture or politics of that place" and through the discourse of naming "social and political relations of power" are produced. (Hagen 2003:49, Foster 1991:239, Case 2009).

It is not my contention that 'Europe' as a concept and geographical territory has no history and values of its own. It is how the European Union as a political and economic project have appropriated certain values to fulfil the objective of a political project which require deeper study. The development of 'Europe' from an 'imagined' entity to one which has self-conscious political identity and one which can both create and implement real structural change illustrates how 'Europe' as a political entity and union is becoming a contentious issue for students of social science. 'Europe' has moved from an imagined concept to one which is now clearly defined with ideological form. In other words, it is a legitimate social actor which can be scientifically studied as a 'real' and no longer 'imagined' concept. Interestingly enough our own contemporary interpretation of how we define 'Europe' has to a very large degree been the result of political 'meaningful construction'. Antonsich (2008) notes that when individuals comment or express an opinion on Europe, most people understand this term to be synonymous with the European Union (2008:698). Delanty too, argues that historically "Europeanism" has often held connotations and representations of certain discourses such as "Christendom, civilization, the West, imperialism, racism, fascism, modernity" all of which Delanty contends are matters "that have little to do with the

real experiences of life” (1995:9). It is in this space that challengers to EU hegemony and ideological domination seek to gain control through mobilisation. Struggles exist within political space over the definition of meanings. Challengers to EU reform treaties such as the People’s Movement group seek to counter-produce their own frames on ‘Europeanism’ and reinvent meaning through social movement discourse which often portrays the EU as hegemonic, imperialist and federalist. This is done against the backdrop of ‘cultural settings’ which ‘resonates’ with individuals based on their values and belief systems.

Delanty argues that “Europe can mean whatever one intends it to mean” but in reality one is admonished to be either for Europe or ‘against’ it, and it is in the name of this rather obscure historical category that the great questions of the day are being debated (Delanty 1995:145). People’s Movement campaigners frequently faced such admonishment by pro-EU Treaty advocates. Those who campaigned to reject the Lisbon Treaty were often portrayed as being ‘anti-European’, less than progressive, conservative and rooted in national traditionalism, having ultra-Christian views or anti-modern. The reality however is much different. My personal experience of campaigners is quite the contrary of such misconceptions. I found campaigners in the People’s Movement group to be quite ‘internationalist’ and ‘global’ in their outlook, while at the same time attempting to preserve cultural heterogeneity by defending ‘local’ and ‘Irish’ qualities of life. Their main struggle was not against ‘Europe’ per se, but against the ideological and hegemonic forms which the EU as a political and economic union represented.

Maurice, a People’s Movement activist from Dublin applies the term ‘European’ purely in geographical terms “As a cultural term its meaningless. A Spanish person has more in common with an Argentinian than he has with a German. An English person has more in common with a New Zealander than a Greek”. Other activists, such as Jim, a rural farmer from the midlands also applied the term ‘European’ geographically rather than culturally or politically. He states that, subtly, over the years, the concept of Europe has changed and decisions are now being taken at EU level, which have a direct impact on Irish people. While he feels that co-operation among the people of Europe is important for the common good, he is quite critical of the direction in which the EU going.

In other words, activists struggle against the concept of ‘Europe’ which has been created and invented by a top-down elite (Sklair 1997, Llobera2003, Shore 2001, Delanty 1995:143). At the same time, activists, through extensive linkages with other European movements, promote their own alternative visions of European solidarity and community based on grassroots action ‘from below’. People’s Movement activist, Miriam, feels that there is a lack of ‘lateral’ action. She feels that individuals and people are not ‘connected’ at all throughout Europe. “Regions in Ireland might have a lot in common with regions in certain member states but they don’t communicate with each other. Everything is centralized through formal committees in Brussels. The way politics is done is all wrong. The EU is bureaucratic.” Miriam’s views were also echoed by another activist Julie who emphasized that solidarity and interconnectivity can be promoted among people and communities in Europe but within a different framework based on cooperation rather than competition. She notes that “we are not working together to help one another ... we are constantly competing within capitalist structures.” Julie also points out that she places no particular emphasis on concepts such as the nation state and ‘Europe’. “I don’t believe in borders, nationalities or flags ... it’s about cooperation among people”.

For many of the activists I encountered in the People’s Movement, ‘Europe’, as a dominant ideology, is one associated with neoliberal economic reform, capital growth and increased ‘materialism’ and ‘consumerism’ (Stevenson 2006). In many respects this concept represents and signifies institutional and undemocratic power which permits, and indeed removes obstacles to, unrestrained economic growth and capitalism. Activists like Jim, Miriam and Julie point out that a ‘Europe’ without borders is primarily driven by a neoliberal economic agenda. Activists note that the Irish establishment often use the European and ‘Irish’ identity card at convenient instances and in contradictory manners depending on the issue in question.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Activists explained that in cases where the establishment need to raise revenue directly from citizens (through the collection of local charges, such as property tax and water/waste charges) political representatives often justify such charges by claiming they are harmonising EU charges for utilities, to reflect other member state systems. Activists are quick to point out the contradiction by highlighting the Irish government’s dismissal of any discussion on the harmonization of Corporate Tax rates. In response to this, the government argue that Ireland has a right to retain low rates of Corporation tax in the interest of the ‘national’ economy.

In reality the European Union has the political legitimacy to impose penalties for interference with the operation of the free market even when such interference is deemed necessary for the protection of social needs. Delanty notes that the European Union has come to signify and epitomize “a form of life based on consumption which no longer bears any relation to human needs ... [and] not surprisingly many of the new social movements are resisting the techno – cosmopolitanism of the new ‘Europe’” (1995:145).

### **From Politics to Culture**

I mentioned earlier how European identity was continually being constructed and reinvented according to dominant ideologies. Scott & Van Houtum (2009) see the EU “as a new type of international actor whose potential strengths lie less in the state like exercise of power and more in its ability to affect gradual social transformation” (2009:271). In many ways, this ‘gradual social transformation’ is a result of what I consider European ‘social conditioning’. Anthropologist Cris Shore (2000) has provided critical research insight into how EU leaders have adopted ‘cultural’ politics in their quest to deliberately reinvent European identity and construct a pan-European culture. Social life has become mediated through ‘culture’ which is now firmly situated within the site of politics. The EU has specifically targeted areas such as sport, science, the media and education. Other areas addressed at senior EU level include, a European lottery, EU postage stamps, EU driving licenses, EU passports and also ‘European’ days and weeks to be designated in our calendars. Symbols which have been traditionally associated with nation state loyalty such as anthems, flags (with religious significance) and emblems have all been utilized in the construction of an EU culture and identity (See Delanty 1995:128). Nevertheless, some commentators feel that, despite these attempts at culture ‘building’ or culture ‘formation’, the EU have not succeeded to any significant degree in their attempt to construct a pan European culture. Abeles (2000) notes, that “after fifty years, the symbolic production is disconcertingly poor.” (2000:37). Abeles provides an account of the great internal difficulties within the EU institutional apparatus to agree on certain symbols which were representative of ‘Europe’. He notes that the European flag, which is blue with a circle of gold stars, was designed to eventually include

an emblem in the middle, but this never transpired. He also notes that the anthem adopted for Europe is one without words. For Abeles, both of these absences are quite meaningful insofar as “it reflects and illuminates the symbolic deficit of the European Community”, which ultimately correspond “to the absence of a coherent set of political concepts and discourses. Everything is working as if Europe was destined to remain a virtual object” (2000:38-39)

When the EEC was first formed it had no cultural remit, but this has changed quite significantly over the last two decades stimulated by greater calls to make the EU more open to its peoples. Barnett (2001) notes that a positive sense of ‘*European-ness*’ was to be constructed through the promotion of a European culture. This was to be achieved through symbolic events. Such events were largely organized and managed within a political framework. The EU, for example, supported cultural programs but only if they added value and had a clear ‘European’ dimension which was in line with the positive image of the ‘Europe’ which political leaders sought to signify (2001:409,411). Dreano (2004) notes that despite such macro political attempts to create a common European identity and culture, considerable political cleavages exist between nation states. He argues that issues such as a European Constitution (Treaty of Lisbon) is an example of one such cleavage, and while Europe is at a crossroads, “governments seem to be indicating only selected paths to their populations” (Dreano 2004:145). He also acknowledges that such attempts to reform the EU are not the result of a “democratic forum in which peoples of Europe could put forward questions and alternative proposals” (Dreano 2004:153). He adds that the “project in no way furthers Social Europe” and merely “projects a Union identity characterized by the market and competitiveness” (2004:156).

These views resonate with People’s Movement activists who feel that reform of the EU is driven by a particular agenda, which remains far removed from the voices of its ‘citizens’ which it claims to represent. People’s Movement activist Ciaran illustrates the widening democratic deficit which exists: “Attempts to create a federal EU have been anti-democratic. You do not proceed without the consent of all the states but this does not happen. We have seen that the EU is determined to circumvent this and try to get around obstacles, such as

ignoring the French and Dutch referendums of the EU Constitution and re-running EU referenda in Ireland after rejections by the public.” Activists also claim that during periods of EU elections and referenda on EU Treaties, debate and discussion becomes clouded in political discourse, which detracts from the real and substantive issues which people are really being asked to vote upon. The imposition of ideal and values ‘from-above’ is being contested and rejected by certain sections of the public. Activists do not wish to have a European culture or identity imposed upon them from above. While certain activists have no problem acknowledging and recognising their ‘European-ness’, there is no cultural similarity. ‘European’ culture does not fall within the same sphere of values of local societies. One activist asks, “How can I expect to be European, or a citizen of Europe, when the EU stand for all that I am against?”

### **Globalisation & Cultural Homogenisation.**

How, therefore, have cultural values changed against the backdrop of increased globalisation and new economic models? It is contended that with greater globalisation of the world’s economy comes increased cultural homogenization, driven particularly by the mass media. This in turn limits, or rather undermines the authority of the state. Nation states become weaker and lose their autonomy, and its national symbols are devalued with the result that we witness a rise in defensive nationalism (Rucht & Neidhardt 2002:16). Marden (1997) provides a critical account of whether we are witnessing the demise of the nation state against the backdrop of the emergence of a globalised culture. He notes that several other commentators have seen the emergence of a ‘cosmopolitan’ culture (Hannerz 1990, Mayo 2005), and a new global cultural economy (Appadurai 1990). Marden (1997:39) rather than seeing this as the end of the nation state, calls for the need to re-evaluate the relationship between local and global. This new ‘cosmopolitanism’ is reflected in the fact that new social identities are being created based on “common interests that cross traditional class, gender, ethnic and political lines” (Marden 1997:44). Ethnographers are also coming into contact with the interconnectedness or diffusion of cultures as a result of increased globalisation. Foster (1991) attributes this cultural diffusion to the “global flows of images, objects and people”. While increased cultural interaction may be evident throughout the globe, it is the

form of such cultural diffusion which concerns many social commentators. The increased use of technology (satellite and internet) and 'mass consumerisation' has led to 'Western' culture being exported throughout the world. The spread of 'Western culture' ultimately leads to a diffusion of cultural values and beliefs which contradict many national cultural systems and can in turn lead to a resurgence of nationalism, ethnic and religious movements as a counter-cultural measure (Della Porta et al. 2006:15). In many respects, the struggles of the People's Movement against further EU reforms is an example of such counter cultural measures. Activists campaign against the imposition of greater political control at EU level, a decline in social cohesiveness and the imposition of a certain (neoliberal) economic order and cultural belief system based on mass consumption and commodification.

People's Movement activist Mairead discussed her concerns on the commodification of culture. She tells me that she holds a "deep scepticism" about cultural events organised by certain high profile politicians and the EU, and in particular, the purpose behind these events. She notes how certain cultural events have been organised to "monetise our culture". In particular, she strongly objects to utilising traditional Irish music and poetry, to serve the interests of capital. She notes that, "spirituality is important ... it's not always about money". Mairead speaks openly about the need to maintain local traditions and values, such as working the land and passing on learned traditions from generation to generation. "Things are either immoral or moral ... focusing on money and competition is immoral." Fellow activist, David expresses concerns over what he sees as a "growing materialist culture" in Ireland, which is founded on the "conception that individuals are merely consumers, to serve the interests of capital"

Allman argues that "the aim of human existence increasingly has become the possession of more and more things. Human beings often are treated and treat one another as commodities [and] possessions"(Allman 1999:49). In terms of increased cultural homogenization / standardization in a globalised world, Kiely (2005), notes that while we consume different consumer goods in different parts of the world, it is the meaning that we give to similar goods in similar places which is leading to a standardized culture. Pichardo (1997) states

that what we are witnessing is ‘cultural massification’, the ‘bureaucratization’ and the ‘commoditisation of social life’ (1997:420).

Eamon states that “we live in a world which is an Anglo American EU dominant culture. Cultures are dying away. Cultures and languages are expressions of human beings. They are the product of our evolution. They are the rich tapestry of human experience and should be sustained as much as possible because they are what we are. These things get completely dismissed as irrelevant, but they are part and parcel of what we are. This commodification of language and culture means that languages and cultures are constantly under pressure from market forces. I am opposed to the concept of market forces determining everything I do whether it is sport, what I read, and what I listen to. Therefore, I see that cultural struggle as part and parcel of human beings asserting themselves. They are more than collective things ... what they eat and consume.”

“Capitalism is presented as competition between equals, where business is competed with business on an equal basis, and it’s not. We live in an era of monopoly. An era which is dominated by global corporations allied to banks controlling them so we don’t live in an era of free competition that they present to us. It doesn’t exist. It’s an illusion. It’s important to address these questions, to educate people”.

While certainly cultural elements are ‘diffused’ in a global context, I do not see culture in purely ‘mechanistic forms’ and would not draw the conclusion that we are witnessing a ‘global culture’ per se. As ‘Westernised’ culture permeates and diffuses throughout the globe it is diluted and transformed by national and regional distinctions because it reacts with local cultures, practices and belief systems. Paradoxically, one of the most critical elements of global cultural diffusion is counter globalisation culture itself, insofar as there is common opposition to the global concerns which impact our localities and ‘puncture’ the social and cultural fabric of our lives. An example of such counter culture which opposes further EU reform can be seen in the transnational networking of EU critical groups. Smith (1990) and Smart (1993) both argue that ‘culture’ needs an element of ‘memory’ and ‘identity’. Without common links to the past which express our individual identities, then

the concept of a 'global culture' is premature and misleading (See Marden 1997:55). It could be said that globalisation in this respect is evolving in such a manner which echoes the description of mass society postulated by Gusfield (1962), in which he sees the development of large scale, impersonal and bureaucratic organisations essentially replacing local informal systems of relationships. According to Gusfield, "technological innovations have made possible a high degree of standardisation, both of products and ideas" and in turn local groups are less visible and identifiable and therefore less able to resist control. "The population ... is now more homogenous but also less sharply identified". (1962:20).

Globalised culture marks a radical departure from the 'traditional' traits which ethnographers and anthropologists often see associated with culture, that is, historicity, linguistics, kinship and value systems. While 'globalised' culture in many respects may appear 'fictitious' (Bazin and Selim 2006:448) it certainly has a 'real' impact on cultural aspects of our lives. It occupies space, both socially and politically, and dominates the construction of 'meaning' in our lives.

There has been much debate within the EU about bridging the 'democratic deficit' in the Union, that is, making the EU more accountable and transparent. Shore (2000, 2001) argues that the 'democratic deficit' is in fact a 'cultural deficit'. He contends that the political establishment need to achieve legitimacy in the cultural domain, that is, the idea of a shared cultural value between rulers and ruled. If there are no shared values among its people, then there does not exist any people to be ruled in a democratic fashion, which ultimately leads to a deficit (Wilken 2012).

### **Memory & Nostalgia**

While I have addressed the concepts of 'culture' and 'identity' above, I conclude by discussing the issues of 'memory' and 'nostalgia', which are very much intertwined in this discussion.

Delanty notes, that within the emerging EU political framework, the “individual can no longer choose his or her own identity” and such identities “become vehicles for the reproduction of dominant ideologies” (Delanty1995:5). It is specifically these dominant ideologies which are challenged at national and local level by social movement organisations such as the People’s Movement. For many activists, the concept of EU citizenship does not merely represent a mapping of new identities, but rather a ‘replacement’ of former identities. This loss of identity, in turn, creates a vacuum or a state of ‘in between-ness’. The local and national are being subsumed into the global and supranational. As this transition occurs, new identities reflect new meanings, significations and traits which in many cases conflict with local work practices and belief systems which attached to former identities. In other cases, individuals feel lost or left behind, lamenting the loss of past identities but not attaching themselves to new constructed identities due to a lack of shared cultural values.

Buchowski (2012), discussing post-socialist populations in the EU, discusses concepts of memory and nation. He outlines how such populations are habitually described as being “nostalgic ... longing for a glorious and cosy bygone life-world”. (2012:79) Concepts of memory and nation can equally be applied to societies of late capitalism<sup>15</sup>, particularly with the advent of a globalised neoliberal economic model. Buchowski notes, that the “politics of memory is directly related to the question of nation...identities do not exist ‘out there’, somehow preceding collective practices or determining cultural configurations” (2012:80). This argument however is not exclusive to post-socialist societies. The transformation, which societies in EU member states have undergone over the past three decades, has resulted in a dramatic shift in work practices and local customs. Buchowski sees the significance of boundaries created by the European Union, “negated by actual practices, through which national and ethnic identities are constantly produced and recreated” (2012:80). Concepts of ‘memory’ and ‘nation’, of course, are inextricably linked to cultural heritage, and indeed language. A European Union comprising twenty eight states and a multitude of languages and regional dialects presents a mountain of obstacles for the EU

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<sup>15</sup> The term ‘Late Capitalism’ is broadly defined as a stage of capitalism which has emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century.

institutions in the process of standardisation. NicCraith (2012) notes that this ‘standardisation’ means that some languages are adopted and others are not. Those languages which are not deemed to be ‘European’ do not derive the appropriate recognition and resources from the European Union. (2012:381)

Horvat (2012) notes that within social theory and political discourse “European identity and memory are still often conceived and/or refuted predominantly in terms of the (im)possibility of reiterating the modern elite project and transcending it on supranational European levels” (2012:149). She further notes that “in cultural theory, consumerism and practice of shopping have long been recognised as carrying complex social, political, and cultural dimensions ranging from emotional dynamisms of everyday private and family life to complex individual and group identity formations” (2012:149). Consumerism and patterns of consumption evoke memories which in turn contribute to the construction of meaning among consumers. Horvat contends that consumerism has been neglected in the discussions of cultural space when discussing European integration and ‘Europeanization’, as it is this consumerism which contributes to shared citizenship, belonging and loyalty. (2012:158)

Essentially present developments of Europe, that is, societies within European member states, are simultaneously impacting and influencing a thinking of the past. In this respect, memory and recollection is being reshaped. Individuals are revisiting past experiences based on present conditions within a rapidly developing global society. This overlap between present and past is an approach considered by Abeles (2000), who notes that an anthropological approach is interested in the “imbrication between present and future in a political project which seems unable to exploit the resources of the past” (2000:31). Abeles notes that the European Union appears to have difficulty managing its relationship with time. “Everything happens as if Europe will be inventing itself every day, thereby reconfirming its permanence. One seems to ignore the specific work of memory in such a way that each crisis is immediately enveloped by a cloak of forgetfulness. Reference to the past is usually limited to a brief remembrance of the founding fathers. Any reference to tradition seems to be completely incongruous in the context of the European institutions”

(2000:33). Abeles further notes, that “each step in European integration is a preparation for the next one ... this process explains the ambiguous relationship the institutions have with history, wherein the obsession for the future and for concluding the project leaves no space for the past and memory” (2000:34). In the absence of a history and memory, Abeles sees the EU “trapped in a cycle of successive take offs and the re-cultivation of its roots. The Community purposely denies history”. (2000:34)

Bossevain (1994:51) considers it is a characteristic of today, and one which is likely to continue into the future, that there is a “romantic longing for an idealised past”. In this respect, he notes that new concepts emerged such as ‘quality of life’ issues. These new concepts required a “reappraisal and idealisation of among other things, community customised rituals and the ‘traditional’ community centred rural way of life, abandoned in the quest for modernisation” (1994:51). These concepts were evident in my discussions with a number of activists I had met in the People’s Movement, during which they discussed a need for a ‘cooperative’ society based on mutual shared values with the common good in mind, rather than one which is based on ‘competition’ and self-interest. Llobera (2003) notes that “European identity can only progress if national identity fades away” (2003:172). While this may be true, what is equally important to consider is the changing form of ‘national identity’ itself, and indeed what this national identity signifies for individuals. National identity cannot be wrapped up simply in economic and political ideologies. It represents, as Shore (2000,2001) and Llobera (2003) have noted, linguistic diversity, historical memories and kinship bonds. It is the absence of these commonalities, which will continue to be obstacles in the construction of a European culture ‘from –above’.

### ***Miriam, Julie & Jim***

*Miriam, Jim & Julie are based in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. They are the principal coordinators of the midlands branch of the People's Movement. Miriam and Jim are both involved in farming, and Julie works in a retail outlet in the town centre. Like other informants I had met during my research, Miriam, Julie and Jim tell me that their own families were not politically active.*

*The foundation of the People's Movement branch in the midlands is an excellent example of how activists collectively mobilise through personal networks and former struggles. While Julie and Miriam were involved in former struggles against EU reform treaties, they campaigned independently rather than with a particular organisation. It was only in the Post-Nice Treaty period in 2003, with a heightened focus on anti-war and peace mobilisation that Julie and Miriam began campaigning together. This was through a campaign organised by the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA). This campaign introduced Miriam and Julie to a new local activist, Jim. These three activists collectively formed the midlands anti-war group.*

*This collective organisation through peace and anti-war frames laid the foundation for future mobilisation against the EU and the creation of a midlands branch of the People's Movement. Such personal stories of activism, illustrate the historical and interwoven network which is, Irish social activism. While the midlands People's Movement branch was only established in 2008, its foundation is merely another milestone in activist's long history of personal social activism.*

*While the activists themselves acknowledge this multiplicity of activism and overlap in support they tell me that even though the support base has commonalities, it is the 'issue' which drives people to mobilise. As Miriam tells me ... "you would have different reasons for contacting the same people."*

## *Miriam*

*Miriam is in her 40s and is a community activist and part time farmer. She lives close to Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. When I met Miriam, I asked her to describe her background in social activism before her involvement with the People's Movement organisation. Miriam tells me that her early activism was influenced greatly by the republican movement in the north of Ireland and in particular the hunger strikers in the early 80's and also the campaign to free the 'Birmingham Six'. She explains that she was very interested in issues of social justice but never joined any political party, instead choosing to give her time to community groups.*

*Miriam explains that the first time she became active against the European Union was during the campaign to defeat the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. She feels that during this campaign, and also the campaigns against the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties in 1998 and 2001, that there was a notable "lack of a structured and progressive campaign". She explains that on these occasions, she was campaigning independently and not as part of a particular group or collective. Miriam advises me that she obtained literature from a number of 'No' campaign groups and undertook leaf-letting in her own community.*

*In the post Nice Treaty period, Miriam continued to remain socially active. Her focus on anti-militarisation and peace led to her involvement with groups such as the Irish Anti War Movement and PANA in 2003-2004.*

*Miriam explained that, while she knew Fergus and other EU critical campaigners through other social movement struggles and trade union activities, she was not directly involved in any form collective action EU critical groups. Miriam tells me that prior to the Lisbon Treaty referendum in 2008, Fergus made contact with her and Miriam agreed to become active with the People's Movement for their campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. Following this, Miriam became one of the key organisers for the midlands People's Movement branch.*

*During the Lisbon Treaty campaign, Miriam was involved in organising meetings, chairing discussions and managing logistics and campaign materials. Miriam's own personal background in farming was also important as the effect of EU legislation and reform on Irish farming has always been a contentious issue during EU referenda and Miriam had first-hand experience of these effects.*

*Miriam explains to me that the People's Movement's objectives held strong appeal for her. Issues which she feels are important to her are, anti-militarisation, local democracy, workers' rights' and issues impacting Irish farming.*

*Miriam notes that the "policies of the European Union have actually drained the life out of rural areas". She also notes that EU Directives lead to "virtual collapse of communities and is severely impacting small rural localities." She feels that the People's Movement look at local issues which she claims is very positive.*

## **Julie**

*Julie is in her 50s and also resides in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Originally from Tasmania, Australia, she emigrated to Ireland in the 1980s. Julie works in a retail outlet in Mullingar town. I met with Julie in a hotel in Mullingar to discuss her history in activism and her role in the People's Movement campaign.*

*Julie recounted personal stories of her childhood, and in particular she recalls the time when she was young and the realisation that a lot of her own relatives had been killed during World War II. She feels that this was one of the key events in her life which later prompted her interest in anti-militarisation events and politics. When Julie first moved to Ireland, she was living in Dublin with her husband. In a similar vein to Miriam, Julie too had campaigned against the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998 as an independent activist.*

*"I took leaflets from different groups and travelled into Dublin city and handed them out and then when I got home to Dun Laoghaire [South Dublin]. I would also hand out leaflets there. I was not campaigning with any particular group ... I didn't know anybody in the area."*

*During this time, Julie did make a number of contacts with activists from various EU critical groups and peace groups in Dublin. She and her husband moved from Dublin to Mullingar in 1999, but she utilised her existing network to remobilise in opposition to the Nice Treaty in 2001 and 2002. She advises me that she campaigned with PANA during the Nice Treaty and became their regional co-ordinator for the midlands area. She also organised public meetings in Mullingar & Athlone, and issued press releases, "some of which got published but most were not." She states that it was difficult to get publicity for the meetings without having to pay for advertisements/notices in the paper. "It was a little bit of a battle because I was leafleting virtually on the streets sometimes by myself ... therefore it's difficult for any*

*campaigner ... it doesn't matter what the issue is whether you are for or against an issue, as a campaigner it's awful when you don't know anybody and you are on your own".*

*While Julie and Miriam were both active in campaigning during this time, they were doing so independently of each other. In the post Nice-Treaty period, Julie's involvement in social activist issues concerning women's rights and anti-militarisation, brought her into contact with Miriam. Like Miriam, Julie had known Fergus from previous mobilisations and events and following discussions with Fergus in 2008, agreed to establish a People's Movement branch in the midlands with Miriam.*

*Notwithstanding Julie's work with the People's Movement, during both the Lisbon and EU Fiscal Treaty campaigns, she remains very active in a number of independent campaigns both on anti-militarisation, health and community services. Julie remains politically active with PANA, the Irish Anti-War Movement and community groups in Westmeath. While she is not committed to any one organisation and undertakes a substantial amount of independent social activism, she advises me that she is committed to the issues which are important to her. In this respect, she is well known to several activists in the People's Movement and on the political Left, and is an instrumental figure in the People's Movement activist network in the midlands.*

*Julie tells me that she felt she could campaign with the People's Movement as its objectives cover a broad range of issues which she felt strongly about, such as anti-militarisation and NATO issues. She also notes the intellectual input from the group which she says was "based on well considered and well researched work". Commenting on the activists who are involved with the People's Movement, Julie notes that they were "so full of knowledge. They undertook so much study of the Treaty. They got hold of the full issue of the Treaty, studying it from cover to cover. They were able to answer any questions put to them from the floor of any meeting or just a spontaneous interview on a radio station. They had the knowledge, the truth and the facts".*

## **Jim**

*Jim is in his 40's, and like Miriam and Julie is also living in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Jim works in farming and expresses great concern over increased EU political power and its impact on local communities and rural farming in Ireland. During my discussions with Jim on his former social activist experience, he found it difficult to pinpoint any particular series of events that motivated him to become active. Jim is particularly vocal on the "growing deficit of democracy in Ireland and Europe and the lack of sovereignty resulting from an increase in the transfer of power from member states to the EU."*

*Unlike Miriam and Julie, Jim was not active in former campaigns against the European Union. He lived in London since 1987 and only came back from England in 2002. He notes that in London, "there are small pockets of individuals interested in campaigning" but he says he found it very "theoretical". He recalls going to an Anarchist meeting in London and "they spent most of the time engaged in theoretical discussions" and this he explains, dissuaded him from getting involved in activism. When Jim returned to Ireland in 2002, there was a heightened cycle of anti-war mobilisation taking place and he participated in a number of anti-war events. This mobilisation introduced him to Julie and Miriam. Through collective action on peace and anti-war issues, he then became active in the People's Movement campaign before the Lisbon Treaty in 2008*

*Jim tells me that during referendum campaigns the "People's Movement give it everything. They don't sit back whoever is involved in it. Whoever wants to come can come ... sometimes not many people come or not many people are interested, but there seems to be a nucleus of people that are dedicated and prepared to give it everything". Jim notes that he was attracted to the group as it was not based on party politics. What he saw in the People's Movement was an organisation which was "against a federal EU and its theme was anti-capitalist.*

## *Chapter 5*

## *The Politics of ‘Meaning’*

This final chapter in Part I of this thesis, is dedicated to a discussion on the construction and signification of ‘meaning’. This is particularly relevant to my own ethnographic fieldwork as I focus on the importance of language and communication within social movement actors’ struggles. The construction and signification of meaning, and its importance to ethnographers in the field and within the discipline of anthropology, is well documented notably within cultural and interpretive anthropology. The works of de Saussure (1916), Victor Turner (1975) and Clifford Geertz (1973) require notable mention. Firth (1975) notes that within anthropological studies, there is a distinct awareness of the significance language plays in the creation of meaning and also how symbols have come to be considered as significant communicators in non-verbal environments (1975:7). Indeed Firth notes that modern social anthropologists rather than looking at the actions and behaviours of the people they study, are also concerned with “their models for perceiving and interpreting their experience and generating their behaviour. The focus is on modes of thought and not modes of action” (1975:8).

To understand the construction of meaning, one must look at language, discourse, ritualism, and symbolism. Anthropologists use these concepts to illustrate how individuals in society create and interpret the world in which they interact. I also wish to show how ‘meaning’ often underpins and indeed transforms the very social relations which form the structures of our community. In previous chapters, I outlined how concepts of the ‘State’ and ‘Europe’ are both imagined and invented entities and how these have come to be recognized as legitimate institutions through the signification of meaning. In this chapter, I want to address the politics of meaning and how the signification of meaning constructs our social world. In turn, culture is intertwined and constructed through social relations. This is relevant because social movements are actors on a socio-cultural field and conduct relations with social actors who are culturally determined. Indeed those actions take place in cultural contexts. O’Laughlin (1975) notes that “if we misunderstand the social relations through which

culture is organized, then we misinterpret culture as well for meaning is in its referents” (1975:348). Symbolism has a key anthropological relevance in the interpretation of meaning. In some instances, such studies can provide a greater understanding of social relations which perhaps may not be visible until documented and interpreted by the ethnographer in the field. I will later outline social movement theory on ‘framing’ and illustrate how social actors can be guided by certain frames which are embedded and imbued with meaning and significance.

### **Meaning & Culture**

Language, as we know from interpretive anthropology is a communication tool which signifies meaning. In a similar vein to etymological studies, it is through linguistics and symbolism that realities are constructed and meanings are applied to the way we live our lives. Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar (1998) contend that “social struggles can be seen as wars of interpretation.” They claim that culture is political because “meanings are constitutive of processes that implicitly or explicitly seek to redefine social power” (1998:7). Charon (1995) notes that we, as humans, encounter objects every day and we interpret these objects and apply meaning to them according to society, in other words “we come to identify and classify our world according to what we learn from others in interaction” (1995:38). He also illustrates how most human action is symbolic and is “meant to represent something more than what is immediately perceived” (1995:40). Such symbols can take the form of acts or gestures, but the use of words and language are the primary communicable forms in which humans interact and create and imply meaning. Indeed words, written or spoken, are considered to be the basis for all other symbolic interactions (1995:45).

Within the context of this thesis, I draw particular reference to the field of ‘social interaction’ and the use of ‘symbols’ because I wish to draw attention to the construction of meaning through political discourse and symbolic representations. Social actors such as political parties, business interest groups, lobby groups and social movement actors are all struggling to construct meaning to influence the public. This is similar to what Gamson (1988) refers to as ‘issue arenas’. It is within this arena that social movements must struggle

to challenge discourse, that is, sets of ideas and symbols which are used to construct meanings (1988:221). While language is the signifying tool which essentially creates convention and entrenches socially relevant meanings (Enfield 2000:37), it is quite notable in the realm of 'political oratory and rhetoric' (Parkin 1984). Indeed Dick Roche (2008), Ireland's Minister for European Affairs, acknowledged after the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum that the Government were faced with the challenge of constructing "a narrative for Europe that speaks to people's hearts as well as to their pocketbooks" (O'Mahony 2009:444). Constructing 'meaning' which resonated with people's emotions was therefore a tactic employed by pro Lisbon Treaty campaigners.

The use of symbolism to communicate meaning has been referred to as 'symbolic interactionism' (Blumer 1969, See also Mead 1934, Goffman 1974). Cahill (1995) notes that Goffman's particular and unique approach to social interaction was often referred to as 'dramaturgical'. Within this approach, life was seen as a staged drama occupied by human 'actors' who engaged in a 'performance' to influence the audience in order to construct an impression (Cahill 1995:187). Human interaction, being mediated through symbolism, can therefore be manipulated and exploited by those who control communication channels and through dominant discourse. Crossley (2002:23) notes that 'social norms' emerge "out of situations of domination and conflict and may as such reflect the interests of dominant groups." The construction of 'meaning' itself becomes a hegemonic form. Control over words and acts are negotiated in social interactions, such as debates, press statements, broadcasts, demonstrations and other symbolic acts. There is an important link between symbolic interactionism and culture. Interpretive anthropology seeks to attribute meaning to acts, utterances and symbols and has in many respects overlapped with and benefitted from phenomenological studies and ethnomethodology. The field of semiotic structuralism, however, is more relevant insofar as such studies are concerned with the 'unconscious' meaning and the rules governing the formulation of such meanings (Rossi 1983:221). Rossi notes that meaning can only be interpreted according to cultural codes in which they are embedded (1983:222). In other words, 'meaning' derives from the socio cultural context in which it is linguistically and symbolically signified and interpreted (Rossi 1983, Charon 1995, Garret and Baquedano Lopez 2002:341). It can also be determined by age, gender,

occupation and temporal factors (Katagiri 1992). ‘Cultural Logic’ is what Enfield (2000) refers to as the “interpretation of one’s world using natural logical principles and with reference to ... particular cultural settings.” Values, ideology and beliefs are embedded in such ‘cultural settings’ (Enfield 2000:40).

Finally, it is worth making a few comments on how the construction of ‘meaning’ is variable and has changed dramatically within a more globalised world. Lash and Urry believe that people have become “disembedded from concrete space and time” (Lash & Urry 1994:13). By looking at the ‘globalised’ nature of the world we live in and the dislocation and abstraction of space and time, events and acts not only lose meaning in the ‘traditional’ sense but new ‘symbolic’ forms of meanings are appropriated (Giddens 1990). This is evident through commodity fetishism, greater corporate intensity in the market place and increased corporate presence within social spaces through consumerism, branding and marketing. In postmodern societies, through economic deduction, rational choice theories and hegemonic cultural domination the ‘meaning’ of citizens and individuals is reduced and deconstructed to single consuming analytic units. In a similar manner, Melucci, also notes the changing form of time and space (Keane & Mier 1989). Melucci notes that time is losing its “telos” as the present “becomes the inestimable measure of the sense of things” and our everyday experiences are losing their “spatial bearings” as “we find our experience of space undergoing both unlimited dilation and an apparently unlimited restriction” (Keane & Mier 1989:106). Meaning can shift and can be signified in accordance with the sociocultural context in which it is embedded. This point was also emphasized by Wagner-Pacifici (2010) in her discussion on ‘political semiosis’. Events, such as an economic downturn or financial instability, can according to Wagner-Pacifici, become signified in a certain manner through performance, speech, language and meaning. “The specific content of a performative speech is only as significant as its context-dependent specific force. Social agents performing ‘performatives’ depend on other agents acknowledging and heeding these speech acts. There is an essential real-time dynamic here between interpretation and action that opens up a space of contingency and change” (Wagner-Pacifici 2010:1359). In this case, the media and the establishment play very close yet interlinking roles in the performative acts of communicating meaning.

The importance of language however, goes beyond the steps of simply performance and communication. In late capitalism, Heller (2010) argues that language itself has been commodified and is a resource in itself. Heller sees a shift in the use of language “away from political frames and towards economic ones, changing the nature of discourses that legitimise power”. She further notes, that this shift “emerges out of existing political economies rather than from the creation of radically new ones” (2010:102). Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, she claims that “language forms part of the symbolic capital that can be mobilised in markets as interchangeable with forms of material capital” (2010:102).

### **Framing**

I referred earlier to the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), who rejected the notion that language mirrored ‘external reality’ but instead “constituted a field of signification which sought to organize the world and define reality” (Swingewood 1984:279). Language, for de Saussure was made up of two components, the signifier and the signified. Language and Meaning must be understood both in what is expressed (the signifier) and how it is understood, comprehended and how meaning is applied to it (the signified). This methodology can be extended beyond language to other forms of communication and signifiable events such as ‘symbolism’ (Turner 1975).

Gregory Bateson (1972) recognises the analytical importance of culture, cultural codes, practices and customs, and his writings provide the grounding for Goffman’s established work on ‘frame analysis’ (Goffman 1974). The term ‘framing’ refers to the ability of individuals to perceive or interpret information, such as data, language or symbols, and to then apply meaning to such information in its application to their lives and society, that is, the ‘organisation of experience’ (1974:13). Bateson (1972, 1979), was also influential on the work of ‘new social movement’ theorist Alberto Melucci. Melucci discusses the capacity of actors to construct, “scripts of reality to influence each other and to negotiate the meanings of their experience” (Melucci 1995:109).

Social movement theorists Snow & Benford are synonymous with the concept of ‘framing’ within Social Movement theory (Snow et al. 1986, Snow & Benford 1988, 1992). Snow and Benford focus on how ‘meaning’ and ‘grievances’ are formed and sustained among activists. ‘Framing’ theorists argued that the existence and constancy of grievances perceived by activists could not simply be assumed. A ‘psycho-functional’ approach was required in order to illustrate the linkage between the existence of grievances and how grievances are formed. What framing theorists illustrate is how a social movement organization functions psychologically. While organically the structure of an organisation may be stable, it is the ‘frame’ which guides how the organisation moves and acts. It is the brain which determines its ‘movement’ and how others judge it and perceive it. It guides its acts, language, and appearance. Snow and Benford make the critical point that if structurally conditions are ripe or fertile, social movement organisations may still suffer decline or failure because of poor framing efforts (1988:214). Collective action essentially derives from emergent sets of meanings and beliefs that inspire legitimate social movement campaigns and activities. (Caroll & Ratner 1996, Della Porta et al. 2006)

### **Master Frames**

The European Social Forum (ESF)<sup>16</sup> has often challenged European hegemony as part of its discourse. Indeed ESF documentation is directed at opposing a “European order based on corporate power and neoliberalism” (Della Porta et.al. 2006:73). In this respect the ‘master frame’ of the People’s Movement group and the European Social Forum are quite similar. Although they occupy distinct spatial zones, they are operating within the same master frames of greater social justice and EU critical action. The sub-frames of the People’s Movement group will be adopted according to national and socio-cultural contexts. In this respect the People’s Movement group in Ireland is clearly part of a global network. Although it has no formal ties with the European Social Forum, it is ‘intellectually’

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<sup>16</sup> The ESF is a conference held bi-annually. It was last held in Florence in November 2012. The forum is attended by a number of civil society actors, NGOs, social movement organisations, anti-capitalists, trade unions, and actors within the social justice field to discuss alternative strategies to European and global affairs. It enables actors to share ideas, plan campaigns and discuss future strategies.

networked through the occupation of the same political space, with respect to challenging EU hegemony. I will discuss ‘intellectual networking’ in more detail in Part II of this thesis.

Della Porta et al. (2006:82) make the critical point that ‘master frames’ essentially provide a symbolic basis for unifying various strands of the ‘movement’, including the ‘old’ Left with ‘new social movements’, radical activists and institutionalized NGO’s. It is to a certain degree a banner under which all groups can march, leaving aside distinct differences in order to defeat a common enemy. I contend that the ‘master frame’ goes beyond simply naming an enemy (Keck & Sikkink 1998:225) and this master frame denotes the type of society which activists hope to build and recreate. In many respects socialism was the counter hegemonic master frame of much of the twentieth century, but it is debatable whether ‘new social movement’ activity could be defined within this ‘master frame’. ‘Global social justice’ appears a popular master frame for recent mobilisations encompassing a wide range of local and global activism particularly anti-capitalist, the environment, women’s rights, workers’ rights, indigenous people, peasants and children (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005:12, Carroll & Ratner 1996, Della Porta et al. 2006:61). Activists can have diverse beliefs, but can be mobilised in collective action as their grievances fall within the master frame of the movement. Participants may therefore disagree with statements of the movement or sub-frames adopted by the movement. Notwithstanding this, participation continues because actors recognise such acts or frames to be part of the mobilisation process. At the same time, action is defined with an overall ‘master frame’ (Gillan 2008:254). Master frames have also provided transnational linkages between social movement actors and in turn this has encouraged them to “develop a more globalised framing of their messages and their domestic appeals” (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005:9).

During my period of participant observation with the People’s Movement group, the issue of distancing campaign activities from other groups was evident. Activists were keen to differentiate themselves from the activities of other campaign groups, such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who adopted a nationalist centre-right approach, Libertas<sup>17</sup>, who advocated an EU federalist approach, and COIR, who adopted a strong Christian pro-

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.libertas.ie/> (Last accessed 28.10.2013)

life ethos. While these groups are all critical of the European Union, the master frames through which they campaign are all quite distinct. Any evidence of Eurosceptic right wing groups would also be firmly distanced from the People's Movement group. Activists often felt that the establishment and commercial media very often 'grouped' the 'No' campaign together without making a differentiation. In this respect, the People's Movement group become perceived as simply an anti-EU organisation. The public has little information to distinguish between EU critical groups and what each group fundamentally stand for. Although the People's Movement, in terms of their criticism of the EU, are quite distinct from other groups, there are considerable overlapping features. In some instances popular sub frames, such as the defence of workers' rights, are appropriated and used by certain EU critical groups. During the Lisbon Treaty campaign, Coir adopted the frame of workers' rights and the possible reduction of the minimum wage. This is despite the fact that the master frame of the group is not concerned with labour and workers' rights. Sub frames can therefore be strategically and deliberately appropriated by groups, in an attempt to achieve their objectives.

### **Concepts of Framing**

It is within political space that challenges are made by social actors and issues are 'framed' according to language, symbols and constructed meanings. It is essentially a battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the public (Holmes Cooper 2002). "Movements" according to Snow & Benford (1988) are "also actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists and observers. This productive work may involve the shaping and structuring of existing meanings" (1988:198). This is the process by which messages are communicated and expressed (signified), and how they are perceived and understood (resonated), by receivers. In other words, they are the stimuli for 'cognitive impetus' (Piven & Cloward 1977, McAdam 1982, 1988). Snow et al. (1986) note that "by rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organise experience and guide action" (1986:464), but such action must "strike a responsive chord with those individuals for whom it is intended". It must therefore resonate and apply to their life situations (Snow and Benford 1988:207). Framing should be regarded as a process and may therefore shift and

change according to external and internal opportunities and events. The resonance of frame actions is dependent upon values and beliefs which at times may have a low “hierarchical salience” within the larger belief system (Snow and Benford 1988:205). My own research reveals how nation states can produce multiple meanings simultaneously. While advocating a pro ‘European’ message, they can do so within ‘nationalist’ frames. In doing so, the state can utilize collective national memories and history in the framing of its message in order to ensure resonance with its public. In the context of debates on economic and fiscal matters, it can also utilize the support of ‘experts’ and “structurally positioned actors” who are seen by the public as having the ability to access, decode and translate the meaning and the ‘truth’ for the public (French 2012).

Without the adequate framing social movements would lack the raw materials it needs, that is, the individual motivations which underlie mobilisation. Social movement organisations therefore need a large number of people to perceive that certain aspects of society are problematic and need to be redressed (Rucht & Niedhardt 2002). The concept of ‘framing’ is similar to what Klandermans (1988) refers to as ‘consensus mobilisation’. Klandermans makes an important distinction between long term framing activity (mobilisation) and short term framing (for immediate action). Target audiences will differ depending on the circumstances (1988:178). Tarrow (1998) has also developed the concept of ‘framing’ by looking at emotionality as a form of energy. Tarrow notes that, in certain instances particularly with religion and nationalistic mobilisation, ritualism and symbolism can provide emotive forces for rousing collective action (1998:112). Tarrow states that “symbols are taken selectively by movement leaders from a cultural reservoir and combined with action-oriented beliefs in order to navigate strategically among a parallelogram of actors” (Tarrow 1998:112).

Interestingly enough, Steinberg (2002) contends that “challengers often create oppositional discourses by borrowing from the discourses of those they oppose” (2002:208). I would not disagree with this theory, and in certain instances during the campaign, I witnessed ‘left-wing’ activists from a number of ‘No’ groups adopting economic arguments designed to ‘fit’ mainstream ‘logic’, that is, the utilisation of state statistics and business and economic

reports, even though activists themselves may on other occasions largely discredit such information. Scott (1990) drawing on the work of Foucault (1980) notes that struggles for meaning “often hinge upon scientific arguments and must contend with the power of dominant paradigms or ‘regimes of truth’ and their expert systems.” The same approach can be applied to those individuals or groups who can linguistically orate and articulate an argument and present the same in a constructive manner to an audience (Scott 1990:140). This point is absolutely critical and should not be overlooked, particularly within contemporary society where individuals appear, not only disconnected from political debates, but lacking the necessary ‘time’ to make an independent inquiry into the issues at stake. For Steinberg (2002), framing as a tool reduces our concept of cultural practices and meanings to that of a resource. He claims that through ‘framing’ and ‘discourse’, “people can control, create and distribute meanings much as they do material resources.” However, what is required is a dialogic approach that sees ‘meaning’ created and constructed only when communication takes place ‘between’ actors not within individuals minds or ideology or framed discourse (Steinberg 2002:211). According to Steinberg, discursive practices can become ‘monologic’ when powerful actors within boundaries of a field “can exert control over the, who, what and why of meaning” (2002:213). Likewise, Eric Wolf (1982) understands power as the “ability to bestow meanings – to name things, acts and ideas ... control of communication allows the managers of ideology to lay down the categories through which reality is perceived. Conversely this entails the ability to deny the existence of alternative categories, to assign them to the realm of disorder and chaos, to render them socially and symbolically invisible” (1982:388). This is a critical point in the context of my present thesis.

For Melucci, framing represents an “interweaving of truth and falsehoods” designed to enable the ‘rationalisation’ of a subject in the “interest of the actor” (1996:349). Such framing essentially reflects the fact that social actors are discussing and debating matters within their own logic but not always on their own playing field. Indeed representations of Europe and European identity, which do not hold emotional attachment like the nation state, need to be framed and signified within an ‘arena of action’ and where the media in particular have an important role to play (Rovisco 2010:244). Social actors need to adopt their strategy

and tactics to what the spectators and media audience are accustomed to. They also need to adopt tactics which appear sensible and logical, that is, they can be 'rationalised' within the minds of others, even though, perhaps, such social actors would prefer to frame their arguments in less strict economic terms. The ability to influence the spectators and audience involves the framing of issues which 'resonate' with their value and belief system. Culture, therefore lies in 'webs of signification' (Geertz 1973:5) through which people construct and interpret meaning in their lives.

In Part II of this thesis, the concepts of framing, the production and signification of meaning, and how this is perceived and signified by the public are particularly relevant. During referenda campaigns, when actors both challenge and advocate EU reform, language and discourse become powerful instruments. The ability to communicate, that is, signify meaning, itself becomes a lever of power. Activists contend that such levers are controlled primarily by political and business sectional interests, and it is through these mediums that struggles are won and lost, rather than on the issues before the public contained within the text of EU Treaties.

## *Paula*

*Paula is in her late 40's, a part time civil servant for the Department of Social Welfare and is from north Dublin. She describes herself as being the "black sheep in the family", due to her strong political views. While Paula acknowledges that her former husband, who was a member of Sinn Féin, may have influenced her views, she tells me that she is not a nationalist. Paula argues strongly in favour of the protection of employment and natural resources. "I have no loyalties towards countries, flags, or religions ... my loyalty starts here".*

*I first met Paula in the autumn of 2008 after the successful campaign for the defeat of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote in June. She was enthusiastic, provided regular inputs into group discussions and devoted a great deal of her personal free time to doing what she could to help out. Unlike other informants, Paula did not have a long history of social activism. She explains that she always voted against previous EU reform treaties, but had no previous campaign experience, except for handing out leaflets for the Socialist Party and providing support to independent electoral candidates. "I felt good about doing things like that. At least I did something." Paula tells me that she has always voted at elections, and has voted for whatever candidate was closest to her way of thinking. "It would be independents or socialist ... definitely on the left but not labour." She tell me that, in the past, she was involved with a voluntary organisation, which encouraged people to exercise their vote and she argues that "when politicians see people not voting they are not concerned, but when you use your vote they are concerned." Although Paula tells me that she has always been angry with the political system, since the acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty in October 2009, it is clear that Paula has become even more disillusioned. She now describes herself as an 'armchair anarchist', and tells me that, now, she simply feels like going out to vote and deliberately 'spoiling' the ballot paper.*

*While Paula is supportive of other social activist campaigns (such as Shell2Sea, environmental campaigns, and workers' rights) her main motivation for campaigning*

against the Lisbon Treaty was 'social justice'. She refers to the EU as "elitist" and states that "the divide is getting wider and it's scary."

"I would consider myself to be more of a Marxist than anything else, but I never had a label and I don't like labels. I'm always on the side of the worker ... that's where I would be coming from. Always watching the news ... always watching politics. Not always understanding it ... I may not be able to explain why that's upsetting me or why I feel that's wrong, but to me it's wrong. I can't articulate myself the way others can, but I know what I know." In terms of workers' rights, Paula, like other informants who I interviewed, is quite critical of certain trade union organisations in Ireland who adopted a pro Lisbon Treaty stance during the campaign. Paula notes that the very same trade unions, immediately afterwards, attempted to mobilise their members to campaign against cuts in public expenditure and pay which are ultimately driven by an EU agenda. This frustration was also shared by a large number of activists.

Paula explains that she wanted to get involved in social activism against the EU as she felt she "had to do something." When I questioned her about what specifically attracted her to the People's Movement, she tells me that "nothing attracted me to them ... I got in touch with Libertas, People before Profit and the People's Movement. I got in touch with every one of them. Fergus rang me ... I liked him. There didn't seem to be any agenda other than where I was coming from as well." Paula notes that, while other groups emailed her back, Fergus responded by calling Paula directly and this is ultimately what prompted her involvement.

Paula also notes, that when she went to People's Movement meetings she did come across a few individuals with views different from her own, but she notes that "everyone who spoke was coming from their own side ... I could just be my own self. That's what I liked about it ... I think if I didn't have the People's Movement I probably would have sought out somebody else. I did think after the Lisbon Treaty that maybe I should go to somebody else to see which way I'm going, but I have decided to stay with them because no matter who you go with, they are all going to be the same. We are all kind of redundant at the moment

*anyway ... I thought stick with these. They are an intelligent bunch of people. They are not mad. They don't get highly upset about anything. They take it as they come. I think they are quite reasonable people. They can detach themselves from all the nonsense that's out there and that's what I like about them. They don't get upset about things".*

*As a researcher and participant observer during the campaign, I often regarded Paula as the 'office manager' for the People's Movement during the campaign for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon referendum. She laughs about the title. "It didn't start out like that ... I just went in one day to open up the office and be there when people came in to get their posters and stuff". The reason why she took on this role, she explains, is simply because nobody else seemed to want it. Paula said she had thought that the role would be boring and she would be just "hanging out in the office" reading her book while people came and went. But she recalls the hectic weeks of work prior to the referendum in October 2009, where she ended up eating her lunch 'on the go', having to run errands around the city in the pouring rain, answering phones and responding to messages. This, she tells me, came as a shock to her. She also says she came on board under the illusion that others in the group knew what they were doing, but she quickly found out they were just as lost and disorganised as her.*

*"They were headless chickens ... but I was the biggest headless chicken of them all." She explains that she found the lack of organisation and roles within the group as very frustrating and something that could be improved upon. Paula also feels that our 'post mortem' meeting which was held following the referendum vote was not effective "A post mortem meeting should not be about why people voted this way or that, but it should be about 'our' campaign ... I'm talking about how our campaign was run and the roles that people played in it and how it could have been done better, tighter and differently, and what we learned from it. It was not as tight a ship as I thought it was going to be. I ended up doing a lot of things that I didn't know I was going to have to do. It was a great learning curve for everybody."*

## **Richard**

*Richard, from North Dublin, is in his late 30s and works as a software engineer. Similar to Paula, he tells me that he first got involved with the People's Movement in 2008 and he was "looking around for a group to get involved with" because he was concerned about the Lisbon Treaty. Like Paula, Richard does not have a long history in social activism and comes from a family which was not political. He did not campaign against former EU referenda, but he was involved in anti-war protests and participated in sit down protests against the Iraq War outside the Dáil<sup>18</sup>. He also tells me that he went to a large protest against EU enlargement after the Nice Treaty, which was at Farmleigh in 2004, and his friends branded him a 'racist' for going to it. He tells me that he also went to socialist meetings but never got involved, which he acknowledges may be a result of his own "middle class upbringing" and what he claims was his own "lack of understanding of the world back then".*

*"I have always been extremely political. I get very annoyed when people say 'I don't care about politics' or 'it doesn't affect me', because it does. In the smallest matters of your life it does." Discussing his own political views, Richard tells me that "Thatcher stands for everything I hate. I have always voted, always openly discussed my politics, ready to have an argument with anybody about it. Up to now I have always voted for the Green party, then some mixture of socialist or Sinn Féin".*

*Describing himself as an 'Internationalist', he says "if you asked me to define myself as Left or Right ... the word I would use is 'Marxist'. I don't feel ashamed to say I'm a socialist. You have to respect Marx as a great thinker ... there is socialism and there is communism built to some degree on top of the ideas of Marx. I go back more purely to the ideas of Marx. I believe I am more purely identifying with Marx by saying I am a Marxist. I believe in some kind of a Marxist solution to the world's problems and a world government would be Marxist"*

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<sup>18</sup> Dáil is an Irish word for 'House of Representatives' which makes up the Irish Parliament.

*Richard cannot recall where he originally heard about the People's Movement but he thinks he may have seen a People's Movement 'stall' on O'Connell Street. He remembers taking a leaflet from an activist. He tells me that the People's Movement sounded like "the best fit" after he looked at the organisation's website. "I looked up the website, rang the phone number and within an hour or two later I was outside Phibsborough Shopping Centre handing out leaflets with Patricia McKenna."*

*"I am a long-time fan of Patricia. I have followed her down throughout the years. She is the most principled politician I have seen in this country. She has a good analysis on things ... very smart." Richard stated that he was aware of Patricia's involvement with the group but this was not the sole reason for him joining up. He explains that "it was a positive that she was with the group." Richard admits he was still very hesitant and unsure about signing up and repeatedly asked himself "What am I getting myself into here?" but looking back he says "maybe I am another stray dog who has found some kind of a home in the People's Movement".*

*Richard tells me that for many years he "shied away from committing to any organisation" never wishing to "tie his flag to the mast." He said he never wanted to sign up to anything. He tells me that he did sign "the odd petition here or there" but he does not like the idea of being too committed and being required to attend weekly meetings. "I don't feel that with the People's Movement. It's the kind of thing you can dip in and out off".*

*If Paula was the 'office manager' during the campaign, then Richard refers to his own role as "assistant" to the office manager. He tells me that he was in and out of the office daily. While Paula managed the logistics in the office, Richard explains that he wanted to bring his IT skills to the group. "The internet has great potential. I do believe that's one place we fell down on during the campaign. I would have liked to have done more on that. We lost to a marketing campaign not to a political campaign ... we really needed a team of people sitting there"*

*Richard also expressed some regret for not putting himself forward to speak at public meetings on behalf of the People's Movement. His main focus during the campaign was "running around doing whatever needed to be done ... sorting out deliveries of posters, out in the van, going to hardware stores, answering phones, leafleting and posterings".*

*Richard also spoke positively about the independence of the People's Movement and the fact that it was not a political party. "Political parties are like 'cults' and the People's Movement were not like that ... they were loose. Political parties play the long game and there are always trade-offs but with the People's Movement it was different."*

## PART II

*“ ... despite the comforting view that Ireland is a deeply conservative place, it is one of the few countries in western Europe where the peasants won the land, where a national revolution had any success or where nuclear power was decisively defeated” – Dr. Laurence Cox (2001).*

Part II of this thesis has two main themes. First, my focus is primarily on social activism in Ireland. I start by introducing the reader to the subject of my ethnographic research, the People’s Movement. Second, I provide a detailed analysis of the organisation’s campaign against the EU Lisbon Treaty. In doing so, I provide an analysis of the Irish political landscape and in particular the field of social actors who contested the Lisbon Treaty referendum. Reference to such information is critically important to illustrate the environment in which activists struggle, but more importantly to illustrate how they perceive and construct their social world. Throughout my analysis, I make reference to my period of participant observation with the People’s Movement group. I also reference formal and informal interviews conducted with activists, as well as general observed information and data collected based on my experience with the group during their campaigns. While Part I of this thesis has provided a contextual and structural setting for my ethnographic analysis in Part II of this paper, I nevertheless make continuous reference to academic text and theory to support my findings where appropriate.

As this thesis is an ethnographic analysis, I hope that I can provide the reader with an understanding of how and why individuals within the People’s Movement collectively organise to counter the European Union and its institutional reforms. In undertaking this research exercise, and as previously outlined in my introduction to this thesis, I also wished to determine what form of social movement organisation is the People’s Movement. I question whether the organisation represents traditional class/labour based collective action or whether the group displays characteristics of a new social movement.

I conclude, by providing an analysis of the People's Movement organisation in the post Lisbon Treaty period. I detail the obstacles and challenges facing the group against the backdrop of a decline in activist engagement. I also provide an analysis of the People's Movement's campaign in challenging the EU Fiscal Treaty in 2012 and I ask whether the group can sustain itself as a social movement organisation in 2014 and beyond.

## ***Chapter 6***

## ***The People's Movement***

The 'People's Movement' is a social movement organisation in Ireland which was formally established following the 2002 Nice Treaty referendum. While an exact date for the formation of the organisation is unknown, activists are of the opinion that the group formed in 2003. The organisation emerged from previous collective action and therefore its activists have strong historic linkages and continuity in collective action. While the organisation does have written rules and holds an AGM, it is not as formal an organisation as a political party or a large NGO. It operates on a nationwide basis but its network is quite informal, and certain 'hub' areas may have activity whereas other towns/regions have little or no activist members. Membership can at times appear ad hoc and irregular, but nevertheless there are a core number of activists who sustain the organisation and its network. The People's Movement has a good mix of gender and age demographics and represents a wide range of diverse views and political standpoints. Certain activists operate peripherally and contribute what they can, such as attendance at meetings and demonstrations and posterings. Others take a deeper role, engaging with the press/media, designing posters, slogans, petitions, and contributing to the organisation's newsletter. The group's activity however is generally agreed upon by consensus and discussion. While regional 'branches' of the organisation exist, I found that these branches take their lead from a core group of activists in Dublin. Notwithstanding this, local autonomous action applicable to the community or region was independently organised by each local group, with materials and support provided from Dublin when required.

In their struggle against the European Union, the People's Movement do not consider themselves as 'anti-European' but rather 'EU critical'. Their campaigns are therefore educational and focus on raising social consciousness and awareness. They illustrate how high level macro decisions have shifted upwards from national capitals to Brussels, and how European policy is clearly linked to a decline in local and community services and indigenous industry, such as rural farming and fishing (Anderson 2009:64). What activists essentially oppose is an ideology and a hegemony which has developed at EU level.

Campaigning has therefore centred around challenging dominant discourse on what it means to be a good ‘European’ and redrawing the lines of political causality, that is, redefining the enemy by linking the local negative impact with EU hegemonic power. In doing so, activists illustrate how ‘autonomy’ and ‘empowerment’ no longer exist, due to a lack of control over the decisions that are taken at EU level and which impact people’s quality of life.<sup>19</sup> The objective of the People’s Movement according to their website is to “defend and enhance Irish democracy and sovereignty and the primacy of Bunreacht na hÉireann [Irish Constitution] and its institutions over EU supranational institutions and treaties” and to further “oppose the development of the EU into a federal super state with its own institutions and constitution”.<sup>20</sup>

### **Social Movement Organisation or Political Agitator?**

I consider the People’s Movement to be a ‘social movement organisation’ which identifies with the preferences and broad objectives of a larger social movement or countermovement (Della Porta et al. 2006:28). I contend that the People’s Movement is part of a broader coalition of groups on the political Left operating in Ireland, which together form part of a wider ‘movement’ which challenges increased EU governance, political federalisation, and global capitalism. The People’s Movement is not a political party and do not contest elections either locally, nationally or at European level. Notwithstanding this, its struggles are clearly political in their nature. Their challenge is clearly directed at the European Union, and the state as an agent of EU and political reform.

Certain commentators have argued that such groups, because of their ‘political’ nature, are not strictly ‘new social movements’ (Scott 1990). I would not agree with this strict interpretation. Data collected during my interviews generally revealed that activists placed themselves and the organisation outside of the official political field, insofar as the organisation was not seeking to assume or take power (Holloway 2005:17). Certain activists appear more open than others in terms of the group entering politics, in some form or

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson (2009) notes that it was decisions at EU level which led to French strikes in the winter of 1995 and a Portuguese recession in 2003. (2009:64)

<sup>20</sup> [www.people.ie](http://www.people.ie) (Last accessed 28.10.2013)

another in the future, to challenge the European Union. During my discussions with activists, it was clear that they did not wish for the organisation to become a political party, preferring instead that it remain an active EU critical group. People's Movement activists, see the organisation as 'issue' focused rather than party politically focused. In this respect, the People's Movement attracts activists from a diverse political background. People's Movement activists see the development of the European Union and its continued political and economic reform as a loss of sovereignty and democracy for Ireland. The focus of the organisation, according to Maurice, is to "raise awareness and consciousness among the public, and to illustrate how the European project and further European integration is having an impact locally on Irish democracy."

Activists, in general, expressed concern if the organisation were to develop further into a political party. They claim that this would have implications on the dynamic of the group, as party politics and personalities take over from the organisation's main objectives. Activists note how such a transformation has impacted other social movement organisations in Ireland. They illustrate the transformation of the Green Party, who were eventually co-opted into the party political system and gave up their principles. People's Movement activist Richard states "I don't see how we could become a political party without ruining what we have." Richard feels that maybe the endorsement of independent candidates might be acceptable, but he acknowledges that there could be pitfalls too. The endorsement of political candidates for election was also raised by Fergus, who felt that it could be a possibility in the future. Fergus notes that if the organisation were to take such a step, it should be at EU level rather than at local level. In this respect, the People's Movement may endorse a potential MEP for Europe if such a candidate identifies with the objectives of the organisation. Other activists I interviewed felt that the organisation operated best as a network group, forming connections with individuals and groups throughout Ireland, who are both EU critical and disenfranchised by the Irish political system. In this respect, activists see the People's Movement as an alternative to the political party system, and a vehicle to counter both the established political parties and the European Union.

While it could also be contended that the People's Movement is simply an 'advocacy' group (Keck & Sikkink 1998:226), I will illustrate throughout this thesis how the organisation is clearly a social movement actor with strong roots in historical social activism. It is also a group with collective shared grievances and a sense of community and solidarity (See Rucht 1988:30, Rucht & Neidhardt 2002, Keane & Mier 1989:29, McDonald 2002:115). Social movement organizations, such as the People's Movement, go through cycles of heightened protest activity during EU referenda and EU summit events, and due to this, their actions and forms of protest may appear 'once off' or certainly episodic. Notwithstanding this, I contend that their actions do in fact form part of greater contentious counter EU activity which is part of a long process of events in mobilisation activity (Tarrow 1998:141, Jerald B Brown 2008, Maheu 1995:1). Activists clearly see the People's Movement as being part of an EU critical movement which has yet to fully take off. While such a counter EU 'movement' may not necessarily be led by the People's Movement, activists do regard the organization as playing a key role in its take-off and a critical component of its momentum. Mobilisation both during and after the EU referenda campaigns continues to be focused on raising awareness and consciousness by highlighting the impact of EU laws and policies on Irish domestic quality of life issues. Such a view may be considered to have Marxist undertones on raising social consciousness or what McAdam (1982) saw as 'cognitive liberation', that is, people collectively viewing their situation as unjust (Allman 1999:90). In a similar perspective, Cox (2001) argues that activists themselves do not cause change. It is only when 'ordinary' people begin to see themselves differently, as subjects not objects, that large scale mobilisation will take place to confront and dismantle large scale power structures (See also Nakhaie & Arnold 1996). Activists are therefore 'organic intellectuals' developing the tools to bring the struggle to the next level (Cox 2001:8).

## **Members**

The diversity of membership is one of the main features of the organization. It was only during formal interviews with members that I truly had time to understand the rich diversity within the group. Activists spoke positively about engagement in collective action with a mix of individuals who came from various political backgrounds, but who were all 'EU

critical' in their approach. It was this diversity that paradoxically united them. I point this out to counter any perception that a social movement organisation such as the People's Movement is merely a collective homogenous grouping. Seeing third level university students in their early twenties, who had no previous experience in social activism, campaigning alongside mature activists, who had a long history in other social movement campaigns was certainly a striking feature of the organisation's activity. Commenting on the people who he has met during his time with the People's Movement group, one activist, Mark, notes: "My impression of people who I have met in the People's Movement is that most of them are well travelled and articulate and people who have a worldview. I think a lot of them are very well educated ... a lot at third level in fact".

Paula notes that upon becoming involved with the campaign, her concerns or apprehensions were eased when she realised how the group was so "diverse and eclectic". She also notes how many individuals in the organisation represented so many backgrounds and standpoints. She states that it was positive that "nobody had specific agendas" and "opinions were not being forced at people". Another activist, Richard illustrated how the group appealed to him as it was 'internationalist' in its approach rather than narrow minded, strictly nationalistic or socialist. "I think that's part of the charm of the whole thing ... I enjoy that part of it, that people are coming from different angles and different spaces"

Ciaran, a People's Movement activist from Co.Wicklow, notes that the diversity of the group is quite amazing. "We have all found common ground in the People's Movement and that ground is so strong". Ciaran further notes that it is a positive that the organisation does not adopt overtly 'Marxist' or 'socialist' ideologies or frames. Other activists have echoed these views, and feel that by not adopting labels or strong ideologies, it has enabled the organisation to attract new members and create new networks. Another activist, Matt, notes that "the messages are EU critical ... they are not involved in socialistic or anti-capitalistic language, but are clearly critical of the European Union in terms of social justice, democracy, anti-militarisation, and sovereignty. They are clear messages which anyone can uphold to. It's important to have a space for people to come together. Once you go down the route, of using a certain language or ideology, people can get divided."

I found that many activists who I spoke to during my research echo similar feelings to Matt and Ciaran. While activists do acknowledge that their political thinking is on the 'Left', they do not wish to use labels such as 'Left' or 'Right' to define themselves. Instead, activists see themselves as promoting democratic, progressive and community orientated politics. Eamon feels that there are people out there who do want to try different political alternatives, but because certain groups use rhetoric and slogans, this causes frustration for people. Eamon argues that "we need to move beyond slogans and give people a roadmap for the way forward. I see that the People's Movement presents a broad democratic roadmap. It embraces those forces who are interested in defending workers' rights, national sovereignty and those who are critical of the European Union. I think the People's Movement talk a lot about national sovereignty, national democracy, and national accountability. You will find that would be very much constantly within the language of the People's Movement, its publications, how it presents itself, how it presents its arguments".

Eamon feels that the People's Movement has a clearly defined political space in comparison to other organisations and political groups. He sees the People's Movement as an organisation which is not mediated by party politics and self-interest. He further notes that "the People's Movement would not define itself as a socialist organisation, it would define itself as a national democratic organisation. It believes in the development of national democratic politics, reclaiming or taking powers back from the European Union, concentrating more economic and social decisions in an Irish parliament and trying to develop a political programme that empowers people at local level. It is very hard to get people motivated so you need to create structures and vehicles by which people can actually engage. Through that process, people learn. People learn through experience ... there is no appeal to abstract slogans of socialism."

New members of the group, who had little or no experience in social activism, did not appear to come from strong political backgrounds. Before asking respondents what prompted them to become involved in the 'campaign', I had expected a higher response rate of 'nationalistic' feelings to come to the fore. Interviews with activists, however, revealed

quite an internationalist approach. It should be noted that the term 'nationalist' has dual meanings. In addition to the general meaning attributed to the term, that is, an attachment or identification with one's nation, in an Irish context it is a term which generally implies support for a United Ireland. My discussions with activists produce findings which appear quite contradictory. On the one hand, I found that multiple activists spoke of national democracy, national sovereignty and national accountability, but at the same time, their political outlook transcended national boundaries and took cognisance of larger geo-political affairs. It would be wrong to conclude that certain activists did not harbour 'Irish nationalistic' political views, but my findings reveal that it would be wrong to consider the movement organisation as 'Irish nationalist'. While there were other organisations who campaigned for a 'No' vote during EU referenda, such as Sinn Fein, Republican Sinn Fein and Eirigi, the People's Movement organisation clearly occupies different political space and adopts no political stance on Irish nationalism and political reunification of the island of Ireland.

So when activists speak of 'national' sovereignty and 'national' democracy, what exactly are they speaking about? While my findings reveal that the organisation was not nationalistic in an Irish political context, I began to question whether it could be defined as an organisation which was 'nationalistic' in the general sense, that is, an attachment or identification with one's nation. While the term 'national' was repeatedly used within activist discourse, I found that in many instances the term 'national' could be interchangeable with the term 'local' and 'community'. In many instances, the term 'national' was utilised to illustrate how powers have been transferred from the national to the transnational. It was used to illustrate how the individuals at micro political level have an increased inability to determine the issues which affect their lives. During my fieldwork with the organisation, I found no evidence of an inward or closed nationalistic approach. In general, activists adopted a broad international political outlook and approach but in doing so, emphasised the importance of decision making being retained at the local/national level. Notwithstanding the political signification attaching to the term 'national' and 'nationalist', I did find that a number of activists held a strong national 'cultural' attachment, that is, they emphasised the importance of the Irish language, music, customs and traditions and so forth.

In many instances, activists simply described themselves as feeling ‘morally compelled’ to take action. They described how they wanted to take some form of action and play their part. In fact, I found a number of ‘first time’ activists could very easily have mobilised with other social movement groups against the Lisbon Treaty but became involved with the People’s Movement after personal interaction with an existing member of the group. A small number of activists described how their involvement resulted from direct contact with an existing activist, thus highlighting the importance of personal social networks to recruiting new members.

I have noted that the organisation has been able to attract new members by avoiding certain frames of action, which are overtly socialist and Marxist. Although the People’s Movement is an EU critical group, its broad position on social rights, peace and justice provides the organization with great appeal to activists. I also contend that this has been a positive for the attraction of new members. Indeed, this is also a positive for extending the organisations networks to community groups or independent political representatives. While the organisation’s appeal is broad, during the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, I could fully understand how the public may have perceived such a diverse and colourful group as being a collection of ‘lefties’ or ‘ideologists’. During my participant observation with the group, there have been occasions where I personally did not agree with certain individuals’ opinions and beliefs. I also spoke to other activists who had encountered similar instances. Notwithstanding this, there was never any evidence of lack of collective solidarity. Differences exist in all types of group situations and individuals recognize the diversity of the group and its members. The ability to express and vocalize one's feelings and attitudes is one of the key defining features of the People’s Movement as a group. It promotes an open, expressive and non-judgmental environment, recognizing individual political and non-political differences, while at the same time utilizing the 'EU critical' theme as a central mobilisation feature. When one looks at the backgrounds of the participants, their politics, gender, and age, it reveals a diverse mix of political interest and social concern over developments within the EU. While I do not believe that the People’s Movement is dominated by any particular sector or grouping of individuals, a core cluster of its leading

activists have common historical struggles in traditional left activism, that is, trade unionism and workers' rights. Studies have revealed that group identity often masks diverse and often quite heterogeneous actors (Stephen 2005). Membership of the People's Movement comprises students, private sector workers, the unemployed, trade unionists, retired civil servants, self-employed farmers, artists and musicians. While the issues of workers' rights and labour are key concerns for the organisation, it would not be accurate to state that the organisation's membership is defined by materialist 'class' struggles. Activists contend that there is an increasing polarisation of 'class' within Irish society which is being exacerbated by an EU model of economic governance which favours capital and corporate business interests over the welfare of society. Notwithstanding this, activists themselves are not all motivated to mobilise based on personal material concerns. While the group is quite diverse, I contend it represents a mix of both materialist and post-materialist struggles, under the banner of common themes, such as, the 'EU' and 'Democracy'.

It is also worth noting that there were a high number of what I refer to as 'inactive activists' campaigning with the People's Movement. These individuals are not members of the organisation but could be considered 'supporters' who remain 'informally' on the periphery of the organization. It is these supporters and informal activists, who enable the organisation to run successful and challenging campaigns during EU referenda. While active membership may appear low during non-contentious periods, the ability of the organisation and its activists to tap into personal networks during referenda is quite amazing. People's Movement activist, Matt, states: "I know they only come out of the woodwork when there's a campaign on, but this is the same for a lot of political organisations. Everyone comes out at election time. That's their level of participation. That's all they want to engage with. 'Give me a poster I will put it up for you'. 'Give me 100 posters I will put them up for you'. They are happy with that. That's their contribution. I always think campaigns are great for organisations ... if you campaigned every week it would be great as it's a great way to keep people mobilised". People's Movement activist, Richard, recalls that during the lead up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum there were so many people ringing up the office looking for material and literature. He notes that these were individuals who came across the group

on Facebook and the organisation's website. Richard notes that these people reminded him of himself when he wanted to get involved with the campaign initially.

It is these 'inactive' individuals who ultimately enable the organisation to make such an impact at a time of 'political opportunity'. In between cycles of protest, these individuals remain largely 'inactive' and 'invisible' in terms of the organization and its management. In the weeks leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote, I encountered numerous individuals who came out on the streets of Dublin to participate in leaflet handouts and posterings who I had never met before, or had only met briefly at large mobilisation events. One individual, Stephen, decorated his van with 'No to Lisbon' posters and drove around west Dublin housing estates with a megaphone asking people to vote 'No' to Lisbon. I spoke to Stephen about membership and he advised me that he "likes to help out now and again". Such loose and informal activism illustrates how Stephen is a peripheral 'supporter' rather than a full time committed activist. I contend, however, that such peripheral support or 'countercultural network' (Kriesi 1988a:43) invigorated new life into the campaign in the final weeks before the referendum. Membership therefore is loose, flexible and adaptable and although it may appear irregular it "can be activated when necessary" (Gamson 1975:90. See also Scott 1990:31, Keane & Mier 1989:60, Kriesi 1988a:44).

While nationally the People's Movement boasts 200-300 members, the number of fully paid up members during the Lisbon campaign in 2009 was considerably lower (c.130). During the course of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign, membership was formalized through the introduction of membership cards. At the time, this was seen as a financial necessity as the organisation desperately needed financial resources. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum had used up all financial resources and the collection of membership fees became a key concern to build up the organisation's finances for campaign expenses in the 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum campaign. The collection of membership fees was only a temporary measure for the organisation. Formal payment of annual membership fees no longer takes place, and the organisation is operated on a volunteer basis only. Notwithstanding this, the matter of financial resources continues to be a matter of concern for the organisation.

In reality, defining accurate membership numbers is simply not possible. Eamon, noting the 'ad hoc' nature of the group, feels that it would be very difficult to put a number on membership as this term is loose and there are some who see themselves as members and others who simply see themselves as supporters. As Fergus says: "It's not a competition to win members". Both Fergus and Eamon emphasise the importance of personal networks and connections with individuals rather than defined membership numbers. The focus is on the mobilisation of individuals. No formal membership data base currently exists. Commenting on past experiences Fergus notes: "I learned a lot from when we tried to have a membership campaign. I don't think people consider membership to be very important ... and I can understand why. If I'm willing to do a bit of work and help out... why should I be a member and pay thirty Euro?" Fergus acknowledges that we should have a discussion on membership and the nature of membership because he feels it is more important that people come out and stand on the street rather than getting small sums of funds from individuals. "We would be better trying to run events to raise money as this has a social element attaching to it". Fergus feels that as the organisation operate a loose structure, "in many ways we don't have any members. We interact with a lot of individuals ... there are some who say they are members, others don't see themselves as members at all, and only supporters, whereas others don't even see themselves as that".

### **New group, Same Movement**

I noted earlier how I see the People's Movement as part of a broader coalition of the 'Left' in Ireland. I now wish to look closer at activists themselves and their personal history in social activism. I question whether the People's Movement organisation is new, or does its campaign against the Lisbon Treaty form part of a larger struggle in a chain of contentious mobilisation events? I contend the latter, but this is not to conclude that there are no 'new' elements. First of all there have been new members involved in the organisation over the course of the two Lisbon Treaty referenda who have limited or no former social activist experience, such as Paula and Richard referred to earlier. The actions and participation of such individuals brings new inputs to the group and in turn shapes the People's Movement and its direction. Second, I found that there are a considerable number of activists within the

People's Movement who have a wide range of experience in social movement activism and contesting former EU Treaties, although such campaigning was undertaken with different organisations in the past.

Although activists themselves are unable to agree on when the People's Movement was formed, we do know that the group emerged informally around a collection of core activists following previous counter EU campaigns.<sup>21</sup> The birth of the group, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nice Treaty referendum was clearly based on a pre-existing network of such activists. I discovered during formal interviews with informants, that a significant number of core activists within the People's Movement had roots in social activism dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. The same individuals had been involved in previous events and episodes of action in opposition to previous EU referenda. Such action dated back to Ireland's initial entry to the Common Market in 1973. Other mobilisation events against EU reform include the Single European Act referendum in 1987 and the Maastricht Treaty referendum in 1992. A number of core activists appear to have campaigned with Anthony Coughlan<sup>22</sup> and Raymond Crotty<sup>23</sup> during previous mobilisation against EU reform, and this thread of activism has continued up to the present day.

The key individuals who were involved in the campaign to reject the Nice Treaty in Ireland in 2001 and 2002, with groups such as 'Democrats against Nice' and other 'No to Nice' groups, were also the prime mobilisers of collective action for the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. I regard the campaigns against the Nice Treaty as 'reframed' or 'realigned' (Snow et al. 1986, Snow & Benford 1988) to suit new challenges and new political environments. The strategies of the campaigns have been redirected and reorganized as appropriate. In this respect, the People's Movement is a continuation, albeit an adapted

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<sup>21</sup> Core Activists: I use this term to denote the 'key' individuals within the People's Movement group whose close social ties (from former campaigns) essentially led to the formation of the group.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Coughlan is a Retired Senior Lecturer Emeritus in Social Policy at Trinity College Dublin & Secretary of the National Platform for EU Research and Information. (See [www.nationalplatform.org](http://www.nationalplatform.org) Last accessed 28.10.2013)

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Crotty (1925-1994) was an agricultural economist and campaigner against the European Union. Raymond Crotty successfully challenged the Irish Supreme Court in *Crotty -v- An Taoiseach* (1987) IR 713, to ensure that EU reform treaties which require constitutional change need to be placed before the Irish public by referendum.

form, of former struggles against the EU and other struggles for social justice and democracy.

Fergus has difficulty recalling when the People's Movement was in fact founded, but he believes it dates back to 2003. He notes that the first meeting was held in Wynne's Hotel in Dublin and was attended by approximately 25 people. During the 'No' campaigns against the Nice Treaty in 2001 and 2002, Fergus and a number of other individuals set up an organisation called 'Democrats against Nice'. Fergus tells me that the group were involved in putting up posters, distributing leaflets and organising local meetings but were mainly a Dublin based group, primarily on the north-side of Dublin. Despite their efforts, Fergus himself admits that the group probably made little impact. Fergus explains that there was another group on the south-side of Dublin, but there was little contact with this group. He recalls that the group on the south-side ran a good campaign and had a larger number of activists than 'Democrats against Nice'. After the Nice Treaty campaign was over, Fergus tells me that, himself, and a number of other activists made contact with Kenneth, an activist who was involved in the South Dublin group, with a view to starting up a new stronger alliance.

The People's Movement acted as a mobilisation vehicle for those former activists who were displaced by the disbandment of certain groups who campaigned against the Nice Treaty. It also engaged with other activists after the demobilisation of the National Platform, a leading Irish EU critical organization focusing on democracy challenging the federalisation of Europe. A number of activists I interviewed explained that a new organisation was required to resist against further EU reforms which were already being discussed in 2003 just after the passing of the Nice Treaty. There was also a need for a new organisation to give recognition to the struggle of labour and workers' rights in a European context. Activists linked up with other individuals who campaigned against the Nice Treaty, therefore widening the net and bringing a range of activists on board. In the meantime, it also began to attract new members who had brief encounters with social activism and members who had no previous campaign experience. Between 2003 and 2008, Eamon advises me that individuals at the heart of the group provided newsletters and pamphlets on workers' rights

and ECJ judgements and also provided information on developments within the EU, particularly in regard to the development of an EU Constitution. They also held public meetings and press conferences when particular issues arose. More importantly, they maintained a network of activism, and sustained a mobilisation group which acted as a form of solidarity for campaigners in the post-Nice Treaty period.

In considering the People's Movement's objectives, Eamon notes that "fundamentally, we believe it is a question of democracy, the will of the people and the right of the people to decide. We believe, and still firmly believe, that the whole political thrust of EU integration is about removing the people from the political process. It's about constructing an economy. It's not about society. It is classic form of neoliberal power being concentrated in a bureaucratic or plutocracy at the top, beyond any democratic accountability. Decisions are formed and shaped by the interest of big business and the interests of the people are secondary. I think it is a major assault on democracy which is taking place and the ability of individuals within states, and also states themselves, to make decisions based upon the needs of their own people".

Eamon goes on to note that a second guiding factor for the establishment of the People's Movement, was the need to ask what can be done to raise people's consciousness about democracy, or more specifically, the loss of democracy and loss of sovereignty, its consequences and political education. Eamon questions the term 'democracy', and asks, "how do we politically develop people's understanding of democracy because our society does not necessarily make you 'participate' politically? You receive it in the form of a vote every five years, and then you forget about it, so democracy itself is confined to a very brief period. It does not impinge on how you live in a community or how you work in a factory or an office. You go to your place of work in the morning and you spend a significant amount of time in a place and you have absolutely no say and no input into how its run, the decisions that are made, and the distribution of wealth generated from your labour, so there's a huge section of people's lives where democracy is removed from, or not even discussed".

Eamon explains that words and language can distort meanings and in many cases, these words can become misused and re-appropriated by individuals with vested interests. “The establishment constantly threw up the term ‘democracy’ and ‘democratic’ and they claim that all those who oppose the European Union are ‘anti-democratic’. Basically, we want to expose this fallacy of democracy which is in fact a very narrow definition of democracy that they have constructed and which a lot of people have taken on board as being representative of democracy. We wish to show that this is only one aspect of democracy and there is a wider context to democracy which we want to engage in”. Eamon illustrates examples of EU democracy and speaks of the French and Dutch rejection of the EU Constitution. In these cases, he notes, the EU by passed all open democratic forums and consultation with the people and “bulldozed” the Lisbon Treaty through their own parliaments. “They paid little or no respect to their own parliament and to their own people. It received very little discussion and debate. Essentially democracy to them is purely a vehicle to impose their will rather than enriching or empowering the people”. Eamon further notes, that when it comes to European treaties in general, people are often presented with a *fait accompli*, and you must vote for or against. Eamon explains that this is “usually without proper and adequate political discussion and debate at the time and the consequences of this are now coming home to roost.”

During interviews with my informants, the diverse background of membership was clear. It is particularly notable that historical linkages were in place among many activists prior to the Lisbon Treaty campaign. Fergus, Eamonn & Maurice all have a history in struggles for Irish workers’ rights and trade unionism. All three activists campaigned together in the group ‘Democrats against Nice’. While their personal backgrounds and activism lie in trade union and workers’ rights, they have been involved in counter EU mobilisation since the 1970s and have also participated in other campaigns over the years on social justice issues. Fergus and Maurice crossed paths during the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement and were also involved in other social campaigns against the privatization of Ireland’s natural resources. Eamon sees activists in the group as part of a community of like-minded individuals. “In the People’s Movement in Ireland there are people who come from different political perspectives but have a shared view or live with a compromise they make with others sitting

around a table. What unites them is far more important than what divides them, so they work on the basis of what we can push forward with.” He acknowledges that a considerable number of existing People’s Movement members have been active in previous struggles including campaigns against former EU treaties and also points out that there are activists within the People’s Movement, who he did not meet personally before the campaign, but he knew of them through social circles and from their activity in other struggles. Eamon tells me that “after Nice, a small group of people sat down and discussed how we should move forward. It was only a matter of time in our view that the EU was talking about further changes ... we knew there would be another assault on democracy so we came together.”

Another activist, Mairead, describes her early activism dating back to 1970s and Ireland's entry to the EEC. She outlines her involvement in struggles involving British imperialism in the north of Ireland and also actions highlighting gender concerns. Mairead also participated in campaigns organized by Action from Ireland (AFRI, an Irish Social Justice and Rights group<sup>24</sup>) before joining the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA<sup>25</sup>) in the 1990s. Working with these organisations and campaigns against EU referenda, such as the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998 and the Nice Treaty in 2001, enabled her to form social linkages and networks with other like-minded activists.

People’s Movement activist, Mark, tells me that he was a Labour Party member for a number of years, but withdrew from the party after it adopted a ‘Yes’ position on the 1987 Single European Act. Mark explains that he has always adopted an EU critical approach, and during the 1990s, became active with the National Platform in challenging EU reform treaties. He built up a personal relationship with Eamon through previous campaigns. It is these historic networks, he explains, which led him to becoming active with the People’s Movement.

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<sup>24</sup> AFRI is a social movement organisation in Ireland which campaigns on issues of social justice and human rights. <http://www.afri.ie/> (Last accessed 28.10.2013)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.pana.ie/> PANA advocates an independent Irish foreign policy, seeks to defend Irish neutrality and promotes a reformed United Nations as the institution through which Ireland should pursue its security concerns.(Last accessed 28.10.2013)

The above accounts from activists clearly illustrate a thread of social activism through various forms which have culminated in the formation of the People's Movement organisation. I see the formation of the People's Movement representing the next step or phase in an on-going struggle against further EU reform and integration. It would be wrong to view the People's Movement as simply a new group with no historical foundations. It is an amalgam of activists who have been involved in former EU critical campaigns. Notwithstanding this the organisation does have new elements, aside from having brought together individuals from former EU critical campaigns into a new alliance. It attracted new individuals who had no involvement in previous campaigns. As one activist remarked, it was a new group insofar as it was "*on* the Left but not *of* the Left" and it sought "to attract people who did not hold strong political views but had strong democratic tendencies".

As I have already outlined, a number of activists were involved workers' rights issues, while others were involved in social justice campaigns and peace groups, such as the Irish anti-apartheid movement, AFRI, and PANA. Other members were linked through their past experience in party political groupings, such as the Green Party, Labour Party and Worker's Party. Notwithstanding these diverse backgrounds, a significant number of activists had experience contesting former EU Treaties dating back to previous campaigns with a number of groups. It is important however not to look at social activism in taxonomic forms. In some instances, activists undertook 'personal activism', that is, they were 'floating activists' and their interaction with certain groups appeared very much dependent upon the campaign in question. Although there is a clear pattern of a cluster of individuals who were involved in various social movement struggles both at previous EU referenda and former social rights campaigns, not all People's Movement members knew each other personally prior to the Lisbon campaign. While I will discuss networking later, it is worthwhile to illustrate the 'intellectual networking' which took place among a number of activists. That is, they were socially linked through various campaigns and struggles. Members did not personally know each other, but in many instances, they knew *of* each other. This illustrates the community nature of social activism in Ireland, which is compounded by the fact that Ireland itself is a small community in European terms.

## **Members & Other Groups**

I have already noted how activists within the People's Movement have high rates of experience in social activism through historic linkages with other EU critical and social rights' groups. I have also noted the diverse composition of membership which makes up the People's Movement organisation. As a result of both of these factors, I had expected to encounter a high number of activists who were engaged in parallel campaigns and other social activist struggles, in addition to their work with the People's Movement. My findings on this matter are mixed.

Firstly, I did not find any great deal of evidence to suggest a multiplicity of membership between the People's Movement and other political groups on the Left. Since becoming an active member with the People's Movement in March 2008, and through interaction with activists from other groups, I regularly encountered overlapping memberships between members of groups on the political Left in Ireland. In a number of instances I observed a considerable overlap of support between such groups as, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Irish Anti War Movement (IAWM) and People before Profit (PBP). This overlap of support was not an unexpected finding as groups, such as the IAWM and PBP, are generally operated and organised by Socialist Workers Party members. While certain activists from the People's Movement did show support for such organisations and certain activists engaged and supported these groups on certain issues, I did not find any evidence that there was any overlap of membership between these groups and the People's Movement. Fergus feels that membership of the People's Movement is different from these groups. He states that "we consciously set out in the beginning to recruit independents, not because there's anything wrong with other groups, but we needed to be associated with independently likeminded people. If you are associated with independents at least people will credit you with having some sort of critical faculties that were not influenced by party loyalty or loyalty to something else ... I think that's the key, and if we ever grow that will be a big factor." I also contend that the framing of the People's Movement, as an EU critical

organisation, differs from groups on the political Left who frame their actions within 'Left' ideology and terms.

Secondly, I noticed that there was a significant overlap of activity between the People's Movement and organisations such as PANA, who campaign on peace and anti-militarisation issues. It is difficult to define this as an overlap of membership. As I discussed earlier, membership of the People's Movement is loose, flexible and informal. Activists and supporters sometimes do not define themselves as members. Notwithstanding this, I contend that there are a large number of activists who not only campaigned with PANA in the past, but continue to work with and support the organisation today. The co-operation and positive linkages between PANA and the People's Movement are framed within EU critical and anti-militarisation terms, rather than Left ideological rhetoric and therefore it is easy to see how these two organisations complement each other.

Notwithstanding the above, there are a significant number of activists who only support and campaign with the People's Movement. In a small number of instances there was evidence of overlapping support with groups such as the Communist Party and other social activist campaigns, such as 'Repudiate the Debt'. Due to the fluid and temporal nature of social activism, support for organisations shift and change as new campaigns advance and others recede. As membership of the People's Movement is flexible and loose, the primary concern for the People's Movement is to sustain a network of activists to ensure that the organisation has the ability to mobilise activists under the banner of the organisation in periods of contentious action.

Another point worth noting is the broad master frame adopted by the People's Movement. I contend that the lack of evidence to suggest any extensive or significant overlap in membership and activity with other groups is a result of the broad scope and appeal of the People's Movement. Richard comically notes that the group, in many ways, is a "home for stray dogs." I noted in Part I of this thesis how 'new social movement' struggles have largely been defined around single issue activities (Scott 1990:26), such as gender, environment, peace and race. The primary single focus (master frame) for the People's

Movement is 'Europe', but there has been multiple extensions (sub frames) of this 'focus' into other areas which impact people's lives, whilst framing such action within a 'European' context. The attractiveness and success of the organisation is its ability to frame actions in multiple spheres. This broadens its appeal and permits members to be flexible from within the organisation in terms of adopting issues on certain topics. While the People's Movement may not campaign specifically on anti-war issues or the Palestinian land issue, these topics would strike a chord and resonate with the membership in general. The People's Movement's primary focus has been to challenge the European Union and its reform treaties. In challenging such reforms, the People's Movement have created 'multiple' sub-frames which broadens the appeal of the organisation. Rather than simply being an EU critical group, the organisation has appealed to peace activists, anti-capitalists and individuals concerned with local democracy. Gamson (1975:44), in his discussion on single issue groups and the multiplicity of framing events, also supports these findings.

In terms of setting strategies, it was beneficial for the People's Movement to have the experience of activists who had engaged in previous counter-EU campaigns and other social struggles. It is well documented that previous or parallel contentious mobilisation and activity strengthens the ability of organizations to sustain mobilisation efforts. Overlapping and multiplicity of group membership has been found to be a key contributor to the success of campaign mobilisations (Josselin 2007:35, Kreisi 1988:354, Tarrow 1998:144). Meyer (2002) notes that, "among activists, a favourite truism is that the same group of people show up at demonstration after demonstration even as the issues change" (2002:11). This is a result of social movement organisations sharing personnel and a common platform of issues. Meyer adds that "a social movement community includes diverse individuals and groups, whose primary focus at any one time may vary tremendously, but who are united by a generally shared view of the world and their place in it" (2002:12). Kriesi (1988a) observes that "activists from a specific new social movement tend to be, or to have been, active in other new social movements as well. Even if they do not participate in other new social movements they at least tend to share their goals and to be related to their activists via friendship ties" (1988a:42). This view is certainly echoed by People's Movement activist Mairead. I asked her what she thought about activism in Ireland and the overlapping nature

of involvement with groups and other struggles. “It’s great ... the camaraderie ... it’s wonderful ... it’s great that you get the same people”. When I first asked this question I had incorrectly made the assumption that overlapping and dual membership of different groups was a negative. Mairead takes a different view. She saw each event and each protest as separate but she also saw the positive social elements to be taken from this action, such as the meeting of friends, the sharing of ideas, the solidarity of protest and the creation and reinforcement of social bonds and cohesion. Maurice notes that there are certain activists within the People’s Movement group who are active on other issues. He comically refers to these activists as “serial offenders”. In regards to the multiplicity of membership of groups in general, he notes that “you see the same faces recycled over and over. If you are kind of on the Left at all in Ireland ... and being a fairly small country ... you may not know the names, but at least you know the faces”.

In general, there is little overlap of activism among People’s Movement members and non-Left groups, such as Coir and Libertas. On a small number of occasions during my fieldwork I did encounter a small number of activists who campaigned with the People’s Movement and who also engaged in leaf-letting with these groups. As the objectives and master frames of these groups and the People’s Movement do not fall within the same political space, as a researcher, I found this multiplicity of actions difficult to comprehend. I found that while this multiplicity existed, it was not common and was usually undertaken by peripheral supporters.

I contend that during high cycles of activity, such as referenda, there are a small handful of activists who will engage with multiple organisations with the sole objective of defeating the EU in a referendum. In general core activists from the People’s Movement would not engage with such groups or hand-out literature from such organisations. For People’s Movement members, the challenge is not simply to succeed in the rejection of an EU Treaty at a referendum, it is about educating the public on how and why the EU needs to be challenged and highlighting how the EU is impacting on local democracy and sovereignty. It is therefore, a campaign to raising awareness and consciousness around these fundamental issues.

## Movement Symbols

As the People's Movement was a relatively new organization in Ireland, it adopted its own emblems and symbols. These were 'green' and 'red' in colour (See Appendix F). Few activists were able to provide any detail on the organisation's emblem. Fergus tells me that there was some debate among the small number of activists who originally set up the organization over what to use as an emblem. An 'olive leaf' beside the outline of three people's heads was finally decided upon. The olive leaf was green and the outline of the people was 'red'. Fergus explains that much debate focused on the use of the 'olive leaf'. Fergus explains that it is not a symbol used to portray the organisation as a group of pacifists, but it does have 'peace' connotations. The People's Movement do not frame their identity as that of a 'peace group'. They do, however, adopt strong 'peace' sub frames including the promotion of Irish neutrality and opposing greater militarization within the EU. Activists within the People's Movement also have strong links to peace groups, such as PANA. The outline of the 'people' on the group's logo was used to portray the organization as democratic, *of* the people and *for* the people. I mentioned above the important use of colour. While the olive leaf was green, this did not necessarily have Irish nationalistic connotations. The organisation does not see itself as having a strong 'nationalist' or 'republican' identity<sup>26</sup>. The People's Movement are strongly focused on sovereignty and democracy and the repatriation of powers from Brussels to Ireland. The red outline of the people on the organisation's emblem, could be said to denote the labour struggle and workers' rights which is often associated with the colour red. While activists were unable to explain the exact reasoning behind such colours, certainly they agreed that on the political spectrum, the group would clearly fall within the red/green spheres. As such, the colours are appropriate symbolic representations. The organisation's name was adopted and the decision was made to also show its Irish title 'Gluaiseacht an Phobail'. It was decided that the Irish name would be promoted and used as much as possible as a mark of its 'Irish' identity.

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<sup>26</sup> A number of other groups who campaigned against the Lisbon and EU Fiscal Treaties were nationalistic and republican. For example: Sinn Féin, Irish Republican Socialist Party and Eirigi.

Eamon advises that the group looked at a number of social movement organisations in Europe and beyond. In particular, they looked at a group called the ‘Danish People’s Movement’ who were active at, and in between referenda/elections, and it was decided that this was a good model to take and shape it to Irish conditions and develop it. While the Danish People’s Movement is a political party insofar as it has candidates standing for election, Eamon prefers to call it, “a democratic alliance of forces; people who can find a common point of co-operation”. The name the ‘People’s Movement’ was therefore adopted based on the Danish group of the same name. In many respects the Danish People’s Movement and the Swedish Red/Green Alliance were particularly influential on the development of the Irish group. Formal interviews with activists reveal that the organization was not modelled upon British and southern European EU critical groups, such as the UK Independence Party, who generally challenge the EU under different frames. Nordic EU critical groups were strongly anti-racist, adopted ‘non-militaristic’ and ‘peace’ frames and did not represent views which were politically sectarian. The sub-frames of such groups resonated with the identity that activists wanted the Irish collective grouping to represent. The Nordic groups appealed to a broad group of people and the Irish organization wished to be seen as open and participative, that is, an organisation for the ‘people’. The People’s Movement is after all, not an anti-European group but rather one which challenges the direction in which the European project is going. It has been, and remains to be, an EU critical grouping. The group has never called for a withdrawal from the EU as a final objective. Core activists admit that if the topic was thrown open to debate, it may cause fractures within the group. The organization is held together, albeit loosely, through the commonalities of its criticisms of the EU. Individual feelings towards the concept of ‘Europe’ may vary, and my interviews with activists revealed a differing of opinion on certain issues.

Fergus tells me that after the 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum on the Nice Treaty in 2002, he felt that “we had to do something, there are going to be other referendums. We had to try and start up something.” Fergus explains that he wanted an organisation “that was not seen as ‘Left wing’, but had a strong ‘Left component’, but not a group who engaged in leftist rhetoric or indeed any rhetoric at all. We could critique things but not by using identifiable Left

terminology”. Fergus feels that by avoiding labels and rhetoric, the group could attract new activists. Referring to social activism in Ireland, Fergus states that “the ground is rather fallow to say the least. Most of the people on the Left are in left-wing groups and are active already.” Fergus also advises me that he, and others, wanted a departure from the way previous campaigns were organised against the EU. A larger organised group with multiple inputs was required. As the issues being campaigned against were EU issues, and were of vital concern, and in the national interest, Fergus states that a “well organised group was required rather than individual style campaigns” against the EU and its treaties.

Fergus speaks quite candidly about his expectations for the group. He advised me that before the EU Constitution, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, the group were very positive and felt that they had a good chance for success. The objective of the group was to be prepared for the next referendum, but it was also envisaged that afterwards the group would continue in existence to critique the EU. It was therefore never set up simply as a once-off referendum campaign group. It was hoped that it would be an EU critical vehicle. “This was an objective at the back of our minds. As an organisation we have not been very successful in making the transition from an objective which is nebulous to one which is more achievable. It will take much longer than expected”.

### **Organisational Structure: Leadership & Meetings**

While the People’s Movement organisation is seen by activists as a national organisation, the planning and strategy of the organisation is determined centrally by a number of core activists in Dublin. A national executive committee exists, but in reality there is significant overlap in the composition of this executive committee and the Dublin branch of the organisation. During the referenda campaigns for both the Lisbon and EU Fiscal Treaties, all materials, such as pamphlets, leaflets and posters were organized centrally in Dublin and then distributed to regional branches as required. During my participant observation with the organisation, I recall travelling to a number of regional meetings and activists frequently requested the delivery of leaflets, posters and other materials. Notwithstanding the dependency of regional branches on support from the central branch in Dublin, there was a

significant level of regional autonomous action in the co-ordination of regional events (See Payerhin & Zirakzadeh 2006:110, Melucci 1996, Kriesi 1988a:45, Scott 1990:30). The organizational structure is therefore quite loose. Each region determines its own local events, fundraising activities and public meetings. Materials and support will continue to be provided from the Dublin branch when required.

New forms of global social movement actors are often credited with adopting a less hierarchical structure and operating in a much looser and informal structure (Della Porta et. al 2006:20). I see the People's Movement structure to be within this definition insofar as it does not operate in an organisational bureaucratic manner (Gamson 1975:91). Although the organization operates with its own charter and has its own divisional structures, these structures are loose, adhoc and informal.

During my period of participation with the People's Movement, there were periods, such as the campaign before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty, when the organisation began to mirror a more formalised structure. The organisation commenced a formal system of membership, including the collection of membership fees and the issuance of membership cards. The organisation also held annual general meetings to adopt resolutions through formal voting mechanisms. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the group has ceased to collect membership fees, no longer maintains a database of membership and no longer issues membership cards. I contend that the organisation adopted formal structures during the Lisbon Treaty campaign in an effort to raise funds to cover its expenses. The organisation now operates a mailing list of activists and supporters. This, I contend, is a more accurate reflection of the adoc and informal structure in which the group and its activists operate. Annual general meetings are not held formally, but general meetings are held when required to discuss critical issues. Since the Lisbon Treaty campaign, there have been two such meetings. One meeting focused on the future of the organisation against the backdrop of activist disengagement, while another focused on the campaigns for the EU Fiscal Treaty and the ESM Treaty

There are presently nine regional People's Movement committees operating throughout Ireland – Dublin, North Kildare, Carlow/Kilkenny, South Kildare, South East, Galway,

Sligo, Midlands, & Donegal. There are other areas outside of these regions where People's Movement supporters are active and it is recognised that these individuals could form the basis for future branches. The leadership and structure of 'new social movements' has been referred to as "segmented", "polycephalous" and "reticular" (Melucci 1996, See also Calhoun 1995) representing a decentralized form. While recognising the adhoc structure and regional autonomy which exists, I nevertheless contend, that it would not be accurate to apply these terms to the People's Movement.

The organization adopts designated titles such as Chairperson, and Secretary. In this respect, the structure may appear quite formal and akin to hierarchical structured groups and other political parties. Internally, the structure reveals that leadership is somewhat interchangeable and the day-to-day operation of activities is less centralized. High profile mobilisation events will require a high profile leadership figure who is recognizable by the public, has high media attractability, commands attention and has strong communication skills. Other actions, such as regular organisational meetings require more strategic forms of leadership based on expertise and knowledge and relationship building. In this respect a more 'hands on' approach is required to manage and direct the organisation at local level. The People's Movement had both. During EU referenda campaigns the media pay particular attention to the People's Movement Chairperson, Patricia McKenna, as she is a former MEP and a long standing critic of aspects of EU policy. The People's Movement Secretary on the other hand provided strategic direction on the ground and at meetings, due to his involvement in numerous campaigns challenging previous EU referenda and campaigning for workers' rights through trade union activity.

The day-to-day leadership of the People's Movement, particularly at ground level, is different and is not based primarily on 'communication' skills but rather defined by knowledge, expertise and commitment. The direction of the organization is particularly centred on a number of key individuals within the organization and their experiences during previous campaigns. In smaller organizations, such as the People's Movement, there is less of a need for rousing and passionate speeches to mobilise individuals (See Barker, Johnson, & Lavalette 2001:7) but instead mobilisation can be activated through emotional attachment

and close kinship relations. Members have close social ties and bonds to each other and therefore feel a social and moral obligation to one another. One key individual was particularly notable for his leadership and organizational skills on the ground. While I felt at times that other activists looked towards him for constant direction, at no stage did I encounter any form of strict hierarchical or authoritative leadership. Decisions were taken on a consensual and participatory basis. While having an experienced individual directing the organization does have its benefits, I feel that an over reliance on one individual may lead to the organization having a difficulty in sustaining itself in the future. Activists had mixed feelings on this.

Mark, an activist from the north Kildare branch of the People's Movement agrees with my view that there are certain figureheads in the group, but he did not wish to focus on particular individuals and the role they played. He noted that there had to be a fundamental foundation for any organisation to exist, and it is this foundation which brought people together. While he recognised the contribution of certain individuals to the organisation, he went on to state that whoever assumes a leadership position within the organisation is not relevant. It was the organisation itself that was important for Mark. "It's a necessity ... people will see that the national parliament and political forces are tied hand and foot to the project at this stage and there is a need for organised resistance to that." Mark states that if we did not have the core individuals today leading the group, "we get together and carry on and someone else steps into the role."

Mairead and Eamon echo similar views to Mark. Mairead notes that "when one person isn't around to manage the organisation, another comes forward and they complement each other". Mairead feels that the organisation does not function through task delegation. "Delegation is not required ... people know themselves what they can or cannot contribute". Notwithstanding the above, a number of activists held opposing views and felt that without a leadership figure, such as Fergus, the People's Movement may not be able to sustain itself. Activists acknowledge his tireless commitment to the group and the amount of personal time and effort he puts into ensuring the organisation is sustained as vehicle for EU critical

action. Based on my own participant observation and activism with the group, I would agree with these activists.

Notwithstanding the leadership role of Fergus, within the People's Movement, there are appointed individuals who have the relevant authority to speak on behalf of the organisation, that is, authority to draw up and issue press releases and adopt organizational positions when required to do so (Gamson 1975:90). Such authority was vested in certain individuals who occupied high profile space within the organisation based on 'social' and 'cultural capital' (Barker, Johnson & Lavalette 2001:17). Leadership roles were passed and interchanged among a number of these core individuals (2001:12). Regional People's Movement branches retained local autonomy in the issuance of regional branch statements in line with planned local events and actions.

I referred earlier to the People's Movement Chairperson and her experience as an ex-MEP. This prominence provided the organisation with the relevant capital to attract much needed media attention. Without such capital, the print and broadcast media may not have covered events, press statements and campaign launches to the same degree that they had. It gave credibility and legitimacy to the organisation. Social actors on both sides of the political field acknowledge this 'credibility' and recognise an individual as a legitimate and worthy challenger. The absence of social capital can limit the capacity of the organisation to act within a certain field. It will also result in the organisation being largely dependent upon factors external to the organisation's structure and composition. All activists carry varying levels of 'social capital'. Some activists are personally grounded in strong individual friendship networks. Other activists have links to trade union and labour groups, others have good writing, oratory, research and technology skills, and others have high levels of knowledge of political and EU affairs. A healthy mix of skills and competencies enhance the organisation's resources. It is the combination of various levels of inputs which provide an organisation with its impetus and drive particularly in the absence of financial and other capital resources.

I mentioned earlier how the People's Movement may appear to operate with formal structures, but in reality and particularly at ground level, these structures are less formal and decisions are generally taken on an agreed consensual basis (Klandermans 1988:175). The issue of leadership is directly related to how the organisation's decisions are taken and implemented. I contend that the People's Movement leadership is 'dialogical' and consensual rather than monologic and authoritative (Barker et al 2001:9). At micro level, leadership at meetings takes the form of steering the group discussion, encouraging debate, stimulating idea generation and promoting an exchange of views in an open forum. It is generally non-hierarchical and activists offer and generate discussion among themselves in a participatory manner.

Certain activists have expressed the view that sometimes the organisation can be 'too democratic' and accommodating to the views of others. While making decisions by consensus is ideal, activists recognise that sometimes decisions need to be taken quickly, particularly during campaigns. From an organisational point of view, it was felt that these decisions should be taken by key individuals within the group. People's Movement activist Paula differentiates between leadership and management. While she feels that key individuals, such as Fergus, provide leadership to the group, she notes that he and others are not managers. While Paula does not agree with hierarchical structures, she believes that the group could benefit from better management and organisation. She states that task delegation and sharing of information is key to ensuring that assigned work is undertaken, and individual activists know clearly what has to be done.

Meetings are also a space for activists to share experiences, discuss strategic developments, plan mobilisations and actions. Meetings also have a cultural and social benefit. It is a space which permits the sharing of experience and the exchange of solidarity and emotions. Members discuss events and topics and further develop a sense of immediacy and a need for action on issues. The executive committee hold regular meetings in Dublin in a city centre venue. The only order of formality which takes place at these meetings is the issuing of agendas beforehand and in some cases minutes may be taken. Due to the size of the organisation and the general low level of participants, the meetings are quite informal in

practice. While regional meetings can take place at various locations throughout the country, this will depend on the region involved, and how many members are available to attend. In more rural locations such meetings are non-formal and in reality are reflected in social gatherings of activists rather than official organisational meetings. Regional branch meetings do not appear to take place in cycles of low activity and only take place during particular mobilisation events such as the Lisbon Treaty and EU Fiscal Treaty campaigns.

Membership and support of the People's Movement can, at times, appear latent. Attendance at meetings is therefore loose, non-committal and flexible. 'Ad-hoc' is perhaps a more appropriate definition. I found that meetings and events consistently revealed a key 'core' group of individuals. Attendance can be quite low in periods or cycles of low activity or in the absence of mobilisation events. In such instances only a core number of activists will be visible. I would not however consider membership unstable due to a lack of attendance at meetings. Attendance at meetings will rise in anticipation of increased acts of mobilisation during periods of high contention or cycles of protest (Tarrow 1998). Individuals re-emerged into visibility at different periods and for larger mobilisation events. The level of participation at meetings is quite varied. Participation during high cycles of protest, such as a referendum campaign, may attract twenty activists, whereas during low cycles, the number may be as low as five activists. In general, activists are in regular contact with each other between organizational meetings through email, telephone and social gatherings.

## *Mairead*

*Mairead lives in Dublin city centre but is originally from West Kerry, a Gaeltacht region of Ireland. Like her family, she is a native Irish speaker. She has three daughters and is in her 60s. Mairead is a musician and plays for about 15 hours per week busking on the streets of Dublin city. She also partakes in local musical events with other musicians.*

*When we first sat down to discuss 'activism' after a People's Movement event in the city, I asked her about her family. She recalls being raised in a very strong patriarchal household and there was a very strong emphasis placed on reading and music in her childhood. Mairead tells me that her family were not political. Mairead explains that there was always a bit of a "rebel streak" in her when she was a younger. Mairead tells me that she first became politically active in 1972, when a referendum was being held for Ireland's entry to the EEC. She recalls how she, and her friend, went around her village asking people to vote 'No'. She states that this was the first event which caught her attention and since then she has developed an interest in politics and current affairs.*

*In the mid-1980s, Mairead moved to Dublin and she participated in a number of events organised by AFRI (Action from Ireland). She was also active in campaigning against the visit of U.S. President Ronald Reagan to Ireland. Mairead recalls that she also participated in a number of events organised by a group called 'Women against Imperialism' who organised and campaigned on political events in the north of Ireland.*

*During the 1990s Mairead became active with PANA and she tells me that later she went on to become the group's 'public relations officer'. She continues to have a close association with this group, although she does admit that over the past number of years the People's Movement have received her full attention. She attributes this to the fact that the group have such a broad and diverse appeal, such as anti-militarisation, anti-privatisation and democracy. It was very clear from my discussions with Mairead that she felt strongly about Ireland's neutrality and its role as a peacekeeper. She held great concerns for the further*

*militarisation of Europe and NATO. In terms of the European Union, she feels that there was not simply one issue or concern which was important. Mairead makes references to the entire European project, and the direction which it has taken.*

*Her former experience in social activism enabled her to build a network of personal contacts. She tells me that during the campaign against the Nice Treaty in 2001 and 2002, she participated in 'Democrats against Nice' meetings which were organised by Fergus. While not directly involved with the campaign against Nice, Mairead tells me that she knew Fergus from other social justice campaigns and his work with the trade union movement.*

*Mairead recalls the first meeting that was convened to establish the People's Movement which she remembers attracted about twenty people. Mairead tells me that she was involved with the group since it was set up and later took on the role of finance officer for the group but, she explains that, "honestly there was not much to do as the group did not have much money."*

*Her main role in the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty was similar to other activists. She tells me that she went to meetings, educated herself on the contents of the Treaty, and handed out leaflets. As the groups finance officer, she also issued a number of letters looking for financial support. Mairead recognises that her role was mostly self-appointed. She recognises the great drive, personal time and commitment that Fergus and other members put into the organisation. Mairead tells me that she is attracted to the issues primarily and the group is secondary. She expressly avoids political parties and tells me that she has no political leanings at all. "I vote only for individuals who think independently. I would have to feel that such individuals are going against the EU monolith."*

*As a researcher, sitting down in Mairead's living room, drinking tea and hearing her stories from her forty years of activism, I felt quite 'out of place' as an activist. Whether I was right or wrong, in my mind Mairead embodied all that a true activist should be. She had a long rich history in activism, her interests were broad and diverse and she was committed to her principles and values, and this has stayed with her and has not faltered with time. On the*

*other hand, I was new to social activism, a researcher studying with a local university sitting with a pen, paper and a dicta-phone expecting to somehow capture forty years of activism, which I knew straight away was not going to be possible.*

*Mairead expressed personal concerns over a wide range of issues, particularly in the area of gender equality and women's rights. While she did not use terms like 'anti-capitalist' to describe herself, she stated: "I would prefer if we had a more socialist Republic here with free healthcare and everything else ... definitely. Even the word 'privatisation' does not go far enough because we should be calling it privatisation for profit." Mairead placed an emphasis on the importance of non-privatisation, and cooperation, rather than competition. She also emphasised the values of sharing and community.*

*"I would call myself a non-conformist. I would say now that I am not co-operating with Europe at all. I am leaning towards anarchy nearly". Mairead recalls meeting an elderly man in his late 60s whilst campaigning for a 'No' vote in the Lisbon treaty and he told her he was becoming an anarchist. Mairead tells me she gets inspired when she hears such stories and comments. While not strictly a 'nationalist', she tells me that she is only 'nationalistic' for "self-preservation" reasons. "If this European thing didn't feel so threatening I wouldn't mind." Mairead recalls a famous anti-war mantra that calls for 'No nation - No borders'. Mairead states that "this is all well and good but this is not easy because the cultures of small nations are disappearing". She states that simply opening borders throughout the EU is not necessarily a good thing. "It must be done for the right reasons". As such, she is very sceptical about political and business elites opening borders to exploit low paid workers and serve the interests of capital. She is also quite critical of Irish politicians, who may not speak their native Irish language, yet treat the Irish language and Irish culture as a commodity which can be used to serve the interests of capital.*

## ***Chapter 7            Communication & Networks***

The ability of the People's Movement to convey its message is determined by both the group's internal resources and also external factors, such as the organisation's access to media platforms. Access to important media channels can be particularly difficult for a small social movement organisation. Within this chapter, I focus specifically on the internal communication tools utilised by the People's Movement organisation in their effort to convey the organisation's message. I also look at the importance of networking and the dynamics of the organisation. I discuss how networking can be an important resource for a small social movement actor, and I outline the organisation's linkages with other groups and networks in Europe and the importance which such networks have played in the growth of the organisation.

### **Communication**

Communication tools and the utilisation of modern technology are critical for a social movement organisation to convey its message. This is particularly true for an organisation which may lack both human and financial resources. The internet has become a platform, not simply for communicating the message of movement actors but as a tool for creating an online community of activism, and as a resource for mobilisation at events and demonstrations. (Waterman 2004:44, Escobar 2004). Computer mediated communication (Diani 1999) can be utilized by activists at a low cost and ensure high speed access to communicate with fellow activists and groups regardless of geographical location and distance. The high profile mobilisation events over the past 10-15 years both in the USA and across Europe, and more recently the Arab Spring uprisings, have been particularly associated with new means of computer mediated communication. Through the creation of online activist communities and web-space, information can be shared and exchanged. This is important for the creation of personal and shared cultural capital (McDonald 2002:122). More importantly this media outlet is an appropriation of space, an "autonomous" zone which can be utilized for broadcast radio, video streaming, digital photography, and the

publication of articles and discussions. It is a tool which enables activists to bypass mainstream commercial media and mount 'discursive surfaces' and arenas which permit dialogic engagement through discussion, blogs, and email lists. It also facilitates direct access to the public via unfiltered raw data, through websites such as 'Indymedia' (Chesters and Walsh 2006:19, Juris 2008).

Notwithstanding new technological possibilities for communication and broadcasting through computer mediated channels, the utilization of such channels by the People's Movement was low. Despite the organisation having limited financial resources, activists generally feel that the utilisation of computer mediated channels is an issue which the organisation will need to focus on, if it wishes to sustain mobilisation and grow into the future. Throughout the People's Movement's campaigns against both the Lisbon and EU Fiscal Treaties, communication primarily took the form of email distribution lists and maintaining a web presence. Members generally received communications about events and planned meetings, and sometimes minutes of meetings, via the circulation of emails from the organization's distribution list. I would consider the use of email to be the most prominent channel of communication between activists themselves. The organisation maintained a webpage [www.people.ie](http://www.people.ie), through which it promoted the organisation's objectives and published details of past and future mobilisation events. The organisation's webpage is also a medium to inform individuals about who exactly the People's Movement are, and what the group collectively stand for and represent. The webpage also acts as a medium for members and supporters, providing links to campaign materials and literature produced by the organisation, as well as links to the organisation's publication 'The People's News'. This publication is also emailed to all members upon release. The publication is generally released on a monthly basis, or more if required. It provides members and non-members with updates on developments in EU Law, recent political developments in the EU, and how such developments impact individuals in their daily lives. During mobilisation events with the People's Movement, I observed other activists from other groups on the 'Left', who have commented on the excellent quality of the organization's monthly publication, particularly for EU news which generally does not get featured in the mainstream commercial media in Ireland. Notwithstanding this, I do not consider the monthly publication in its present form

as being anything more than a rich and informative tool for 'existing' members and activists. It remains a challenge for the organisation in accessing alternative computer mediated channels to communicate this publication.

The website also provides the organisation's bank details, should supporters and members wish to make a financial contribution and also a link to popular social networking site 'Facebook', where the organization has 409 followers<sup>27</sup>. Upcoming events and planned actions are posted on both Facebook and on the group's webpage in order to maximize the organisation's message and to mobilise support. I do not consider the website, or the social networking page, to be key influencers of mobilising individuals to participate in collective action. However, I do believe it is important that a web and internet social networking presence is maintained.

During meetings, activists with I.T. skills were relied upon for their expertise. In the early days of the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, the organisation's utilisation of computer mediated channels was very low. After the organisation established a Facebook page to communicate the group's message, it was not managed appropriately to maximise its potential. Several discussions with activists, particularly in the post-Lisbon Treaty period, focused on the need to improve the organisation's presence on-line and how computer mediated channels in general, could be better utilised to reach a wider audience in order to maximize the benefit to the organization. Activists, themselves, are well aware of the shortcomings. Without an investment into communication channels, the website and the organisation's publication will only be beneficial instruments for existing members, rather than key resource tools for the mobilisation of new members and supporters. Activists such as Ciaran and Richard were particularly vocal in their call for an increased focus to paid to important communication channels. These activists also provided very positive inputs on possible ways to utilise internet resources to communicate the organisation's message, such as social networking sites and political blogs. The issue of computer mediated channels remains a challenge for the organisation, particularly in cycles of low protest activity. In the absence of a mobilisation event such as a referendum, the organisation will need to focus on

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<sup>27</sup> The People's Movement has 409 followers of its Facebook page as at 27.10.2013

new means of communicating the group's message, as well as recruiting new members. In general, all activists agree that improvements need to be made in the use of technology and alternative media channels. It has proved difficult to maximise the benefits of technological approaches. The organisation relies on activists who volunteer their time around personal and work commitments. There is a notable lack of full time dedicated activists who can commit to undertaking this much needed work on enhancing the organisation's internet presence. While the organisation attracted new (and younger) members during the campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty, there has been a notable disengagement of activism in the post-Lisbon Treaty period. I will address this issue further in later chapters. I contend that younger activists brought with them a heightened awareness of the value of internet and social media as a communication tool. The withdrawal of certain young activists from group activity has further compounded the need of the organisation to focus on this area in the future and maximise its benefits.

## **Networks**

From loose informal social linkages between friends and family to formal communication to members and supporters, the importance of networks cannot be underestimated and is critical to understanding 'mobilisation' in social movements. In many ways, networks produce social movements but such movements can also produce networks (Crossley 2002:95). The bonds between people are seen as "the central building blocks of the larger social edifice" (Field 2003:11).

My discussion in the previous chapter on People's Movement membership, and their strong historical links in social activism, overlaps with my current discussion on networking. I have already noted how former networks and social ties can lead to future mobilisations and how such networks provide an essential grounding or anchoring of new social movement organisations. Crossley (2002) notes that, "the history of any movement is punctuated by the rise and fall of specific organisations and organizational cells within it, each new group breathing life into the movement and its struggle, directing it in a specific way, before finally dying off or burning out and leaving room for the next contender" (2002:97, See also

Cox 2003). In support of my own analysis of the historical factors which contributed to the formation of the People's Movement, Kriesi (1988) notes, that cycles of protest "... leave behind a large potential of activists and sympathizers who can be mobilised by future movements... [and] ...“activists become permanently socialized by their experiences in the mobilisation processes of which they participate early in their lives” (Kriesi 1988:366, See also Meyer 2002:14, Klandermans 1988:174, McAdam 1988:142).

Eamon, notes that personal networks do exist and are very important for a small social movement actor such as the People's Movement. He notes that, in some instances, issues which are raised and discussed at People's Movement meetings in Dublin might also be raised by social activists in other forums. The People's Movement has no full time committed activists, and in many cases members are involved in other networks, such as trade unions, community groups and other political groupings. Eamon feels that People's Movement issues can disseminate into other networks, but likewise, activists may also bring something into the group from outside. In this respect, information is shared and exchanged. Eamon notes that “there is experience moving in and out of the group. Personal experiences are imported and exported ... we don't operate in a vacuum”.

In explaining 'networks', I have divided my discussion into two sections. Firstly, 'internal' networking refers to networks which exist within the People's Movement organisation and also between its members and supporters. Secondly, 'external' networking refers to connections and linkages which exist between the movement organization and the broader left coalition of groups who campaigned against EU referenda.

### *Internal Networking*

Informal relationships, or “friendship networks” (McAdam 1988), are a key factor in the ability of the organization to mount an effective campaign. Social and informal ties through friends and acquaintances, or between individual activists, were a key factor in campaign 'networking' and branching into regions which were 'untapped' by the People's Movement. In many ways, such informal and social/friendship ties have enabled the People's Movement

to gain footholds in certain areas and thus establish new regional hubs and committees. Close social ties, family and social networks of friends are therefore considered to have a key role in determining participant activity (Crossley 2002:96). Networking provides a social movement organisation with growth, much like roots and branches, which take on their own shape and form. The People's Movement acts in a micro-mobilisation context (as defined by McAdam 1988) insofar as they mobilise as a small team, and the "process of collective attribution are combined with rudimentary forms of organization to produce mobilisation" (1988:135). In this respect, small and informal groups are of critical relevance to the organisation's success. A number of regional branches of the People's Movement contained only three or four active members. I met with Miriam, Julie and Jim (a community activist, shop assistant and small farmer) from one particular rural branch of the People's Movement and learned how these individuals staged public events, such as Treaty information meetings, which attracted a large public attendance and notable attention from local media. The ability to attract a large attendance, they claim, is due largely to activists own social and personal networks in their community. 'Word of mouth' through friendship networks is an important tool to generate support for local action. I spoke to Mark and Eddie, both students, who are active in the north Kildare branch which also had a small number of activists. They advised me that while networks are important, the utilisation of contacts with local businesses, such as local newspaper and radio is also important. The north Kildare branch received good local media attention by directly challenging a local based U.S. multinational company, who were actively promoting Treaty acceptance, to publically debate the articles of the Lisbon Treaty. As the activists in this group were students they were also able to promote the organisation through their university and hold public information meetings on campus. It is these forms of action which promote the organisation's identity, recruit new members and communicate the People's Movement message.

In my earlier discussion of organisational structure and membership, I noted how 'informal' membership and support for the People's Movement is quite widespread. Such support is garnered through informal networks and ties. During periods of 'latency' (Melucci 1995) and low cycles of activity, members are meeting and keeping these networks alive (Crossley

2002:98). Social and informal networks and ties continue to be maintained with supporters and friends, perhaps through regular friendship interaction or perhaps through other social struggles which may not be directly related to People's Movement activities. During contentious action and high cycles of activity, these informal networks and social ties can be 'tapped' as a resource for mobilisation. Regional branches of the People's Movement acted 'locally' in their campaigns. Certain localities only had a small number of activists, and while there were not sufficient members to create a new branch of the movement, activists did organize local events to raise the profile of the movement. One activist, Patrick, organised a public information meeting in a Dublin suburb. While the attendance at the meeting was low, the message of the organisation nevertheless attracted another individual, Darren, who subsequently agreed to help out with poster and leafletting at future events. Networks are therefore formed and generated through local events. While activism may be low in certain localities, the ability to hold an event such as a public meeting, can lead to other activists and volunteers participating in future events. I recall Fergus telling Patrick not to be disheartened by low attendance figures at the meeting. Fergus advised that while the objective of the meeting is to inform the public, the 'network' of the movement is broadened by interaction with activists, such as Darren, who subsequently volunteered to get involved. Activism in this locality has now increased, and should future campaigns emerge, a new branch of the People's Movement can be established and this network can be utilised to mobilise activists. While the referenda on the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Fiscal Treaty have passed, should future campaigns emerge, this latent structure would be reactivated to ensure a local campaign could be mounted and sustained. The ability of activists such as Fergus to see the positive and long term benefits illustrates that campaigning is not a one off event. It is a long road which will require more and more people, hence the importance of networking and building for the future.

In this respect, maintaining networks is a key resource tool for existing activists. Such networks are essential in the creation of collective identity (Payerhin & Zirakzadeh 2006) and are vital for maintaining solidarity and bonds between fellow activists. During periods of contentious action, these relationships and bonds of collective solidarity have a social and emotional value for activists (Juris 2008:126). Bramble and Minns (2005) study on the

Australian anti-capitalist movement reveals the importance of social networks and connective structures which are, in many ways, similar to the People's Movement. While 'friendship circles' are noted to be important they became even more closely intertwined and embedded as the movement actor developed and engaged in more protest activities, that is, activists became part of each other's 'friendship' and 'social networks' (Bramble and Minns 2005:109). Participating in collective action with others strengthens individuals' goals and solidarity is maintained through group meetings (Gamson 1975:58, Dieter Opp 1986 & 1988). Melucci (1988) recognizes individual motivation in participation as "constructed and consolidated in interaction" within a network (Melucci 1988:340, Oliver 1993:278, McAdam 1988:137). McAdam (1988) illustrates the importance of social ties and friendship bonds and argues that such ties and bonds can reduce the potential costs for activists to participate. The hardships of activism are made more bearable. In many ways, these social relationships and exchanges represent the organisation's resources or a form of 'capital'. It is through these connections and relationships that people with common values work together collectively to achieve something. The networks therefore act as a resource in themselves and can be regarded as forming a kind of 'social capital' (Field 2003:1). Symbolic forms of "supportiveness and friendliness" underlie 'mutual support' in group contexts (Blau 1989:95). Essentially, social exchange furnishes benefits which lead to the "development of bonds of fellowship" and reciprocal arrangements to sustain the relationship over time (Blau 1989:113, Ekeh 1974:205). The networks and relationships which Field (2003) discusses are quite similar to 'kinship' and 'reciprocity' in that social bonds are created through exchange and obligations (Mauss 1924). Participants in social movement organisations develop personal links and bonds over time. These linkages often develop into friendships and kinship relationships through mutual interests, meeting at social events and extending their 'ties' beyond the structure of the organisation. Similar to a web, individual's personal social networks are extended as they are introduced into a wider collective of 'like-minded' individuals.

### *External Networking*

Formal networking involves specific attempts by individual social movement organisations to coordinate their actions and events to mobilise as part of a collective ‘movement’ or ‘coalition’. The People’s Movement was a participant in a broader Irish network of social movement organizations and political groups who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty. This grouping was referred to as the ‘Campaign against the EU Constitution’ (CAEUC), later renamed the ‘Say No to Lisbon’ campaign. Attempts at formal networking for the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty were made by this ‘umbrella’ group of organizations and political parties. Despite the fact that the People’s Movement were an affiliated organisation within this umbrella group network, attendance by People’s Movement representatives at regular CAEUC meetings was, at times, rather ‘inactive’. There were a number other Irish social movement actors and political groups forming this alliance.<sup>28</sup> While activists from the People’s Movement did not share the views or opinions of all these organizations, the groups were nevertheless united in their opposition against the Lisbon Treaty. Network based movements often prefer more temporary ad hoc coalitions rather than a permanent common agreed approach. Juris (2008) notes that, “activists from network based movements are willing to work with other sectors but hesitate to create permanent coalitions” (2008:83). Members of the People’s Movement shared platforms with a number of these groups in the weeks leading up to the referenda in June 2008 and October 2009. At ground level, in terms of posterage and leafleting, the People’s Movement had little contact with other groups and generally operated independently. I found that there were a number of these organizations who were more closely linked to the objectives of the People’s Movement than others. The Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) and other socialist groups had closer ties to the People’s Movement, but I contend that these ties were not a result of the CAEUC grouping, but rather through social linkages and personal networks with individuals who had engaged in former contentious action.

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<sup>28</sup> In addition to the People’s Movement, the CAEUC grouping also included The Communist Party of Ireland; Eirígí; Irish Anti-War Movement; Irish Friends of Palestine against Lisbon; Irish Republican Socialist Party; Irish Socialist Network; Peace & Neutrality Alliance; People before Profit Alliance; Sinn Féin; Socialist Party; Socialist Workers Party; and the Worker’s Party.

People's Movement activist, Maurice, explains to me that it was originally hoped that the CAEUC would be a co-ordinating group, but he claims it gradually opened itself up and it attracted individuals, who then began to participate without having attachments to any affiliated organisation. "It became a group of itself with its own members ... and then it was unclear who made decisions." Other members also note that "it ceased to become a coordinating body and became an organisation on its own basis and it started to produce policies which we would have trouble with, such as the concept of developing a social Europe ... we couldn't support that."

Other members felt that the People's Movement was never at the heart of the CAEUC and adopted the position of a peripheral actor. One activist describes this as "a watching relationship ... we were in, but never really in". Notwithstanding this, activists see participation in the umbrella grouping as a "necessary requirement" but many activists feel that there was not any notable benefit of the alliance. A handful of activists also noted that the CAEUC had "less desirable" groups attaching to it, and felt that they would not like themselves associated with these groups. One activist states, "I guess you have to show solidarity to oppose something like an EU Treaty ... and this may mean taking a stand with groups who you would normally not associate yourself with." On the other hand, People's Movement activist, Paula, explains that she has no difficulty in groups with different agendas coming together to fight EU treaties and afterwards, such groups will retreat and manage their own organisations. "We may as well join up and create a united front as the media simply throw us all in together because it suited them. They tarred us with the same brush and the people fell for it." In general, activists did not feel that there was any tangible benefit or value out of their association with the CAEUC grouping, and several activists felt that the group came to be dominated by certain personalities and individuals. While the CAEUC grouping continued to remain in place in the post-Lisbon Treaty period, it has since been renamed 'Campaign for a Social Europe.'<sup>29</sup> There was no evident participation with this umbrella grouping for the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign in 2012.

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<sup>29</sup> [www.campaignforasocialeurope.org](http://www.campaignforasocialeurope.org) (Last accessed 27.10.2013)

A non-financial resource tool available to the People's Movement is its 'patronage system' which illustrates the group's close connections with well-known Irish politicians, musicians and artists<sup>30</sup>. During discussions with activists, there was full support and positive comments about the group adopting a patronage system. Although the People's movement is not a political party, and is not affiliated in any way to a political party, a patronage system allows individuals (political and non-political figures) to be affiliated to the organisation and who claim to share its broad objectives. Individuals are generally invited by the organization to be a patron. Currently there are sixteen patrons to the organisation. A patronage system adds 'social capital' to the organisation insofar as it provides the uninformed individual with a sense of awareness about what the organisation stands for and its values. In other words, a patronage system is a two way exchange, a mutual recognition of shared values. Certainly, when dealing with the 'formal' media and political channels, it can lend 'credibility' to the organisation, insofar as the group has recognized shared values with a number of high profile individuals and elected representatives. This patronage system is important as it extends the network and linkages of the organisation beyond the activists themselves. In certain instances, well known patrons have made appearances at public demonstrations and events to support the People's Movement campaign.

Fergus notes the importance of the patronage system during referendum campaigns but feels that this system is utilised less during non-contentious periods. Activists are in agreement that the system provides the organisation with "credibility", whereas some activists note that it provided the People's Movement with "a certain niche during the campaign". Maurice notes that, "when a member of the public receives People's Movement literature or accesses the organisation's website, they can see the names of patrons who are affiliated to our campaign." Eamon felt that the patronage system was important for "delegitimising criticism". He states that, "to have people who are well known as sponsors, prevents the media and the establishment from demonising us because we are linked to reasonably sensible people who have profile, people who are involved in arts and culture. It narrows the ability of the establishment to peg you into a hole. It gives you space to function and

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<sup>30</sup> Patrons are listed on the People's Movement website [www.people.ie](http://www.people.ie) and include Raymond Deane, composer and novelist, Robert Ballagh, artist and designer, Dervla Murphy, author. Other patrons are political councillors and academics.

operate. They will constantly want to drive you into corners and keep you there. We have to be mindful of what they want to do and do the exact opposite.”

### **Movement Dynamics & Identity**

In discussing movement dynamics, Diani (2005) contends that, “organisations involved in a movement dynamic will share both material and symbolic resources in order to promote more effective campaigns and will be fairly closely linked to each other” (2005:51). Notwithstanding the CAEUC umbrella grouping, I did not see such dynamics occurring to a great extent, within the broad coalition of actors involved in the campaign to defeat the Lisbon Treaty. In certain instances, close personal contacts between certain activists from different groups did result in the sharing of platforms at public meetings. Certain individuals who have high profiles within the organisation, such as Patricia, Fergus and Eamon, had an established network of personal contacts with other activists from previous campaigns. These contacts were utilized when staging press conferences and holding public meetings. The People’s Movement and other organisations within the CAEUC umbrella group identify with each other as part of a broader collective and within an overall ‘EU critical’ master frame. The ties that link these actors together is loose, uncoordinated and at times can only be considered ‘networked’ on paper. The People’s Movement acted independently and within its own space. Notwithstanding this, I would still contend that the People’s Movement remains ‘intellectually networked’ with a coalition of broader groups on the Left. Social movement actors cooperate and participate in similar events and demonstrations and take cognisance of other movement organizations’ actions. This enables each organisation to operate within its own political space, and ensures that there is no overlap or overtly direct competition when holding events, such as meetings and conferences. They compete ‘in harmony’ and will co-operate, albeit not in an organized formal basis. Each organisation is aware of the actions and campaigns of other organizations through informal social ties and linkages. During activist meetings, discussions took place about recent or upcoming events organised by other social movement groups. Information was shared among members of what was taking place on the political field. Similarly informal, ‘chattering’ exists between high profile individuals of certain movement groups, which can in turn, lead to a combined

event or the sharing of a public platform. People's Movement activists generally consider other groups on the 'Left' to form part of the wider 'EU critical movement' in Ireland. Such groups include, People Before Profit, Socialist Workers Party, The Worker's Party, Socialist Party, Irish Anti-War Movement, and PANA. Other groups who campaigned for a 'No' vote during the Lisbon campaign, such as COIR (a conservative pro-life organisation) or 'Libertas' (a new well-financed EU federalist group) would generally not be considered to be part of a coalition on the 'Left'. I contend that there was little or no 'intellectual networking' with these groups during the campaign. People's Movement activists often had personal ties and informal relations with activists from political groupings on the 'Left' but there were no evidence of ties between activists of the People's Movement group and groups on the political 'Right'.

I contend that the principal reason for the People's Movement following its own path of action, may be attributable to the group being a small tightly knit body of social activists who see their own independent action and protest as the group's sole opportunity to promote itself as a credible and real social movement organization. I contend that to conjoin and merge with other groups, may in fact have submerged a smaller organisation, such as the People's Movement, under the banner of other larger groups on the Left. For a number of groups on the Left in Ireland, namely nationalist and socialist groups, the Lisbon Treaty reforms represented yet another obstacle to overcome in their struggle against the State and EU institutions. However, for the People's Movement and its activists, the Lisbon Treaty was not simply another obstacle. The Treaty itself was its very struggle. For the People's Movement and its activists, the entire movement organization was built upon and founded as an EU critical grouping. Defeating and challenging the Treaty and its reforms represented its identity and its uniqueness as a social actor.

The lack of more formal networks between the People's Movement and other groups has led me to question whether existing networks can collectively be referred to as an EU critical movement or looser still, a coalition of actors. Diani (2005:51) emphasizes the need for sharing collective identity. He acknowledges that although joint collective action may occur, and may centre on specific agendas, in many cases groups and organisations will not feel

linked to each other by a shared identity once these specific actions and campaigns are over (Diani 2005:51). Albro (2005) notes that “popular identity can only be a marriage of convenience, or temporary coalition of heterogeneous social ‘classes’ that briefly joins for one specific purpose, after which it fragments” (2005:254). Saunders (2007), on the other hand, regards networking as an essential ingredient of movement dynamics but stresses that “links must be more than cursory and should involve shared engagement in collective action.” Saunders considers this to involve the sharing of information and resources in a ‘collaborative’ network rather than in an informal structure.

I do not consider the linkages within the CAEUC umbrella grouping as a conduit for the sharing of information as Saunders (2007) describes. A strict interpretation of Saunders’ definition would imply that a collective movement network did not exist among the groups in Ireland who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty. Diani (1992) however, allows for a looser definition of ‘networking’ permitting more informal arrangements to be acceptable. While he views networks as information exchange conduits, he does not equate the formality of the networks or frequency of information exchanges with the critical importance which Saunders (2007) appears to attach to them. Despite the lack of visible and formal networks and linkages, I contend that the CAEUC grouping was one approach at networking which has emerged out of the campaign to defeat the Lisbon Treaty. It therefore forms part of a larger ‘network’ which has its roots in historical social activism, but which is not based on formal information exchange. Networks, I contend, are rather based on Diani’s (1992) concept of informal relationships and infrequent linkages (Diani & Lodi 1988) and what I referred to earlier as ‘intellectual networking’. I contend that a loose informal network is appropriate when the collective group of social movement actors is diverse and identities are heterogeneous. In this respect, the umbrella grouping of organisations on the ‘Left’ in Ireland operated quite well. However, if all the movement organizations on the ‘Left’ in Ireland were to combine to create a formal pan ‘Left’ group to mobilise against EU referenda, it is questionable whether a unified collective identity could be maintained. Despite such actors commonly agreeing on the master frame, the heterogeneous and diverse grouping of opinions, values and beliefs may have contributed to a “messy compromise” among such actors (Payerhin & Zirakzadeh 2006:94).

## **Transnational Linkages**

While I first became active with the People's Movement in March 2008, I had little involvement in the organisation and planning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign. Any comments I make regarding transnational linkages are based primarily on participant observation during the campaign leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum in October 2009. The input from European social movement actors, albeit limited, was notably from the Nordic countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark. I also encountered a handful of activists from the Czech Republic and Poland. For several weeks leading up to the referendum vote in October 2009, teams of Norwegian, Danish and Swedish student volunteers spent their time in and out of the People's Movement office in Dublin. They met with People's Movement activists, collected materials, and travelled all over the city and its suburbs, 'posting' and 'leafleting'. Teams of three or four activists went out in vehicles to do morning and afternoon 'poster runs'. I could not help noticing the paradox, insofar as individuals from other EU member states were actively coming together in a unified manner in their opposition to the EU. For many activists, this represented true 'Europeanism', that is, common action from ordinary European individuals against EU governance. To this day, I doubt if any party or grouping, whether on the 'No' or 'Yes' campaigns could equal the level of pan-European campaign involvement, unaided by financial incentives or business self-interests (Sharrock 2009). I also contend that it is these informal ties with fellow European activists which will help the People's Movement build for future events and counter EU mobilisations.

The social 'ties' to Scandinavian countries, rather than southern Europe states, is clearly evident and it is within the shape of Nordic counter EU movement activity that the Irish People's Movement finds resonance. Indeed, I noted earlier how the name, 'People's Movement' was adopted from the Danish group of the same name. Although the People's Movement is not a political party, there were transnational links between the organisation and formal political groupings, such as the Danish People's Movement and the Swedish Red/Green Alliance. A Swedish People's Movement was formed after the creation of the

Irish People's Movement. Activists contend that this grouping is modelled on the Irish and Danish organizations. There were also discussions on the possible establishment of an Icelandic People's Movement group following contact with some individuals, but the formation of a group does not appear to have taken place. Activists see the extension of groups into a pan-European opposition as a good and healthy development and these connections need to be maintained and built upon in the future.

The cooperation between social movement organisations and other political groupings, to promote a pan-European organisational network, could be seen to reflect the formation of a European shared cultural value system. In other words, activists from fellow EU member states are joining together collectively, based on shared values and beliefs, in their opposition to the EU. Paradoxically, this very same argument is used by government officials and business interests in their advocacy of a 'Yes' vote. While business interests and the elite within the EU are concerned about the construction of European identity and culture from the 'top-down', it is these linkages and networks among social activists throughout the EU which represent an organic form of cultural exchange and identity construction from the 'bottom-up'.

During the campaign for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, the People's Movement were fortunate to be joined by a number of prominent political representatives, including MEP's, former MEP's and peace activists from the Nordic countries. These individuals helped out on the campaign by leafleting, attracting media attention to promote the People's Movement in the Irish press and indeed sharing People's Movement platforms at public information evenings. The People's Movement did have contacts with other individuals from other groups across Europe, such as left-wing groups in France (Parti de Gauche), Germany and Austria (Attac), but there was little or no active involvement from any of these groups in the campaign. People's Movement activist, Kenneth, notes that the People's News, which is the monthly publication of the People's Movement, is distributed to approximately 150 European contacts. These transnational contacts include individuals, social movement groups, academics, peace groups and trade union groups.

The People's Movement's participation and affiliation with 'TEAM Europe'<sup>31</sup>, a European wide forum of EU critical movements, is another important international dimension. Such international linkages promote the sharing and exchange of EU critical information among movement actors. It enables activists to meet like-minded individuals and to create a common EU wide defence against further EU institutional reform. Participation in such a network has enabled closer cooperation between the People's Movement and EU critical figures throughout Europe, particularly at times of high cycles of protest activity, such as the referendum campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty. The People's Movement have utilised such networks and this has enabled the group to invite fellow EU guest speakers to come to Ireland to help and assist with the campaign and to inform the public about the impacts of EU reform. The People's Movement is one of three Irish EU critical groups affiliated with TEAM Europe. It is also worth noting that the three groups do not frame their actions within primarily nationalist or socialist agendas as do other groups and organisations within the broad coalition of the Irish Left. The other two groups who are affiliates of TEAM Europe with the People's Movement are 'The National Platform' (which has been a key EU critical group in Ireland at previous EU Treaty referendums) and PANA (Peace and Neutrality Alliance). It is notable that while there are a substantial number of groups within the CAEUC umbrella group, these groups are largely not participants of TEAM Europe. This is important as it illustrates how other groups within the CAEUC, do not adopt a master frame of 'EU Critical'. Another notable observation is the participation of both PANA and the National Platform in TEAM Europe. In addition to having some overlap of support among existing People's Movement activists, there is also a thread of historical activism which interweaves between all three groups. In many instances, prior to the foundation of the People's Movement, activists campaigned and mobilised with these groups, thus further illustrating that activists' struggles against the European Union are rooted in historical mobilisations and former struggles.

I referred earlier to the umbrella group 'CAEUC' who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty. As a broad alliance of groups and political parties on the Left, this group also established excellent international linkages from the Left across Europe. The group's

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<sup>31</sup> See [www.teameurope.info](http://www.teameurope.info) (Last accessed 30.10.2013)

website was particularly informative and well maintained, and provided links to documents and information on the EU from Swedish and Dutch MEP's and also from 'Attac' groups in Germany and France. The website also had links to a number of groups across Europe who opposed the Lisbon Treaty. The increasing transnational linkages between national movement organizations to counter the EU is evidence of what Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) refer to as a 'scale shift', that is, a shifting from local/national contention to transnational level. This is also aided by developments in communication technologies (Rucht & Neidhardt 2002:19). Such technologies have led to a transferrance or 'diffusion' of ideas and local action frames have come to be framed within a 'global' context (Della Porta & Tarrow 2005:3-7). Indeed national mobilisations are adopting a 'global framing', that is, local campaigns are being fought by using the 'language of globalisation' (2005:122).

People's Movement activist Fergus notes that "the EU is not going to go away ... there will have to be a pan-European opposition of some sort". He emphasises the importance on greater pan-European connections with other like-minded social movement organisations. Fergus notes that while the organisation is attempting to reach out and broaden our network, and also to seek financial support, at times there has not been much interest in the People's Movement group in Ireland. Fergus feels that, despite the positive linkages which the People's Movement have made with activists in the Nordic countries, forming new connections in Europe can be difficult. He notes that left-wing groups, who refer to themselves as 'Marxist', 'socialist' or 'workers' groups, are clearly identifiable simply by their name. For these organisations and groups, Fergus contends, it is somewhat easier to make connections and linkages. In Scandinavia, Fergus feels that the groups were different. He explains that the Nordic groups looked at the individuals behind the groups to assess their seriousness and commitment. Fergus feels that the approach of the People's Movement is very similar to Norway, Sweden and Denmark and quite different to groups from mainland Europe such as 'Attac'. "Our critique is EU critical whereas Attac and other groups appear to challenge the EU as engaged groups. They don't stand back and question its legitimacy and democratic accountability as we would do."

In regard to transnational mobilisation, People's Movement activist Eamon recognises its potential but feels that the first step is to resist locally. "Our primary focus has to be on the impact on Ireland, and its people, from decisions made by the EU. We can only resist them at a national level. We can only build political pressures to force the Irish government to resist or change. If we create a problem for the Irish establishment, we create a problem for the European Union. You look for allies across Europe but you are constantly trying to develop people's knowledge, understanding and experience."

## *Ciaran*

*Ciaran is now 30 years old and from Co.Wicklow. He first became active with the People's Movement prior to the Lisbon referendum in 2008. When I met him first, he was very well spoken, confident about what actions he felt the group should take, and at 25 years old was also one of the youngest members of the group.*

*After finishing university in Ireland in 2004, Ciaran lived in Spain for a number of years. He explains that he was aware of developments which were taking place within the EU, in preparation for an EU Constitution. He recalls specifically how the constitution was defeated in referenda by the publics in France and Holland and upon hearing that the EU Constitution was being reintroduced as the EU Lisbon Treaty, he wanted to get involved in the campaign.*

*"It weighed quite seriously on my mind that here was something which was going to change the future of Ireland, and the future of Europe, and the majority of people were not going to get chance to have a say in it".*

*Ciaran had not participated in any former struggles against the EU, and was not a member of any other organisation before joining the People's Movement, Ciaran tells me that he used to write letters and articles about political issues and send them into papers with the hope of getting some published. He stresses the need for local and direct democracy which he feels is very important. "I feel that direct democracy is far more democratic than representative democracy. I think that elected representatives are too easily swayed by the media or lobby groups because of the party system and the whip system. While an individual political representative may want to serve your interests, and you may know where they stand on a whole load of issues, it doesn't really matter where they stand unless they are the party leader or within the party leadership. Therefore, when it comes to a big issue particularly something like sovereignty, I actually think that Switzerland has the right idea"*

*While Ciaran was not involved with any political group or organisation in Spain or in Ireland, he tells me that he was brought up in a family who regularly “took to the streets” to protest on different issues. “I was reared on opposition. From an early age I was brought to different protests, marches and pickets. I don’t remember most of them. We have always been encouraged in my family that if there is something that you think is wrong, whether it’s a moral issue or a democratic issue, you have to get out and make yourself heard.”*

*Ciaran also told me that he “never had any hesitation about getting involved. It's natural. I have friends who have the same feelings as myself, but they never had any of that [protest culture] in their upbringing and therefore they find it a lot harder. They are a lot more nervous. Nurture has come into it a lot ... certainly my mother’s side of the family would be quite nationalistic, sceptical of anything that gives away our hard fought independence and sovereignty to people, who basically we haven’t any ability to stop, once we give them that power.”*

*For a period of time, Ciaran’s own mother and brother were also active People’s Movement members and regular attendees at organisational meetings. This was the only ‘family’ who I saw actively involved in the campaign. Ciaran's family involvement with the group declined in 2009 whereas Ciaran continued to participate in regular meetings. During the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, Ciaran also helped out other groups, such as Libertas, and he also knew several campaigners in Coir and was quite supportive of them also. This was rare, as People’s Movement campaigners generally had no connections with such groups.*

*Ciaran feels that the successes of the People’s Movement group during EU referenda do not get attention ‘on a grand scale’ but the organisation’s successes are more “discreet and subtle” when compared to bigger organisations such as Libertas and Coir. Ciaran feels that nobody could ever vilify the People’s Movement as its spokespeople have both reputation and integrity. “Individuals like Patricia McKenna stand up for what they believe in. The papers were able to cast doubts and vilify Libertas and Coir, but they couldn’t in any way say there were bad people in the People’s Movement and they couldn’t really say we were wrong on solid arguments”*

*“We may not have reached as many people as Libertas or Coir because we didn’t have the same amount of financing. We didn’t have the same amount of membership. We did reach a chunk of people and also maybe influenced other groups of a political nature and trade unions. Members of our group, under the People’s Movement banner, had a big influence on trade unions”. Ciaran goes on to add, that “what we had in solid arguments and integrity, we maybe didn’t have as much in creativity, so our posters were not as eye catching”. Ciaran feels that it is quite sad for democracy when you need ‘X factor’ posters in order to catch people’s attention on issues which ultimately affect them and future generations.*

*When undertaking my research I was conscious of the fact that Ciaran, who was a regular contributor at meetings in 2008-2010, had gradually withdrawn from the group. His attendance at meetings became very infrequent and while I knew he had moved out of Dublin and was focusing on his work, it was clear that the Lisbon campaign was over and the group was losing some members. Ciaran admits that he gave it his “all” during the Lisbon campaign and in 2010 focused on work because he became self-employed and took a step back from activism. In 2012, in the weeks before the referendum on the EU Fiscal Treaty, he explains that he was in contact with Fergus about helping out. While Ciaran admits to being less engaged and did not attend meetings, he explains that he did put up posters in his area and handed out leaflets. Ciaran says he was not able to dedicate much time but he would “always try to do something.”*

## **Eddie**

*It was June 2009 and I had just taken the bus into Dublin City centre to attend a meeting of the People's Movement. The government had yet to formally make an announcement for a re-run of the Lisbon Treaty vote which had been defeated by the Irish electorate almost one year previous. There were eleven present for the meeting that day and there were a number of issues on the agenda to discuss. As usual, funding and resources were high on the agenda. We needed to discuss possible fund raising ideas as we all knew that the government would be re-running the Lisbon Treaty referendum again, perhaps late in 2009. As yet, no formal date had been set. I took my seat around a large table in the middle of the room, beside Eddie, a young man in his mid-twenties. I had not seen him at previous meetings, and although he did not appear to know everybody at the meeting, he appeared to be on first name terms with a few activists.*

*I later discovered that Eddie was from Kildare, a student of NUI Maynooth, and like myself was relatively new to the group. He explained that he was new to social activism, and not connected to any political party, although he stated that he was involved in the 'Connolly Youth Movement' in the past. During our discussions, Eddie emphasised the need for local and community initiatives, and the importance of local people having a say in what goes on in their area. "Focusing on the needs of residents and the community", Eddie explains, "is important, as there is a need to challenge events which are organised locally purely for business self-interest but which are being marketed and organised for residents and the community."*

*He advised me that, he has always had a keen interest in politics and reading and through personal contacts he made through 'Left' reading groups and events decided to get involved with the People's Movement.*

*"A lot of other groups went for headline sensational statements whereas the People's Movement was unique, insofar as it went into depth on the issues, without taking a hard Left*

*or republican stance. I believe this comes from the fact that it has a broad base and represents different viewpoints.” Eddie also elaborated on how the People’s Movement was different from other groups as it was the only group which had EU developments as its main focus.*

*While this was my first meeting with Eddie, he tells me that he was actually involved with the People’s Movement since March 2008. He discussed three main issues which he felt very strongly about and which attracted him to the People’s Movement: “Democracy, the development of the European Union as a federal super state and the protection of the Irish Constitution.”*

*For Eddie, the European Union represented competition rather than co-operation. While he emphasised the protection of the Irish Constitution and Irish democracy, he was also quite critical of the Irish state. On the one hand, he sees trade with other European countries as important for Ireland. On the other hand, he is highly critical of the state for transferring sovereignty to the EU in critical areas such as monetary policy, a road he notes that Britain is fortunate not to have gone down.*

*“I would have criticisms of the Irish state as a lot of my views are socialist, but I’m not anti-European. To me the terms ‘anti-EU’ and ‘anti-European’ are buzzwords which are used to divide people and detract from the real issues.” He goes on to add, “I would not consider myself an anarchist. I would not be extreme Left but I do have revolutionary views, insofar as I believe we do need an overhaul and a complete change, the opposite of what is being done now.” Notwithstanding this, I was surprised when Eddie went on to say that he still believes in the state system. He adds, “I don’t believe that human evolution has reached the stage where some form of a state system is not required to afford protection to members of our society. I think Ireland is too small a nation to look at regional governance but powers could be devolved so that more local democracy could be brought in ... within an overall state structure.”*

*Despite being a small organisation, Eddie does feel that the People's Movement do make a difference. He feels that there is a good direction from key individuals within the group and there is a good focus on certain issues. The small number of volunteers and activists and the limited availability of financial resources are not issues that concern Eddie, and he simply remarks that "this is an issue for all social movement organisations and political groups". During the campaign, Eddie was instrumental with Mark, a fellow activist, in setting up the north Kildare branch of the movement. He chaired and organised local meetings, and undertook postering and leafleting. Since the Lisbon Treaty campaign, Eddie continues to remain socially active but his work with the People's Movement group has diminished. He is focusing on other activist struggles which are organised by the Communist Party and the 'Repudiate the Debt Campaign' in which Eddie holds the role of Secretary.*

## ***Chapter 8            Civil Society and the Irish Political Landscape***

The groups campaigning against the Treaty of Lisbon in 2008 and 2009 did not differ significantly from those who campaigned against the Treaty of Nice only seven years earlier (O'Mahony 2001). The 'Yes' groups comprise the leading political parties, corporate and business interests and a number of 'civil society' groups, whose independence was repeatedly questioned by activists. I will look closer at these 'civil society groups' later. Business support for the Treaty came from independent multinational corporations and also from a number of business alliances and business lobby groups, such as The Irish Business and Employer's Confederation (IBEC), Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Chambers Ireland, IDA Ireland, Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland, Irish Hotels Federation and Small Firms Association. A 'Yes' vote in the Treaty was also advocated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). The main political parties advocating a 'Yes' vote were Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Progressive Democrats. The 'No' groups comprised social movement organizations such as The Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA), COIR, The People's Movement, Irish Anti-War Movement, AFRI, CAEUC, National Platform EU Research and Information Centre, and the Workers Solidarity Movement. Political groups and parties who campaigned for a 'No' Vote included Sinn Féin (SF), Republican Sinn Féin, Irish Republican Socialist Party, Eirigi, The Worker's Party (WP), Communist Party of Ireland, Libertas' and a number of other socialist groups, such as Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party and People Before Profit.<sup>32</sup> One of the main differences between the Nice Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty was the absence of the Green Party in the 'No' camp. Since the Green Party had joined the government in a ruling coalition they chose not to adopt a formal position on the Treaty of Lisbon, a clear sign to many activists that participation in government had a direct influence on the 'softening' of its position.

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<sup>32</sup> This is not a comprehensive list of all Yes and No groups who campaigned for and against the Treaty of Lisbon. There were a number of smaller organisations and community/regional groups who independently would have taken a position on the Treaty but are not listed here.

I have made brief references to ‘Coir’ and ‘Libertas’ earlier in this paper, as they are two groups who opposed the Lisbon Treaty but they are not positioned on the political Left. ‘Coir’ was considered to be a conservative group and their criticisms against the EU had a strong grounding in religious concerns. The group was led by pro-life campaigner Richard Greene, and the group were said to represent a rebranding or amalgamation of the former ‘Youth Defence’ party which campaigned on pro-life matters and family Catholic values. Libertas, on the other hand, styled themselves as a new middle class political party, and were fronted by well-spoken business man Declan Ganley. They appeared at the time to offer a viable alternative to voters who were unhappy and disillusioned with mainstream politics. Both groups appeared well financed and professionally managed, particularly Libertas, who at the time, held aspirations of branching into European politics. Media attention was very strong on these groups and their campaigns were no doubt seen as a potential threat. Politicians and the media were therefore quick to target such groups for criticism. Libertas leader Declan Ganley was a continual victim of such character assassination from all corners of the political spectrum and media. He was forced to answer repeated questions on the group’s funding sources and his own personal business connections. While activists did share these concerns, certain activists felt that that the vilification of these groups in the media was a political strategy to distract the public from the real content in the Treaty which was not being discussed. Other activists felt that despite their well-funded campaigns, groups such as Libertas and Coir portrayed the overall ‘No’ campaign in a negative light. Despite this, activists accept, sometimes reluctantly, that the efforts of these groups contributed to the overall success of the first Lisbon referendum outcome. Certain activists contend that the entry of Libertas into the campaign, and the corresponding media attention they received, had made it more difficult for groups on the ‘Left’ to attract media attention and communicate their message.

### **Irish Politics**

Within this section, I would like to provide an account of the main political actors who dominate Irish political life and have played critical roles in EU referenda. I mentioned above that there were a number of ‘civil society’ groups campaigning for a ‘Yes’ vote

during the referendum campaign. I will discuss these groups and ‘civil society’ later in this thesis. Despite political party rhetoric from the ‘Yes’ campaign around ‘unity’ and ‘co-operation’ among European member states, I argue that each party understands and interprets the concept of ‘Europe’ largely within self-interest and national terms. This of course raises the critical question. Is the European Union today expected to be anything more than a union of rational self-interested nation states? If not, then the Irish government’s position is synonymous with the original logic behind the creation of the European Economic Community which according to Millward (1984) was the autonomous calculation of nation states that their prosperity and domestic legitimacy would be further enhanced by a customs union. I contend that after the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, with the introduction of an even more enhanced political and economic union, the European Union has ‘in principle’ sought to reposition itself and move beyond the nation state concept. Over the past two decades there has been a concerted focus by EU leaders to ‘rebrand’ Europe, not merely as a unified political entity, but also as a unified socio-cultural region. In this respect EU Leaders have engaged in a deliberate attempt to construct concepts such as a European culture and European identity. Such cultures and identities are therefore being constructed within European frames rather than within nation state contexts. Notwithstanding this, discourse from the political establishment and ‘pro-treaty’ groups during referenda campaigns is couched in ‘nationalistic’ and ‘self-interest’ terms, while at the same time advocating closer and deeper integration into a European model.

Fianna Fáil conceive Europe largely in terms of what it can offer Ireland. ‘Europe’ as a community of states is rarely considered beyond national boundaries. National self-interest is a priority and is framed largely in terms of how the EU can facilitate economic success for Ireland (Hayward & Fallon 2009:492). While the party may like to see itself as Pro-European, we can see that such ‘Europeanism’ is conditional and the values of ‘Europe’ take second place to what the party elite believe to be in the national interest. Studies of the Fianna Fáil Party have also revealed a lack of grassroots support for Europe, but more particularly, it has been shown that there is a strong willingness among grassroots members to blindly accept the direction of the party elite in decisions on further European integration (Hayward & Fallon 2009:506). Support for greater European political and economic unity

appears therefore to be an agenda which is driven from the top down and is largely driven and supported by the party elite. This is common not only in Fianna Fáil, as studies have also revealed similar findings in Fine Gael (Reidy 2009). While Fine Gael are generally regarded to be the most pro-European party of all the Irish political parties, commentators note that, like Fianna Fáil, this pro Europeaness is largely driven by the party elite and is not necessarily evident among grassroots members (Reidy 2009: 512).

The Irish Labour Party and the Green Party are probably the two most significant political parties in Ireland who have fundamentally shifted their positions on where they stand on the European project. Indeed, several ‘disillusioned’ members of both of these parties have broken rank and have publically challenged EU reform treaties. The fact that the Irish Labour Party adopted a ‘party’ position, ultimately made it more difficult for elected officials and representatives within the Irish Labour Party to visibly oppose the Treaty and go against the party line. Notwithstanding this, it is worth noting that some activists on the political Left who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty were former Labour Party and Green Party members, supporters, and voters. While the main political party positions on the Lisbon Treaty came as no surprise to People’s Movement activists, a general disappointment was expressed with Labour and Green Party positions. Disappointment was expressed by activists as these parties, historically, espoused rhetoric which at times resonated with, and appealed to, activists’ beliefs. In much the same vein, many activists felt let down by leading trade union groups in Ireland and were seen by activists to have ‘compromised’ their positions by coming out in favour of the Lisbon Treaty with the main political parties. When one considers the history of the Green, Labour and trade unionist movements in Ireland, one can understand activists disillusionment and in many respects ‘abandonment’ by groups and parties which have turned to established politics. Indeed throughout the twentieth century, there have been several global and national movements which have gained success, such as worker/socialist movements, the women’s movements, and ethnic/nationalist movements. None of these movements, according to Wallerstein (2004) “had achieved their subsequent objective, using their control of the states to transform societies” (Wallerstein 2004:73). The Irish Labour Party are considered to have undergone substantial ‘Europeanisation’ over the past number of decades, from a position of opposing entry to the

EU in 1972, to acceptance thereafter, to eventually advocating full support. The party has at times been divided on certain issues relating to further European integration. What is particularly noteworthy is the fact that significant proportions of grassroots members of the Irish Labour Party continue to vote 'No' in referenda on further EU Integration when compared to other pro-EU parties (Holmes 2009:534). The Green Party, it would appear, are now accepting the same fate which faced the Labour party in the 1970s, that is, choosing to accept the EU project and offer its support to ensure its own party domestic electoral success and guard against the risk of marginalization. Participation within government has clearly compromised both the Green Party (Bolleyer & Panke 2009:544), and also the Irish Labour Party (Holmes 2009:534), and both parties are seen to have adopted more pro-EU integrationist approaches when domestic political opportunities were available. It appears that political self-interest influenced party political determinations on EU reform treaties.

Aside from the smaller political groupings in Ireland who continue to oppose further EU reform treaties including the Treaty of Lisbon, Sinn Féin remains the only significant political party, to have opposed the Lisbon Treaty. Maillot (2009:559), however, does note that Sinn Féin has been partially Europeanised in that they now occupy a 'critical' EU space rather than complete opposition. While it was noted above that Fianna Fáil adopt a 'pro-EU' stance in order to achieve an 'economic benefit' which is in the national interest, Sinn Féin similarly adopt 'national' issues when campaigning against further EU integration in terms of a 'loss of sovereignty'. Both parties, to a certain degree, use national self-interest in their campaigns, but frame their discourse within contrasting terms. Sinn Féin had historically adopted a 'traditionalist' approach, using Irish nationalist rhetoric to oppose EU integration. In later years, it has been observed that Sinn Féin have moved to a more critical stance of the EU by engaging on a wider range of issues but clearly affirming its left-wing approach to distance itself clearly from other established political parties. (Maillot 2009:566)

Notwithstanding the varying degrees of 'Europeanisation' of the broad spectrum of Irish political parties, it is worth noting that this term is not in itself correct. 'Europeanisation' in this context means a willingness to either support or engage with the European Union. I have already outlined in Part I of this thesis, how meaning is applied to such terms. The

Green Party, despite its staunch anti-EU integrationist position is paradoxically the only party with any real and credible European founding. It is to a large extent an ‘organic’ European creation. Its growth since its formation in 1981 was based largely on its network of autonomous green and ecological groups within pan-European networks with emphasis on environmental issues which transcended national domestic politics (Bolleyer & Panke 2009:545). Ironically, one could argue that rather than becoming ‘Europeanised’, the Green Party in Ireland have in reality become ‘domesticated’ in order to gain success at local electoral level and through participation in government in national politics. Hines (2003) provides an excellent account of how the Greens throughout Europe have become mainstreamed and more professionally organized which he equates with becoming ‘Europeanised’. Research also illustrates how policy, in areas such as militarization and neutrality, has also been modified and has undergone ‘Europeanisation’. Political parties have redefined Irish ‘neutrality’ to suit their own political agendas (including complete reversal on policy issues) at strategic times depending on whether they hold office in government, negotiating within the EU Council, or in opposition (Devine 2009). This is in many ways similar to my discussion later on ‘civil society’, where I illustrate how NGOs and civil society actors have in some cases been ‘co-opted’ and institutionalised within state structures. For activists, the revelations of Devine’s work are not ground-breaking and for activists campaigning against greater EU militarization, the Lisbon Treaty in its historical setting was clearly seen as yet another gradual erosion of Irish neutrality.

Interestingly, Kenneth Benoit (2009) in his analysis on Irish political party stances on European integration illustrates how data clearly points to a rise in the prominence of Europe as a topic in party platforms, from only scant attention historically to high prominence from 1989 onwards. Benoit also notes that Sinn Féin and the Green Party, although Eurosceptic on the dimension of EU authority, are actually ranked as quite ‘pro-European’ in terms of making the EU more accountable and democratic for its citizens (Benoit 2009:455). I would agree with the findings of Benoit and would argue that several other groups who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty, including the People’s Movement, could also be seen as quite ‘internationalist’ in their outlook. While this contention may appear paradoxical, it is based on activists having a broad, external and ‘internationalist’ outlook rather than an

inward ‘nationalistic’ and self-interested approach. Indeed some activists from groups who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty, favoured a pan-European single election from all twenty seven member states which I believe is a clear example of how such groups wished to promote greater ‘European’ democracy and accountability. In Chapter 9, I elaborate further on this discussion of European identity. I further illustrate how discourse and meaning was applied by ‘Yes’ campaign groups during the Lisbon Treaty to re-appropriate meanings of being ‘European’ to signify positive associations with a ‘Yes’ vote for the Treaty.

### **Civil Society – Independence & Co-option**

I discussed earlier the main political parties in Irish politics. While social movement organisations such as the People’s Movement, compete with political parties for media attention during referendum campaigns, they also engage with such parties and attempt to challenge political discourse and meaning. I will look at such discourse and meaning in more detail later. First however, I wish to focus on a number of other social actors on the political field during the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. These social actors are commonly referred to as ‘civil society’ actors but who exactly are these groups and for whom do they speak? Let us first take a look at what civil society is and how it is understood.

Modern ‘civil society’ is essentially regarded as an area operating outside of state control where new forms of association and organization are founded on social, economic, cultural and ethical arrangements. Civil Society is a ‘rediscovered’ space where self-organisation operates outside politics and where autonomous individuals participate in society (Kiely 2005:198). Civil society is considered to be independent of political and commercial interests and is made up of voluntary civic and social organisations (Murphy 2009, Daly 2007, Crotty 1998). It is a space where issues are contested in a vacuum left by the retreat of the state (Marden 1997:48, Kiely 2005). In other words, the presence of a strong civil society’ is seen as a sign of a healthy community and one which is guided by a strong moral and social compass (O’Broin & Kirby 2009). The retreat of the state is noted to have gone

hand-in-hand with a direct policy of neoliberal economic reform. As the state has retreated from public ownership and protectionism towards a policy of deregulation and privatisation (i.e. free markets), the state has also retreated in the provision of adequate social care and welfare. This has created a vacuum for welfare, service and social care to emerge from civil society actors, such as community groups, NGOs and social movement organisations (Edelman 2005:37).

In addition to the expectation that 'civil society' actors are independent, Murphy (2009:35) goes further and argues that Irish civil society should also be acting as a social challenger, pressuring the state in a 'conflict relationship' to ensure that the state responds to protect social well-being. The reality is far from the truth however. Several leading Irish social scientists are keen to illustrate not merely the lack of independence of 'civil society' actors, but their 'co-option' by the State through 'social partnership' (O'Broin & Kirby 2009:24, Murphy 2009). Marx and Gramsci (See Kiely 2005:197) both saw the emergence of 'Civil Society' as one which contained 'vested interests' which could then be used to subordinate classes, and persuade others that the system was effective and that no alternative existed. In other words, 'civil society' was part of the state structure itself. Social partnership is considered to be the tool which is used by the state to achieve hegemonic power (Murphy 2009:38, Geoghegan & Powell 2009). Activists on the political Left in Ireland including those in the People's Movement tend to share these criticisms. The co-option of civil society through the social partnership programme, in turn, has led to marginalisation and depoliticisation by limiting the dissent of such groups on national and local issues (Esteves, Motta & Cox 2009:1). Irish civil society groups and lobbyists campaign against the state through transnational civil Society and NGO networks who, in turn, challenge the EU at global level. They are in effect mobilising against the Irish state but outside of its borders. Of course, the participation of such groups in these forms of action has been claimed to be a direct result of their co-option into the institutional process since their ongoing legitimacy and funding will dissolve if they situate their struggle outside these politically defined boundaries. In other words, they conduct their struggle within acceptable and defined boundaries. This essentially challenges our views on who actually constitutes 'civil society'. In a great deal of cases it will be organized by forces opposed to the state and the market.

Notwithstanding this, social activism in the form of ‘civil society’ can ultimately be used as a vehicle through which the state itself can operate through discourse (Bowie 2005). As the state has actively funded such groups, their financial dependency has “reduced their autonomy and independence of action” (O’Broin 2009:123). The state has essentially transformed the community sector “into a service delivery-oriented system” and has “engaged in a process of bureaucratising potential vehicles for dissent”. (O’Broin 2009:123, Murphy 2009:45, Harvey 2009:29). Meade (2005) argues that such sectors should now “experiment with more confrontational forms of political expression”, and although this may be costly in the short term and result in some marginalisation, she argues that “it is clear that sticking with Ireland’s cosy consensus is proving to be a demoralising experience” (2005:351).

Discussing the 2008 Lisbon Treaty referendum, Murphy (2009:47) argues that none of the active ‘civil society’ campaigning groups had a structured relationship with the state in terms of funding. In other words, Murphy surmises that no ‘civil society’ group “dependent on state funding felt able to participate directly in the campaign” for fear that their position may impact that very funding. Legitimate civil society groups, therefore, have effectively been depoliticised and silenced. While my ethnographic research did not extend into documenting the voting tendencies of ‘civil society’ groups, I did find a particular leaning towards a ‘No’ vote evident among volunteers from legitimate civil society sectors and NGOs, particularly those working on global issues such as debt, development and human rights. I contend that such NGO campaigners and People’s Movement activists have much in common. This may be a result of both actors identifying the EU as a dominant and hegemonic trading bloc and thereby using this position on the world stage to the detriment of developing nations. Many People’s Movement activists share NGO concerns that many nations of the global south, while free politically, are essentially operating under a form of ‘economic colonialism’ in the form of market liberalisation at the behest of EU and U.S corporations.

Activists contend that ‘civil society’ groups who campaigned for a ‘Yes’ vote during the Lisbon Treaty referendum were illegitimate civil society actors and in reality were

established fronts for business interests with direct links to business lobby groups, such as IBEC. There were also discussions among activists that smaller non-business groups, that is, genuine civil society actors, may have been co-opted at the final stages of the campaign for the vote on the Lisbon Treaty. There was a feeling among activists that certain groups, such as ‘animal rights’ campaigners, may have been compromised based on political promises to address their concern, that is, there was a clear government strategy to quell dissent from certain groups. While it is very difficult to conclusively establish these links and claims, such discussions took place among activists on the ground. Hardiman (1998) notes the powerful influence that business interests and the business lobbyists have on government policy which is not necessarily aimed at reducing social inequality (1998:134). It is this power and influence of the Irish business community which activists believe was directly responsible for the establishment of groups, which have come to be referred to as ‘civil society’. While I referred earlier to co-option, the very creation of groups by business interests (or by individuals so closely related to business interests) certainly diminishes their independence and calls into question who these ‘civil society’ groups’ interests were promoting. In fact, activists question defining these groups as ‘civil society’ actors as their business links are so blatantly clear. I make reference to these ‘civil society’ groups as their impact on the political field in Ireland in the few months leading up to October 2009 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> vote on the Lisbon Treaty was considerable. They not only had a high profile and visible presence but they also applied a notable form of discourse in order to construct ‘meaning’ in the minds of public voters. The absence of political parties campaigning on the streets was also quite noticeable. Activists saw the retreat of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour from the traditional space occupied by politicians, and this void or vacuum was filled by corporate advertising and business groups, under the guise of ‘civil society’. I acknowledge that it may appear somewhat ‘biased’ to focus on particular ‘civil society’ groups, however my intention is to illustrate how ‘astroturfing’<sup>33</sup> is repeatedly applied during Irish referenda campaigns. Activists regard these ‘civil society’ actors as a ‘movement from above’, operating under the direction of business and political interests and applying ‘social discourse’ designed to promote business and free market interests. Indeed many of these so

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<sup>33</sup> The term ‘Astroturfing’ refers to the use of various tactics to create the perception of a grassroots movement or opinion. (See <http://www.campaignsandelections.com/print/175112/astroturfing-is-campaigning.shtml>)

called ‘civil society’ groups make clear references to their alleged ‘independence’. People’s Movement activists point to the fact that so many ‘civil society’ groups emerged from out of nowhere in the few months preceding the vote and have sunk back into the woodwork, never to be heard of since.

### **‘Civil Society’ Actors**

The 2008 Lisbon Campaign was dominated by one main ‘civil society’ group, Alliance for Europe. This group was chaired by former Labour leader Ruairí Quinn. The group was reported to be ‘independent’ and included members from a variety of backgrounds: business people, lawyers, trade unionists, academics, farmers and students. The group was dominated by the thirty four member organisations of its business "pillar", the Business Alliance for Europe. This business alliance included the Irish Business and Employer’s Confederation (IBEC), American Chamber of Commerce, Irish Taxation Institute, the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish Banking Federation, Small Firms Association and the Irish Exporters Association. Former President of the European Parliament Pat Cox and former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald participated with the Alliance for Europe call for a ‘Yes’ Vote. The key individuals and business interests re-grouped under a new name for the 2009 2<sup>nd</sup> ‘Lisbon Treaty’ under the name ‘Business for Europe’.

In April 2009, a group called ‘Generation Yes’ announced their entry into the Lisbon Campaign. This group framed itself as a youthful organization of 18-30 year olds who wished to promote the positives about Europe. The founders of the group however, have direct links to political parties and key positions in other allegedly independent ‘civil society’ groups.<sup>34</sup> Other individuals in the group with key positions appear to be well educated, and have past experience working for NGOs and political parties. Surprisingly, for a group which seems proud to claim its independence, the group’s launch took place at IBEC headquarters in Dublin and indeed further events were held in IBEC’s office for

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<sup>34</sup> Generation Yes founder Andrew Byrne was also Chief of Operations at ‘Ireland for Europe’. He is former Trinity College Students Union President and a Green Party member. Hazel Nolan, (UCC student) and a member of the Labour Party, was involved with the Alliance for Europe 2008 campaign.

people to come along and, according to the group website, “get involved” to “secure Ireland’s future”

‘Ireland for Europe’ is a group which was launched in June 2009. Activists were particularly sceptical about this group and its independence. Not only did its key personnel have links to senior positions in the EU and the Irish political elite, but other individuals within it had clear business connections and links to the Institute for International and European Affairs (IIEA)) and Ireland’s State television channel and radio broadcaster (Phoenix 2009).<sup>35</sup>

‘We Belong’ was another organization to emerge advocating a ‘Yes’ vote. It is difficult to find background information on individuals behind this ‘civil society’ organisation but the group appeared very professional and the individuals involved with the campaign appeared to be ex-students of EU Law or European Affairs. According to the Sunday Times (Lyons & Coyle 2009), ‘We Belong’ was in fact registered as a political organization. It is also reported that Director Olivia Buckley was Director of Communications with the Fianna Fáil party under Bertie Ahern from 2003-2007 and her family continue to have strong links to the leadership of the Fianna Fáil party (Phoenix 2009a). Olivia is also a former executive with Murray Consultants, a firm that surprisingly enough includes the Referendum Commission as one of its clients. ‘No’ campaigners argue that such strong political and business links clearly delegitimize the claimed independence of this ‘civil society’ group. The support the group received from business sectors was quite clear. Bill Cullen, ex-Head of Renault Ireland, supported the campaign and so too did Glenisk, an organic dairy Company which appeared to have a very strong connection to the group.

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<sup>35</sup> Ireland for Europe: Director Pat Cox is Former President of European Parliament) and company advisor. He was also president of International European Movement. Chairperson Brigid Laffan is a Professor in UCD and executive committee member of Institute for International and European Affairs. Campaign Co-ordinator Brendan Halligan is Director of Institute for International and European Affairs, Economist, ex Labour Party member, ex MEP, ex –Chairman of European Movement. Mr. Halligan is and has been a director of a number of high profile companies in Ireland. Andrew Byrne was Chief of Operations and was also connected with ‘Generation Yes’ referred to earlier. Caroline Erskine was Communications Director and former political correspondent and news and current affairs presenter/reporter with RTE. From 2002 until May 2009 she was Communications and Media Relations consultant with the National Forum on Europe. Declan McSweeney (Treasurer) is ex KPMG and a former banker and was Chief Financial Officer with AIB from 1997 to 2005. Iain Bennett (Accountant) is also ex KPMG, and is a former property investor, banker and consultant.

The ‘Charter Group’ was another ‘Yes’ group which launched in August 2009. This group was specifically organized as a pro-Lisbon Treaty group of trade unionists<sup>36</sup>.

‘Business for Europe’ was launched in August 2009 and was an alliance of business and professional groups calling for a ‘Yes’ vote. This group mirrored the Business Alliance group which was active for during the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign. Business for Europe aligned itself with the Ireland for Europe campaign led by the former president of the European Parliament, Pat Cox (Collins 2009).

‘Women for Europe’ was launched in the months leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> vote on the Lisbon Treaty to apparently highlight and promote the benefits of EU membership to Irish women. While the individuals chairing this group did have links to established sectoral NGOs, the founders had clear connections to the legal and business profession as well as strong links to Irish political parties.<sup>37</sup> Indeed the group’s Chairperson Olive Braiden was a former MEP candidate in 1994 for Fianna Fáil. Activists are also keen to point out the fact that the registered office of this group is 84-86 Baggot St, Dublin which is the headquarters of the Irish Business and Employer’s Confederation (IBEC). Other groups supporting the Lisbon Treaty, such as The European Movement, who claim to be an independent and voluntary group, clearly have links to the Irish and EU political elite, as well as having a number of former CEO’s of multinational corporations on its managing board.

The above list of groups is by no means comprehensive, but I have made references to them here to highlight two issues. Firstly, I wish to illustrate how the term ‘civil society’ has become blurred in modern Ireland, and secondly, to illustrate the questionable independence

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<sup>36</sup> The Charter Group Chairman was ex Siptu President, Des Geraghty. The Vice Chairs included Senator, Ivana Bacik, General Secretary, Impact, Peter McLoone, General Secretary, Communications Workers’ Union, Steve Fitzpatrick and Director of Social Policy, Irish Nurses Organisation, Clare Tracey. General Secretary of the CPSU, Blair Horan is the Secretary of the group.

<sup>37</sup> Women for Europe: The group’s Chairperson Olive Braiden (prominent in the NGO sector in areas of Women’s rights). The group was co-founded by Niamh O’Donnell & Michelle Keating O’Donnell. Other individuals involved with campaign include Barrister Billie Sparks (Campaign Co-ordinator), Barrister and Collette Douglas (Team Leader) Co-founder of Progressive Democrats. Sally O’Neill, Michelle Mahon, & Paula Cooney.

of some of these groups. Activists throughout the campaign were often frustrated by the apparent lack of independence of these groups and their alleged business connections. This frustration was compounded by the simultaneous reporting in the Irish press and broadcast media of new launches of ‘civil’ initiatives, which created the impression amongst the public that these groups were grassroots movements by the people and communities. Activists claim that in reality these groups were set up at the behest of corporate interests with the support of individuals who had strong political connections. The ability of the state and sectional business interests to ‘label’ such organizations as ‘civil society’ is one of the most remarkable and uninvestigated features of the Lisbon campaign. In a similar vein to studies undertaken by Garsten & Jacobsson (2007) it effectively silences potential conflicts of interest and draws a veil across the real relationships of power and vested interests (2007:150). The lack of independent investigation into the business and corporate aspects of these groups is perhaps representative of a biased media who were complicit in branding such groups as products of civil society. A clear overlap of membership with former organizations and groups was also evident. The Institute of Ireland for European Affairs (IIEA) claims to be a “registered independent charity ... independent of all political, economic and social interests”<sup>38</sup> but yet several high profile individuals from the political and business establishment are honorary members and sit on its executive committee. Several of these individuals have direct relationships with some of the civil society groups stated earlier. Activists from other groups on the ‘Left’ campaigning against the Lisbon Treaty have also pointed out the lack of independence of these groups and the clear connection between the directors/members of such groups and multinational corporations, high level EU political office and global financial institutions.

One key differentiating feature between certain ‘No’ and ‘Yes’ groups was the clear professionalism of the ‘Yes’ campaign. This was noted by People’s Movement activists such as Richard who observes “It was all a marketing campaign to paint all these groups and all these people on the ‘Yes’ side as civil society”. Richard also notes that you are deemed to be a ‘civil society’ group if you are on the right side, whereas the government do not deem groups such as the People’s Movement a civil society group. On the streets of Dublin in the

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.iiea.com/governance> (Last accessed 27.10.2013)

weeks leading up to the October referendum in 2009, a neutral bystander or an ‘undecided’ voter was greeted by a ‘Yes’ campaign which appeared professionally organised, managed and marketed<sup>39</sup>. Their message was positive, youthful and ‘progressive’. ‘Messages’ are created and framed with the media in mind. They produce meanings. Advertising and communicating a positive message and image was key to the group’s success. In addition to being well financed, ‘Yes’ groups also appeared very well structured with a clear division of labour, with strong business and political support. These groups appeared to be managed in a ‘business’ fashion and individuals within these groups had clearly defined roles such as Communications Director, Project Manager, Campaigns Co-ordinator etcetera. The People’s Movements campaign was not managed in such a professional manner. This was not due to a lack of commitment from activist members, but the group were restricted to a certain financial spend on the campaign due to the scarcity of resources. This therefore had an impact on what materials the organisation could produce and how its campaign was managed. People’s Movement activist, Paula argues that civil society should not include church and business interests and was frustrated how groups such as ISME and IBEC are almost treated as an extension of the state and are provided with considerable amounts of airtime in Irish media. Paula also stated that, while she feels these groups may have genuine and sincere individuals working with them, she feels that such individuals are either misled or uneducated. She notes that small businesses have been brought on board with big business interests to support EU referenda “because they are led to believe they can make a difference”. She further argues, that “like the rest of the public, small business owners are really being ‘suckered’ in and this is not really in their interests”.

An important element of the success of ‘civil society’ groups who advocated a ‘Yes’ vote, was their ability to attract high profile names from business, music, entertainment and sport. ‘Ireland for Europe’ adopted patrons from the music and sports industry<sup>40</sup> and ‘We Belong’ ran a very high profile campaign and staged publicity events which were supported by quite

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<sup>39</sup> See also Gamson (1988) in his discussion on professional organisations and the use of public relations experts to manage campaigns, draft communications and speeches and prepare adverts and pamphlets.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Ireland for Europe’ patrons included Seamus Heaney, ‘The Edge’ of U2 and Paul McGuinness, U2’s manager; Robbie Keane, footballer, Harry Crosbie, the owner of the Point Depot (now named the ‘O2’) and Peter Sutherland, the chairman of BP. (McInerney 2009).

a number of sportspeople and entertainers.<sup>41</sup> EU Commissioner, Margot Wallstrom, on her visit to Ireland also campaigned and shared platforms with the group to advocate a ‘Yes’ vote. In many respects the use of well-known personalities to support the campaigns of ‘civil society’ groups is quite similar to the People’s Movement ‘patronage’ system I referred to earlier. It provided the group with much needed social and cultural capital. People’s Movement activists contend that the ability of the ‘Yes’ campaign to attract such high profile names in support of the Treaty deflected attention from business funding and corporate and political linkages. Support from well-known personalities enabled these groups to ‘appear’ as grassroots movements ‘of’ the people. Photo-shoots and publicity acts were often masked as charitable ‘civil society’ action which disguised the political nature of the events.

### **Independent ‘Civil Society’ and Social Activism.**

I made reference earlier to how certain activists in NGOs and civil society sectors have become ‘institutionalised’ through co-option. This in turn has reshaped their discourse through more centralized language and has resulted in them becoming domesticated within a more accepting state structure within neoliberal governance (Esteva, Motta & Cox 2009:2). It is contended that this division within movements and societies, that is, between NGOs, civil society actors and left wing social activists, has created a deeper cleavage. On the one hand, there are actors who are shifting closer to the centre and on the other hand, there are those who are moving further into the periphery. This, in turn, has been a catalyst of more ‘radical’ bottom up strategies based on local autonomy and anarchy. This was also expressed in interviews with activists in the People’s Movement, who post-Lisbon saw themselves pushed further to the periphery and left with greater disillusionment and frustration with the

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<sup>41</sup> ‘We Belong’ teamed up with a host of sports stars outside Croke Park on All Ireland Final Day and asked match goers to ‘*tog out*’ for Lisbon when they go to the polls in October 2009. Among the ‘stars’ canvassing were Dublin Footballers Bernard Brogan, Bernard Brogan Jr, Alan Brogan, Jason Sherlock, Ross McConnell and Barry Cahill; Irish rugby stars Malcolm O’Kelly and Shane Byrne, former rugby international Hugo MacNeill, Olympian and Irish flag bearer at the Beijing Olympics Ciara Peelo as well as Pat Hickey, President of the Irish Olympic Committee. ‘We Belong’ also managed to get Ireland’s soccer manager Giovanni Trapattoni on the campaign for a Yes Vote. Other personalities to back the campaign included Kilkenny Hurling Mgr Brian Cody, Packie Bonner (former Irish Goalkeeper), Eimer Quinn (former Eurovision winner), Mary McEvoy (Irish actress), Frankie Gavin (Irish traditional musician from DeDannan), Mick Galway (Irish rugby legend), and Pat Gilroy (Dublin Football Mgr).

state and society. Indeed, the political disenfranchisement of activists has also been a factor in activist disengagement from mobilisation and campaigns organised by the People's Movement.

I support the view of Esteves, Motta and Cox (2009) who note that such phrases as 'civil society', 'social movements', and 'non-governmental organisations' do not have any "single simple meaning" and they are "massively inflected by their national and regional context"(2009:4). One needs to assess the meaning afforded to the term 'civil society' before it can be applied in any real sense. The co-opting of 'movements' and 'civil society' and their political capital is nothing new. In both Canada and the U.S there is a long history of such strategic action (Esteves. Motta & Cox 2009:17).

My own personal experience during the campaign, from speaking to certain NGO volunteers involved in debt and development issues and also animal welfare groups, was that such actors clearly opposed the Treaty. 'Civil society', however, does not appear to be a term appropriated to these actors and social movement organisations who advocate against EU reform treaties. Activists contend that 'civil society' should exist as a realm between the public and the State. It should exist as the political space created within societal structure to allow public representation for civil concerns and is representative of the public attitude. While Esteves et al (2009) note that there is no single simple meaning afforded to the term 'civil society', within an Irish context the view that civil society should exist in a space independent of the state is generally the accepted meaning afforded to the term, both by academics, the public, the media and indeed by activists themselves. The interpretation of the term in this respect is similar to the arguments put forward by Murphy (2009) and O'Broin & Kirby (2009) discussed earlier.

While the meaning and interpretation of the term has met with general acceptance, I contend however that the application of the term 'civil society' has become skewed and misappropriated. In many instances, this has been done to fit within defined meanings according to the state and sectional interests. In many instances, voices within society can either be deemed legitimate or valid 'civil society' concerns. In determining such validity,

astroturfing, which I discussed earlier, plays a significant role. It is the creation of the perception that certain campaigns are grassroots non-political action which enables the state and the media to define who does and who does not represent 'civil society'. The People's Movement campaign against the Lisbon Treaty was not defined as 'civil society' action. Media discourse and language used to portray pro-Lisbon groups as 'civil society' is a redefinition of the term, with clear strategic political purposes. Melucci (1985:815) does not see social movement organizations and 'civil society' actors being one and the same. He recognizes that autonomous social movements are more independent and unlike civil society groups are not positioned in the structural framework of the state and its institutions. I would agree with this thesis. Pichardo (1997) also illustrates the 'reflexive' nature of new social movements, and although some have evolved into political parties, by and large such actors prefer to remain outside normal political channels. Social movement actors challenge the state whereas language and discourse applied to 'civil society' has shifted the concept of civil society away from conflict and into a field of "consensus based understanding" (Murphy 2009: 40). My own findings in my fieldwork support such views. It is argued that 'civil society' needs to challenge discourse by reclaiming language and concepts used by the state, and be financially independent (Murphy 2009:46, Cronin 2009).

## *Maurice*

*Maurice has been a regular attendee at People's Movement meetings since I first began my research with the group in 2008. While he engaged in discussions and debates during People's Movement meetings and events, I had assumed, incorrectly, that he was a recent member of the group and was new to activism. It was not until I asked him for an interview as part of my research that I realised that I was wrong to draw conclusions. We went for a coffee in a local Dublin hotel where Maurice first began by telling me about himself, and then explaining why he is a long-time activist against the European Union.*

*Maurice, now in his mid-50s and from Dublin, works part-time in the public service on a job sharing basis. He completed his third level studies in UCD with a Masters in Irish Studies and then went on to complete a PhD in Irish History. He is also an accomplished author with a number of published articles and books focusing on the Irish language and eighteenth century Irish History.*

*Although coming from a family which was not very political, Maurice has a long history in activism against the EU. He tells me that he has participated, in some manner, campaigning against all previous EU Treaty referenda, although his involvement has varied for each one, depending on his own work and commitments at the time. He states that he was involved in "doing groundwork" rather than being involved in planning and campaign strategies. Maurice states that, when he campaigned in the past, it was with Anthony Coughlan and the 'National Platform' organisation. During the campaign against the Nice Treaty, Maurice campaigned with a group called 'Democrats against Nice' which was organised by Fergus. Following this, he says "the natural progression then, was onto the People's Movement."*

*The importance of personal networks is evident as Maurice recalls that he first met Fergus many years ago when their paths crossed through involvement in either the 'Irish anti-apartheid movement' or the 'Resources Protection Campaign'. Interestingly, both are also*

*former members of the Worker's Party. Maurice also tells me that in later years he was involved with the Green Party and was active in campaigning for Patricia McKenna when she contested the European MEP elections.*

*When I asked Maurice why he was campaigning against the Lisbon Treaty, the question ideally should have been, why he was campaigning against the European Union. Maurice tells me that "if you don't like the destination then don't get on the train". He states that this is his "fundamental objection" as each treaty is "part of a process". Maurice explained that unlike other activists who provide a critique of the Treaty and study its text, he is opposed to the Treaty from the start as it further develops a project to which he fundamentally objects. "I know what these people who produced this document want to do, I don't like what they want to do, I don't want to go where they want to go, therefore, I am against whatever it is they are selling." Maurice also tells me that there is no EU constitutional treaty or document which could be produced by the EU which he would accept. As a long-time activist, he has struggled against the European Union at every referendum and has seen how the EU has developed since its inception to its current journey into a fully political and economic federal state. His steadfast opposition to the European Union was therefore clearly more evident than some of my other informants, particularly younger activists who had not experienced former campaigns.*

*Maurice's role in the organisation is largely the maintaining of the organisation's website. He manages IT aspects such as technical issues and the layout of the website, whereas the content is sourced by other activists. He also prepares the layout and finishing of the organisation's newsletter the 'People's News'.*

## **Kenneth**

*Kenneth is a native of Belfast and came to Dublin in the 1960s to study in Trinity College. He tells me he first got involved in politics in the 1960s when he co-founded the Trinity College Dublin Republican Club. This, he tells me, was part of a more general “attempt to formulate republican politics away from an undue emphasis on physical force”. After finishing his studies in History, English, Philosophy and Legal Science Kenneth returned to Belfast in the late 1960s during a difficult period in the history of the north of Ireland. Kenneth tells me that when he returned to Belfast in 1969 he co-produced a publication called ‘The Citizen’s Press’ which was produced regularly for several months and which Kenneth claims “had great influence behind the barricades ... it showed the power of what activism could achieve”.*

*Kenneth then became Organiser of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and held that position from 1969-1976. He was interned and on his release was active in civil disobedience campaigns against internment and was involved in the ‘rent and rates’ strike. His focus, he explains, was civil rights and democracy. He states that these were crucial in the northern context as they were two matters which could act as common ground which could reach across sectarian barriers and oppose the violence. In the late 1970s, Kenneth returned to Dublin, completed his legal degree and returned to the North as a practising solicitor. He and others set up the ‘Campaign for Democracy’ pressure group in in Belfast 1983. This, he explains, “was a group for both Protestant and Catholic to campaign on issues of democracy and civil liberties.”*

*After his children were raised and educated, they emigrated to Australia and Canada. Kenneth and his wife returned to Dublin before finally moving to Wexford, where he currently resides*

*Kenneth clearly has a long history in social activism and this is also evident from his involvement at People’s Movement meetings. Together with Fergus and Eamon, he is seen*

*by other activists as one of the core figures in the People's Movement group. While he currently does not live in Dublin and cannot commit to attending all meetings and events, he continues nevertheless to be one the key organisers of events and a key contributor to group discussions. His former experience in social activism is a benefit to the group. Kenneth tells me that he has always been involved with the campaigns against all previous EU treaties, including Ireland's initial entry to the EEC when he campaigned with Anthony Coughlan. Kenneth said he also campaigned with the late Raymond Crotty against former EU referenda.*

*In later years when Kenneth resided in Shankill in Dublin, he organised a group in Bray, Co. Wicklow to oppose the Nice Treaty in 2001. While this was a relatively small group, he tells me that he was familiar with other local groups which had been established around Dublin and the rest of the country. While not campaigning directly with Fergus and Eamon during this time, he knew both individuals from previous EU referenda campaigns and other social movement struggles. He acknowledges that the People's Movement today was essentially founded around a cluster of individuals and personal networks dating back to the 1970s, many of which date back to campaigns with Raymond Crotty and Anthony Coughlan. Notwithstanding his political activism, Kenneth states that he is not a 'political party' person. He believes that democracy "is a key issue because unless you have control over your own political and economic affairs you cannot implement either a conservative programme or a socialist programme. To that extent, broadly, that's why I am in the People's Movement and would always try and say we should not be identified with either Left or Right".*

## *Chapter 9            Discourse & Meaning*

I discussed ‘Meaning’ in Part I of this thesis and referred to how it needs to be both ‘signified’ and ‘interpreted’. The ‘framing’ of events, and the communication of symbols and language to create ‘meaning’, is expressed through communication channels. In an Irish political context such communication is largely expressed through political and business discourse. This, in turn, is represented and communicated by commercial and state media. The media in Ireland has a particularly important and influential role within Irish political and social life. Eurobarometer polls (Eurobarometer 2007, 2007a) reveal how the Irish electorate place a considerable (and above EU average) trust in broadcast media (television/radio). Indeed a Eurobarometer Report (Eurobarometer 2009), released only days after the referendum result in October 2009 supports these findings. The report revealed that the main sources of media for information on the referendum were television (65%), newspapers (48%) and radio (39%). It appears that access to these three key portals of communication is therefore imperative for a social movement organisation to convey its message to the public. In reality access to such sources has been at times very difficult for social movement actors and this is further compounded when an organization has a low number of activist members and low financial resources. Activists generally utilize internet/email/blogs and other electronic forms of communication to convey their message. They also focus on public participation at debates/local meetings. Both these forms of communication ranked low in terms of sources of public information on the referendum (13% and 9% respectively). The Eurobarometer poll also illustrates that the primary source of information for the public in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was the Irish Government (37%), followed closely by family and friends (34%), political parties (29%) and the Referendum Commission (24%). This is particularly interesting insofar as information and meaning is coming from sources directly associated with a ‘Yes’ vote. The importance of the media cannot be stressed enough during referendum campaigns. Activists know too well the power of the media both as a resource for mobilisation and a channel to communicate messages and meanings. Hobson (2003) notes that “the media is a crucial field in which

frames are transmitted, as well as a site where discursive contests take place over who and what is recognised” (2003:7). Rucht and Neidhardt (1999) state that events which are not covered by the media essentially do not exist for the national population. The ‘validity’ of events is raised when they are reported by the media (1999:77). There are two sides of the media coin. First of all, there are particular social actors who have easy access to media channels, such as the established political parties, ‘civil society’ groups, and business and corporate interests. On the other hand, there are social actors who struggle to attract media attention and in many ways must scramble and compete to attract such attention. Protest groups are essentially competing with each other for publicity and space. Media access for small social movement organisations is therefore a rare commodity. As a ‘rational actor’, protest groups need to develop their resources as best they can and therefore need publicity to compensate for other resource weaknesses (Hocke 1999).

Media reports are often biased, and the reporting of events often omits information, misrepresents the facts or makes reports based on limited data (McCarthy et al. 1999, George 2004:138). Print and electronic media have a bias to report only stories they consider relevant and other events will not get coverage unless they are deemed newsworthy (See Rucht & Neidhardt 1999, Rood Koopmans 1999, McPhail & Schweingruber 1999, Crossley 2002:123). According to Melucci (1996), the media are manufacturers of “master codes” insofar as they determine the language to be used and what information should be broadcast. The public according to Melucci, are simply “users” in the audience” (1996:179). The ‘principal power’ of such decisions “is embedded in their capacity to organize the minds of people” (1996:179). The ability to control and dominate communicable and transmissible symbolic forms, enable social actors to ‘exploit’ the dramatic effect of their performances to willfully and intentionally create and construct a certain type of ‘meaning’ and signification in the minds and hearts of the ‘audience’. Activists felt that the established print and broadcast media in Ireland were often biased in its reporting of EU matters, and the coverage afforded to the established political elite far outweighed the sentiment of the public at large. This view has also been supported by quantitative studies (Brandenburg 2005). Brandenburg’s research reveals that print media (front page coverage statistics, headlines, editorials and political comment) and broadcast media (coverage on news bulletins and

running order of news events) are all largely over-proportional in terms of the government at the expense of other parties. He also makes specific reference to how other parties, namely The Labour Party and Sinn Féin, are ‘marginalised’ in the media (2005:311).

Social movement organizations are aware of the need to ‘reframe’ themselves and their agenda to suit media discourse. They are also aware that those who challenge the dominant cultural-political model by offering alternative solutions will generally not experience a media willing to communicate their message. They may in fact be leaving themselves open to attack, ridicule, stereotyping or what I believe can be called ‘mis-framing’. I noted earlier how ‘civil society’ groups advocating a ‘Yes’ vote appeared to be well financed and managed, perhaps with the assistance and expertise of PR firms. Generally groups advocating a ‘No’ vote did not have sufficient resources to employ professional marketing agencies to convey their message, perhaps with the exception of formal political organisations such as Libertas and Sinn Féin. When political and business discourse is challenged, the media often use this ‘official’ discourse as a starting point of any discussion, and it is the competitors or challengers who carry a burden of proof (Gamson 1988:226). Social movement organisations on the Left who interacted with the media very often “lack the resources, professional skills and routine relationships with journalists” which established political and business groups may take for granted. Gamson (1988) states that activists “face an undeniably formidable task” as they must “challenge deeply entrenched ways of thinking” and “confront journalistic norms and practices that make it difficult to be taken seriously” (Gamson 1988:227). It is the task of collective action and mobilisation to challenge media discourse and ‘punch holes’ in established meanings and expose frame vulnerabilities.

### **Money talks**

The Sunday Times, in the lead up to the referendum on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty, reported that the total spend of groups campaigning for a ‘Yes’ vote was €2.4 million whereas the figure of €270,000 was quoted for the ‘No’ groups (McInerney 2009). Estimated expense figures for groups advocating a ‘Yes’ vote are as follows: Fine Gael €700,000; Fianna Fáil €700,000; IBEC €150,000; Ireland for Europe €120,000; and The Labour Party €100,000.

Groups such as ‘We Belong’, supported by ex-businessmen Bill Cullen, would not reveal the amount of expenditure. Companies such as INTEL were reported to be spending between €300,000 and €500,000 on promoting a ‘Yes’ vote. The expenditure figures for Treaty opponents were much lower. Sinn Féin and Coir are both estimated to have spent €100,000. Expenditure from small Left groupings and EU critical organisations was considerably less than this figure. The Sunday Times also reported that Libertas expenditure was up to €1.1 million, and their absence from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon referendum was particularly notable. Activists from the People’s Movement expressed particular concern at the alleged high level of corporate and business funding behind ‘Yes’ groups and questioned the impact that this has on democracy. While business lobbyists and the financing of political campaigns is a well-known fact, the blatant interference by business interests and corporations into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was seen by activists as a clear attempt to directly interfere with the Irish democratic system. Activists were keen to point out that potential financing from foreign corporations to directly influence a domestic political referendum raised serious questions for the Standards in Public Office. Rules and regulations about ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ groups maintaining financial records and keeping receipts to show how such groups were financed appear quite ludicrous when undemocratic and unaccountable corporations are permitted to simply spend unlimited amounts of monies to influence a referendum outcome.

Final expenditure figures for Intel and Ryanair, in their campaigns for a ‘Yes’ vote, were reported to be in the region of €500,000. Other companies adopted alternative methods. Organic dairy company Glenisk stated that the company would utilise all vehicles in its fleet to communicate the message of a positive ‘Yes’ Vote (Glenisk 2009). Unilever and Aer Lingus were also seen to have used ‘referendum’ related advertisement campaigns. Unilevers advertisement campaign clearly stated ‘Ireland says Yes’ and Aer Lingus advertisement campaigns focused on ‘Lisbon’ as a destination for cheaper flights. Meanwhile, certain businesses released either press statements supporting a ‘Yes’ vote in the Lisbon referendum or released internal communications to their staff emphasizing the importance of the vote to Ireland. While such communications were not overtly or explicitly calling on their workers to vote yes, the interpretation of such statements by recipients was predominantly in the theme of positive acceptance.

It is worth noting that activists from the ‘No’ groups were quite vocal in their objection to what they saw as corporate interference from companies, such as Microsoft, Intel and Ryanair in Ireland’s democratic process. The Socialist Party highlighted Intel’s military links in its manufacture of key components of military hardware including deadly missiles and guidance systems (Higgins 2009). It also made reference to the Intel corporation’s recent record fine from the European commission of €1.06 billion. In a similar vein, it is suggested that Microsoft needed to “to build goodwill” with the European Commission due to an investigation into alleged breaches of EU competition law (Burke Kennedy 2009). Many activists believe that similar reasons are behind the entry of Ryanair to the Lisbon Treaty debate, as the company needed to curry favour with the EU Transportation and Competition Commissioner in their bid to gain control of its main rival Aer Lingus in the Irish Airline Industry (Waterfield 2009). During the campaign activists were shocked to see the European Commission directly interfering in the democratic process of a nation state by using EU public funds to publish a sixteen page magazine, which was distributed with all editions of the national press, to promote the Lisbon Treaty.

### **Language and Rhetoric**

O’Mahony (2009) contends that the rejections of EU referenda, such as the first Nice Treaty vote and first Lisbon Treaty vote, by the Irish public are a result of a withdrawal of the ‘elite’ and the emergence of ‘populist’ and ‘anti-establishment’ groups who simply “capitalized on the fears and distrust of an electorate deficient on general knowledge about the EU” (2009:430). Certainly, People’s Movement activists would dispute such findings and would counter-claim that both democratic referendum results were overturned by the ‘elite’ who capitalized on people’s fears and distrust. The outcomes of both the Nice and Lisbon Treaty referenda seem to suggest that those who control the most resources and the levers of political discourse will be successful.

The outcome of the vote from the 1st Nice Treaty referendum was quite similar to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. The results were greeted with disappointment by the Taoiseach and his Government, but the language used is quite interesting. Politicians spoke of having

'respect' for the vote and 'listening' more closely to the needs and concerns of the electorate (O'Mahony 2009). In both cases, the same Treaty was re-run and put back before the Irish public. Indeed, certain political leaders, such as Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore, publically expressed, after the public had rejected the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty in June 2008, that the Treaty was now 'dead' (Gilmore 2008). Despite this, the very same political figures were staunchly campaigning for a 'Yes' vote, when a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was announced. Indeed, on 30 May 2012, a Wikileaks file was reported to be released purporting that Gilmore, following the defeat of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 had advised the US Embassy that he 'fully expects' and would support another referendum in 2009. Wikileaks files are reported to reveal a cable from then US Ambassador, Thomas Foley, outlining Gilmore's position which states: "He explained his public posture of opposition to a second referendum as 'politically necessary' for the time being" (RTE 2012).

Ryanair Chief Executive Michael O'Leary also publically called on the government to respect the 'No' vote and claimed "it is the only democratic thing to do" (Ennis 2008). In 2009, in the lead up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, he subsequently threw his weight behind the 'Yes' campaign. The divide between elite political decision making and public acceptance was noted by Devine (2009:481) in her illustration of how political parties simply changed, back tracked and shifted on their positions so blatantly.

Activists are keen to highlight how EU leaders use political discourse and rhetoric to signify 'European' values representing 'democracy', 'understanding' and 'unity' throughout the member states. References are regularly made to the need to bring the EU and its institutions 'closer' to its citizens. Such discourse and rhetoric contrasts sharply with the reaction received from the EU political establishment and the European media to the Irish 'No' vote in June 2008. Particular and noticeable contempt for the Irish 'No' Vote was received, in a similar manner to the rejection of the Nice Treaty in 2001. Questions were raised about Ireland's commitment to European integration and how a small nation should not be permitted to hold up the advancement of EU integration (Leahy & Connolly 2008, Kennedy 2008). Indeed, after the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon referendum was announced, mainstream print media referred to the result as a "crisis" (Collins, Smyth & Scally 2008). Rather than asking

questions about Ireland's commitment to 'Europe' activists argued that the real counter-question that needed to be asked was why referenda were not being held for all the publics in all EU member states. Democracy, it would seem, is only welcomed when it is a democratic decision which is favoured by the European political establishment. EU officials were quick to dismiss the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty restating the need to push ahead with the Treaty's implementation despite the Irish 'No' vote (Smyth, Collins & Fitzgerald 2008). Indeed, the very willingness to proceed despite a democratic rejection of the vote compounded the main thrust of the activists' arguments which centred on larger states in the EU pushing ahead and leaving smaller states behind. Such European political elitism essentially affirmed activists' beliefs. Hooghe (2003), in her analysis of elite decision making on European Integration notes that, the "elites desire a European Union capable of governing a large, competitive market and projecting political muscle. Citizens are more in favour of a caring European Union which protects them from the vagaries of capitalist markets. They support different aspects of European integration" (2003:17).

In the following sections, I outline and illustrate forms of discourse used during the campaign. Many of the examples provided are based on personal observations and the experience of activists 'on the ground' campaigning. The purpose of the following section is to illustrate specific examples of discourse. This highlights how group's 'frame' their campaigns and create messages which resonate among the public (Silverman 2006:224). The Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign illustrates how the terms 'rights' and 'democracy' were both used interchangeably by the campaigners in arguments for and against the Lisbon Treaty. Their use was entirely dependent upon the 'framing' strategies of each campaign group. An analysis of dominant discourse illustrates the sometimes insurmountable challenges which faced 'No' activists during the campaign. The strategies and 'frames' adopted by 'Yes' campaigners had a direct impact on how 'No' campaigners framed and shaped their arguments and directly obstructed their ability to communicate and signify meaning (Meyer, Whittier & Robnett 2002:303).

## **‘Yes’ Rhetoric**

O’Mahony (2001), in her discussion of the 2001 campaign for the Treaty of Nice, notes that the reasons put forward by advocates of a ‘Yes’ vote were, political stability, security in Europe through enlargement, and placing Ireland in an advantageous position to benefit from this increased market (O’Mahony 2001:204). Similar arguments for voting ‘Yes’ were seen in 1998 during the Amsterdam Treaty referendum. During this campaign, citizens were told by Government ministers that a ‘No’ vote would have been “damaging for our image as first rate Europeans and that we would be left in limbo” (Brennock 1998a). Other articles at that time clearly illustrated that a ‘Yes’ vote would be good for certain sectional and business interests (Cassells 1998, Parlon 1998).

It would seem that the arguments for voting ‘Yes’ in the 2008 and 2009 Lisbon referendums were built around quite similar standpoints as those in previous referenda. I contend that discourse from ‘Yes’ campaigners took two forms. Firstly, ‘positive’ discourse was presented by the political and business establishment and ‘civil society’ groups around imagined concepts of ‘Europe’, ‘Europeanism’ and Ireland’s ‘national interest’. Secondly, ‘negative discourse’ involved the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the ‘No’ campaigners and the framing of ‘No’ arguments as ‘anti-European’ and economically unsound for Ireland’s future.

‘Yes’ campaigners, from both political and business sectional interests, sought to win the hearts and minds of voters through deliberate spin and ‘positive discourse’. General Manager of Intel Ireland, Jim O’Hara, released a statement (O’Hara 2009) encouraging businesses to speak out and promote the Lisbon Treaty as essential for growth and jobs. Ryanair Chief Executive, Michael O’Leary, claimed that “Ireland’s future success depends on being at the heart of Europe and our membership of the euro” (O’Regan 2009). The ability of business elites to communicate their message in a pro-consumer frame and capitalise on anti-political sentiment was one of the key features of corporate ‘Yes’ to Lisbon campaign ‘framing’. The Chairman and Director of the Small Firms Association (SFA), Dr Aidan O’Boyle & Patricia Callan, both issued a joint statement calling for a ‘Yes’ vote emphasizing the 250,000 small businesses in the country, and the fact that such

businesses employed half the private sector workforce. Dr. O'Boyle stated that, "Ireland must be at the centre of Europe, not just for the opportunities it has given us in the past, but the many opportunities it will give us in the future". As well as promoting the Treaty as one which protects the women of Ireland, Patricia Callan also claimed that, "the small business community are viewing a yes vote for the Lisbon reform Treaty as a vote for investment, jobs and the economy." IBEC in their campaign simply said, 'Yes for Jobs' directly linking treaty ratification to a reduction in unemployment figures.

Fianna Fáil's main 'Yes' leaflets and posters stated: 'Yes - Keep Irelands Commissioner', 'Yes For Jobs and Investment' and 'We're Better Together'. The party's pamphlets focused on addressing challenges by 'No' campaigners by simply referring to such challenges as scare tactics and lies. Fianna Fáil literature gave assurances for Catholics to vote 'Yes' (Fianna Fáil 2009)<sup>42</sup> and also aimed to provide assurance to nationalists and republicans, by claiming that 1916 revolutionaries were passionate 'Europeans' too.<sup>43</sup> Doane (2005:192) illustrates how discourse and rhetoric around 'national' interests can be used as an important ideological tool with reference to national iconic heroes. Pamphlets also made references to support from Ireland's business community, CEOs of multinational firms, trade unionist and leading economists (Fianna Fáil 2009a).<sup>44</sup> Fianna Fáil also repeatedly used the term 'Stronger with Europe', 'Ireland needs Europe' and how 'Europe has listened to the Irish people'. Fianna Fáil also issued a document called 'Rural Ireland needs Europe'. They were the only 'Yes' group I observed who had published pamphlets in both Irish and English.

Fine Gael's posters centered on jobs, national recovery and greater opportunities and prospects if Ireland voted 'Yes' to the Treaty of Lisbon. The party's main posters stated

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<sup>42</sup>Fianna Fáil literature included a reprinted statement issued by Bishop Noel Traenor on behalf of the Catholic Church on Sep 18 2009. This statement noted that a Catholic can "without reserve and in good conscience vote yes for the Lisbon Treaty. There are no grounds to justify a no vote in the Lisbon Treaty on the basis of specifically religious or ethical concerns."

<sup>43</sup> 1916 revolutionaries is a reference to the leaders of the Easter Rising in Ireland in 1916, a nationalist rebellion against British rule which began a series of events which culminated in Irish Independence in 1922.

<sup>44</sup> Pamphlets made specific reference to Patricia Callan (Director of Small Firms Association), Paul Rellis (General Manager, Microsoft), Paul Duffy (American Chamber of Commerce), Liam Shanahan (President of the Irish Exporters' Association), Blair Horan (General Secretary, CPSU Union), Padraig Walshe (President of the Irish Farmers' Association), Jackie Cahill (President of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association), Brendan Butler, (Director of European Affairs, IBEC), Des Gerathy, (Chairperson, The Charter Group), John Monks (General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation), Barry O'Leary (CEO, IDA Ireland).

‘Yes to Jobs, Yes to Recovery’. Young Fine Gaels poster campaign appealed to a younger market by promoting the EU but with controversial posters containing sexual innuendos. One poster depicted a young man, half naked in tight EU-coloured shorts with the phrase ‘Enlarge your opportunities’. Another poster depicted a young lady holding up two melons, with the phrase, ‘Enhance your opportunities – Vote Yes to Lisbon’. President of Young Fine Gael, Barry Walsh, stated that the posters were “designed to be controversial” and were intended to “excite imaginations” (Kerr 2008). The Labour Party’s main poster stated ‘Work with Europe’ and their main focus for voting ‘Yes’ focused on the Charter of Fundamental Rights which they claimed strengthened the rights of workers. The Labour Party also focused on the ‘gay/lesbian’ vote by appealing to Ireland’s LGBT community arguing for a ‘Yes’ vote on the platform of freedom of assembly and gender equality.<sup>45</sup>

The ‘Ireland for Europe’ group used the terms: ‘It’s simple, we need Europe’ and ‘Strong Voice in Europe’, and ‘It’s Simple, I’m safer in Europe’. Such phrases clearly linked a ‘Yes’ vote to security and EU membership. ‘We Belong’ posters stated: ‘We Belong, You decide’. The ‘We Belong’ campaign were strong in communicating the fact that 70% of our exports went to Europe, and a ‘Yes’ vote was important to be more pro-European and therefore more welcoming to multinationals. They similarly claimed that the Lisbon Treaty was strongly supported by the business community and how company CEOs believed a ‘Yes’ vote would boost employment.

It is quite clear to see how discourse from the ‘Yes’ campaign linked a positive vote in the Treaty to economic growth, continued foreign investment and jobs (See Appendix D for samples of pro-Lisbon Treaty posters used throughout the referendum campaign). Indeed the continued association and linkage between ‘jobs’, ‘security’ and a ‘Yes’ vote were emphasized from a range of corporate and business interests, ‘civil society’ groups and the main political parties. Although 2008, the year in which the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum took place, represented the first signs of the economic downturn particularly in the U.S and Europe, the re-run of the Treaty referendum in October 2009 took place in a more uncertain economic period. Indeed, the intervening period between June 2008 and October 2009

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<sup>45</sup> Labour LGBT launch Wednesday 16 September 2009. 11am Merrion Square.

represented a period of continuing economic downturn, a near collapse of the Irish Banking sector and increased unemployment. In Part I of this thesis, I made reference to ‘political opportunity’ (Tilly 1978, Tarrow 1998) and how social movement organisations, and indeed governments, will utilise opportunities in periods of contentious action to their advantage. In the months leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, there was much ‘uncertainty’ in the minds of the Irish public in terms of both the economy and employment. Studies have revealed that domestic and international political events and external factors can have a direct and significant impact on the successes and failures of mobilisation activities (See Josselin 2007, Meyer 2003:19, Starr 2000:38, Kolb 2005, Jenkins & Perrow 1977). Activists I interviewed were in no doubt that the economic ‘uncertainty’ during the campaign for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum provided the government and ‘Yes’ groups the ability to communicate and frame their message in order to provide comfort, security and assurances for the future, through false promises of employment and increased investment. Through discourse, the formation of ‘positive’ associations of growth, jobs and security with a ‘Yes’ vote in the Treaty, in many ways, persuaded a perhaps undecided, uninformed and apolitical electorate. Associations relating to employment, security and protection transmitted positive emotional signification which resonated with the public. People’s Movement activists I interviewed following the referendum were keen to point out that the outcome of the vote was a result of the political and business establishment playing on people’s fear and insecurity over jobs and future growth. All of which, they claim, was managed through well-financed PR and marketing campaigns.

According to the Wall Street Journal prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, Irish Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan was “peddling phantom terrors to scare the Irish people into voting yes. But in a world made skittish by last year's global credit panic, it's just possible that someone might, at least in the absence of thought, take them seriously. Preying on those fears, in fact, seems to be the chief strategy of the Yes campaign”. It also went on to discuss how, in reality, Irish economic growth is not really attributable to the EU at all particularly when one considers that “Ireland sucked on the teat of EU regional aid for two and a half decades without discernible effect. By the mid-1980s, it was still a poor country by European standards.” (WSJ 2009)

The 'corporate culture' which seems to be permeating into our social consciousness is one which adopts the dominant paradigm of 'rational' business and economic logic. The 'positive' associations I referred to earlier which linked treaty acceptance to jobs and economic growth is perhaps synonymous with how individuals increasingly apply economic rationalisation to the way we construct and live our lives. Sklair (1997) recognises this political and business discourse in convincing citizens that the "business of society is business." Interests not deemed to be in line with 'business interests' are considered merely 'sectional' and not in the common interest. Nash (2001), notes that the political and business elites have been quite successful in their discourse insofar as business objectives and economic reasoning have become the rational and logic by which we live our lives. Nash notes that the "rationale for international co-operation has been made largely in terms of improving national economies" (Nash 2001:89).

I have illustrated here how the business and political establishment have applied a form of discourse to voting 'Yes' and thereby creating 'associations' and linkages between a 'Yes' vote and a return to economic growth and prosperity. In addition to this, there was also a clever attempt at constructing an association between a 'Yes' vote and EU membership, despite the fact that a rejection of the Lisbon Treaty would not have resulted in Ireland leaving the EU. By calling for a 'Yes' vote with such phrases as: 'We're better together', 'Safer in Europe' 'We need Europe', the 'Yes' campaign created 'associations' between a positive Treaty vote and European unity. Indeed, activists campaigning for a 'No' vote often spoke of encountering individuals during the campaign who said they were voting 'Yes' as they did not want Ireland to leave the EU. By linking a 'Yes' vote to Ireland's membership and cooperation with our fellow EU member states, it could be claimed that a number of people went to the polls in October 2009 voting 'Yes' simply because they feared that a 'No' vote would signal Ireland's exit from the European Union. I contend that 'positive' associations between a 'Yes' vote and EU membership in turn created 'negative' associations for a 'No' vote. For many individuals a 'No' vote became 'associated' with a lack of belonging or a detachment from Europe, and emotionally signified increased insecurity and risk.

Another key strategy for the ‘Yes’ campaign was not to allow the campaign become dominated, or be seen to be dominated, by older conservative politicians. Engagement with the EU is largely led by elites and knowledge of EU institutions and its legal frameworks are mediated by political parties. It is contended that support for the EU is based on trust in political leaders (Murphy & Hayward 2009) however in the run up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum trust in the political establishment during an economic downturn was at a considerable low level. While political figures were visible and vocal during the campaign for the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty, there was a clear and deliberate political party retreat for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign. The political establishment permitted, or indeed orchestrated, ‘civil society’ groups and the business community to achieve a more prominent and visible position in the ‘Yes’ campaign. The public face of the ‘Yes’ campaign was bright, youthful, and energetic. One civil society group, ‘Generation Yes’, focused on its ‘youthful’ image and during the campaign involved a number of students and young people. Young men and women wore pro-Lisbon Treaty t-shirts: The men wore a blue top with “Yes, Yes, Yes” and the women wore pink saying “I only kiss boys who say yes”. Other t-shirts stated: "EU is Ireland's best friend". Similarly, ‘We Belong’ and ‘Ireland for Europe’ were marketed as very youthful and vibrant groups. Photo shoots with students and young people calling for a ‘Yes’ vote received much media coverage. Clearly having a positive, youthful and colourful appearance was a deliberate key strategy for the ‘Yes’ campaign. The promotion of the importance of a ‘Yes’ vote for women was also key factor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. A new ‘civil society’ group emerged called ‘Women for Europe’. Analysis by the government and the EU after the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum revealed that young people and women were key demographic groups who voted ‘No’ and the concerted attempt to focus on these two groups was clearly evident during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign. ‘No’ activists were quite critical of the clear use of public tax payers money to fund research into why the public voted ‘No’ (DFA 2008). It is claimed that such research was then used by ‘Yes’ campaigners as part of their strategic plan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign.

Finally, I want to also make reference to the symbolic use of colour during the campaign. I made reference earlier in this thesis to how meaning is created through rituals and symbols. Colour can be applied and expressed as a powerful symbolic form. Symbols for Turner

(1967) are ‘dynamic’ and are an intricate element of the social process as they “become associated with human interests, purposes, ends, and means” (1967:20). The use of yellow and pink on campaign posters and advertisements was particularly noticeable. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael both used yellow as their main colour. Generation Yes used multiple light colours and Ireland for Europe used pink. The use of bright and positive colour imagery symbolically constructs meaning to their message. Pink and yellow may represent vibrancy, youthfulness and energy. Such colours were transmitted as progressive and non-threatening and resonated positively with the public. The ‘No’ campaign was generally not marketed in such a manner, with the exception of the Coir group who I will discuss later.

### **Constructing Negativity**

Constructing ‘negativity’ is not unique to recent referenda. Devine (2009:484) notes that during the Nice Treaty referendum campaign, Fianna Fáil quite spuriously referred to the Treaty as being a prerequisite for enlargement and the Department of Foreign Affairs in fact referred to it as the ‘Nice Treaty on enlargement’. Voters were made to feel as if they were voting on ‘accession’ to the EU for other states. In other words, rather than debating the articles at hand, the vote was strategically managed into a vote for or against other states joining. These arguments adopted ‘justice’ and ‘equity’ frames. The underlying message was that a ‘No’ vote was implicitly denying individuals in these countries some form of ‘wealth’ or ‘rights’ associated with EU membership (O’Mahony 2009). The construction of ‘negativity’ was alive and well during both the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Fiscal Compact Treaty campaign, and was evident in discourse from the political and business establishment.

In the lead up to the Lisbon Treaty referendum, Minister for Environment, John Gormley said that another ‘No’ vote in the referendum would set Ireland back and would present Ireland with another ‘crisis’. Speaking to the Joint Oireachtas<sup>46</sup> Committee on European Affairs, he said that another ‘No’ vote would change the perception of Ireland radically and

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<sup>46</sup> Oireachtas is an Irish word meaning ‘Houses of Parliament’

would have a negative impact (Gormley 2009)<sup>47</sup>. General Manager of Intel, Jim O’Hara, stated that, “if for the third time in less than ten years we reject an EU treaty, we must realise this will create uncertainty in the minds of investors” (O’Hara 2009). Michael O’Leary said he could think of no better reason to vote ‘Yes’ than “doing the opposite of that recommended by some of the headbangers” calling for a ‘No’ vote. He criticised the ‘No’ campaign as “a ragbag amalgam” of “economic illiterates” and made negative and discrediting remarks about groups such as Sinn Féin, the UK Independence Party and the Socialist Party. He also attacked Ireland’s “incompetent politicians, our inept Civil Service and the greedy public sector trade union bosses who, through social partnership, have in recent years destroyed Ireland’s competitiveness” (O’Regan 2009). Certain companies who advocated a ‘Yes’ vote often cited statistics of the number of staff the company employed and then spoke about isolation and a withdrawal of multinational investment into Ireland should the Treaty be rejected a second time. There was an implicit association made between a ‘No’ vote and a possible reduction in job numbers and a flight of foreign capital (Conroy & Majerus 2009, Callan 2009). ‘Generation Yes’, according to their website, claimed they formed as a ‘civil society’ group as they were “not prepared to sit by and let their country be overrun by naysayers and cynics”.

During EU referenda campaign, ‘character contests’ are frequent and regular. During the Lisbon Treaty campaign, activists often complained that government actors and representatives of business interests would engage in such frivolous character assassinations in order to detract attention from the issues at hand. The involvement of corporate and business interests in the debate over the Lisbon Treaty even saw chief executives of multinational companies engaging in televised and radio debates proclaiming the benefits of voting for the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>48</sup> Other such activities included the company Ryanair taking out large page advertisements in the national press making direct and personal character attacks on individuals from the ‘No’ campaign. Activists pointed out that this illustrated a withdrawal from engagement on discussions relating to the articles and the text of the Treaty

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<sup>47</sup>Similar warnings were also given from Government ministers before the first Lisbon referendum (See Hennessy 2008).

<sup>48</sup>RTE Prime Time Debate 24 September 2009. Michael O’Leary, CEO Ryanair & Declan Ganley, Libertas. See also the Today FM debate chaired by Matt Cooper 4pm Irish Times Building, Dublin. 24 Sep 2009.

itself. Indeed when ‘corporate’ actors outside the political field entered the debate on Lisbon, the discussion was entirely based on ‘character’. The ‘dramaturgical’ value of these interactions increased as such social exchanges in the media became ‘circus’ like. Although these interactions provided ‘entertainment’ for the public they did little to inform individuals on how to vote on the Treaty itself. Acts of ‘belittlement’ or ‘underplaying’ the substantive issues at hand simply detracted from the main important articles being voted upon. In some respects, comical entertainment resonated with the ‘audience’ who may either be disillusioned with ‘politics’ in general or disinterested in the issues being debated as they did not see the relevance of the issues to their lives.

Natrajan (2003) sees hegemonic representations evident within the print and broadcast media mainly to represent protests and struggles as irrational, immoral, unnecessary or non-existent (2003:218). In these respects the media plays a very powerful role in the construction of ‘meaning’. It can, and often does, portray the actions of protestors as ‘backward’, ‘non-progressive’ and ‘radical’. A successful tactic employed by the ‘Yes’ campaign was to avoid addressing the text of the Treaty and simply present themselves as ‘pro-Europeans’. This in turn created an implicit perception that a ‘No’ voter was somehow ‘anti-European’ which was clearly not the case. The state according to Boykoff (2007), “sometimes works through the mass media to suppress dissent. By transmitting the state’s unfavourable portrayals of dissidents, the mass media sometimes depict social movements in deprecatory ways”. This has an impact on participants, adversaries, recruits and supporters (2007:285). Social movements actors can be undermined, and portrayed to look “ridiculous, bizarre, dangerous or otherwise out of step with the general public” (2007:293). A number of People’s Movement activists, as well as activists from other organizations campaigning against the EU, can easily point to examples where they were ‘marginalised’ and ‘demonised’ by campaigners on the ‘Yes’ side during referenda. Through marginalization and personal character attacks the public become distracted from the critical issues contained within the Lisbon Treaty itself.

People’s Movement activist Patricia notes that there is a “huge focus on suppressing any kind of criticism. A lot of money and resources have gone into it. One of the things which the EU

has under control is the media. The normal media have been spun a line that anyone critical of the EU are ‘nutters’, ‘fanatics’ or ‘religious fundamentalists’. Even though the People’s Movement might be doing things it’s hard for them to get the message out”. She feels that the media do not show any interest in printing or broadcasting an organisation’s message unless that message is part of a particular campaign or political contest, and even then, only if it grabs people’s attention and sells papers. “This idea that we are anti-European is nonsense. In Europe, in every single member state, you have people who are so frustrated with what’s going on. They are feeling helpless. This idea that everything is outside your control and you have no way to stop it.” Patricia notes that anyone who gets interested and involved on EU related issues gets extremely frustrated. “It’s like ‘banging your head against a brick wall. You are up against everyone, the establishment, the media, the EU Institutions and others who have a lack of understanding and awareness of what you really stand for and what you are trying to do. You are misrepresented by the establishment deliberately so that it undermines your credibility and therefore people really don’t seek out why you are campaigning on a specific thing”.

Patricia points out that what the media and establishment are doing is extremely dangerous. She claims that because a healthy critique of the European Union by ‘moderate people’ is not being permitted, these issues may ultimately surface by ‘extremists’. She expresses particular concern for the rise of far Right extremists in a number of countries. Patricia feels that the growth of these groups are being facilitated by the establishment and a media blackout on alternative and critical voices on the EU. “I think they are quite happy to have people who are critical of the EU if they are on the extreme Right but they didn’t like people who are ‘lefty’”. She notes that the extreme Right cause a lot of concern and it undermines a lot of EU critical action so the establishment can challenge this easily, rather than a moderate and well-structured critical left analysis.

People’s Movement activists Julie and Jim from the midland’s branch describe the “backlash” from the ‘Yes’ people during the run up to the referendum and the campaigning process. There was great hostility and viciousness and abuse. I wouldn’t even repeat the words that were said towards the ‘No’ campaign by the hard-line ‘Yes’ people. Be it

leafleting in the street, doing door-to-door canvassing, or being yelled at from motorcars. I found it quite terrifying”. Julie notes that when People’s Movement activists encountered certain individuals who were ‘No’ voters, they were quite secretive about it and almost ashamed in case they would be overheard or ‘found out’ by their neighbours that they were a ‘No’ voter. While out campaigning on the streets, certain individuals would challenge activists and ask them “do you want to throw the country back into the dark ages?” Activists feel that a negative image of ‘No’ voters had been successfully constructed by the media and establishment which inferred that ‘No’ voters were against progress, holding up a process, and responsible for bringing the country backwards.

People’s Movement activist Eamon states: “They present us as marginalised critical voices and critical voices are then seen as extreme. The fear is subtle but it’s there.” Eamon explains that the public are faced with little choice at EU referenda. The establishment, he claims, provides little alternative to the public. “They [the establishment] say ‘things are bad now but we are presenting you with a possible way out ... this way. If you go that way you are going to lose everything’. People have to make judgement calls on two possible roads of fear ... one which leads to death, damnation and hell. There is constant demonization of alternatives. In the debate they tend to take the more extreme element as opposition, exaggerate its role and hold it up and say ‘do you really want to go with this?’ To the vast amount of people, the TD’s<sup>49</sup> in the Dáil are bad, but these ‘No’ people are head cases’. The media pick up and exaggerate more extreme elements of opposition to demonise, and marginalise them further without listening to people who have something to say with real substance to it.”

As I have stated earlier, the analysis of Boykoff (2007) on demonization of social movement actors is particularly noteworthy. The importance of negative framing and its effects on social perception cannot be overlooked. I want to discuss Boykoff’s view on ‘stigmatisation’ in the narrative of ‘framing’ and the construction of ‘meaning’. Stigmatisation as a mechanism is an “important cog in the process of social control whereby individual and

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<sup>49</sup> The term TD is an Irish language term meaning Teachta Dala or ‘Member of the Dáil’ which is the House of Representatives in the Irish Parliament.

group behaviour and/or attitudes are manipulated in order to bring them into conformity with the behavioural or attitudinal expectations of others” (Boykoff 2007:296). It can therefore be socially isolating and can essentially lead to stereotyping and marginalization. I found that against the backdrop of the ‘economic’ downturn, stigmatization increased and activists were at times made to feel ‘un-progressive’, ‘withdrawing’ from Europe and not concerned about Ireland’s future economic well-being’. Such ‘stigmatization’ while originating in forms of stereotyping created and constructed through ‘Yes’ discourse, was clearly evident among members of the public. At times, certain people questioned activists as to why, they, as ‘No’ voters, wanted Ireland to leave the EU. Examples such as these illustrate how through discourse, ‘Yes’ campaigners constructed a ‘negative’ characterisation of the ‘No’ campaign. The media were also utilised to discredit the ‘No’ campaigners through publicity stunts, press conferences and ‘civil society’ group launches. The media construct meanings within dominant geopolitical frames. In presenting stories, they do so in a way which serves to delegitimize, marginalize and demonise protestors and social activists. In doing so, the counter effect is to add credibility to the people and organizations who are supportive of the very global institutions who are being challenged (McFarlane & Hay 2003). In fact an example of the incursions which corporatist culture has made in our lives is evident from the struggles of social movement actors, not merely those who campaign against EU reform treaties but also other struggles and campaigns, such as ‘Save the Hill of Tara’, ‘Eco warrior’ protests at the Glen of the Downs, and the ‘Shell to Sea’ group. These social movement actors are often ‘demonised’ for being anti-progressive and ‘ridiculed’ by ‘corporate’ society. Such campaigns are often misrepresented in the media and subject to accusations of damaging local ‘business’. When one views the acts of these social movement organisations against the backdrop of the state’s efforts to promote and support Irish businesses, the struggles of these social movement actors therefore appear not merely anti-progressive but indeed anti-national. This is primarily due to ‘framing’ and discourse adopted by the state and supported by the broadcast and print media. In this sense the important message which these social movement organisations are attempting to communicate can become skewed and misunderstood.

While several ‘Yes’ campaigners were quite vocal and critical of the ‘No’ campaign, direct attacks in the media were, in general, made against Libertas, Coir and Sinn Féin. Few direct attacks were made against members of the People’s Movement. However, it could be argued that the political and business establishment challenged those groups which it saw as posing a real and credible threat to their campaign. Indeed, Libertas appeared to have a well-financed and well-managed professional campaign. Coir on the other hand had very ‘eye catching’ statements which prompted a backlash from the political and business establishment.<sup>50</sup> People’s Movement activist Miriam notes that anyone who attended a People’s Movement meeting or debate on EU treaties was very impressed with the level of information. She notes that the ‘Yes’ campaign did not have similar public meetings and debates. “They may have held a press conference to kick off the campaign, but that was it”. Miriam feels it was difficult for the media or the establishment to demonise the People’s Movement group as the group’s speakers and members “were able to hold their own and discuss the issues. We had well researched material and we put forward reasonable and educated views”.

## **Identity**

In Part I of this thesis, I discussed the construction of imagined and invented ‘identities’. In many ways our identity as ‘European’ is constantly undergoing construction and reinterpretation. The work of Fligstein (2009) supports my contention that the future on European integration will be built around the ‘framing’ of such identities. The fragile nature of ‘identity’ is revealed when one studies certain events and how they are ‘framed’ in a certain manner by the political elite and media. Such ‘framing’ can either build or destroy an ‘identity’. Ireland’s economic downturn was ‘framed’ to strengthen such ‘identity’ by promoting greater ‘solidarity’ with our European neighbours in order to overcome our common problems, that is, member states working together in ‘unity’. Indeed, the Fianna Fáil slogan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was ‘We’re better together’. Perhaps if the

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<sup>50</sup> Coir received significant media attention in response to its posters making allegations that the minimum wage could reduce to €1.84 after the Lisbon Treaty. It is worth noting that Coir appeared to adopt workers’ rights sub-frames, despite the fact that this group’s master frame was not to struggle for the rights of workers. Certain People’s Movement activists felt that this marketing campaign was in fact harmful insofar as it may have detracted attention from a real debate on labour and workers’ rights issues raised by groups on the ‘Left’.

Lisbon Treaty referendum was held in a less uncertain economic environment, its outcome may have been different. Domestic and international events gave rise to new ‘framing’ opportunities (See Fligstein 2009:159). Molly Doane (2005) illustrates how ‘national’ projects determined by the state to be of particular importance and having national interest can be framed and promoted by the government as necessary to tackle poverty and boost economic growth. In this case, the Lisbon Treaty became the focus of such importance. Its acceptance was directly linked to national economic recovery, investment, prosperity and employment.

It could be argued that individuals within EU member states are in a position of ‘liminality’ (Turner 1977:95) when it comes to ‘identity’. Are we Irish? Are we European? If we have aspects of both sets of identities, are we more of one and less of the other? While individuals still have strong emotional attachments to national Irish identity, at the same time, political discourse challenges us to be ‘European’. When it comes to European elections (EU referenda and European parliamentary elections), political campaigning has largely revolved around local and national issues. According to Gilland such campaigns have a marked ‘what’s in it for Ireland’ theme (Gilland 2000:128, See also Brandenburg 2005, Sinnott 1995, Quinlivan & Schon-Quinlivan 2004, Reif & Schmitt 1980). It has also been noted that voters in European elections and referendums simply use the opportunity to ‘deliver a message’ to the incumbent government on national and local issues and are willing to take more of an anti-establishment view as they consider the issues at stake at European elections too ‘distant and irrelevant’ (Quinlivan & Schon-Quinlivan 2004:88, Gilland 2000:131). Perhaps this element of distance is compounded by the fact that Irish political culture, as Brandenburg (2005:29) notes, is of a ‘parochial nature’. An election at national level is similar to a number of simultaneous elections at constituency level.

One of the main paradoxes of the Lisbon Treaty campaign and indeed other European referenda, was the fact that the main government parties and civil society groups sought to project a European ‘identity’ and frame their actions as positive ‘Europeans’ while at the same time asking the electorate to vote on matters which are local and in the ‘national interest’. There is little or no focus on European political affairs. Ruane (1994) addressed

these issues in a study undertaken after the Maastricht Treaty referendum, which challenged the assumption that nationalism within Europe is on the decline. Ruane found that the major divisions between ‘No’ and ‘Yes’ treaty advocates was not between ‘nationalist’ and ‘non-nationalist’, but rather different kinds of nationalism (Ruane 1994:138). I contend that this argument continues to hold its weight in subsequent EU reform treaty referenda including both the Lisbon and EU Fiscal Treaty campaigns. Campaign slogans and themes are all framed within a national context and on domestic issues, such as national economic growth, foreign capital investment into Ireland and local employment. In other words, their arguments were presented as ‘neo-liberal nationalist’ (Adam Harnes 2012). Breznitz (2012) in his study of state action and economic growth also refers to Ireland’s somewhat contradictory economic position which can, as he claims, favour multinationals and foreign investment while inhibiting indigenous industries (2012:107). Notwithstanding these points, it should also be noted that there are a significant number of ‘No’ campaign groups who also campaigned exclusively on local and national issues, however, such groups do not at the same time promote an image or identity of being ‘European’.

Manseragh (1999), in her analysis of the 1998 Amsterdam Treaty referendum on EU Integration, illustrates the type of arguments being put forward by the political elite to advocate a ‘Yes’ Vote. Similar to the Nice Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty campaigns, framing was centred on ‘success’ or ‘failure’. The Nice Treaty in Ireland was “sold by Yes campaigners as being in Ireland’s best interests” and enlargement would “give Irish industry access to an enlarged single market” (O’Mahony 2009:437). Citizens were told that a ‘Yes’ vote would help “transform Ireland from one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the very wealthiest in the world” (Brennock 1998). Indeed, one particular civil society group, ‘Ireland for Europe’, during the Lisbon Treaty campaign used the slogan ‘Ruin or Recovery’. O’Mahony (2009), also illustrates the ‘generic’ nature of the ‘Yes’ Campaign in the first Lisbon Treaty with the use of posters ‘Good for Ireland, Good for Europe’ and ‘Europe, Let’s be at the Heart of it’. (2009:438).

An important illustration of the impact that ‘national’ interests, or rather national ‘sectional’ interests, have on referenda on European treaty reforms is provided by O’Mahoney (2009),

who explains how certain groups issued ‘ultimatums’ to the government with the hope of using the referendum as a tool to better their position and protect Irish industrial interests<sup>51</sup> (O’Mahony 2009:438). Sectional interests such as business, farming and industrial groups have considerable influence over large sections of the public, and these groups have shown that they can use this leverage to their advantage. Ireland’s widespread support for EU integration is therefore ‘soft’ and ‘conditional’ in its nature (O’Mahony 2009:443). Bellier and Wilson (2000) note that as a result of the interplay from a wide variety of interests, the construction and perception of European identity becomes redefined. “As a result some state structures keep alive different forms of nationalism and regionalism, which to some extent run counter to the fostering of common forms of European identity and affiliations” (Bellier and Wilson 2000:20). Activists who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty are under no illusion about the ‘self-interests’ of such sectional groups and business funded ‘civil society groups’. While activists adopt a critical EU position, they point out the irony, that language and acts of pro-Treaty advocates often run counter to fostering the idea of ‘Europeanism’ which they so often claim to champion. Activists contend that such groups are not campaigning for a ‘Yes’ vote simply because they feel strong and passionate about their ‘European’ identity. They clearly see these groups and sectional business interests investing in campaigns and lobbying initiatives in the belief that they are promoting and protecting their own interests. Notwithstanding this, Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) note “however vague, or ill-defined the concept, ‘to be European’ or ‘in favour of Europe’, it is increasingly taken to mean support for the European Community and its goal of ‘an ever closer union’.” (1994:26)

## **No Rhetoric**

My participant observation during the Lisbon Treaty campaign led me first of all to conclude that there is no level playing field in challenging political projects which are being driven from the top-down. Activists who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty and previous EU treaties are sometimes asked why they are always voting ‘No’ against EU reforms. For

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<sup>51</sup> The Irish Farmers Association (IFA) threatened to withhold support unless the Irish government vetoed WTO talks which it was claimed would damage Irish farmer interests.

activists, the Lisbon Treaty is another reform treaty in a long line of EU developments which activists regard as a shift towards a more centralized, political and more ‘federal’ European governance system. Activists could just as easily ask why are successive governments constantly asking its publics to accept such reforms? Calling for a ‘Yes’ vote compared to a ‘No’ vote is clearly different. ‘Yes’ by its very nature has positive connotations and can be framed in a certain manner, such as being a vote for ‘progress’, ‘change’ and the ‘future’. The fact that activists have no choice but to adopt a ‘No’ position leaves them immediately having to defend their standpoint which can have connotations of being conservative or traditional. I contend however that many People’s Movement activists, and indeed activists from other groups on the political Left, have quite ‘internationalist’ outlooks. Paradoxically, the reason why activists are so adamant in their call for a ‘No’ vote is simply because such treaty reforms further legitimize and reinforce the neoliberal economic agenda and hegemonic positions of power which they struggle against. In other words, activists campaign for a ‘No’ vote because it does *not* bring about the very change and reforms which they wish to see.

I will look at the specific strategies of the People’s Movement in the next chapter, but I now wish to take a look at some of the general discourse used by the ‘No’ campaign in their opposition to the Lisbon Treaty. O’Mahoney (2001) notes that during the Nice Treaty campaign of 2001, groups campaigning for a ‘No’ vote focused on Ireland losing elements of sovereignty, an increasing democratic deficit, losing economic prosperity and a more militarized Europe (O’Mahony 2001:204). Seven years on, campaign slogans for the 2008 and 2009 Treaty of Lisbon referenda have not differed fundamentally from those of former campaigns. There was a significant overlap in the issues being contested by all groups who campaigned for a ‘No’ vote. Notwithstanding this, Coir and Libertas, were quite unique in the ‘No’ campaign. While these groups adopted similar sub-frames and arguments to communicate their message, the political standpoint of these groups was not similar to other organisations advocating a ‘No’ vote. People’s Movement activists would generally not consider these groups to form part of a broader Left coalition.

According to their website, the Coir group appeared to be critical of the EU Treaty on a number of points such as workers' rights, lower wages, less democracy, and national sovereignty. It appeared this group simply adopted a wide range of sub frames in its criticism of the Lisbon Treaty. Although the group are considered to be a conservative Christian movement, their campaign appeared to shy away from strong religious arguments to reject the Lisbon Treaty. The group did adopt a colourful and youthful approach. The numbers of volunteers on the streets were quite impressive, and the majority appeared to be young students. I referred to the symbolic use of colour earlier. The Coir Group were the only evident group on the 'No campaign' who clearly used 'colour' to express itself. Young volunteers wore bright 'red' t-shirts during the campaign, and the group distributed colourful pink stickers with EU critical slogans. The group also received significant media attention in response to its posters making allegations that the minimum wage could reduce to €1.84 after the Lisbon Treaty. Libertas, on the other hand, did not have such a wide and diverse focus. They focused mainly on a loss of democracy and a reduction in democratic representation in Europe, coupled with the fact that Ireland would lose its permanent EU Commissioner. It was a professional middle class organization, and it hoped to make inroads in the Irish political landscape by challenging the dominant Irish political parties.

In general, all groups campaigning for a 'No' vote, made reference to the economic downturn in an attempt to frame the economic position into a positive reason for the public to reject the Lisbon Treaty. Many groups made personal attacks on the government over rising unemployment, wage reductions, financial institutional collapse and increased taxation. In many respects, the 'economic downturn', became the master frame for many groups on the political Left. Opponents of the Lisbon Treaty on the political Left began a campaign to educate the public about the articles of the Lisbon Treaty. They claimed that the very economic policies which have in fact contributed to the economic downturn are embodied in the Lisbon Treaty, that is, unregulated mobility of capital, open competition and free market neoliberal economics. By accepting the Lisbon Treaty, activists claimed that such economic policies would be copper-fastened into law. The People's Movement were particularly focused on these aspects of the Lisbon Treaty, including the issue of militarisation, workers' rights and how recent decisions of the European Court of Justice

have illustrated that the rights of the market and business take precedence over the rights of individual workers.

In general, groups on the Left had a significant focus on matters relating to Irish national sovereignty and a lack of democracy. They argued that Ireland's voting weight in Europe would be significantly reduced by the Treaty, and Ireland would lose its Commissioner. While a wide range of groups rejected the Lisbon Treaty due to its militarization aspects, certain organisations such as PANA and the IAWM almost exclusively focused on Irish neutrality. 'Women say No to Lisbon'<sup>52</sup> was formed, it would appear, to counteract 'Yes' discourse on how acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty was good for women. The campaign included 'Maureen O'Sullivan TD.', Councillors Brid Smyth and Joan Collins from People Before Profit and Mary Crotty from the People's Movement. Other prominent women in the group included Patricia McKenna, People's Movement, Bairbre DeBrun, Sinn Féin MEP, and various councillors, community activists and peace campaigners from a cross spectrum of socialist and 'left wing' groups. Their main message was to combat business interests which are favoured and protected by the EU. They were also quite vocal in their opposition to privatization and called for greater protection of public services which employ predominantly women and protect women's interests.

I mentioned earlier in my discussion on 'networking' how the People's Movement are affiliated to a wider umbrella 'left' grouping known as the 'Campaign against the EU Constitution' (CAEUC). During the campaign the CAEUC had a notable success when it succeeded in getting 135 councillors all over Ireland to sign up to its charter to reject the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>53</sup> The main arguments of the CAEUC grouping were loosely framed around general themes common to all affiliated groups, such as greater EU power and control, lack of democracy and sovereignty, militarization of the EU, neoliberal economic policy, privatization and pro-business policies which impact on workers' rights. During the campaign the group on behalf of all its affiliates publically came out against UKIP for bringing 'anti-immigration' into the argument for a 'No' vote to Lisbon. In an effort to

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<sup>52</sup> 'Women say No to Lisbon' Press Release, Buswells Hotel 11am Wednesday September 30 2009.

<sup>53</sup> CAEUC made the announcement on their website on Tuesday 8 September 2009. Their website has since been revised and renamed [www.campaignforasocialeurope.org](http://www.campaignforasocialeurope.org)

discourage false allegations about the Lisbon Treaty, the group also publically acknowledged that the Lisbon Treaty had nothing to do with abortion, an issue which has been quite contentious with the Irish public at EU referenda.

## **Mark**

*I first met Mark at a People's Movement meeting in early 2009. He was also involved in the campaign for the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum but our paths had not crossed. Mark tells me that he first got involved with the group in the final stages of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign. Mark, together with another activist, Eddie, were the key organisers for the People's Movement in the north Kildare region. I canvassed with both Eddie & Mark during September 2009. We handed out leaflets outside a church in a North Kildare village, met with local citizens and asked them to vote 'No' for the Lisbon Treaty. I had just collected and delivered a new batch of 'No to Lisbon' leaflets and we spent the afternoon going door-to-door leafleting in various housing estates. Afterwards, Mark agreed to talk to me about his own history of activism, how he got involved in the campaign and more specifically his work with the People's Movement group.*

*Mark has a strong history in politics dating back to the 1970s, through his involvement with the Connolly Youth group and later his involvement as a member of The Labour Party. His family, he tells me, were not political at all. In 1987, with the introduction of the Single European Act, his views diverged from The Labour Party, and he campaigned against the Single European Act and later the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s. Mark told me that he felt The Labour Party policies had shifted significantly over the years to the point where he could no longer support them. "They are now part of a centralised European project which is inherently operating a right wing agenda, and efforts to use it to improve conditions for workers are only cosmetic and cannot deliver real fundamental changes".*

*Mark tells me that during former referenda for EU reform, such as the Maastricht Treaty (1992), Amsterdam Treaty (1998) and Nice Treaty (2001, 2002), he campaigned with independent EU critical groups, such as the National Platform, but he advised me that post 2002, he "wanted to be associated with a group who were on the Left, who were opposed to the project of centralising Europe and which stood for strong national governance." The People's Movement group provided this association for Mark, and he tells me that it was*

*also a grouping with organisational structure and had a good campaign. Mark also noted that it was different from other groups on the Left. He distinguishes the People's Movement group specifically because of the economic and political analysis it provides which he claims "is highly researched and factually accurate".*

*Mark was first introduced to the group through former contacts he had built up from previous campaigns. He knew Eamon personally and through these personal networks he was introduced to the group. Mark advised me that it was Eamon who had originally told him about the People's Movement organisation. Eamon recommended the group to Mark as he felt it was a good thing and it appeared to be a "genuine attempt to build a broad movement".*

*During my discussions with Mark, it was quite clear that he had a strong academic background and was very well read. He spoke of 'Labour', 'Capital' and 'Class' quite regularly and it was clear that there was a Marxist influence in his political tendencies. Mark told me that he had several influences in his life including Christian, Marxist, and Socialist but "most definitely on the Left". He went on to add, "I think it's a mistake to start labelling people because then you start to marginalise them by sticking labels on them".*

*Our discussion moved to focus on issues such as sovereignty and democracy. Mark advised that the "best form of defence for the Irish people or any other citizen of other countries within the EU against the multinational is your own democratic parliament at home. The Irish electorate have direct control over that parliament but as soon as you start to delegate power from your parliament to the centre then the citizens have less control. I think that's what has happened as the project has developed ... to the stage where key economic , financial, political and defence decisions are no longer made in Dáil Eireann but Brussels, Frankfurt and NATO headquarters".*

*Mark speaks of regret for the Irish Defence Forces. He feels that they have lost their uniqueness and special status in the world. He feels, as a small nation, we should be forging links with natural allies in the developing world. He feels that the Irish Defence Forces were*

*formerly seen as “representatives of a country which had emerged from an empire and were admired around the world. Now they see themselves as more interested in getting equipment and using equipment supplied by the British, French and Americans and they see themselves integrated now into a Western Alliance.” While not defining himself as a ‘nationalist,’ he tells me “I would like to think I have a worldview. The first thing I would think is that I’m a citizen of the world, but within the world we live in, at this point in history, the dominant forces in the world are neoliberalism, capital and multinational corporations.” He is quite critical of the structure of the European Union which he feels is “fundamentally undemocratic and increasingly unaccountable to its citizens”.*

*Following the campaign, Mark and I met up again and he commented on what he saw was a flawed victory for the establishment. “I think the people who were suggesting that Ireland would do better economically by being part of Europe were just putting out a form of propaganda to support a weak case. I think anyone who looked at the operation of the Euro and fiscal policy on interest rates and exchange rates couldn’t but come to the conclusion that it damaged Ireland’s economic performance and was one of the fundamental reasons why the Celtic Tiger blew up. It helped create the bubble in the first place and then helped to destroy it.” Mark felt quite strongly that the Irish people got “brow beaten” and bullied because of economic fears.*

*As Mark was one of the key organisers of the north Kildare branch of the People’s Movement, I asked him for his views on the local campaign. He tells me how he and Eddie, in the north Kildare People’s Movement group, accessed local media such as the Liffey champion newspaper and the Leinster Leader issuing press releases and writing letters. Mark also notes that the group received good coverage at local public meetings and also through leafleting/postering and by directly challenging figures in local U.S multinationals, who advocated a ‘Yes’ vote, to public debates on the EU Treaty. Mark felt that these actions and events have helped the People’s Movement in north Kildare to capture some political space and raise its profile.*

Having outlined the main political actors, civil society groups, and opponents to the Lisbon Treaty, I now wish to focus on specific strategies and tactics of the People's Movement. I have already outlined how activists view political and business discourse and also how they consider the establishment of numerous 'civil society' groups as being funded and driven by political and business motives. People's Movement activists argue that 'Yes' campaign literature clearly did not focus on contents of the Lisbon Treaty and instead focused on 'half-truths' (McKenna & Bonde 2009) and vague 'fearful' statements, such as 'ruin' or 'recovery', and the promotion of some unreal or supra-nationalistic sense of 'Europeanism'. Strategies adopted by social movement organisations vary greatly and are dependent on both internal and external factors. Strategies are also directly linked to framing and how the organisation wishes itself to be perceived by the public and the media. This is particularly relevant when opponents and competing organisations are challenging claims and making counterarguments (Klandermans 1988:185). During the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, activists in the People's Movement utilised and participated in a number of events and actions, including the following: public meetings and speeches, holding press conferences, issuing letters of opposition/support, declarations, signed public statements, use of specific slogans and symbols, use of colourful banners, posters, leaflets, pamphlets, interviews with the press, radio, television, internet, audio-visual presentations for activists, information stands, organising public events featuring well-known figures, undertaking symbolic public acts, musical events, participation in dramatic events such as marches, demonstrations, photo shoots and door to door canvassing (See Klandermans 1988:184).

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Referendum**

Activists adopted largely similar strategies for both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaigns. In late 2007 and early 2008, in the months prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, the People's Movement sponsored a series of lectures which focused on critical aspects of the

EU. This series of lectures included Irish peace social movement organisations (PANA), human rights organizations (AFRI and Statewatch), European peace activists, Independent Irish TD's, anti-racism campaigners, and trade unionists. The extent of the diversity of speakers highlights the People's movement connections to other social movement organizations in the field of 'new social movements' (discussed earlier in the thesis) rather than those groups who are solely focused on 'traditional Left' struggles. In addition to the series of lectures sponsored by the People's Movement, the organisation commenced a series of public meetings in January 2008 to inform the public about the contents of the Lisbon Treaty. The first meeting took place in Galway, followed by Sligo, Dublin, and Cork. Platforms were shared between the People's Movement and speakers from PANA, Sinn Féin, People before Profit, the Independent Workers Union, Socialist Party, and community activists. On other occasions public meetings took the form of debates between People's Movement speakers and Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael speakers. The People's Movement also had a key participatory role in the 'Forum of Europe'<sup>54</sup>, a body set up to promote "national debate on the European Union, on its future and on Ireland role in it". The Forum of Europe brought the debate on the Lisbon Treaty to business and work locations throughout the country and was certainly critical in communicating the message from both the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns in a neutral and unbiased manner.

Prior to the June 12<sup>th</sup> 2008 referendum date, the People's Movement also held a demonstration at the EU offices in Dublin to protest the fact that only Ireland with a population of just over four million could vote on the Treaty. This protest highlighted the fact that up to five hundred million other Europeans were being denied the opportunity to vote on the Lisbon Treaty. A final press conference was also held by the People's Movement and chaired by Independent T.D. Tony Gregory and attended by political figures, such as Senator David Norris, Finian McGrath TD, Joe Higgins and a number of councillors. Such high profile press conferences and events before the referendum are key to attracting media attention, particularly in the race to attract 'undecided' voters. Feldman (2002) recognises that "spatial dynamics and dimensions are intrinsic to key areas of sociological and political social movement scholarship" (2002:42). The occupation of spatial dynamics, namely

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.forumoneurope.ie> (Last accessed 25/10/2013)

temporal space through intensified actions and events in the days prior to the referendum were key for the People's Movement to gain much needed media attention.

### **People's Movement and the Media**

I make reference here to external media sources and coverage of the People's Movement message and events rather than internal media outlets such as the organization's own website and internet communication portals. I noted earlier how the People's Movement, being a small organization, did not have the sufficient financial resources to employ specialist or expert PR consultants. Nor did it have sufficient funds to mount a large scale marketing and advertising campaign. Klandermans (1988:189) notes that a social movement organisation's failure to use the mass media is a result of inexperience, but there are also a number of other factors such as resources, competition with other organizations and of course media bias. For a small organization, mounting a publicity action could prove costly and timely and will not guarantee success or media coverage. Decisions about resource allocation were determined based on maximizing potential.

The People's Movement, in an effort to construct their own identity and build the organisation, attempted where possible to run their own independent campaign. The group's Chairperson, Patricia McKenna, was the leading and most prominent spokesperson for the group and appeared on numerous radio and television debates. Due to her history of campaigning against former EU reform treaties, her history in the Green Party and her status as former MEP for Dublin, she was the most high profile member of the organisation. She was, and continues to be, one of the leading critics of EU reform treaties in Ireland. While Patricia represented the People's Movement, very often she was introduced by the media as 'former MEP' or 'ex-Green Party member'. This may be a result of her notable prominence in the Green Party or may be because the media considered the People's Movement a small and unrecognisable organization. While the People's Movement generally conducted its own campaign and strategy, speakers from the People's Movement regularly shared platforms at public meetings with Independent T.D.'s and councillors and representatives from socialist and peace groups. The People's Movement did not generally share a platform with Libertas

or Coir, aside from broadcast media panels, as such parties' 'master frames' and objectives were not in line with the views and objectives of the People's Movement.

I have already outlined in detail the difficulties encountered by social movement organizations in attracting media attention. I have also outlined how the media has and can be used to stigmatize and demonize EU critical activists. Activists note that in the final weeks and months leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum in October 2009 the competition among social movement groups, political parties and business interests was particularly fierce. Anything less than spectacular campaign 'launches' or large scale mobilisation and events simply failed to attract attention from mainstream commercial media and press.

People's Movement activist Michelle notes the change in media attention and coverage over time. She recalls previous EU referenda, such as the 1972 vote for Ireland's entry to the EEC, and notes that "there was a very balanced debate in the media and equal coverage was given to yes and no arguments." Michelle undertook extensive research on archives of press cuttings and documents dating back to the 1970s. She explains that historically, there was clearly more media space for the 'No' campaign and journalists provided a more balanced approach. "It's become much more difficult to fight the establishment, to go against it. As the media were brought into it ... there is very little argument now." She feels that defeating the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty was a success for the group. "I think it was very difficult with the EU Fiscal Compact Treaty. That was a much more difficult campaign because people, the public generally, were so shocked by the downturn in the economy and the threat of not pleasing our European masters. It was very difficult to get a voice to be heard to say anything against the EU". She also recognises, however, that a lot of this access, or lack of it, has to do with the limited financial resources of the organisation.

People's Movement activist Fergus notes that the group received a lot more media attention during the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign, which he feels is due to the organisation having a distinct message. He also feels that the media may have thought that the People's Movement were a bigger group than they actually were. Fergus refers to media access for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon

Treaty referendum as a “blackout”. He feels that because the organisation were “issue” driven, “dealt with the substance of the Treaty” and did not frame arguments about the victory of the working class, this led to some media access. Fergus feels that the media at times, will listen, but feels that in the months prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, there was a “substantial campaign by the government on the press”. He feels that there was a “consensus” which included the press editors and press owners that this time, that the ‘No’ groups would not be afforded the amount of publicity it had obtained prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote.

Local media is generally seen to be more open to providing coverage of acts and events by local groups. The north Kildare People’s Movement branch gained particular local attention when it specifically challenged the Intel group for its interference in the Irish democratic process. Indeed the group challenged the multinational company to join them in a public debate to discuss the provisions of the Treaty but the company refused to comment. Notwithstanding this, the event captured good local media attention in the local ‘Leinster Leader’ newspaper (Bauress 2009). Another example of positive local media attention for the People’s Movement is the local press coverage provided to the midlands branch of the organisation. A People’s Movement public debate during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign attracted a large turnout, including a number of individuals who were quite vocal in their opposition to the attempt by the political establishment to push the exact same treaty back to the electorate for ratification (Hughes 2009). People’s Movement Activist Mairead speaks highly of the Irish language media, who she claims are ‘kinder’ to activists rather than the established mainstream media who are based in Dublin.

Following the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008, Irish government representatives planned to attend a summit in Brussels in October 2008 to discuss the outcome of the vote with their EU counterparts. A number of People’s Movement activists, including myself, travelled to Brussels to participate in a counter EU Summit demonstration, calling on the Irish and EU political establishment to respect the Irish ‘No’ vote. This demonstration provided the People’s Movement with considerable media attention including slots on

RTE<sup>55</sup> News at 6pm and 9pm for two consecutive days. Such televised coverage for the People's Movement is rare. The ability of the group to engage in more critical events and high mobilisation activity increases its capacity to gain media attention. Another such demonstration took place in December 2008 when EU leaders met again to discuss Ireland's rejection of the Lisbon Treaty. Local radio was also an outlet which provided some publicity to the People's Movement group. This took the form of radio talk-show discussions and debates on the Lisbon Treaty. Other media attention included the publication of articles and letters by individual activists in the national and local press.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in accessing media coverage, activists express notable concern over the lack of open discussion and debate in Irish society on EU affairs. People's Movement activist Patricia notes that during the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum there were open political debates for the public to attend. The public had the opportunity to hear both sides of the argument from those advocating and opposing the Treaty. This has since ceased. She feels that it is becoming more and more difficult to voice an EU critical opinion. Patricia notes that EU structures are built in such a manner that key individuals are completely unaccountable. MEP's, who are directly elected, are only a "small cog in the machine". She claims that the overall EU apparatus operates in a very undemocratic manner and there is 'invisible' politics taking place which the public are not aware of. She notes that European nations are quick to criticise other countries and governments of the 'developing world' for a lack of democratic structures, but "here in the EU we have clear democratic deficiencies."

Fellow activist Richard recalls campaigning alongside Norwegian volunteers during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. Richard tells me that he learned from one particular volunteer, that Norwegian people regularly engage in open debates and discussions about Europe and the EU. He also notes how a Norwegian 'No to EU' group was provided with access to schools to give lectures and participate in debates. This level of public interaction and debate fascinated Richard. "Can you imagine? If we could bring things to that level in Ireland that you can actually discuss and say things against the EU. If that's what the People's Movement could achieve then we would be in such a better position for anything coming

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<sup>55</sup> RTE is the name of the national state broadcaster in Ireland.

down the line. We could actually progress this country along to having a mature debate about the EU”.

### **Solidarity and Resources**

As well as experiencing cycles of contentious activity, social movement organisations also make full use of political opportunities and ‘cleavages’ to engage in their struggle. Organisations experience highs and lows during their lifetime and for core activists at the heart of the People’s Movement, the success of the campaign in defeating the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008 was evidence that the task of overcoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty, although difficult, was not insurmountable. The collective memory of success and past achievements can in many ways strengthen the bonds of a group’s identity. Symbolically, language used by activists can inspire others to mobilise and can contribute to shaping the ideas and concerns for new campaigns (Harris 2006:23). The leadership of the People’s Movement made significant attempts to keep the momentum alive on the ground, to encourage mobilisation and attendance at meetings during periods of inactivity between June 2008 and April 2009. A number of dedicated and committed individuals held a public ‘stall’ each Saturday outside the General Post Office (GPO) on O’Connell Street in Dublin to keep the campaign momentum going. The commitment of these dedicated individuals was quite inspiring. The success of the first campaign provided a strong sense of accomplishment and encouragement that success, against the political and business establishment, was possible. The continued commitment of individuals ensured other activists also offered their time and effort. I contend that social reciprocal exchanges and obligations to fellow activists are stronger in social movement organisations which are smaller in size. Personal ties and kinship links are stronger.

As a strategic form of action, the People’s Movement decided to release a ‘People’s Covenant’ which it hoped to get signed by politicians, and well known individuals all over the country. The covenant was essentially a public declaration of ‘respect’ for the democratic outcome of the vote in June 2008. It called on the political establishment to recognize the vote and democratic wishes of the electorate. Another ‘covenant’ or petition

was then to be signed by members of the public. Although the stall remained active each Saturday, and was an important symbol of the People's Movement's activity, the concept of the 'People's Covenant' failed to materialize. The stall did however provide an opportunity for the organisation to continually engage with the public and collect names and addresses of individuals who said they would support the organisation's objectives. Local meetings continued during the latter half of 2008 and members kept abreast of up to date events from around Europe. Although Ireland had democratically voted 'No', activists were keen to illustrate how European member state governments were blatantly dismissing the Irish 'No' vote by proceeding with their national ratification processes for the Treaty. Events were held at certain embassies to coincide with member state's ratification of the Treaty. At one such event in November 2008 members of the People's Movement placed a picket on the Swedish embassy in Dublin, the day before the Swedish parliament were expected to ratify the Treaty. A letter of protest was handed in to the Embassy asking the Swedish government to respect the Irish democratic vote.

In the latter half of 2008 and early 2009 the organization structure became more formalised with regional branches taking shape, forming a regional structure within a national framework. During early 2009, People's Movement activists, in cooperation with activists in its broader network on the political Left, participated in a 'day of action' on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2009 organized by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) against the government's handling of the economic crisis. The People's Movement demonstrated against the neoliberal policies of privatization and deregulation promoted by the government and sought to highlight how such economic policies are promoted and copper-fastened by ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Ironically this 'day of action' saw pro and anti-Lisbon Treaty campaigners march side by side in their opposition to the government and its policies. Such events illustrate the divide between the 'Left' and the 'centre-Left' in Irish politics and on issues regarding the European Union.

The mobilisation events of the People's Movement group at EU buildings, government buildings, and foreign embassies have important symbolic meaning. Marches and street demonstrations are representative of the people reclaiming public space, which has been

'deterritorialised' by a corporate and political culture. The politics of the public space has both symbolic and ceremonial meaning for social movement actors in that it is space which is "struggled over and earned by the concerted efforts of people" (Lee 2009:40). This is in line with Habermasian concepts of 'public space' in that such space has been structurally transformed (Habermas 1989) and determined by the state and corporations. Lee (2009) notes that "people are only passive actors in the public space; they earn certain qualifications in society ... the public space givers decide what is allowed in the space and people cannot use and create a public space according to their own needs" (Lee 2009:40). Control over public space is essentially a critical component to communicate ideological frames and for redefining life qualities unrestricted from the focus of politics and capitalism (Hardt and Negri 2000:397).

Meetings of People's Movement activists during the early months of 2009 also focused on the depleted financial resources of the organization after the first referendum campaign. Financial resources have consistently been an issue for the People's Movement for as long as I have been active with the group. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, the group raised funds from personal donations and contributions. Funds were also raised from benefit nights such as pub quizzes, raffles and music nights. Local groups organized their own fund raising events. The north Kildare branch of the People's Movement in May 2009 organised a folk and blues music night. The event was called 'Rock the Treaty and give Lisbon the Blues'. Other fund raising ideas included car boot sales and street collections. The People's Movement also put up fund raising ideas on its website for local groups to campaign and raise funds. The decision was also made to ask members for membership fees to raise much needed funds for the 2009 referendum campaign. Other events closer to the referendum included a traditional Irish dancing event organized in Dublin city centre at the end of August. A formal ticket only dinner was organized in early September in a hotel in Dublin with prominent guest speakers. Well known British Labour politician and social activist, Tony Benn, agreed to participate in this event, but due to other circumstances was unable to attend. The guest speaker for the evening was a close personal friend and colleague of Tony Benn, British MP for Islington North, Jeremy Corbyn, Raffles and prizes on the night helped to raise additional much needed funds.

Financial resources were not the only concern for the People's Movement organisation. Labour was also required for much needed organisational work, and as this depended on people giving up their free time, this too was limited. People's Movement activist Michelle notes that our resources were particularly limited for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon referendum. "I think that when you have a campaign on a particular issue like a referendum, that is great motivation for people to get together. There was momentum in that. The fact that they called the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon referendum so soon after the first ... all our resources, financially and mentally and physically as volunteers, were wiped out. If we had maybe a five year gap between referendums we might have had a better chance." Eamon sees resources and personnel as the biggest weakness as the People's Movement are a small organisation "which is fledgling and trying to do things." He notes that the group does "draw on other activists who are involved in other things, therefore it is pulled to a degree. It's like everything else, it's getting individuals who will focus exclusively on the work of the People's Movement and build the group." Eamon acknowledges that the people involved with the People's Movement have other commitments and can only contribute what they can.

Based on financial and human resources available to the organisation, Paula feels there is nothing more that the group could have done. Paula feels that "even if we made better posters, even if we gave out another thousand leaflets, we wouldn't have won anyway. It wouldn't have made a blind bit of difference." Other activists, such as Matt from Dublin notes, "It's difficult to build an organisation when everyone is volunteering. You have to ask yourself, how much work can you do and what can you achieve? It's hard when you are a national organisation and you are trying to move it along. It depends on people's time and their resources." In terms of mobilisation, Matt feels that the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was a victory. "We had great support. Feedback that I would have got from people who weren't involved in the campaign, Labour Party people, and people from other organisations, spoke highly of the People's movement in terms of their visibility and also their message and they gained quite a lot of respect. For such a small organisation they tend to get quite a lot of airplay. That was definitely a highpoint"

Fergus agreed that at times, there was reluctance on behalf of some individuals to engage and get involved and this made it very difficult for the organisation to operate with such limited resources. Fergus recognises that certain activists have become disillusioned, and disheartened. He notes that some activists are very close to exiting the group as they feel that they are not making any difference. “It’s a slow laborious process of conscious raising. That’s all you are doing. Keeping the issues somewhere bubbling away politically.” One of the important factors for Fergus is activist engagement. He notes that the organisation is “somewhat organic but not organic enough. I’d prefer if people were more engaged and tried to take hold of it ... a bigger hold of the organisation. Sometimes people do become engaged for a week or two and become disengaged again and I am beginning to feel a bit uncomfortable about it all.” Despite these comments Fergus does not feel that there is a lack of commitment from people. “You have to learn that people choose their own level of commitment. There’s no point in trying to get people to do things if they are unable to commit to doing them”

### **Activist Meetings and Public Debates**

Due to a lack of financial resources the People’s Movement did not have formal office space or an organisational headquarters. The formal correspondence address of the organisation was, and continues to be, in the name of the organisation’s Secretary. Regular meetings of the Dublin People’s Movement branch are held at a central city location where a room is temporarily used for meeting purposes. While this is an informal arrangement it suits the needs of the group and its central location is ideal. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, when I first became involved with the group, I recall meeting a group of activists in Dublin City Centre for ‘postering’. We met in a small room over a commercial unit in Talbot Street in Dublin to collect posters and other materials. This was the storage unit for the People’s Movement’s posters, banners, leaflets and other materials relating to the organisation. Due to limited financial resources the organisation was unable at that time to rent out office space to set up a campaign office. Any financial resources available were channelled into expenses on postering and campaigning. Several meetings leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum stressed the urgency of the need to find a new location, from which the

organisation could base itself. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign, the use of a temporary central office location for meetings was ideal, but unfortunately the organisation could not have extensive use of this room to conduct a full campaign. An effort was made to find office space within Dublin city centre. Finally in August 2009, the People's Movement established themselves, on a temporary basis, on the ground floor of a Georgian house on Amiens Street in Dublin. The large open ground floor space provided sufficient room to store posters, leaflets, materials, cable ties, and other campaign equipment. Soon an office phone line was set up, volunteers stepped forward to provide a full time presence, a desk was in place and the office became a hive of activity. Maintaining this office space was critical in the final few weeks of the referendum campaign. In a matter of days, activists had maps placed on the walls. Routes were mapped-out, areas marked and colour-coded to indicate which areas of Dublin had been 'posterred' or 'leafleted'. Activists came and went in a flurry of activity, some of whom I had never seen or met before, only to be told later they were a friend of a member, a close family connection or a neighbour who was helping out. It seemed that the office suddenly came alive with action. The buzz and excitement of these few weeks brought the campaign alive and the solidarity and social interaction provided activists with increased incentives to mobilise. In many ways the organisation was reinvigorated as the office became a hub of activity.

As the office location was temporary, it had to be vacated following the referendum in October 2009. Meetings throughout 2010-2011 continued to take place at a city centre location. The organization was fortunate, yet again, to acquire a ground floor premises to occupy for six weeks leading up to the EU Fiscal Compact referendum in May 2012. This premises was in North Frederick Street in the heart of the Dublin city. It provided an excellent location for the storage of posters/leaflets and a focal point for the organisation's campaign in the run up to the referendum. There was a marked difference, however, in comparison to the atmosphere and activity witnessed during the Lisbon Treaty campaign in October 2009. The campaign against the EU Fiscal Treaty in 2012 saw a considerable reduction in the level of activist engagement, an issue which I will address in further chapters.

There was a notable attempt by the establishment to disengage in public debate on the Lisbon Treaty during the 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum campaign. The ‘Forum on Europe’ which I made reference to earlier, which provided a neutral forum for the exchange of arguments for and against the Treaty of Lisbon, was shut down by Taoiseach Brian Cowen in April 2009, before the campaign took off for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty. In a letter to the Chairman of the Forum on Europe, Brian Cowen advised that the oireachtas will “once again assume the role as the primary forum for national debate on issues related to our membership of the EU” (Cowen 2009). The decision to shut down the forum angered and disappointed activists who contend that the closure reflected the government’s attempt to control the debate on the Treaty. It was felt that this action limited dissent by silencing and indeed censoring the voices and concerns of activists. People’s Movement activist Patricia notes that “the Irish public had just rejected a huge EU Treaty and instead of promoting discussion they disbanded these open debates.”

Meetings held by activists in March and April 2009 focused on the planning of regional public meetings, determining platform speakers and the locations of upcoming meetings, and discussing the design of posters and campaign literature. Activists in suburban Dublin locations were quite active and resourceful in obtaining and booking locations with minimal cost to the organization. This was important due to the limited financial resources available. Public meetings commenced in April 2009. These meetings also coincided with the organisation’s AGM, which was an important event to sustain activist mobilisation in the months leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. Posters for public meetings were agreed and prepared. The statement on each poster read ‘The Lisbon Treaty – The economy and the Guarantees’. This was used as a generic poster phrase and regional meetings around the country focused on this theme. Activists clearly wished to demonstrate, that since the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, political assurances which the Irish government had received at European level to dissuade the fears and concerns of the Irish public were political ‘promises’ and not in fact legal guarantees. Activists also wished to link the economic downturn in Ireland and Europe to the very neoliberal economic policies which the Lisbon Treaty promoted and encouraged, that is, increased competition, privatisation and deregulated markets. A meeting in July 2009 of People’s Movement activists formally

outlined a structure of multiple and successive meetings to take place commencing in August 2009. Several regional locations were identified for public meetings in addition to a large number of Dublin suburban locations. Activists committed a significant amount of their personal time to prepare for these meetings. Much time was spent posterizing in the vicinity of each meeting location and also on leafleting the surrounding housing estates. While public information meetings were held in different localities, largely where People's Movement members were located, activists also travelled to each location to assist and help each other out in promoting local events. This was an important act of group solidarity, which went beyond support for the organisation itself. Activists recognised and supported each other's personal efforts, which in turn, reinforced their solidarity through the strengthening of friendship and kinship bonds. I attended a large number of these meetings and found that, in general, rural meetings appeared to have higher levels of public attendance. This was despite similar strategies employed in the advertisement of such meetings, such as posterizing, leafleting and utilising local media. People's Movement activist, Michelle, notes that attendance at public meetings can be quite variable. "I'm not sure how it works. It seems very haphazard as to whether the connections are there or not". Michelle notes how certain public meetings, such as a meeting in Mullingar, can receive great attendance, whereas a similar public meeting in Kilkenny could be empty "no matter how much work you put in and how many posters you put up. A lot of it has to do with connections in the locality. You can't just drop in and campaign". She feels that personal networks and connections with local individuals are of vital importance to motivate people to ensure a good attendance is achieved. Michelle also spoke of a meeting she attended in Carlow, which had very low attendance, despite promoting the meetings on local radio and among local groups. She expressed disappointment with these numbers despite the hard work she had put in to making them a success. Michelle feels that there is a strong political dynamic in certain rural areas and this adds to the difficulty in attracting members of the public to meetings, despite high profile figures from the People's Movement on the platform. Notwithstanding low turnout figures from members of the public, it was generally felt that public participation was higher in rural areas. This is also supported by my own observations. Meetings held in the Dublin suburbs in particular, despite activists promoting the events, resulted in very low participation from members of the public.

It should be noted that key figures within the People's Movement shared platforms with other affiliated organizations of the CAEUC group, who I made references to earlier. Such meetings, where they did occur, were shared with PANA representatives and in some cases with Sinn Féin or People before Profit members. Patricia McKenna, representing the People's Movement, also appeared as a guest speaker at a PANA/IAWM in September 2009. Further public meetings in Dublin in the final two weeks of the campaign, were attended by guest speakers from the Danish and Swedish People's Movement. A number of regional meetings were also attended by prominent guest speakers from the Danish People's Movement and 'Nei til EU', a Norwegian EU critical group. The People's Movement also organized meetings in third level colleges such as Carlow Institute of Technology, where it shared a platform with People before Profit, IAWM and former Danish MEP Jens Peter Bonde. A meeting also took place in NUI Maynooth, and the platform was shared with the local Workers Solidarity Movement branch in the college.

### **Postering**

In the weeks before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum in October 2009, a concerted effort was made to 'poster' various areas. 'Postering' commenced in early September and started immediately after the initial 'Yes' and 'No' campaign posters appeared on the streets of Dublin. Coir was the first group to appear with posters. Following this, over the next few days, the streets were turned from empty avenues to colourful displays of 'Yes' and 'No' posters as political parties, business lobbyists, 'civil society' groups, community groups and social movement organizations scrambled for lamp post space on the streets of the nation's capital. Outside Dublin, similar efforts at postering were underway. The People's Movement held their final activist meeting at the start of September, deciding instead that the time for meetings was over and resources should now be dedicated to postering and public engagement. The People's Movement posters for the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum were not colourful and instead attempted to convey factual information. They were Black and White and included such statements as 'Keep Ireland's clout in Europe - Vote No' and 'Follow the French and Dutch – Vote No' (illustrating that a 'No' vote in Ireland would simply be

following the French and Dutch in rejecting the proposed EU reforms). Other posters stated ‘Don’t Risk EU Taxation – Vote No’ while another poster called for a ‘No’ vote to protect against militarisation aspects of the EU. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, the number of posters used by the organisation was evidently less. One colourful poster was used to illustrate how the European Court of Justice interpreted EU law to the detriment of EU workers in favour of big business. Two other posters, remaining in black and white, focused on attacking the Irish political establishment for the economic downturn. It showed a picture of a number of political leaders with the statement ‘Lisbon 2 - From the brains behind the recession’. Another poster illustrated the new EU political and military hierarchy by stating “1 EU President + 1 EU Foreign Minister + 1 EU Foreign Policy + 1 EU Voice at the UN = 1 EU Army?” (See Appendix E for samples of People’s Movement campaign posters).

Postering was concentrated close to the city centre. Activists met in the evening, taking batches of posters and cable ties and taking to the streets of Dublin in cars and on foot. As many posters as possible were erected. Meanwhile, efforts were made to ensure posters were distributed to regional groups around the country. Posters were collected from the city centre office and delivered to rural locations for local People’s Movement activists to put up in their localities. In Dublin suburbs, postering was undertaken in areas where the organisation had volunteers.

### **Public Interaction**

Due to a lack of resources both financial and human resources, People’s Movement activists engaged, in “face to face public” activity (Klandermans 1988:188). Rather than engaging with the public by mail, telephone and individual doorstep discussions, the People’s Movement focused on public events such as information stalls, public meetings, and postering. I have already discussed these in much detail. All activists were assigned tasks and duties to maximise potential based on minimal organisational resources. In this section, I wish to elaborate on public discourse and feedback, focusing particularly on public opinion and attitudes at ground level. Direct face to face communication with the public was made during leafleting events. A stall and a public meeting invite the public to come to hear the

organisation's message, whereas leafleting involved direct proactive contact with the public. Examples of these interactions are provided to illustrate public perception of activists, who were campaigning for a 'No' vote.

Activist feedback on public reaction is mixed. In the weeks before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote, I recall some activists coming back to our 'meeting point' after leafleting with very positive stories of 'smiles' and friendly comments of support and best wishes from members of the public whereas on other occasions, members of the public refused to acknowledge campaigners and simply made negative remarks when they were engaged with. My experience of campaigning with the People's Movement is varied. On the one hand, I encountered several members of the public who simply appeared disinterested and apolitical. Others appeared interested but genuinely confused between all the 'Yes' and 'No' arguments been made. In a number of cases, I experienced negative reactions from some individuals. In some cases members of the public refused to take literature and made it quite clear they were voting 'Yes'. The ability to engage directly with individuals to debate and address their concerns is quite limited. Campaigning at train stations or bus depots either in the morning or evening rush hours only permits a few moments to hand out leaflets and use a few catchphrases to attract the public's attention. I personally found that the battle for the hearts and minds of the public was won and lost through the media. My experience from speaking to neighbours and colleagues during the campaign was that 'word of mouth' played a very important role in communicating and signifying meaning within Irish society. This, I contend, is reflective of the small size of Ireland and regional localities. Circles of friends were powerful arenas for transmitting and communicating 'meaning'. There is often a strong level of trust among members of a particular social group, club or indeed workplace. For those individuals, who perhaps may not follow politics or may not understand the arguments for and against the Lisbon Treaty, trust in friends, colleagues and members of that social group acts as a powerful influencer. Of course, social groups can be dominated by certain individuals and in many situations sociological pressure can be exerted to silence certain members or indeed encourage other members to conform.

I encountered a number of instances throughout the campaign where ‘No’ campaigners were referred to as ‘anti-Europeans’. Members of the public questioned activists why they wanted to leave the European Union. They also asked why, in an economic downturn, we should break with the Euro currency. Other activists, through formal interviews, spoke of similar instances where they were made to feel ‘shameful’ for not acting in the nation’s best interest because they were advocating a ‘No’ vote. Such perceptions can marginalise potential ‘No’ voters and can, in many ways, silence debate and limit dissent. I contend that such negative comments were largely from individuals, who were clearly unfamiliar with the terms of the Treaty, and were influenced by ‘Yes’ discourse which detracted from the issues contained within the Treaty. Positive and pro-European feeling and sentiment is generally reported to be high in Ireland and therefore action to counter the EU or Europe may be regarded as a negative. Anderson (2009) supports this view and illustrates that, as citizens, our perception of the EU is often positive, but this is because the EU is not seen as having brought any immediate concerns to people’s lives and any effect on them personally. Individuals only see the positive benefits, such as travelling within a union of no border checks and without the need to change currency (2009:63). Negative issues such as taxation, social spending on health and education, and employment, have always been, and continue to be, determined within a national context. In other words, individuals do not see these critical issues falling within the remit of the European Union. Accountability for these concerns continues to lie at the doorsteps of local politicians. This may provide an explanation for Ireland’s regularly high sentiment and positive feeling towards Europe, paralleled with its distrust in the political establishment. Activists share such distrust, but unlike the general public, they squarely lay the blame for such issues at the door of the European Union in Brussels. In other words they challenge local state actors but in a ‘European’ context and focus on the ‘EU’ as the root cause of the problem. I also contend that economic uncertainty had a large bearing on how the Treaty was perceived by the Irish public. Activists illustrate how business and political groups compounded these fears and used economic uncertainty as a resource tool to mobilise for a ‘Yes’ vote. Jenkins and Perrow (1977) illustrate how the challenges and struggles of social movement organisations can be influenced and determined by dramatic changes in the political environment from one challenge to the next. Certainly for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum, activists who campaigned for a ‘No’ vote

were facing a much changed political and economic climate. Fear and uncertainty dominated people's minds. Other members of the public claimed that they were voting 'Yes' based on the level of financial aid that Ireland had received from the European Union. This illustrates how European treaties are often seen through national economic frames, much like a rational cost/benefit analysis. O'Connell (2001) illustrates that our knowledge of EU affairs and the EU institutions are poor. He also adds that the Irish "have tended to like Brussels because it gave us money to build roads and factories and fund hedge payments and heifers" and in return he notes "all we had to do was to fly the European flag in a few prominent places and make vaguely liberal noises" (2001:108). Activists would whole heartedly agree with O'Connell when he refers to our 'Europeanness' as one driven by national "self-interest" and is a "product of selfishness, delusion and wishful thinking while its internationalist aspect is at best superficial" (O'Connell 2001:108).

During interactions with the public there were times, when activists from the People's Movement, were forced to answer questions regarding claims and allegations made by other 'No' campaign groups. I often felt that members of the public failed to make a differentiation between the various 'No' groups who were campaigning. It is understandable how individuals, who had little or no interest in politics, would not see any distinguishing features from one group to another without taking time to familiarize themselves with all the campaign groups. Meyer (2002) notes that, "activists choose issues, tactics and allies but not in the circumstances they please. They can be subsequently trapped in particular positions, wed to odd tactics or caught in uncomfortable alliances" (2002:12). While activists in the People's Movement attempted to clearly distinguish themselves from negative comments or bad publicity from other groups, I found certain activists were slower than others in criticising particular 'No' groups. Such activists felt that the overall 'No' campaign needed all the support it could muster. The majority of activists within the People's Movement did not comment on the strategies and tactics of other groups and simply outlined to the public their own reasons for voting 'No'. On rare occasions, I encountered and experienced verbal confrontations with campaigners from 'Yes' civil society groups. Other activists who I interviewed spoke of similar confrontations but these appeared to be largely confined to busy city centre locations where both 'Yes' and 'No' campaigners were competing for

political space and the attention of busy commuters. The ‘Yes’ campaigners in question did not appear to represent political parties but were campaigning for business funded ‘civil society’ groups. In such instances, activists felt that ‘Yes’ campaigners did not appear to understand the ‘Treaty’ itself and failed to understand why activists from the ‘No’ campaign were opposing the Treaty.

I referred earlier to how economic uncertainty dominated the minds of the public in the weeks and months leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote. This increasing period of ‘uncertainty’ appeared to have a correlating increase in the support for the ‘Yes’ side. While people were unsure on whether to vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ based on a lack of knowledge or a distrust in politicians, the uncertain economic situation ironically appeared to benefit the ‘Yes’ campaign. The economic downturn created a climate of uncertainty for both employment and economic stability. Businesses were struggling. Unemployment was rising. Property and share prices were falling. While anger with the government was widespread, certain members of the public comically passed remarks that they were voting ‘Yes’ because the politicians in Brussels could not destroy the country any more than the Irish politicians had. Activists countered such arguments by illustrating how the majority of our financial and economic policies were in fact directly driven by the EU. The very fact that our economic and fiscal policy is determined by the European Central Bank (ECB) illustrates the lack of power that Ireland has to control its own fiscal future, such as control of interest rates and currency exchange rates. I did notice that members of the public failed to make the connection between EU power and the issues which impact their daily lives. Individuals faced on-going worry and concern over job security, household expenses, health services and mortgage interest rates. The connection between these critical ‘quality of life’ matters and EU economic policy was not being made. As a result of this, members of the public did not perceive any ‘tangible’ or ‘visible’ consequences of Treaty acceptance. During the campaign, the People’s Movement and its activists sought to increase individual’s consciousness of these matters, to promote awareness and to make the ‘invisible’ visible by illustrating the connection between Treaty articles and how they impacts on people’s daily lives. While ‘Yes’ campaigners made references to vague positive elements of the Treaty, ‘No’ campaigners engaged in a deeper analysis of the Treaty’s

articles. Public meetings held by the People's Movement focused on 'interpreting' the Treaty and its articles. While this may have proved invaluable for individuals with a specific interest in EU politics and law, it may have appeared quite 'legalistic' and detailed for certain members of the public. In many instances, members of the public wanted 'brief' arguments for and against the Treaty. Engaging in long and detailed discussions about the articles of a European treaty was not possible during face to face encounters with the public due to people's personal time constraints in their busy lives. A lack of public interest appears to be reflective of a growing apathy for politics which seems to be emerging in Irish society.

Activists sought to illustrate that by voting 'No' this was, paradoxically, the most 'European' thing to do. It was argued that a 'No' vote was an expression of the shared negative views on EU policy which their fellow Europeans felt across all member states. Unfortunately the Irish media appeared uninterested or unwilling to report on EU critical movements and general public dissatisfaction with the EU across other member states. Activists point out, that political parties too, appeared unable or unwilling to illustrate the linkages between EU policy and domestic legislation and how it impacts negatively on individual's lives. Indeed all the main political parties in Ireland appear to accept the EU project as a certainty or a *fait accompli*. Any alternative model presented is generally dismissed or rejected. EU Treaties are not open to inputs, discussions or debates. They are presented in a 'Yes' and 'No' fashion. During the campaign, the main political parties appealed to individuals to put aside their political differences until after the Lisbon Treaty had been passed. The message delivered to the public from the political and business establishment was that the passing of the Treaty was of critical importance for our economic future, a myth fuelled by political and business discourse, that people should not vent their anger at the government by rejecting the Treaty.

### **Forms of Protest**

Rucht (1998), in his study of collective protest, focuses specifically on protest 'structure', that is, the hardware of protest such as occurrence in time, location, size, duration, organization of groups, types of action, and level of mobilisation and targets. This also

includes protest 'culture', that is, the software of protest such as framing of action, language, symbols and concrete behaviours which are guided by underlying values, interests and experiences (Rucht 1998:31). Group collective protest and public displays of action were key to the People's Movement as a strategic resource and action tool. Social movement organisations use such protest events as a resource tool primarily due to a lack of other resources such as money, formal power and expert knowledge.

The form of protest activity by social movements at mass mobilisation events is well documented. Such gatherings have been synonymous with art, street theater, gender performances and mobile carnivals (Juris 2008:139, St John 2008:180). Such action represents forms of "ritual opposition" and "a symbolic overturning of hierarchy" (Juris 2008:140, Turner 1974:96). The 'festival' nature of protests has been aptly described by some as 'protestival' (St.John 2008) because of its carnivalesque elements. While street performances are generally not within the group's repertoire of protest, there were a number of occasions where the group employed theatrical or dramatic rituals of protest. While such performances do attract media attention and have been discussed at activist meetings, they can also be a distraction from the underlying message, as mainstream media discourse can obliterate or render the political content less visible (McFarlane & Hay 2003:219).

Protests have been designed and shaped within existing 'repertoires' of action (Tilly 1978) within the broader framework of social movement struggles in Ireland. Such struggles are evident in the form of postering, leafleting, petition signing, holding public debates and information evenings, visible public demonstrations, and mass mobilisations. Such protest forms are familiar to many groups on the political Left and are considered to be accepted forms of protest, that is, they are forms of protests which are well recognized and considered 'legitimate' forms of protest. Herbert (2007) illustrates how spatial tactics are critical for social movements in their struggle, but the state itself can often limit dissent through defining its own territorial restrictions which have implications for movement actors. When such protest is spatially marginalized by the state, it is also becomes marginalized politically (2007:602,616). Other forms of protest such as the occupation of space, destruction of property and acts of civil disobedience (violent or peaceful) generally fall outside of publicly

‘acceptable’ forms of action and People’s Movement activists did not engage in such protest activity. The forms of protest employed by the People’s Movement group are not considered ‘radical’ action or forms of violent ‘direct action’ which are at times witnessed at contentious mass mobilisation events at global political summits and meetings of global financial and trade bodies (See Juris 2005, 2008:155).

People’s Movement activist, Paula, feels that “out of all the groups campaigning against the Lisbon Treaty, we were the least pretentious of everybody. The reason that they [the Media] didn’t mention us in a lot of things is because they didn’t have anything to say about us. We weren’t pretentious. We were not pushing anything down anyone’s throat”. Paula said she sees the People’s Movement group as very “mild and reasonable” and not extreme or radical at all. “We don’t get hot headed at all”. Notwithstanding this, the People’s Movement has adapted its forms of protest to its immediate environment. Crossley (2002a) argues that all struggles, or ‘field dynamics’, do not occur within a single homogenous space and such ‘repertoires’ of action can and are moulded to suit the situation at hand. What is key to any protest in order for it to be successful, or indeed acceptable, at societal level is the manner and form in which it is presented and the message in which it conveys. What is critical is the social acceptance of this protest and in doing so protestors must understand how the form of protest employed will be received by their audience (Croizat 1998:61).

The People’s Movement seek to raise social awareness but at the same time they do not wish to distance themselves from public support. Whether it be in terms of financing its campaign, the distribution of leaflets, the erection of posters and engaging with citizens on the streets, the organisation operated within the state’s legal framework and ensured adherence to the ‘rules of the game’ (McCarthy & McPhail 1998:84, Della Porta, Fillieule & Reiter 1998). While the organisation operated less as a political grouping compared to other groups on the ‘No’ side, its repertoires of action were largely in line with other parties and ‘civil society’ groups. People’s Movement activist Richard acknowledges that we are not radical protestors but he notes that our views may be considered by some as radical. He agrees, however, that the organisation does not protest by using strategies which could be considered outside of the rule of law. A small number of activists felt that the group should

consider more ‘attention grabbing’ events and public displays to communicate our message, particularly as the organisation has limited resources. Ciaran, as one of the younger activists in the People’s Movement, recognises the importance of social media and feels we should place greater emphasis on this communication medium in the future. Ciaran feels that we should have done “exactly what the ‘Yes’ campaigners done. Fill every space. They had their civil society groups, their footballers and celebrities, political groups, the media, the business community ... unless we had something to tackle that with we could do nothing.” Ciaran feels that it is disappointing that you have to have some “X-factor quality” to get people’s attention when it comes to politics and issues which directly affect people’s lives. Ciaran notes that “we had wisdom but we just were not young and sexy”.

While no ‘direct action’ tactics and strategies were evidently deployed by any group during the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, the post Lisbon political environment throughout Europe is much different, and certainly there is increasing evidence that ‘direct action’ as a strategy is growing and is reflective of the anger and sentiment among politically disenfranchised individuals (McGee 2010, Beesley 2010a, Cassidy & Hunt 2010). Notwithstanding this, the forms of protest engaged by the People’s Movement group in the campaign leading up to the referendum on the EU Fiscal Compact in 2012 were broadly in line with former Lisbon referendum campaigns.

One feature of protest which does deserve comment is the focus of the EU as a symbol of power. Certain social movement organisations, advocacy groups, NGOs and political groupings situate their struggles vis-à-vis the state and its institutions. The People’s Movement also situate their struggles within similar frameworks but broaden their definition of power to include EU institutions both in Ireland and throughout Europe. Kolb (2005) sees institutions such as the EU as critical targets of mobilisation in the same space as struggles against other supranational institutions such as the WTO, IMF and G8 summits. Contentious events which require mobilisations against the EU “can become short term windows of opportunity” (2005:115). The referenda against the Lisbon Treaty provided the People’s Movement, and indeed other activists on the political Left, with such an opportunity to challenge the EU directly and the state as an agent of such change.

The dynamics of protest can also be influenced and determined by symbolic meanings. Corporate hegemony and discourse can determine and condition protest. Language is relevant and can be used as a weapon in the struggle to create and solidify a movement organisation's identity (Sharryn Kashmir 2005). If a movement organization does not have adequate access to channels of communication, acts of civil disobedience or less 'legitimate' or politically 'acceptable' styles of protest can be used. These, however, can be reinterpreted and misrepresented by powerful actors and media discourse. Struggles may therefore be performed with such discourse in mind and issues may be contested within acceptable parameters to avoid negative media coverage. Language is also important for a social movement organization particularly in the way it communicates and expresses its challenge. In some instances, for a social movement group to receive adequate recognition, they must assume a certain identity in their relation to the state, that is, they must succumb to national and international discourse on their identity in order to support their claims (Renee Sylvains 2005). In other words, a movement organization may have to express or challenge their enemy by adopting the logic and discourse of that enemy. Marc Edelman (2005) notes how certain organizations have to assume certain organizational structures and become fluent in the banal and repetitive institutional discourse in order to have their message communicated (See also Alvarez, Dagnino & Escobar 1998:12).

### **Creating 'Identity'**

A final aspect of mobilisation which I wish to look at is the establishment of collective identity. This is one of the key and critical components for social movement organizations and can be a valuable resource in the mobilisation of activists and the recruitment of new members. The primary focus for People's Movement members was communicating the organisation's message and explaining the articles of the Lisbon Treaty to the public. While the organisation was formed after the Nice Treaty referendum, active mobilisation only commenced in the months leading up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum. It was during the campaign, that the organisation began expanding, assuming regional structures, and recruiting new members. In this respect the creation of collective identity was paramount.

Mobilisation and events which took place during the campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> referenda were opportunities to promote and highlight the People's Movement as a group, but also what the organization stood for and represented. The referenda, in other words, also signified the organisation's struggle to gain 'recognition' and 'identity' (Hobson 2003:4). While the organisation is not a political party, the People's Movement seek to be a new and alternative critical voice in Irish political concerns. In many ways, activists in the People's Movement are seeking 'recognition' insofar as their political voice has been disenfranchised. I also consider this to be a valid reason for the group's peripheral status in the umbrella grouping of 'No' campaign groups, the CAEUC. Maintaining a separate identity is therefore fundamental to sustaining the group particularly as the organisation is new and developing. Through the growth of a new organisation, its supporters are reaffirming recognition and identity. Activists see themselves as a critical voice to challenge the EU and the state on issues of social justice. 'Identity' in this context relates to how the People's Movement seeks to frame itself in terms of public perception. It also relates to the symbols and language used by the group and also the meaning created by virtue of its actions. It is how the group, as a social movement organization, is perceived both by its members, networked colleagues, the media, government agents and the public. Identity can be fluid and can shift and change according to its needs and objectives.

A small number of activists, notably Ciaran and Paula, while recognising the groups distinct identity, felt that there should have been a more unified approach during the campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty, extending beyond that of the CAEUC umbrella grouping. Paula and Ciaran were quite expressive of the need to put all personalities and differences aside and come together to try a build a united alliance against the Treaty. Such an alliance, they argue, should include all groups on the 'No' side including non-Left groups such as Coir and Libertas. I should note that the majority of members of the organisation would not have favoured such an approach. Paula felt the 'Yes' side were very united and organised and were "singing from same hymn sheet" whereas the 'No' side were "tripping over each other and in-fighting". Paula felt that "we had individual identities but no united identity. If we had one big press conference and meeting to show that this Treaty was not a good thing for

people it would have helped. It's divide and conquer". Paula expresses regret that this did not take place and each organisation ran its own campaign. "It was doubling up on things and saying the same things. We need to stick together. Pool our resources". Paula feels this didn't happen due to personalities within certain organisations and certain people refusing to share platforms with other people. Paula states: "This is a battle. Put your personalities aside. Just pick up your bloody armour and your sword and get out there and fight. Fight the battle, win the battle and live to fight another day. When it's over you can go your separate ways"

Identity also relates to how individuals perceive themselves. My discussions with People's Movement members revealed a reluctance to consider themselves as social 'activists' (Bobel 2007). Members who did see themselves as 'activists' were largely individuals who had a long history in social struggles, that is, they had been involved in previous campaigns in EU referenda or perhaps were involved in other social movement organisations. Although the majority of members did not define themselves as activists, they did acknowledge that perhaps the general public would see them as such. There are those who perhaps resist the phrase 'activist', as they may feel they do not meet the value standard for activism and therefore do not feel worthy being accredited with the title 'activist'. While activists would be 'of the Left' they do not stress the strong politics of their identity. McDonald (2002:114), drawing on the work of Melucci (1996) argues that reducing a contemporary social movements 'identity' to their political dimension suppresses the message which movements are attempting to communicate. He notes that 'identity' remains political only in its relationship with government (see also McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) but outside the political realm it is a shared symbolic response which for a lot of people is very much an individual experience, contributing to what has been referred to as activist's 'cultural capital' (Lichterman 1996). The 'individual experience' is certainly one which activists relate to and this passion for 'social justice' and political accountability are driving factors in the motivation of individuals to take action and mobilise. For activists campaigning with the People's Movement this was the linking of EU policies to the quality of life issues of Irish people. It was about linking global and international causative factors to the concerns of local people (Allen 2004:4) and illustrating and highlighting how EU laws and policies

affect and construct ‘meaning’ to how we live. Studies have shown that unless these global causative linkages are made, contentious issues will remain local and will only be challenged locally (See Drury, Reicher & Stott 2003). Such linkages can be made to numerous struggles throughout Ireland whether challenging EU political and economic reform or environmental concerns created by increased corporatism and powerful multinational business (Leonard 2009:281). Scott (1990) notes that new social movements have an “interest in ‘participatory democracy’ rather than merely the outputs of the political system” (1990:153). I contend that these comments would strongly resonate with how People’s Movement activists feel about EU referenda debates, particularly when one considers ‘entrenched forms of power’ from both official state discourse and also from corporatist actors who entered the debate on EU reform.

It is through an organisation’s master and sub frames that it shapes its actions. This, in turn, affects how it is perceived by members and non-members. Frames of action create identity. Rucht & Neidhardt (2002) state that in order to understand social action we need to comprehend how those who take action construct their realities. The structural context of their actions and interactions is of significance. I have already noted in detail how the People’s Movement is organised and structured and how the organization engages with the public. The ‘EU critical’ theme together with ‘social justice’ could be considered the ‘master frames’ of the People’s Movement, both of which are integral components of the organisation’s identity. Sub Frames however are also relevant in understanding the organization. The People’s Movement is an organization which opposes militarization of the EU and is a strong advocate of Irish neutrality. I have already made reference to the close links between the People’s Movement and PANA. ‘Democracy’, particularly the promotion of local participatory decision making is another key sub frame for the movement. Activists highlighted how changes to the EU Commissioner system, voting procedures such as ‘qualified majority voting’ and changes to member states ‘voting weight’ impact on our ability as citizens to have our voice heard in Europe. ‘Sovereignty’ was also an important sub frame. Activists illustrates how the EU was moving towards a federal system through the creation of supranational positions such as an EU President, an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and one diplomatic EU voice at the United Nations. All positions they claimed

would diminish and replace national sovereignty. These changes coupled with cultural symbols, such as an EU flag, EU anthem and EU currency, illustrated how the EU mirrored a nation state structure or in this case a 'super-state'. 'Economic Policy' is another sub frame, and discussions on this matter centred around the European Central Bank (ECB) and how the volatility of the Euro may impact Ireland and indeed how fiscal policy is determined by economic conditions in larger European member states. Anderson (2009) interestingly enough notes that the Euro currency spelt the end of the "most important attribute of national economic sovereignty". (2009:26)

These sub frames are just examples of how People's Movement activists challenged various elements of the Lisbon Treaty. Other key sub frames focus on the issues of workers' rights, and how such rights have been diminished by decisions of the European Court of Justice, and also on neoliberalism, by reference to Treaty articles specifically promoting privatisation, increased competition and reduced state aid. It is important to illustrate how such sub frames operate at a level below and within a grand master frame. It is these frames which contribute to organisational identity and how it is perceived both by activists, the media, potential volunteers and most importantly the public.

During my participation with the group, I did question what action, if any, members of the People's Movement would be taking if there were no EU referenda to be challenged. While I do believe that a number of activists only emerge to contest major contentious events and actions framed as 'counter EU' struggles, I contend that a core group of activists would nevertheless be challenging the state under different frames of action and under different 'guises' and 'forms' in order to promote issues of social justice, local autonomy and democratic accountability.

## **Michelle**

*Michelle, originally from Kilkenny but now living in south Dublin, tells me, “I’m a late comer to political movements. I wasn’t terrible politically aware in my 20s and 30s. I was busy having family and children. I had an awareness as there was a family background of going against the EU. In 2002, I had the opportunity to study Politics and Sociology in Trinity College Dublin. This got my interest going. I completed a Masters in Ethnic and Racial Studies, but I wrote my thesis on nation state formation which made me very aware of the issues of the EU, and how they were forming an EU State”.*

*Michelle’s work with the People’s Movement was new to her. Aside from volunteer work which she had undertaken for 2 years on a helpline with Women’s Aid, she never volunteered her time to a group before and not a social movement group or any action that could be considered ‘political’. Her family, however, were political and in this respect her father, who was an ardent and well known EU critical campaigner, would have been quite influential on her political outlook on world affairs and Irish sovereignty.*

*“I would always have had an awareness. I wouldn’t have had the naivety of the general public of just accepting that this is a great thing for Ireland. The core issue is the EU for me. It’s specifically about the impact of the EU on the Irish nation state. I am not a nationalist or anything like that, but I do have concerns. Accountability and sovereignty and democracy are important.”*

*It is interesting to note that like other activists who became involved with the People’s Movement group, Michelle’s involvement was also a result of personal contacts and linkages. Following the defeat by the French and Dutch people of the EU Constitution and its repackaging in the form of the Lisbon Treaty, Michelle decided that she wanted to get involved and support a campaign. Following contacts with Anthony Coughlan, from the National Platform, she was put in touch with Fergus in the People’s Movement. Michelle tells me that although her initial contact was with Anthony Coughlan, she “felt much more*

*comfortable joining up with People's Movement based on what they stood for, and they were on the Left more so than others". While not being critical of other groups, such as Libertas or Coir, Michelle feels that these particular groups would not have represented her ideals and principles.*

*During the campaign against both the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Fiscal Treaty, Michelle organised the Carlow/Kilkenny branch of the People's Movement. Her role was to organise and chair public meetings, undertake interviews for local radio and press, and organise poster and leaflet distribution in her locality.*

*As Michelle is relatively new to social activism, I asked her to outline her experience after almost five years of activism. Michelle sees resources as the biggest obstacle to the group's success, the ability to attract new activists but also fund-raising. Speaking about public perception, Michelle feels that generally "people in Ireland see activists such as us in the People's Movement as a crowd of cranks. The message is not clear or they do not understand why we are campaigning on these issues. If we were seen more as a pan-European group then maybe we would get more credibility with people generally and the media"*

*Michelle also refers to public perception and people's attitudes, particularly when she tells her friends and colleagues that she is a 'No' voter. "Maybe it's a legacy of our past. Anybody in Ireland who claims they are more Irish than they are European, are tagged as being a 'Nationalist' or a 'Sinn Féiner'." She feels that these stereotypes are probably unique to Ireland due to our history on the island. "Maybe in other European countries they haven't had that issue so it's easier to be EU critical. Perhaps it's not as negative."*

*Although she does not feel she has strong nationalist ideologies, she is quite proud of her 'Irishness' and issues such as democracy and Irish sovereignty are very important to her and are key drivers in her motivation to mobilise.*

## **Chapter 11**

## **New Challenges**

Excerpt from author's fieldnotes 21/10/2009

### *Post Lisbon Activist Meeting, Dublin, Ireland 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009.*

*It has been just over two weeks since the referendum of October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 in which the people of Ireland voted by a clear majority of 67% to 33% to accept and ratify the Treaty of Lisbon, which now paves the way for the EU to proceed with institutional reform and major legislative changes. For European senior political figures, and indeed the political establishment in Ireland, the outcome of the referendum of October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009 brought with it a sigh of relief. For many activists and groups who campaigned against the Treaty of Lisbon, the outcome was a sad result after such an ardent campaign.*

*Approximately fifteen activists from the People's Movement, including myself, who had campaigned for a 'No' vote in the Treaty of Lisbon Referenda both in June 2008 and October 2009 met in Dublin City Centre on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009 to evaluate the outcome of the referendum and to discuss "where do we go from here?" Our meeting began, first of all, with an overview of the Eurobarometer (October 2009) poll results which provided quantitative data on the reasons why people chose to vote 'Yes' to the Lisbon Treaty on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, overturning the previous 'No' vote of June 12th 2008. The findings illustrated that 77% of 'Yes' voters, approved the Lisbon Treaty on the basis that it was in Ireland's best interest to do so (politically, diplomatically and economically)<sup>56</sup>. For activists, the success of the 'Yes' campaign was the result of a discursive approach, that involved a climate of fear and economic uncertainty, instilled within the public mind through a high profile and professional marketing campaign which was well-financed and supported by vested interests.*

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<sup>56</sup> 27% of 'Yes' voters believed it was in the best interest of Ireland. 18% claimed Ireland receive a lot of benefit from the EU. 23% stated a 'Yes' vote would help the Irish economy. 9% stated that it would keep Ireland fully engaged in Europe.

*According to the Eurobarometer findings, there was an overall 17% swing in voters' intentions between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendums. While certainly there was a greater visible campaign for the 'Yes' side, opponents of the Treaty disputed the assertion that the public were armed with greater information for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote. According to the Eurobarometer poll, a large factor for voting 'No' in the referendum of June 2008 was a lack of understanding among voters of the contents of Lisbon Treaty. It is reported that the lack of understanding decreased from a level of 22 per cent to only 4 per cent over the 16 months between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty vote. Activists however, clearly see the difference in being 'informed' on a subject and being 'influenced' through misinformation from the political and business establishment.*

*While the results of the Eurobarometer poll could be interpreted in both positive and negative ways, the discussion of activists at the Dublin meeting on October 21 was one largely of disappointment and disillusionment. Activists present felt that the reasons for the dramatic increase in the 'Yes' vote was largely due to fear among voters about an uncertain economic future coupled with possible political and economic isolation should the Irish public reject the Lisbon Treaty. Anger among activists was clearly aimed, not at the 'Yes' voter, but rather at the government and the main political establishment who built their campaign on fear and possible economic ruin. Activists discussed what they could have done better, what 'lessons' could be learned from the outcome of the referendum, but also the obstacles to accessing media channels in communicating the organisation's message to the people. The discussion among activists then moved from, what the future of the People's Movement should look like, to what kind of an organisation we should be. Over the past two years, the organisation has largely been centred on EU referenda. It has been a focal point around mobilisation and action framing. Activists now began discussing how to reframe their objectives in a post-Lisbon European Union.*

*“The Treaty of Lisbon speaks not of the peoples of Europe but of the States of Europe; that it was rammed through to circumvent the popular will, expressed in three referenda; that the structure it enshrines is widely distrusted by those subject to it; and that so far from being a sanctuary of human rights, the Union it codifies has colluded with torture and occupation”*  
- Perry Anderson (2012:51)<sup>57</sup>

This chapter has two main themes. First, I focus on the post-Lisbon period to illustrate activists’ attempts to sustain mobilisation. While Chapter 10 of this thesis focuses on strategy and tactics during referenda campaigns, this chapter focuses specifically on activists’ efforts to sustain a positive momentum in the group in the absence of an EU referendum. Second, I focus on the EU Fiscal Treaty referendum which was held on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012. I make a comparative analysis between the People’s Movement campaign during this referendum and the group’s campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. In doing so, I highlight the repertoires of the group’s activity and approaches adopted by the group. I also pay particular attention to internal and external factors which impacted on the People’s Movement campaign.

## **Sustainment**

Following the acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty by the Irish public in October 2009, a notable attempt was made by the leadership of the People’s Movement to maintain momentum and create a new focus of mobilisation. Interviews with activists revealed a growing disillusionment and frustration with the nature of democracy in Ireland and the inability of ordinary citizens to compete with powerful political and business interests. While there was no specific evidence of a move towards radical action from social activists, I do contend that the disenfranchisement of activists further alienates them from mainstream political society. In examining sustainment, I wish to discuss two distinct elements which, although interlinked, need to be addressed independently. First, I discuss mobilisation to sustain

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<sup>57</sup> See Perry Anderson (2012) in which Anderson counteracts the views of Jürgen Habermas’ shifting position on the EU and Lisbon Treaty.

activist engagement. Second, I discuss mobilisation as a resource in the construction of organisational 'identity'.

### *Activist engagement*

The most significant challenge for the People's Movement in the post-Lisbon period was the lack of a central focus for mobilisation. The People's Movement specifically challenge the European Union. A referendum on reform of the European Union is therefore a key mobilisation event for the organisation. In the Post-Lisbon environment, the absence of a referendum created a period of uncertainty for the organisation. Mobilisation, however, has two elements. Firstly, the event of a referendum, is in fact a mobilisation resource for the People's Movement. A referendum motivates individuals to become active, and therefore enables the People's Movement to grow. A referendum attracts new and former activists to the organisation. I contend that the absence of a referendum, therefore, acted as a demobilisation factor for the group. Indeed, throughout 2010 and 2011, I observed a notable decline in attendance at activist meetings. In some instances a number of individuals completely retreated from social activism. Secondly, the absence of the referendum as a campaign focus, created a vacuum for the group itself. While the objectives of the People's Movement were still relevant, the group lacked a central and cohesive element around which to mobilise. As the People's Movement is not a political party, the group needed to discuss new approaches. In particular it needed to re-frame its actions in the absence of a referendum, while keeping the European Union as its 'master frame'.

Activists' meetings, following the acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty, focused on reframing the organisation's approach. The continuing decline in Ireland's economy provided the basis for such re-framing. Activists felt that the issues, which the group raised during the Lisbon Treaty campaigns, continued to be relevant. In the absence of a referendum, a vehicle was needed to communicate this message and highlight the democratic deficit which existed. In other words, the People's Movement sought to highlight the connection between the EU, the lack of democracy, and the implications for the economy. The group sought to raise

awareness about increased EU political and economic power and its impact on the local economy. The economy essentially became a sub-frame within an EU master-frame.

Protest events, such as demonstrations at the Dáil to coincide with the announcement of the annual budgets, also enabled activists to challenge the European Union. Activists illustrated how European Central Bank (ECB) demands for tighter fiscal and monetary control was leading to increased budgetary cuts for Irish workers and cuts in social expenditure which impacted local communities. Other protest events targeted the political and business establishment. These events acted as reminders to the establishment and the public that the promises made during the Lisbon Treaty campaign were not forgotten. Demonstrations were regularly held at EU offices in Dublin, the offices of leading political parties, as well as IBEC conferences for businesses. Activists wished to hold the political and business establishment accountable for the statements they made during the campaign which clearly linked a ‘Yes’ vote to jobs and investment. The People’s Movement pointed out, that despite such assurances, unemployment has since increased dramatically<sup>58</sup> and the country was sinking further into economic recession.

Following the acceptance of the Lisbon Treaty in October 2009, there was no referendum to be contested by the People’s Movement. The Lisbon Treaty, however, continued to represent a symbol of protest. People’s Movement’s events continued to adopt the Lisbon Treaty as a theme of mobilisation. The referendum campaign had led to increased activism and the recruitment of new members to the group. It was considered important, therefore, to keep the Treaty at the heart of the group’s actions. Mobilisation events, therefore, sought to connect today’s economic issues with yesterday’s political decisions.

### *Constructing Identity*

In addition to the group’s attempts to re-frame its approach, there was also a concern about group ‘identity’ and the need to undertake mobilisation events in the name of the People’s

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<sup>58</sup> Central Statistics Office (CSO). Seasonally adjusted unemployment figures: 2007 average 4.6%. 2008 average 6.4%, 2009 average 12%, 2010 average 13.8%. Figures for 2011 and 2012 have risen further to 14.6% and 14.7% respectively (after peaking at 15%).

Movement. While demonstrations and protest events provided the People's Movement with political space to communicate their message, it also sought to solidify 'collective identity' under the banner of the organisation. The People's Movement organised a number of symbolic protest events at EU buildings in Dublin to express concerns over the Lisbon Treaty. The ability of the organisation to hold its own protest events was seen as critical. As the People's Movement was not a large organisation, there was a concern that by limiting participation to large events, that is, collective action with other groups, the People's Movement may be subsumed within a larger collective.

Notwithstanding this, the People's Movement did engage in joint mobilisation and large scale events but sought to differentiate itself from other groups and sought to highlight its EU critical position. During joint collective mobilisation events, such as those organised by The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), marches were generally attended by a large number of trade union groups, political groups and community activists. While the People's Movement participated in these demonstrations, the group's activists carried People's Movement flags and large banners which directly referenced the Lisbon Treaty and the loss of sovereignty to the European Union. While 'identity' is a key concern, participation in large mobilisation events does have some benefits for a small organisation. It enables the group to distinguish itself among other groups by communicating a distinct message. It also acts as a resource mobiliser for activists to re-engage during periods of non-contentious action. Notwithstanding this, the decline in activist attendance at mobilisation events was notable.

In addition to mobilisation events, organised collectively or by the group itself, core activists continued to engage with other social movement actors and groups on the political Left. It was important for the identity of the group to remain networked and visible. As discussed in previous chapters, the importance of networking is vital to ensure the sustainment of a small social movement organisation. Personal linkages formed by core activists were maintained between other activists and organisations who adopted an EU critical outlook. A series of joint meetings were organised with such social movement organisations and NGO groups,

engaging in EU-critical themes.<sup>59</sup> Other meetings organised by regional People's Movement branches focused on the EU and its impact on the Irish health system. The People's Movement also continued to engage in joint initiatives with other groups on conferences relating to the EU and militarisation<sup>60</sup>.

Notwithstanding mobilisation efforts to re-engage activists and re-construct identity, a core group of activists remained focused on organisational tasks. This core group of activists continued to be involved in the design and preparation of new literature and pamphlets for the organisation. New literature centred on political developments within the EU, including treaty changes and reform. One notable development was a new agreement by the EU Council which sought to establish a permanent 'European Stability Mechanism' (ESM) in June 2013<sup>61</sup>. The People's Movement claimed that this pact subjected the seventeen members of the Eurozone group, and in particular smaller states such as Ireland, "to a regime of detailed intrusive surveillance of budgets, tax policy, wages policy, pensions policy and economic policy, to be enforced by fines and sanctions"<sup>62</sup>. The People's Movement further claimed that the matter should be put before the Irish public in a referendum. In June 2011, at a press conference in a Dublin City Centre Hotel, the People's Movement launched their booklet "The European Stability Mechanism and the case for an Irish referendum", and later organised a demonstration at the Irish Parliament which coincided with a European Council Meeting in Brussels, at which final agreement on the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) was expected to be secured. The group also commenced a letter campaign to all T.D.s and Senators with information on why there should be a referendum on the issue of the European Stability Mechanism.

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<sup>59</sup> Conference lectures on 'European Union politics' were jointly held with PANA peace group. Lectures on 'European trade policy and its impact on the global south' were jointly held with Comhlámh NGO.

<sup>60</sup> The People's Movement, PANA (Peace and Neutrality Alliance) and the CPI (Communist Party of Ireland) organised a conference entitled "The Peace Movement –v- EU and NATO" which also featured guest speaker Iraklis Tsavdaridis (Executive Secretary World Peace Council).

<sup>61</sup> The objective of the ESM was to replace the EFSF (European Financial Stability Facility) and EFSM (European Financial Stability Mechanism) because the legal basis of these two funds was a matter of contention particularly as EU Treaties expressly forbid financial bailouts and assistance (See Article 122, Art 123 & Art 125 of the TFEU). A new Treaty amendment was agreed upon to establish the ESM, which created a new mechanism which could consider the provision of loans to Euro zone member states in difficulty. The provision of loans would only be made on a strict structural adjustment basis which the People's Movement claimed would result in several years of strict fiscal and austerity budgets.

<sup>62</sup> 'The European Stability Mechanism and the case for an Irish referendum' 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Publication by People's Movement Ireland June 2011. (See <http://www.people.ie/eu/esmref2.pdf>)

The same group of core activists were also instrumental in the research and publication of the organisation's newsletter, the 'People's News', to inform activists and the public about developments within the EU. Activists also targeted trade union conferences to distribute leaflets and promote the group's message. A number of core activists continued to be involved in the organisation of public meetings, and lectures and the preparation and participation in conferences.<sup>63</sup> While these tasks and events demonstrated organisational activity to sustain momentum, it was evidently clear that a number of activists had disengaged with the group and there was a need for a stronger focus. While the Lisbon Treaty continued to remain a symbolic theme of mobilisation, over time, its ability to mobilise activists diminished. There was no 'street' campaign, postering or leaf-letting to mobilise activists into action. Without media assistance to communicate the message, the well-researched information and literature prepared by the group, could only be circulated on the group's website, and to political figures and trade union groups. It was also evident that all attempts to sustain mobilisation were undertaken by a handful of core activists. Without their commitment, I contend that the group may have simply dissolved throughout 2010 and 2011 due to low activist engagement. A People's Movement AGM was organised, but this too, failed to provide any new impetus into the organisation by recruiting new members or re-engaging with former activists. While sustainment of activist mobilisation was continuing to be a critical concern by the group, a 'People's Agenda' was agreed upon at the AGM, which has strengthened the group's links with Independent political figures.<sup>64</sup>

Acknowledging the decline in activist participation, and conscious of further EU developments, core activists sought to re-generate the organisation. Communications were

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<sup>63</sup> Core activists were involved in public meetings for the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Desmond Greaves Summer School ([www.greavesschool.com](http://www.greavesschool.com)) which was held over a weekend in September 2011. Participation in conference in October 2011 entitled "The EU in Crisis – Prospects for regaining Ireland's sovereignty", which also saw participation from a number of speakers from the ICTU, TD's, PANA activists, journalists, and activists. In October, the People's Movement held its inaugural Crotty Memorial Lecture (named after the late Irish economic and agricultural historian Raymond Crotty). The guest speaker for the lecture was author Conor McCabe who discussed "Rancher and Banking Interests in the Modern Irish Economy".

<sup>64</sup> The People's Movement published its 'People's Agenda' which called for a repudiation of the national debt, national control of natural resources, opposition to EU competition policies and privatisation, defence of Irish neutrality and sovereignty, and a repatriation of powers from Brussels to Dublin. A number of political candidates signed the People's Agenda. One such candidate, Thomas Pringle, was elected to the Dáil and has since continued to work with the People's Movement group on a number of issues.

issued to activists on the group's mailing list with a view to 'reforming' the People's Movement and setting up a new executive committee. While the group had never officially disbanded after the Lisbon Treaty campaign, the number of mobilisation events by the group had diminished and activist participation was very low. On foot of new developments within the EU to proceed with treaty reform, the meeting was an opportunity for activists to re-engage with a specific focus. The call for a referendum on the ESM Treaty, as well as the publication of a new Fiscal Treaty, provided the organisation with new impetus.

### **The Permanent 'Austerity' Treaty.**

While the nature and form of referendum campaigns has been widely discussed in previous chapters, I wish to discuss the referendum on the EU Fiscal Treaty under a number of key headings. First, I discuss the People's Movement campaign during the referendum in order to make a comparative analysis with the Lisbon Treaty campaign. Second, I focus on the economic environment in which the campaign took place. Third, I focus on issues such as 'discourse' and 'language' from the political and business establishment, and the difficulty facing activists in challenging the establishment.

The government announced in early 2012 that the 'EU Fiscal Treaty' would be put before the Irish public by a referendum on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012. The EU Fiscal Treaty referendum represented the third EU referendum to be challenged by the People's Movement group in less than four years. The group continued to adopt a two-treaty approach. While a referendum had been called on the 'Fiscal Treaty' the group also continued to call for a referendum on the establishment of the ESM. As both treaties were 'complementary', activists felt it was illogical to have a vote on one and not on the other. The referendum itself became a mobilisation resource for the People's Movement. As the group had a specific objective and campaign, a number of activists re-engaged with the group. The level of re-engagement, however, was not substantial enough to mirror activist participation during the Lisbon Treaty campaigns.

### *People's Movement Campaign*

In the months leading up to the referendum, a number of meetings were organised to discuss the group's campaign. In the face of diminished financial resources and low activist attendance, it was clear that the organisation had an uphill struggle. While numbers at activist meetings can at times be quite low (during cycles of low mobilisation in between periods of referenda), I found that the numbers attending meetings in March and April in the lead up to the campaign against the Fiscal Treaty were very low compared to meeting attendance figures in the months leading up to the Lisbon Treaty referenda. While the number of activists had certainly increased as activity heightened and the group took on a greater sense of purpose and objective, the attendance figures nevertheless continued to be a concern. At one particular activist meeting I attended in March, it was disheartening that there were only six activists present. Notwithstanding low levels of activist engagement, the strategies deployed for the campaign were largely similar to the Lisbon Treaty campaign. There was no evidence of new tactics or forms of protest.

Having identified temporary office space for the campaign, People's Movement activists held regular meetings to discuss planning and strategy for the campaign. Meetings focused on the design and content of literature and pamphlets,<sup>65</sup> poster slogans, and the national planning of public meetings and key speakers. Since financial resources were very low, and with only two months to campaign, all available funds were utilised to pay for posters and literature. Activists did discuss the possibility of holding fundraising events to promote the 'No' campaign and raise funds, but due to a low level of activist engagement, such plans were abandoned.

A number of public meetings were held around the country, but attendance at these meetings was quite varied. Activists could clearly see that the turnout at public meetings was significantly lower than similar meetings which were held during the Lisbon Treaty

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<sup>65</sup> A detailed 4 page information pamphlet was issued by the group which provided information to the public on both the ESM & the Fiscal Treaty (referred to by the group as the 'Permanent Austerity Treaty'). The group also published an 18 page annotated version of the Treaty itself, which explained very clearly 'line by line' what the treaty sought to do and its implications.

campaigns. If this was to be used as an indicator of public interest, it certainly revealed that the issues being presented in the referendum were either not being perceived to be of any great interest by the public or that the public had already made up its mind on which way to vote. A small number of activists felt that the concept of public meetings was becoming outdated. One activist tells me “It’s difficult to motivate the public to get them to attend meetings. They prefer to sit at home and watch TV, go online and read whatever information can be downloaded on an ‘app’. Unless we can access those channels, we simply cannot and will not be able to communicate our message. I don’t mind if they don’t come and they have already made up their mind to vote ‘No’, but I know this is not the case. It’s human nature. They will go to the polls, vote yes and then complain afterwards that they were not well informed. People need to wake up and take control over their own future, their own political destiny”.

Similarly to the Lisbon Treaty campaign, the frequency of public meetings was increased in the final weeks before the referendum vote. This placed incredible strain on the organisation because there were an insufficient number of activists available to assist and only a core group of activists were willing to be platform speakers at public meetings. A series of meetings were also held by a number of groups on the political Left who were also campaigning for a ‘No’ vote. On a number of occasions, similar to the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty, People’s Movement activists shared platforms with these groups to deliver their message to the public. The umbrella grouping, the CAEUC, which existed during the Lisbon Treaty campaign, was revised under the heading ‘Campaign for a Social Europe’<sup>66</sup>. The People’s Movement continue to be affiliated to this campaign group. Aside from the sharing of campaign platforms with certain affiliated groups, there was no evidence of further interaction with the umbrella network. As the campaign against the EU Fiscal Treaty was underway, the ‘Occupy’ group in Dublin were camped out at Dublin’s Central Bank. The People’s Movement group and activists from the ‘Occupy’ group in generally did not maintain any network linkages. During the campaign, however, a number of activists from

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<sup>66</sup> [www.campaignforasocialeurope.org](http://www.campaignforasocialeurope.org)

the ‘Occupy’ group frequented the People’s Movement campaign office to avail of literature and activists agreed to distribute People’s Movement campaign material.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the group’s literature on the Treaty and the ESM, a small double sided flyer was produced, to hand out to members of the public during street leafletting and door-to-door campaigns. The People’s Movement group also distributed a significant numbers of a small newspaper entitled ‘People’s News – An Introduction to the ESM’. This newspaper was published in conjunction with the ‘EU Democrats’, a pan-European alliance who work for “increased transparency, accountability, subsidiarity and most importantly budget control within the European Union”.

The People’s Movement also decided on the design and format of a poster. In previous campaigns the group adopted three or four poster designs for their campaign, usually in black and white. On this occasion, the group decided on one poster design, in yellow and black, which resembled a road sign and warned of ‘Permanent Austerity ahead’ (See Appendix E).

Although the People’s Movement had obtained office space to operate their campaign, due to a lack of financial resources, this space was primarily a collection point for materials. It acted as a ‘drop-in’ location for activists to collect and distribute leaflets, posters and campaign material. David, a fellow activist summarised what he thought of the office space “Yeah, it’s not state of the art, but it meets our needs. Really all we need is a few chairs, a desk and some space. Anything after that is a bonus. It would be nice to have more ... an office telephone, internet, but we just don’t have the resources.” Two new young activists, John, an architectural student and Barry, a journalist and musician, gave up a considerable amount of their time to help out and manage the office in the few weeks before the vote. It was notably clear, from the low level of activists and the level of activity in the office, that the campaign lacked the ‘buzz’ and ‘energy’ of the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty.

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<sup>67</sup> It was reported that a number of individuals from the Occupy movement occupied the premises of the Referendum Commission the day before the referendum vote. Activists are reported to have displayed a banner calling for a ‘No’ vote while at the same claiming that the referendum commissions information was biased, one sided and manipulative. (Telford 2012).

The appearance of European MEP's in Dublin did raise the profile of the campaign and captured some media attention. The MEP's argued that the Treaty, while only receiving a public vote in Ireland, was bad for all Europeans. They supported the views of activists, such as those in the People's Movement, that the Treaty would reinforce austerity measures for individuals across all European member states<sup>68</sup>.

In the final week of the campaign, the group, using whatever funds remained, decided to issue a new poster focusing on the ESM, the Treaty which was not being put before the people in a referendum. As the public were being urged by the establishment to vote 'Yes' due to poor economic conditions, the People's Movement responded by highlighting the fact that under its treaty obligations, the state would be required to pay €11bn into the EU for the ESM fund. New pamphlets were also designed to educate the public on this matter. High profile People's Movement members continued to hold press conferences to attract much needed media attention<sup>69</sup>. In the final week of the referendum campaign, the People's Movement released the results of a Red C Opinion poll (a poll commissioned by the group in conjunction with the EU Democrats) highlighting the fact that 72% of respondents in the poll were in favour of holding a separate referendum on the ESM treaty.

Notwithstanding these events, which were designed to attract media attention, there was an immense amount of work carried out by activists on the ground. In the final two weeks of the campaign, there was a final push to ensure all postering and leaf-letting were completed. Prime city centre locations, such as bus and train stations and busy shopping streets in the city centre were targeted. Due to work and personal commitments, several activists could only commit to part-time work. In comparison to the Lisbon Treaty campaign, it was evident that the low level of activist engagement was taking its toll. Certain activists committed full days to campaigning. The level of exhaustion for activists was notable.

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<sup>68</sup> MEP's represented the European United Left and Nordic Green Alliance and came from Portugal, Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

<sup>69</sup> May 17<sup>th</sup> Press Conference attended by People's Movement patron Robert Ballagh, Chairperson Patricia McKenna and Independent T.D., Luke Flanagan. This press conference highlighted the ESM and the fact that it was being overshadowed by the Fiscal Treaty and being ushered in by only a parliamentary vote. On 28<sup>th</sup> May the People's Movement held their final press conference, which was supported by a number Independent T.D.'s such as, Catherine Murphy, Finian McGrath & Maureen O'Sullivan.

After meeting in the office in the mornings, a small number of activists spent full days commuting to and from Dublin suburbs erecting posters and handing out leaflets to the public. One activist's remarks sums up the sentiment: "There just aren't enough activists coming out to campaign. It's go, go, go! We spend most of the day leafleting and putting up posters. You have to ask if it does any good. If we can't get on TV or the radio, I don't feel that we are going to get anywhere. I'm still committed to helping out, but I already feel we have lost".

By Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May, it was clear that activists had done all they could to play their part in challenging the Treaty. It is estimated that during the Fiscal Treaty campaign the People's Movement group put up 1,500 posters, distributed 300,000 pieces of literature and held over 30 meetings nationally.

While the Lisbon Treaty campaign represented a challenge a specific EU reform treaty, the campaign during the EU Fiscal Treaty referendum was different. Activists sought not only to challenge the Treaty itself, but also sought to highlight the ESM Treaty as part of the campaign. They wished to inform the public that the most important Treaty to be voted upon was the very Treaty on which they were being denied a vote. The People's Movement campaign was framed in strict economic terms within the master frame of the EU.

Activists referred to the ESM and the Fiscal Treaty as a betrayal of the Irish people by the government. Activists highlighted the fact that Ireland's economy was primarily in a poor condition because national sovereign debt had increased simply to bail out failed financial institutions. The People's Movement claimed that the Irish people were being asked to foot a bill for protecting the Euro currency and shielding other member states from financial disaster. In addition to the group's objections to the establishment of the ESM, activists also pointed out that the financial costs of the establishment of the ESM bailout fund would result in Ireland incurring an obligatory cost of €11bn even if it never needed to benefit from the fund itself. People's Movement activists claimed that both the ESM and EU Fiscal Treaties, would constitutionally copper-fasten 'balanced budget rules' and "would make

euro zone member states into regimes of economic austerity involving deeper and deeper cuts in public expenditure, increases in indirect taxes, reductions in wages, sustained liberalisation of markets, and privatisation of public property.”<sup>70</sup> Activists argued that this subjected our national budget to external interference, not just in the short term, but on a permanent basis. One activist remarked, at a meeting in February 2012: “This treaty is like a fiscal straitjacket. It places restrictive budgetary rules on the Irish people in perpetuity. We are essentially writing away our economic and fiscal sovereignty with one stroke of the pen and ceding national powers to unaccountable EU institutions”. Activists also contended, that as the Fiscal Treaty is not an EU Treaty (as Britain and the Czech Republic are not parties to it), it was unlawful insofar as the institutions of the EU will be used to oversee, monitor and ensure compliance with the terms of the Fiscal Treaty.

### **An economic Treaty for an uncertain economy**

There were a number of key differences between the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign and the Lisbon Treaty campaign which need to be noted. First, while Ireland was the only member state to put both the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Fiscal Treaty before its people in referenda,<sup>71</sup> non-ratification of the EU Fiscal Treaty by Ireland would not prevent the Treaty from entering into force. While the outcome of the vote was a concern for the EU, a rejection however would not hold up the EU and its objectives. Second, while the Lisbon Treaty referenda were held in 2008 and 2009, the economic position in both Ireland and the EU had rapidly shifted by 2012. I contend that the context in which the vote took place is therefore a critical component of the referendum result. Appendix C to this thesis provides a snapshot of key data for Ireland throughout this period, highlighting key trends in the areas of unemployment, growth and debt. This shifting trend needs to be grasped in order to understand the context in which the 2012 Fiscal treaty referendum was debated, discussed and eventually accepted by the people in a referendum on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012. Finally, the nature of the referendum was unique. The 2012 referendum on the EU Fiscal Treaty did not deal

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<sup>70</sup> Leaflet by the People’s Movement. <http://www.people.ie/leaflet/auster2.pdf> (Last accessed 25/10/2013).

<sup>71</sup> In a mark of respect for democracy, the Danish People’s Movement met with Irish Ambassador Brendan Scanell and presented him with a letter (from 4 political movements in Denmark) welcoming the Irish referendum on the Treaty and noting that Ireland is the only country to allow its citizens to vote on the Treaty.

with as broad a range of matters as the Lisbon Treaty. Activists felt that this, in many ways, limited its appeal and interest to the general public and to a certain degree activists themselves. The fiscal and economic nature of the Treaty, and its relatively small size, meant that the issues which dominated the referendum debate in 2012 were entirely different than those debated in 2009. The nature of the debate in the Lisbon Treaty was wide ranging, insofar as it was essentially a new Constitution for the EU. The debate on the Lisbon Treaty therefore had wider appeal, and in terms of EU development, it represented a significantly larger step in the EU process of greater integration. The EU Fiscal Treaty, on the other hand, was simply ‘fiscal’. It was an economic treaty no more than 25 pages in length and containing only 16 Articles.

Indeed, many activists I spoke to referred to the entire referendum campaign as “subdued” compared to the Lisbon Treaty referenda. The referendum, they claim, did not have the same importance or immediacy attached to it, nor did it carry with it the same momentum as the Lisbon Treaty referenda did in 2008 and 2009. The campaigns, of both the ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ groups, did not have the ‘visibility’ on the street, similar to the Lisbon Treaty campaigns. While the People’s Movement, and other groups on the political Left, ran their independent campaigns, there appeared to be less public interaction and visibility on the ground. As a participant observer over the three EU referenda in 2008, 2009 and 2012, I felt this lower level of visible engagement on the ‘No’ side was compounded by the late entry of Libertas, who did not enter the campaign until 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012, and the absence of Coir who were highly visible and active during the Lisbon Treaty.

While activists referred to the ‘subdued’ nature of the campaign, I should point out that this was in reference to the general atmosphere among campaign groups and the public interest rather than People’s Movement activity. Indeed, due to a decline in the levels of participation by activists, I contend that the level of work and effort contributed by certain People’s Movement activists exceeded that of the Lisbon Treaty campaign.

### *Discourse and emotions*

Bearing in mind the economic position in Ireland and Europe in mid-2012, advocates of a 'Yes' vote framed their arguments around employment and investment. While the framing of the 'Yes' campaign was similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign in 2009 (which I have extensively outlined in Chapter 8 and 9 of this thesis), the frustration and disillusionment felt by activists within the People's Movement was heightened. Political and business discourse for a 'Yes' vote adopted both positive and negative forms. This was quite similar to the approach adopted during the Lisbon Treaty. Negative forms related to discourse on the both the EU and national economy, employment and investment, and uncertainty and isolation. Positive forms of discourse focused on sovereignty and EU membership.

The principal argument for a 'Yes' vote rested on the availability of future funding for the economy. While the EU Fiscal Treaty was only 16 articles in length, an exclusionary clause was inserted into its preamble (and agreed by the Irish state) that should the EU Fiscal Treaty not be accepted, the member state would be denied access to future programmes of funding. While a small number of activists felt that the Treaty would be successfully challenged due to strong anti-government and anti-austerity sentiment throughout the country, the 'exclusionary' clause essentially copper-fastened a 'Yes' victory. While activists had faced, and in some cases successfully challenged, political and business discourse in former EU referenda, activists knew from the outset that the campaign would be a struggle. The creation of doubt, insecurity and uncertainty around future funding for the state were being debated and discussed in an already mixed and volatile economic and fiscal climate both in Ireland and Europe.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, on the day Ireland went to vote on the Fiscal Treaty, one of the leading newspapers published a story with the headline 'Euro's survival at risk, officials warn'<sup>73</sup> which spoke about growing doubt among international investors, risks to bank deposits, and the potential failure of the Euro currency. It is within this context and environment that voters went to the polls on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012.

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<sup>72</sup> The economic situation in Ireland and Europe had deteriorated rapidly in 2012. Events and news in other member states, such as Spain, spoke of impending bank bailouts of c.€100bn and in Greece, there continued to be failed attempts at forming a government. These news stories were prominent and there were repeated references in the Irish media to future bailouts and the instability of the Euro

<sup>73</sup> Irish Times 'Euro's survival at risk, officials warn' 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

The argument that the State was essentially bankrupt and may not be in a position to continue to pay its finances was constantly referred to during the campaign. ‘Access to funding’ was the mantra of the ‘Yes’ campaign. It appeared to activists that the Treaty was being misrepresented by the establishment and sold as a magical formula, which when adopted would somehow calm the impending storm and ease the state’s financial worries.

Print media editorials fuelled public fear and insecurity advising of: a break-up of the single currency; the ejection of Ireland from the currency union, a collapse of the entire Irish banking system, a Greek style sovereign default and a much bigger fiscal adjustment (O’Brien 2012). In addition to economic and fiscal discourse, political representatives and ‘civil society’ groups suggested that Ireland would be marginalised and cast adrift (DeBreadun 2012).<sup>74</sup> Fianna Fáil leader, Michael Martin advised that Europe is now on the precipice and we “must do nothing to push it over the edge”. He also stated that “We need to save the Euro and stay within it” (O’Halloran 2012). Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore gave a damning warning that investor confidence in Ireland would be hugely impacted if Ireland voted no to the Treaty and such a rejection would leave Ireland “back in the eye of the storm” He went on to speak of ‘enormous consequences’ if the Treaty was rejected, and when asked if Ireland should consider returning to the Irish pound and existing the Euro, he advised that this would be bring Ireland into the ‘unknown’ and it would be like ‘playing with fire’ (DeBreadun 2012a). Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan warned that a ‘No’ vote in the fiscal treaty would be a “dangerous leap that Irish citizens should not take”. Taoiseach Enda Kenny, endorsing his Minister for Finance Michael Noonan, warned of a downgrading of Ireland’s credit rating and harsher budgets ahead if there was a ‘No’ vote on the Treaty. Ireland’s EU Commissioner Maire Geoghegan Quinn stated that if Ireland rejected the Treaty there was no ‘plan B’ (Beesley 2012) and Ireland would be in ‘financial no-man’s land’ (Cullen 2012).

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<sup>74</sup> Pat Cox, former president of European Parliament and Director of pro Treaty group Alliance for Ireland, advocated that a ‘No’ vote will add to uncertainty and in a period of crisis and national vulnerability will raise additional questions about our national credit worthiness” (Collins 2012). Economist Jim Power referred to rejection of the Treaty as ‘economic and financial suicide’. Blair Horan of the Trade Union Charter Group argued that a ‘No’ vote could lead to Ireland defaulting on its debt, an exit from the euro and would cost everybody in the country €11,500 in the first year alone. (Collins 2012a)

While the use of emotionality is a powerful tool, this was a strategy which was also applied extensively during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign, discourse however did not merely focus on fear and uncertainty. Discourse also focused on ‘guilt’ as well as positive emotions such as ‘belonging’, ‘generosity’ and ‘reciprocity’. The establishment made a conscious effort to appeal to people’s emotional attachment to Europe. An Irish ‘Yes’ vote was communicated as one which would save the Euro currency, not just for Ireland but also for other Europeans. People’s emotional attachment to Europe was emphasised by references to Ireland’s forty year membership of the European Union. Emotional reciprocity was applied by linking a ‘Yes’ vote to the EU Fiscal Treaty, while at the same time emphasising the financial benefit that Ireland has seen through its receipt of EU Regional and Structural funds during the state’s forty year membership. In such instances, arguments for and against Treaties are often won and lost not on the contents and substance of the Treaties themselves but on the signification of meaning, staged performances and appealing to individuals’ emotional attachments and sets of values and norms.<sup>75</sup>

The People’s Movement, in direct response to the arguments of the ‘Yes’ Campaign published new literature in the final few weeks of the campaign. While efforts were made to challenge and counter ‘Yes’ rhetoric, the organisation’s lack of access to the print and broadcast media was again proving too difficult. The group experienced similar obstacles to media access in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty campaign. Without access to important communication media, such as radio and television, it appears that the group will have an on-going problem in communicating its message. The People’s Movement made the decision to issue pamphlets to challenge the principal argument of the ‘Yes’ campaign which centred on access to funding. The pamphlet was entitled ‘Ah, but where will we get the money if we Vote No?’ This 2 page pamphlet outlined 6 sources of funding for the Irish State should the state be denied access to ESM funds. It was written to provide assurances to

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<sup>75</sup> Certain activists feel that negative and racist remarks, in reference to Greece, made by Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan during the campaign (Keena, Minihan & Collins 2012) illustrate that Ireland views treaties not in purely self-interest and national frames rather than solidarity and co-operation in Europe. Statements such as this further compounded activists arguments that Europe was not about social solidarity and co-operation, but rather about a Europe which had a strict financial and economic agenda which it needed to implement and enforce despite the social consequences.

voters, who activists felt were beginning to be swayed to voting ‘Yes’, in the final few weeks of the campaign. Activists were conscious that there were significant numbers of undecided voters and ultimately it would come down to these voters on the day of voting.

It should be noted that activists were also critical of the role of the Referendum Commission in the 2012 EU Fiscal Treaty campaign. The Commission is tasked with providing the public with an informed and impartial view on what the Treaty proposes and its constitutional implications. Activists note that the Commission failed to commence the issuing of documentation to all households until 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Activists feel that the Commission’s work was being stifled by the establishment, who were already engaging in public debates around the country. A new website named [www.stabilitytreaty.ie](http://www.stabilitytreaty.ie) was also in operation which, on the face of it, was interpreted to be an independent analysis of the Treaty, but was in fact a government run website. Activists claimed such deliberate interference was a direct violation of the principles of the McKenna judgement in 1995 which ruled that government expenditure of public money should be not used to advance the arguments of one side in a referendum.<sup>76</sup>

### *Civil Society & Lobbyists*

While the political establishment appeared to withdraw from the ‘Yes’ campaign during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty, political representatives appeared to re-enter the campaign during the EU Fiscal Treaty. Notwithstanding this, ‘civil society’ groups, supported by a largely pro-Treaty media had a key role to play in the campaign’s success. Indeed, the Taoiseach Enda Kenny had refused to participate in televised debates to discuss the Fiscal Treaty, preferring instead to address the nation unchallenged using the State broadcaster in a four minute address to the Irish people.

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<sup>76</sup> While no direct legal challenge was made in regard to the use of public funds during the Fiscal Treaty, a later case in 2012 following the Childrens referendum called the McCrystal judgement<sup>76</sup>, reinforced the principles laid down in the McKenna judgement.

While extensive reference is made to ‘civil society’ in chapter 8 of this thesis, it is important to provide an outline of ‘civil society’ involvement in the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign. In the weeks leading up to the referendum vote, a number of groups emerged advocating a ‘Yes’ vote for the Treaty. These groups include, ‘Alliance for Europe’, ‘Sportspeople say Yes’, ‘Women for Europe’<sup>77</sup>, and ‘Business for Ireland’<sup>78</sup>. In many instances, the same individuals involved in ‘civil society’ groups for the Lisbon Treaty, were also instrumental in the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign. Similar to the Lisbon Treaty, the definition of ‘civil society’ continued to include any group of individuals advocating a ‘Yes’ vote, regardless of political or business connections or other vested interests. The ‘Alliance for Ireland’ group, who were also active during the Lisbon Treaty campaign, ran a high profile and visible campaign<sup>79</sup>. The group attracted several high profile names in Irish sport, business and music,<sup>80</sup> and advertised extensively in the national print media. The government itself also targeted sports people in its bid to raise the profile of the ‘Yes’ campaign. Political party members were instrumental in a new group entitled ‘Sportspeople say Yes.’<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that Senator Eamon Coughlan, the group’s promoter, made specific reference to the ‘Yes’ campaign as ‘charity work’ (Lord 2012). This highlights the fact that such events, while politically motivated, are often masked and presented as non-political.

In addition to ‘civil society’ groups, key business sectors were also highly visible in advocating a ‘Yes’ vote. These groups are largely similar to the campaign for the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and include, Irish Small Medium Enterprises Association (ISME)<sup>82</sup>, Irish

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Women for Europe’ was promoted by Fianna Fáil member Olive Braiden.

<sup>78</sup> IBEC’s Business for Ireland group comprises 60 sectoral groupings including chambers of commerce, the construction industry federation, hotels and restaurants.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Alliance for Europe’ included Former EU President Pat Cox and EU campaigner Brendan Halligan. These individuals were also active in ‘civil society’ groups during the Lisbon Treaty. The group has strong links to IBEC. The campaign was marketed by PR agency O’Herlihy Communications.

<sup>80</sup> A sample of such profile names include, Brian Cody, Kilkenny Hurling Manager, Ronan O’Gara, Munster and Ireland rugby player, Sharon Shannon, musician, Nina Carberry, national hunt jockey, Niall Quinn, business man and former Ireland footballer, Neven Maguire, celebrity chef, Norah Casey, TV presenter and businesswoman, Pat Gilroy, Dublin football manager, Conor Counihan, Cork football manager, Liam Griffin, former Wexford Manager, Christy Cooney, Ex GAA President Christy Cooney, Denis Hickie, former Ireland rugby player. The high number of GAA sports personalities recruited to participate in the campaign prompted the GAA to issue a statement saying that it does not take a position or comment in any way on either elections or referenda. (Carroll 2012).

<sup>81</sup> Former athlete, Eamon Coughlan, who is now a state Senator and Fine Gael member arranged a photo publicity stunt in the Aviva Stadium, with a number of high profile sports personalities.

<sup>82</sup> ISME claimed it represents 8,700 SME’s employing 230,000 employees nationwide.

Business and Employer's Confederation (IBEC), Small Firms Association (SFA)<sup>83</sup> and Irish Farmers Association (IFA)<sup>84</sup>. In addition to these groups, 'The Trade Union Charter Group'<sup>85</sup> also advocated a 'Yes' vote in the Treaty.

While civil society and other business groups were active in promoting acceptance of the EU Fiscal Treaty, there were some notable differences. While business groups communicated their message largely through their own organisations, there was a low visibility of 'civil society' groups on the streets, compared to the Lisbon Treaty campaign in 2009. The media played an instrumental role in communicating the message of these groups through both advertisement and 'news' editorials and broadcasts. While the amount of corporate involvement in the Lisbon campaign in 2009 was quite evident (from companies such as Ryanair and Intel), this was certainly less evident during the 2012 EU Fiscal Treaty campaign. Nevertheless corporate and business involvement had not completely withdrawn. Indeed certain sectors of the banking industry in Ireland were complicit in their calls for a 'Yes' vote with one bank issuing a document clearly calling for a 'Yes' vote in the Treaty, despite being a state owned financial institution and in receipt of bailout funds at the taxpayer's expense. Other instances of corporate involvement were more subtle. Irish businesswoman and vice president of 'PayPal's' global operation Louise Phelan warned that Ireland risked losing major investment from 10 international companies if it did not vote 'Yes', and she stated that such decisions would not be made until after the referendum. Activists feel that such statements are not only threatening, but amount to blackmailing potential voters, leaving individuals with little choice when they go to the polls, particularly against the backdrop of the states 14 per cent unemployment rate (rising to 30 per cent unemployment at youth level). Other sectional business interest groups such as ISME, IFA, IBEC and SFA regularly quote employment numbers when advocating a 'Yes' vote to signify an attachment between Treaty acceptance and job creation.

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<sup>83</sup> The SFA claims a membership of 8,000 members. The group disseminated information to its members with the expectation that this information would also be briefed onwards to their employees to advocate a Yes vote. The group engaged in a national road-show called 'Better Business Ireland' with the government. This was a 4 week road-show aimed at engaging with 3000 businesses.

<sup>84</sup> The IFA undertook regional meetings, advising its 4,000 branch officers of the need to communicate a 'Yes' vote and informing its memberships of 90,000 that a 'Yes' vote was in farmers best interests.

<sup>85</sup> Trade Union Charter Group was organised and promoted by Blair Horan.

Weiss & Wodak (2000) note that the central function of economic globalisation rhetoric is “disciplining by economic arguments”. They note that the “process of disciplining works essentially on fear. In this, unemployment undoubtedly plays a major role ... the fundamental problem that undermines a society is not an unemployment rate of 10 per cent, but the fear of unemployment in the other 90 per cent. Instability and uncertainty are becoming a norm” (2000:78).

### **Post EU Fiscal Treaty**

The referendum vote was held on Thursday May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012. The results of the vote were 60.3% ‘Yes’ and 39.7% ‘No’. It was a major disappointment for activists but the outcome of the vote was no surprise. Activists felt that the outcome was similar to the Lisbon Treaty insofar as the public had voted out for fear and uncertainty. The establishment had utilised Ireland’s and Europe’s perceived economic uncertainty and financial risk to its advantage to sell the terms of the Treaty to the Irish people. Garsten & Hasselstrom (2003:252) note that “global interconnectedness of markets and associated risks are often invoked by ... politicians on the national arena when justifying unpopular economic and monetary decisions”. They further notes that such risks may be “blatantly real and their consequences universal, but they are also constructed phenomena, the perception of risks being highly influenced by culturally embedded beliefs and values” (2003:252). Indeed, the fiscal complexity of the arguments, both for and against the Treaty, was wrapped in intellectual jargon. Financial language such as “Structural Deficits”, “Debt Brakes”, and “Balanced Budgets” made it difficult for individuals to fully understand the Treaty’s implications and the impact it could have on their lives. In many respects, the Treaty needed to be ‘explained’ by ‘market experts’ and economists. Within the context of debates on the EU Fiscal Treaty such experts and economists varied in their opinions to a considerable degree<sup>86</sup>. Academic opinion was also quite mixed.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Leading Irish economist, Jim Power, referred to a ‘No’ vote as ‘economic and financial suicide’. Nobel prize winning economist, Paul Krugman, proclaimed that austerity policies in Europe are a complete failure (O’Shea 2012). On the eve of the referendum, Krugman advised Irish voters to vote ‘No’ claiming that austerity is as a policy which is failing dismally (Krugman 2012).

<sup>87</sup>UCC lecturer & political analyst, Dr.Jane Suiter, argued a ‘No’ vote would leave Ireland’s future in the Euro in jeopardy.(Healy 2012). UCD European Law Lecturer, Dr.Gavin Barrett argued that a ‘Yes’ vote will not

When activists met in June 2012 following the announcement of the results, there was no extensive campaign analysis undertaken. There was no post mortem. There was no study of the group's positives and negatives, what it had failed to do, and what it could have done differently. There was no study or discussion on why voters voted the way they did. As a fellow activist, I too felt no need for such an analysis to take place. All activists present knew that they had contributed all they could, based on all resources available. While no formal post mortem took place, activists clearly felt that the passing of the Treaty was an illustration of how the establishment used the economic crisis to their advantage. Political and business interests, in an opportunistic fashion, capitalised on the fears and concerns of working individuals. In doing so, activists felt that the establishment had pushed through a Treaty which not only intensifies an economic model of governance and disciplined fiscal management, but also facilitates a neoliberal agenda of competition and privatisation. Furthermore, the effect is an erosion of the common social good by widening the democratic deficit.

I spoke with a number of key activists in the People's Movement after the referendum to ask for their opinion on the campaign. I first asked how the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign compared to former referenda and secondly, I enquired why they felt the public had voted to accept it. According to Fergus, "the difference between the Austerity treaty and the Lisbon referendum was we were simply dead in the water ...things just weren't moving. It was obvious it was going to be carried". Fergus refer to the entire EU Fiscal Treaty campaign as 'torture' and notes there "was no enthusiasm around". Patricia also highlights the lack of enthusiasm. She regarded the entire campaign as a "low profile" campaign and notes that "unlike previous EU treaty referenda, where unanimity was required for those treaties to come into force, this time it didn't matter to the European elite whether we voted yes or no as Ireland's decision would not block the process and they could go ahead regardless."

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lead to further austerity than is already in place whereas a 'No' vote will restrict access to future funding (Barrett 2012). Head of the DCU School of Communications, Dr.Patrick Kinsella, stated that a rejection of the Treaty is not a rejection of the EU or the Euro but simply making a stand for social rights and a rejection of bank bailouts over individuals (Kinsella 2012). NUI Maynooth Sociology lecturer, Dr John O'Brennan, argued that the Treaty threatens to widen the democratic deficit that characterises EU politics and may even drive some member states into the hands of fully fledged far right governments (O'Brennan 2012).

A fellow People's Movement activist, David, is more candid when he tells me, "I'm not surprised the Treaty was voted in .... What chance did Irish people have? They could have rejected it, but they didn't understand it, and besides, what else can you do when you are cash strapped and the EU are holding a gun to your head?" Other activists, such as Michelle, were quite disheartened by the campaign. Michelle felt that the Lisbon Treaty campaign in 2009 represented such a big encroachment on Irish sovereignty. "What was in Lisbon was not simply finance or democracy ... it was much bigger politically than the EU Fiscal Treaty". She feels that this explains the momentum during the Lisbon Treaty campaign in 2009. Michelle states that "the Lisbon Treaty dealt specifically with undermining democracy and centralising power but with the Fiscal Treaty ... the people did not see it as a major step ... it was only an incremental step".

As expected the result of the referendum was applauded by both the establishment and high level political figures in the EU but the vote was also completely misunderstood and misinterpreted. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy spoke of the fact that the Irish people have now, with this vote, given their endorsement and commitment to European integration. European President Martin Schultz stated that the vote was an important signal of Ireland's commitment to the euro and EU more generally. Other leaders, particularly in Germany, spoke of acknowledgment and respect for the Irish people who wish to see a stable euro despite the cuts and hardships that the people have had to endure. It was notable that no individual from the EU commented on the Irish vote and its connection to future funding, which demonstrated a lack of understanding and a serious disconnect between senior EU elite and the public of a member state. All congratulatory remarks avoided the key reasons why the Irish public voted yes on 31<sup>st</sup> May and instead were clouded in veiled remarks about support for the Euro, membership of the EU, sustainability, job creation and investment (Beesley & Scally 2012)

Finally it is worth noting a few comments on political and class division and how this impacted the vote outcome. Firstly, out of the total Dáil seats (166), there were 30 T.D.'s calling for a 'No' vote on the EU Fiscal Treaty. While no official figures are available on the

remaining 136 T.D's, it is nevertheless claimed that this is the biggest anti-Treaty bloc since 1972 and Ireland's entry to the European Community (Collins 2012b). Secondly, out of 43 voting constituencies in Ireland, 38 voted 'Yes' and 5 voted 'No' (Donegal North East, Donegal South West, Dublin North West, Dublin South Central and Dublin South West). Activists are well aware of class differences in voting trends. Highly affluent middle class areas of South Dublin & Dun Laoghaire repeatedly vote 'Yes' to European referenda and the Fiscal treaty was no different with Yes votes coming in at 72.3% and 74.2% respectively. While activists are clearly aware of how class does have an impact on voting trends, it was surprising in the aftermath of the referendum results to see a high level of coverage in the media being provided to class divisions and voting preferences. The Irish Times ran a number of articles on the shift to class politics voting. It was reported that the results of the referendum confirm dramatically "a growing working class alienation also clearly seen in the Lisbon polls - ironically perhaps manifesting a much more European political culture and cleavages than our own domestic politics."<sup>88</sup> It also noted that "social polarisation was most striking at local level" pointing out that the 'No' vote was up at 90 per cent in 'disadvantaged' areas, whereas 'No' votes being returned from certain 'privileged' areas came in at only 20 per cent. This divide was most strikingly evident in cities like Dublin, Cork and Waterford (Carl O'Brien 2012). Historian Dr. Donal O'Drisceoil of UCC argues that these voting trends do form part of a historic shift in Irish politics "As the class divisions in Irish society become starker in the context of austerity, they are starting to be politically articulated ... [this] suggests the beginning of a move towards a system of class politics that has been absent in the State since independence – a so called left/right divide" (O'Drisceoil 2012). Many activists and campaigners have been painfully aware of this divide for a considerable period of time and can concur with the findings that such a class division exists within Irish society. It is debatable, however, whether recent voting trends are representative of a 'historic shift' to class politics. Indeed there are some activists who would claim that politics in Ireland has always been about 'class' but this has been disguised under the veil of nationalist politics for the past ninety years since independence from Britain. Notwithstanding this, a vote on the Fiscal Treaty and 'austerity' cuts right to the

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<sup>88</sup> See Irish Times 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2012. (1) Article in 'Debate' section entitled 'A crucial victory'. (2) Article 'Far Stronger No vote in poorer areas suggests shift to class politics for some' by Carol O'Brien. See also Irish Times 26<sup>th</sup> May 2012 Article 'Referendum campaign dividing along class lines' by Stephen Collins.

core of class divisions in society. The sizeable 'No' vote in both the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 (32.9%) and the EU Fiscal Treaty 2012 (39.7%), shows that there are a significant number of individuals who are willing to cross party loyalty lines and stand up for a rejection of the further erosion of democracy and sovereignty to the European Union.

## ***Patricia***

*Patricia, originally from Co.Monaghan but now living in Dublin, has been an active member of the People's Movement since its foundation. As a former MEP for Ireland on two occasions, she is well known to all activists, the media, the establishment and political groups. I met with Patricia in Trinity College, Dublin after the EU Fiscal Treaty referendum in 2012 and we discussed both her own background in social activism and also her views on the People's Movement campaigns.*

*Patricia tells me that she comes from a family which are not political. She tells me that she first became politically active before the Single European Act (SEA) referendum in 1987, but admits that her involvement in politics was purely accidental. She notes that her interest began from an EU perspective. She discusses how she felt very strongly about the peaceful resolution of disputes and Irish neutrality as "Ireland was a small country which suffered under colonisation and we should not be supporting a big military aggressor". She recalls hearing a discussion on the radio about the SEA and its potential impact on Irish neutrality. This, she claims, triggered her initial involvement. Her initial concerns centred on Irish neutrality, militarisation, NATO and the arms industry. She notes that prior to this she was not involved in any other anti-militarisation activities as she was studying in art college. She does acknowledge that her sympathies have always been with certain struggles, such as the campaigns against the visit of US President Reagan visiting Ireland.*

*Patricia's involvement in activism coincided with her moving to Dublin. She made contact with the Green Party to assist in their campaign against the Single European Act. Once her interest in politics developed, Patricia tells me, "I was gobsmacked at how undemocratic the system is. I could not believe that governments could get away with what they were doing and how the forces were just stacked up against anybody who didn't agree with the status quo and didn't agree with the establishment. I think I was just indignant about it all".*

*Several of the activists I spoke to since my initial involvement with the group, speak very highly of Patricia particularly for her principled stand for what she believes in. She tells me "I have never done things by half measures. I have to get fully involved".*

*"There were so many different things that opened my eyes. How the establishment works against anyone who questions it. How it's very difficult to get through to the broad majority of people because they have been spun a line and they believe this line. I consider myself as a real internationalist. I have always thought there is a bigger wider world out there and the more international we could be the better". Because of this Patricia feels that if she had a vote back in 1972, then she may have voted yes to Ireland's entry to the EEC. She further explains, "it was only when I got involved in the campaign and took an interest in politics that I realised the democratic deficit, the propaganda, how people's resources were being used against the people themselves, how everything was stacked against the people, and the images and messages put forward by the establishment and media were simply propaganda."*

*As her interest in politics developed, Patricia explains that her focus shifted in two ways. First, it moved from Irish Politics to European Politics and secondly, it moved from peace and neutrality to a range of other issues but particularly democracy.*

*She tells me that she fundamentally believes in the principles of democracy. She always felt that if we, as citizens, didn't like certain policies, we could campaign at election time and vote somebody else into the Dáil. She explains that when her eyes were opened to the reality of politics, "I was outraged at the fact that I had lived under this false impression all my life, that I lived in some sort of democracy".*

*"I realised that you can speak about everything, except criticise the EU. You can criticise your own government within your own member state, but don't criticise the EU. It's quite amazing. On the one hand they criticise people for being nationalist, and on the other hand, when you try to criticise something which is like a super-pseudo nationalist structure it's like treason. There was this kind of attempt at every opportunity to try and suppress any kind*

*of criticism of the EU. It's still going on. It's quite amazing, the EU propaganda machine. The huge amount of money that goes into it and it's all to do with monitoring and trying to counteract any kind of criticism. There is nothing democratic about an organisational structure that cannot deal with criticism and can't address criticism, and has to suppress it."*

*During the Single European Act (1987) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) Patricia campaigned with the Green Party. At that time, she worked as a part time teacher and held no position of any prominence within the party. She recalls that during the Maastricht campaign, the real economic and political issues contained within the Treaty were never discussed and the establishment used so much money in the media to campaign for a 'Yes' vote.*

*In 1994 Patricia was elected as a member of the European Parliament, the first Green Party MEP from Ireland. In 1995 she brought a case to the Irish Supreme Court who held in her favour, that it was unconstitutional to use public funds to promote only one side of an argument during a referendum. In hindsight, she feels that given this decision one could argue that the SEA and Maastricht were passed unconstitutionally. As a result of her case (which is known as the McKenna judgement), the Referendum Commission was established in Ireland to provide equal and unbiased arguments 'for' and 'against' issues which are put before the Irish public in referenda.*

*During EU reform treaty referenda, such as the Amsterdam Treaty (1998) and Nice Treaty (2001 and 2002), Patricia continued to remain an active member of the Green Party and was re-elected as MEP for another term in 1999. Although the Referendum Commission was in place for these referendums, Patricia feels that they were given inadequate time in the preparation of their work. While she acknowledges that the concept of the Referendum Commission was a great idea, she feels the functioning of the Commission is often scuppered.*

*I asked Patricia how she first became involved as a People's Movement activist. She recalls that the group initially asked her to become a patron after the group was established*

*following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nice Treaty referendum. She later agreed to become the group's Chairperson. Patricia lost her seat as an MEP in 2004. She continued to remain an EU critical member of the Green Party. She stood for election as a Green Party candidate in 2007 for the General Election to the Irish Parliament but was unsuccessful. She states that, over the years, there has been a 'dilution' of the Green Party's position on the EU. She attributes this to the party's involvement with EU parties in Europe and also a media campaign which she feels was designed "to wear the Greens down". This dilution was most evident in the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty when the Green Party, who were in power in Ireland as a junior coalition partner, for the first time did not oppose an EU Treaty and adopted a neutral position. While Patricia continued to be a member of the Green Party, she campaigned with the People's Movement for a 'No' Vote.*

*Patricia's role in the People's Movement, aside from being the groups Chairperson, was primarily participation in public debates around the country. She tells me that she enjoys public meetings, interacting with the people and explaining in simple terms what the issues are, to raise awareness with them and to lift the veil on what's going on.*

*"I like the idea of being able to being able to speak to people, to communicate with people and get across to people. I think a lot of things are being presented to people in an inaccessible manner". She notes that the EU has two goals which are fundamentally irreconcilable. "Firstly they want to do things in as complicated a way as possible so people cannot access what is going on. Secondly they want to communicate to people in a way which shields them from ordinary public criticism"*

*Patricia notes that while the 'Crotty' Supreme Court case in 1987 has meant successive referenda in Ireland, she expresses deep concern that this may change and in the future the state may be able to introduce further EU reform without having to ask its citizens in referenda.*

## **Chapter 12**

## **Looking to the Future**

*“Democratic states of the capitalist world have not one sovereign, but two: their people, below, and the international ‘markets’ above. Globalization, financialisation and European integration have weakened the former and strengthened the latter. The balance of power is now rapidly shifting towards the top. Formerly, leaders were required who understood and spoke the language of the people; today it is the language of money that they have to master. ‘People whisperers’ are succeeded by ‘capital whisperers’ who, it is hoped, know the secret tricks needed to ensure that investors receive their money back with compound interest. Since investor confidence is more important now than voter confidence, the ongoing takeover of power by the confidants of capital is seen by centre left and right alike not as a problem, but as the solution” – Wolfgang Streeck (2012:64)*

In Chapter 11, I made reference to a notable decline in activist engagement in mobilisation throughout the post-Lisbon period. There were notable concerns among core activists within the People’s Movement about the considerable decline in activist numbers. Concern was also expressed about the ability of the organisation to sustain itself in the absence of a referendum. It became clear to activists that the organisation needed a well-defined and central theme around which to mobilise. While the organisation had previously utilised the ‘Lisbon Treaty’ as a symbol to mobilise members, this had failed to prevent activist disengagement. Despite a concerted effort to initiate a campaign for a referendum on the ESM treaty, the level of activist engagement continued to be low.

In this concluding chapter, I focus on the issue of activist engagement. I divide my discussion under two principal headings. First, I discuss the growing disillusionment and frustration felt by many individuals who participate in social activism. Second, I address the issue of sustainment. I question whether the group can sustain itself as an organisation in the face of declining resources and I look at the challenges for the organisation as it looks to the future.

## **Activist ‘Disillusionment’**

Activist disengagement was particularly notable in the post-Lisbon period. It was clear from discussions with certain activists that there was a lack of momentum and a central theme around which to mobilise. Certain activists, such as Paula, Ciaran and Richard, withdrew from activism for number of reasons. Ciaran, one of the younger activists in the People’s Movement group, retreated from activism as he was focusing on starting his own business and could not dedicate his time as much as he would have liked. Richard also withdrew from activism, and was forced to emigrate to the UK in search of employment. Paula, on other hand, explains that she has simply become “disillusioned with how the democratic process in Ireland functions”. It was clear from previous campaigns that Paula, who was new to social activism, provided a considerable amount of her personal time to the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. She explains to me that she put her “heart into the struggle against Lisbon” and felt that she could not contribute anything further to the group. The loss of new social activists, such as Paula, was a disappointment for the group. However, feelings of disillusionment and frustration appear common to all activists I engaged with, whether new to the organisation, or activists with a long history in campaigning. I discussed these issues with activists to understand their disillusionment.

Paula had played a key role in the organisation for the Lisbon Treaty campaign. When I spoke to her a number of months after the referendum, she explained how she felt “redundant”. She stated that “until something is happening, I don’t know what I can be doing”. While the People’s Movement continued to organise mobilisation events post-Lisbon, Paula’s frustration was clearly evident. “I have no real intentions of going along. I can’t be bothered. People are not down enough. I really think although people voted out of fear, and they were hoodwinked. I have no sympathy for them. Until they wake up and smell the coffee, there’s no point in us doing anything. They are not down enough yet ... while people’s basic needs are being met, they will do nothing. When it gets so bad they will have to fight against it.”

Among all activists who acted as my informants, the frustration felt by Paula was most evident, so much so, that she withdrew from activism in 2010. Paula did however engage with the group again in 2012. This re-engagement was through personal contacts in the months leading up to the 2012 referendum on the EU Fiscal Treaty. Notwithstanding her participation during the 2012 campaign, her involvement was limited compared to previous campaigns. Paula again withdrew from activism after the EU Fiscal Treaty campaign. Paula's entry and re-entry into activism is not unique. In my discussion on networking, I noted how social movement organisations have both active and inactive members. While a core group of activists remain within the organisation, a number of non-active or 'latent' members remain on the periphery. While Paula retreated from activism after the Lisbon Treaty, she became reactive during contentious periods of action. As a participant observer with the People's Movement, I had concerns about activist disengagement with the group. Such disengagement, however, did not surprise other core activists of the group, who recognised the fact that people mobilise and demobilise, but they constantly remain on the periphery and ready to re-engage when required.

Maurice, a long-time activist against European referenda, feels that the People's Movement organisation is similar to political parties and other political groups. "When there's nothing to mobilise around all seems quiet, but when an election or a referendum crops up, people will come out of the woodwork and they will do the work when there is work to be done". Maurice acknowledges that there is a shortfall of people who are active on an on-going basis but he does not view this as negative reflection for the People's Movement. He explains that it is simply a reflection on how busy people are in their lives due to work and personal commitment, but "when there is work to be done ... people do pull out the stops and make the extra effort."

Defining 'disengagement' is also problematic. As an observer with the organisation, I had made assumptions that low attendance at regular activist meetings was a result of such disengagement, but this is not accurate. A number of activists, despite not attending meetings and certain mobilisation events, still considered themselves to be active members. Jim, an activist with the midlands branch of the People's Movement, echoes these

sentiments. Stressing the contentious and non-contentious periods of activity, he notes that the group can “die down for a while and then it can rise up again when issues arise and they need to be addressed”.

While activist disengagement is an issue which all social movement organisations face, People’s Movement activists often spoke of disheartenment and frustration with the democratic system in Ireland. Julie, a long-time activist from the midlands People’s Movement branch feels that it’s hard not to get disheartened when one considers the personal effort, time and money that are put in by activists to compete with larger forces which are very well financed. “You might make a little dent here and there but they come back even stronger and more viciously every time. It’s always an adversarial position that we are in. We are always on the defence. You are on the back pedal from the start.” Other activists I spoke to, such as Mairead from Dublin, tell me that there are many times when they feel disheartened and frustrated. As a long-time activist, Mairead explained to me about instances where she felt ‘vilified’ and ‘trivialised’ for being a social activist. “We give up our free time, sometimes our work time, our family time, our social time. We could be doing something else, but we don’t.” Mairead illustrates the difficulties which many social activists face, attempting to balance a personal, work and family life, while at the same time remaining committed to an organisation. The struggle to balance multiple commitments is a concern which is echoed through a number of my interviews with informants.

I contend that while disillusionment and frustration exists, this is not the primary reason for activist withdrawal. This is particularly true among those activists who had been involved in successive and repeated campaigns and other forms of social activism throughout their lives. It would appear that withdrawal from activism was predominant among those activists who were, in general, new to activism. While I do not believe that activists with little or no former social movement experience were more frustrated or disillusioned than long time activists, one could argue that long time activists, who have been through several campaigns, have to a certain extent become ‘normalised’ to the struggle of social activism.

## **Reconstructing Identity**

Despite low activist engagement during the post-Lisbon period, the EU Fiscal Treaty in 2012 injected new momentum into the group. The ‘referendum’ acted as a mobiliser for former activists to re-engage with the group, and attract support from peripheral and latent activists. Notwithstanding this, the People’s Movement now faces the same problems in 2013 as it did in 2010. While the group have faced tough campaigns over the last five years, the challenge for the organisation continues to be its ability to sustain mobilisation in the absence of an EU referendum.

A discussion on the future of the People’s Movement group is important. While I raised the question during interviews and discussions with activists in the post-Lisbon period, the question has also since appeared on People’s Movement meeting agendas for discussion. As this thesis is a study of a small social movement group during the most active period of its existence, the question of its sustainment and future is still very relevant. The matter of sustainment for a small group such as the People’s Movement is one which forms part of a larger debate on small and minor groups in Irish politics. Weeks (2010) notes that the problem for most minor political groupings in Ireland is survival, and the reason why so many questions about minor groups and parties are difficult to answer, is due primarily to the fact that the field of minor parties is largely unexplored.

The disillusionment felt by activists following the three major campaigns of the last five years has to a certain degree affected the organisation both in terms of activist engagement, financial resources and organisational morale. All these factors need to be considered against the backdrop of what can realistically be achieved for the future. My findings suggest that on-going meetings and events, while maintaining a loose thread of solidarity, require something more substantial and concrete for long term sustainment. While this may not be fundamentally necessary to keep existing long time activists engaged and committed, it does however have implications if the group wish to expand and recruit new activists. For the purposes of ‘identity’, the People’s Movement organisation has to a certain degree

become associated with 'referenda'. Activists are keen to point out that this is not the group's principal objective. Referenda only form part of the cycle of protest of the People's Movement group. The organisation is, and continues to be, an EU critical vehicle to raise social awareness about the loss of sovereignty and democracy in Ireland.

I discussed this matter with a large number of activists from the People's Movement to gauge opinion on the future and what actions, if any, the organisation should take. All current activists expressed positive opinions about the organisation's objectives and the need for some EU critical vehicle in Ireland to exist. People's Movement activist, Eddie, makes reference to the important issues which the organisation raise through their publication, the 'People's News'. "If the People's Movement were not there, I wouldn't be able to read about these issues. I hope it continues." While it is noted that there are several groups, particularly on the political Left in Ireland who adopt, or appear to adopt, an anti- EU position during EU referenda, these are not EU critical organisations. There is an important difference. The People's Movement is not an anti-EU group, but rather an EU critical vehicle to raise public awareness on loss of sovereignty and democracy.

People's Movement activist, Kenneth, explained the difference: "We are an organisation that believes that social and political advance in this country can only be in the context of democracy ... and part of democracy means the country having a degree of control over its own affairs which is difficult, if not impossible, through membership of the EU. We are not an Anti-EU organisation. We are Anti-EU only insofar as it makes it difficult, or impossible, for us to control our own affairs. We are EU Critical. As the EU manifests bad features we then seek to highlight this and seek to raise people's awareness, mobilise people where possible against it, draw it to the attention of Dáil deputies and do all the things that an organisation should be doing".

My own research findings conclude that the People's Movement are the only social movement actor in Ireland who adopts an EU critical approach as its central objective. In this respect the People's Movement occupy a distinct political space in comparison to other groups. Fergus notes that "there are individuals out there who are fighting back, but they

don't see any collective who they can fight with. This has to do with the 'individualisation' that occurred during the good times in Ireland where everybody is out for themselves and it didn't matter about everyone else. They are beginning to get over that ... and when they do that and when they get back to the idea of collective action, the People's Movement will occupy that space". In a similar vein, Eamon notes that "the People's Movement approach to politics is very distinct in Irish political life. I think it provides a political vehicle and space for people who are not involved in political parties. I think also it's a good vehicle to bring those who are involved in political parties together under a broad united front, so I do think it's absolutely important that it continues to exist. I think the shape, form and concern will be developed and is developing. Of course it started off as a campaign against treaties, but I think now we have to create a vehicle which struggles against the consequence of the treaties and that is harder and much more difficult".

Activists are keen to stress the importance of sustaining the organisation as it provides a unique analysis and critique which other groups lack. Several activists were also quite positive about the heterogeneous composition of the group insofar as it welcomed EU critical approaches from all individuals without a political party bias. Patricia, a long-time activist with the Dublin People's Movement branch states that activists should not give up. "I'm convinced that you have to keep on and on and on even if you don't win because the problem is, that's why they win. They win because everybody gets fed up and gives up because you are fighting a losing battle all the time. That does not always have to be the case. You can look down through history ... eventually something breaks somewhere and things flow the other way". She also notes that a lot of activism and learning is by chance. Recognising the fact that individuals do not set out with the intention of becoming a 'social activist', she explains that activism begins with a "political awakening" and "slowly and gradually you are made aware of how wrong and unjust the system is, which most people go through their lives not knowing."

Notwithstanding the positives about the People's Movement as an organisation, only a small handful of activists agreed that the organisation should continue without making changes. People's Movement activist, David outlines that there are internal and external obstacles. He

notes that while the established political parties, sectional business interests, and the media are entities which all social movement actors must face, he states that, “we as activists must focus on what we ourselves can change, our strategy and our approach”.

Activists clearly see human and financial resource deficiencies as obstacles to the group’s success. Michelle, People’s Movement activist from Kilkenny, notes that “it’s so difficult to keep things going on a voluntary basis. If you had the resources it would be different. The one thing that I think would be worthwhile doing would be getting a full time person who would spend time researching, and making contacts”. Many activists I spoke to echoed Michelle’s comments. Michelle makes reference to the structure of other well-financed social movement groups and political parties, in terms of the full time staff that many of these groups employ. She notes that the inability of the organisation to maintain an office with staff is also a contributory factor to low levels of engagement among activists and members of the public.

In addition to deficiencies in human and financial resources, other activists note that the organisation should look at its internal structures and meetings. Matt, a young activist from Dublin suggests that a general meeting should be held at least annually and there may be a further need for smaller steering committees to meet on a 6 weekly basis. Other activists highlight the I.T. skills gap in the group and the need for an activist with good social media skills to communicate the People’s Movement message. General concerns were also expressed around the “narrowing constituency” of activists in Ireland as there are quite a number of active social movement actors and political groupings. Kenneth notes that “there is a limited pool of supporters available who would be attracted to what the People’s Movement stand for and what they campaign for”. Kenneth feels that the rise of other groups and other campaigns, such as the ‘anti-household charge’ and ‘anti-water charges’ groups, which are now politicised, are drawing activists to those issues whereas they may have supported the People’s Movement campaign. Kenneth emphasises that connecting EU events with local issues remains a challenge. “Our message sometimes seems far out and unrelated to people’s everyday things”.

A small number of activists who have since left the People's Movement group did feel less than optimistic about the group's future. It is notable to mention that such activists did not have a long history in social activism in comparison to others. Richard feels that the People's Movement can be a 'support' group to maintain solidarity with likeminded people. In terms of future action however, he and a number of others have doubts about the group's ability to sustain itself. Richard does not feel optimistic about the future and he feels 'globalisation is where we are headed' and "the war is lost ... I feel we have reached this critical mass. People are beyond reach." Richard feels that the group, in the future, can act as a research body or a 'think-tank' which publishes EU critical information. Michelle also told me that she has concerns about the about the notion of sustainability. Although she is not a long-time activist, she tells me that her understanding of social movement groups is that they campaign on an issue and then recede. In this context, she discusses a number of environmental groups and she feels that the People's Movement group are similar. "They deal with an issue. It's either successful or not. The movement then disseminates and finishes."

I noted earlier that the People's Movement had also placed the topic of the organisation's future as a matter for discussion at activist meetings. Serious questions were being asked by group members about the future of the organisation. Similar to the post-Lisbon period, there was a notable void in the group's action following the EU Fiscal Treaty referendum. Core activists within the group, for the first time, issued a communication to activists to discuss the issue of "Where to now?" for the People's Movement group. These issues are ongoing within the group but suggested reforms include appointing designated spokespeople, communicating our message and identity in a clearer manner, focusing on organisational growth in rural areas, and applying realistic limits on what we can achieve based on resources available. While these matters are being discussed further by activists who recognise the need for such change, the People's movement organisation continues to engage in mobilisation events and demonstrations. This activity has increased throughout 2013 and the Irish term of 'Presidency of the European Union'. The People's Movement engaged in a number of demonstrations at the Dáil, EU Buildings, and Dublin Castle to coincide with meetings of EU Council Heads of state and foreign ministers. Activists are

also involved in the preparation of a People's Movement exhibition in Dublin city, which will display archived photographs and documents from past EU referenda dating back to Ireland's entry into the EEC in 1972. Activists hope that such events will remind the public of the role of the EU in Irish politics, as well as raise the profile and identity of the People's Movement organisation. Activists are also looking to the future, noting the elections for the European Parliament which are taking place in the summer of 2014. A number of People's Movement members are currently in discussions regarding the possibility of forming allegiances with a potential 'Independent' candidate for the EU elections, however these discussions are continuing. There are also further challenges ahead. Since the onset of the European financial crisis, there have been extensive discussions at senior EU level, regarding the establishment of a 'banking union' which may result in further changes to the existing EU treaties. It is unclear yet if such treaty reforms will require a future referendum in Ireland. It has also been reported that German Chancellor, Angela Merkel stated that "fellow EU leaders during a summit in Brussels have 'accepted the principle' of binding reform contracts that will transfer further sovereignty from a national level to the European Commission" Such reforms are reported to be in the areas of labour markets, public sector efficiency, research and innovation, education, employment and social inclusion (Pop 2013d).

Notwithstanding the lack of a referendum, activists do feel a "wind of change" has occurred. Activists point out that the political and economic landscape of Ireland has changed dramatically since the group first campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty in 2008. They point out that only five years ago, it was difficult to voice any criticism over the European Union, but today it is different. There is space developing for such criticism, whether it is aimed at the EU itself or the Euro currency. Fergus notes that "we are part of a nexus that is coming together to give people different perspectives ... I can see a situation where all things being equal, in five years time, there will be a good healthy critique of the EU here in Ireland and we will be part of it. I won't say we will lead it but certainly we will be part of it. That's important because essentially at the back of it all we are a campaigning group". Fergus reiterates the slow, laborious and time consuming action, which is social activism. He emphasizes the small positives and the importance of building upon these and over time he

feels that the group can and will make a difference and play its part, small or big, in raising consciousness and awareness of EU developments and its implication for Irish sovereignty and democracy.

## *Conclusion*

Thomas Wilson notes that ethnographers, due to their embeddedness in localities over a long period of time, “in order to contextualise the objective outcomes of policy with personalised, interested and symbolically charged local cultures and communities ... may be in the best position among all social scientists to provide the information necessary for the understanding of wider European social formations, not least of which is the European Union, in the everyday lives of Europeans.” (1998:117)

I have illustrated why People’s Movement members engage in collective action and struggle to counter the EU and its reform treaties. I have made references throughout this thesis to various aspects of collective action of the People’s Movement such as its organisation, structure, movement leadership, movement solidarity, identity, communication, networks, transnational linkages and discourse. I have provided an analysis of the socio-cultural and political environment in which the People’s Movement group contest their struggles. In doing so, I have made references to such themes as, culture in contemporary society, identity, globalisation and the signification of meaning through discourse. An understanding of these concepts is just as important as the acts of the group itself, if one seeks to ascertain the causative factors which produce grievances and mobilise individuals. Although this thesis focused on social movement activity in Ireland through the lens of one particular social movement group, it is hoped that the reader will be able to step into the shoes of those activists by understanding their ‘world’, and why they campaign against EU policies and EU treaties.

I have illustrated the fluidity and historicity of collective action which led to the formation of the People’s Movement group. The campaign of the People’s Movement and indeed other Irish social movement groups should not simply be studied by reference to their structural position, they need to be understood within a historical analysis. This has been one of the underlying themes throughout this thesis. Is the People’s Movement a traditional class or labour based movement or is it a ‘new social movement’ which focuses on rights and

social justice? Are grievances formed through material or post-material factors? I made specific reference to this matter in Part I of the thesis, where I noted how ‘new social movements’ (Melucci 1988 & Offe 1985) were not in fact ‘new’ but rather a diversification of older groups. ‘Sub frames’ have been realigned or reframed to suit a changing political and economic environment. Social movement organisations adapt easily and assume new forms. Cox (2003) notes that such social movement actors are “branches of a single tree”. I agree that we should begin by looking at these groups not as movements but as part of one ‘movement’. Rather than seeing them as distinct and isolated actions, they are merely “different aspects of the same social movement, whose linkages, mergers and separations can be understood in historical perspective” (Cox 2003:16). This is clearly evident in the People’s Movement whose members have their historic roots in a number of different organisations, including peace groups, gender based and environmental struggles, and workers’ rights/ trade unionism. Indeed, many of the movement actors today have their roots in ‘new social movement’ identity politics, which studies have shown have been alive and well in Ireland since the 1960s (See Smyth 2006, Ryan 2006 and Connolly 2006). Indeed within social activism on the ‘Left’ in Ireland there are strong ‘anti-war’ and ‘peace’ undertones which resonate with calls for maintaining Irish neutrality in a militarised EU. In addition to this, activists challenge the EU as it redefines identity and imposes a top-down ideology of European citizens with a shared cultural heritage.

Notwithstanding these factors, I do not contend that the People’s Movement represents ‘post-materialist’ action in the strict sense. The group’s struggle is based on material concerns and where issues and grievances are defined, this is done within social and economic frames. The organisation retains a strong traditional ‘labour’ theme and continues to emphasise the growing class divide in Irish society. As exemplified through my own research, social movement organisations in Ireland today encompass individuals of the ‘old Left’ and ‘new social movements’, some of whose struggles against the EU date back to the early 1970s. The People’s Movement is a hybrid flux of activity representing both material and post material concerns. Indeed the People’s Movement could be said to occupy a transitory or liminal state between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Left, that is, class based action combined with identity politics. The distinction between old and new Left is a fine line. New activists

continued to view capitalism and imperialism as a root cause of injustice, and argued that the lack of direct democracy for people has continued to be a source of inequality (Cleveland 2004). The ability of actors to collectively organise and reframe their actions within a master frame allows us to study such groups not as ‘once off’ movements or individual struggles, but rather as a long continuous struggle with many forms and adaptable features. In keeping with the Marxian emphasis on the historical, I do not consider the organisation as a static unchanging form. I look at the relations between activists and how the formation of intricate personal networks provides the foundations for the growth of new social movement entities. Each social study of the movement is merely a temporal snapshot of its present form but it needs to be examined within a changing environment and as a continuous fluid movement. Individuals who are new to social activism are providing groups such as the People’s Movement with new inputs and this, in turn, is contributing to the future shape and form of the organisation. The engagement among first time campaigners and experienced social activists provides the group with rich diversity. The ability of the organisation to attract such a broad demographic is enhanced by its ability not to look at social struggles strictly through frames of ‘class’ action or ‘Marxist’ struggles.

While they focus on national sovereignty and local democracy, they simultaneously adopt a global and internationalist outlook by looking at EU injustices, inequalities and rights both in a national and international context. They adopt the master frames of ‘EU and democracy’ and have a strong ethos for principles of social justice. As I have illustrated in great detail in Part I of this thesis, there are strands of academic opinion that situate new social movement activity outside the political space. I however see the causative factors for People’s Movement action clearly embedded in the political and economic, that is, the state and the market, and I contend therefore that to define new social movements as non-political is a misnomer as all the issues they address are political. Indeed ‘political identity’ is the very driving force of new social movements. I found that the People’s Movement provides an alternative medium to individuals who wish to express disillusionment with mainstream politics while at the same time offering a new vehicle for self-expression. It also offers individuals a new movement on the ‘left’ which is internationalist in its approach and adopts a broad political worldview.

While the group has challenged EU reform treaties in three EU referenda since 2008, the organisation faces a number of challenges now and into the future. Activists are aware of these challenges and the need to adapt to sustain mobilisation during periods of low campaign activity. It remains to be seen how the organisation can adapt to these challenges. Notwithstanding this, a core nucleus of activists, through passion and personal commitment ensure that the organisation continues. For these activists, there is no winning and losing, it is a “way of life”, compelled by a strong moral and social conscience, of knowing what is right and wrong. As one activist notes “It’s in the blood. I just couldn’t not do it. My bottom line is that the EU is fundamentally flawed. Inevitably it’s going to break up. It might take five years, it might take ten years, it might take twenty years. As long as it continues to be driven by elites in an undemocratic manner, the ordinary person on the street does not associate with it and does not connect with it. It’s not democracy.”

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[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203917304574412641980083218.html?KEYWORDS=fear+and+loathing#articleTabs\\_comments%3D%26articleTabs%3Darticle](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203917304574412641980083218.html?KEYWORDS=fear+and+loathing#articleTabs_comments%3D%26articleTabs%3Darticle) (Last Accessed 31.01.2014)

## *Appendix A*

### *The Lisbon Treaty*

The Lisbon Treaty is a European reform treaty which further enhances the political and economic development of the European Union. Its origins lie in the European Intergovernmental Conference (IGC October 2003 – June 2004) which ironically was chaired under the Irish presidency of the EU Council (Dur & Mateo 2008) in which representatives from all EU member states reached political agreement on the text for a new European Constitution. The Constitution, which was officially signed in October 2004, was ratified by 16 member states but was subsequently rejected by the publics of France (55% No Vote) in May 2005 and the Netherlands (62% No Vote) in June 2005. Defeats in such key and decisive European countries represented an obvious political set-back but did not result in defeat for the EU Constitution. After a period of ‘reflection’, the Council of Europe (2007) in July 2007 announced that the reforms should be implemented by way of a Treaty rather than by a ‘Constitution’ and instructed the IGC to prepare the draft text of such a Treaty with the instruction that “*settling this issue quickly is a priority*”. The result of such IGC discussions was the Lisbon Treaty, agreed upon by member states in October 2007 with the hope of full implementation across all EU member states in time for European Elections in the summer of 2009. By reintroducing the reforms in a European Treaty rather than a European ‘Constitution’, EU leaders politically side-stepped any requirement to seek public approval through referendums and thereby avoided potential embarrassment and fear of popular rejection. Ireland however was unable to introduce legislation (such as that laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon) which conflicts with Bunreacht na hEireann (Constitution of Ireland). It therefore had no option than to put the matter before the Irish public by way of a referendum.<sup>89</sup> On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, the Treaty of Lisbon was rejected by the Irish electorate by 53.4% to 46.6%. Following much political deliberation between the Irish government and EU member states, the Irish government proclaimed it had received ‘guarantees’ to address the concerns of the Irish electorate. 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009 was the date set to stage another referendum and ask the Irish electorate to vote again on the Treaty of Lisbon. Activists who campaigned against the Lisbon Treaty reforms dismissed such ‘guarantees’ as nothing more

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<sup>89</sup> See Irish Supreme Court Case of Crotty –v- An Taoiseach (1987) IR 713

than political promises and were outraged (as were many voters who in fact voted yes to the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008) that the government were placing the exact same Treaty before the electorate again without changing one single word of its text. Ireland became the focal point of political interest between June 2008 and October 2009 as being the only country out of 27 member states with the power to determine the political and economic course of Europe. A country with only 4.3 million held the power to determine the political direction of a European Union of c.500 million. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lisbon Treaty referendum was held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009. The Treaty was accepted by 67.1% of the electorate, compared with 32.9% against.

## *Appendix B*

### *European Fiscal Compact ('Austerity') Treaty*

The Treaty is known by several names such as the EU Fiscal Treaty, the Stability Treaty, the EU Fiscal Compact, and the Austerity Treaty, but its formal name is the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union. In fact, while it is generally referred to as an EU Treaty, this is in fact inaccurate. The Treaty is not an EU treaty insofar as it is not an agreement between the 27 member states. The Treaty was signed on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 by 25 member states (UK and the Czech Republic did not sign) and it is therefore an intergovernmental treaty. I have simply referred to the Treaty in this thesis as the EU Fiscal Treaty. Unlike former EU treaties the Fiscal Treaty was only 25 pages in length and contained only 16 Articles.

While the Treaty related specifically to fiscal rules and budgetary discipline, the foundation of such rules date back over 20 years to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 which set out the criteria for economic and monetary union. Such criteria specifies certain rates for inflation, ratios for government deficit to GDP (3%), and ratios for government debt against GDP (60%), long term interest rates and exchange rates. These foundations were laid down as a precursor the introduction of the Euro currency.

In 1997, the Stability and Growth pact (SGP) was introduced through a resolution issued by the Council of Ministers<sup>90</sup>. This pact of the 27 member states sought to strengthen fiscal governance in member states by enabling the EU Commission and Council of Ministers to oversee national budgets and issue recommendations, warnings and sanctions to member states deemed non-compliant. The SGP was modified slightly in 2005<sup>91</sup> to 'relax' the rules, due primarily to the fact that 5 of the 12 Eurozone nations at the time had or planned deficits outside of the SGP rules<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Resolution of the European Council on the Stability and Growth Pact Amsterdam 17/06/1997. EU Official Journal C236 02/08/1997.

<sup>91</sup> See EU Council Amendments 1055/2005 & 1056/2005 which amended regulations 1466/97 & 1467/97.

<sup>92</sup> 'The Reform of the Stability and Growth Pact – An Assessment' – Speech by Jose Manuel Gonzalez Paramo, Member of the Exec Board of the ECB. Conference on 'New Perspectives on Fiscal Sustainability' Frankfurt 13<sup>th</sup> October 2005. (See: <http://www.ecb.int/press/key/date/2005/html/sp051013.en.html>)

The ‘Euro Plus Pact’ was agreed by the EU Council of Prime Ministers and Presidents in March 2011 and was aimed at member states making political reforms to support the fiscal targets laid out in the SGP. Also agreed however was an amendment to the EU Treaties to establish a permanent ‘European Stability Mechanism’.

The SGP was revised again in late in 2011 with the introduction of the ‘six-pack’ (based on 5 Council Regulations and 1 Directive<sup>93</sup>) which provided not only fiscal surveillance but also macroeconomic surveillance. The ‘six pack’ essentially strengthened fiscal targets laid down in the SGP by ensuring a stricter application through greater definition, introduction of corrective mechanisms and reinforces sanctions.

While the Fiscal Treaty which was signed on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012 (and which was put before the Irish people on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012 in the form of a referendum) largely mirrors what was contained in the ‘six pack’, it does go further by modifying some rules, which according to the European Commission are more ‘stringent’<sup>94</sup>, it also amended voting rules for corrective mechanisms, reinforced economic governance and more importantly requires member states to ensure that specific targets and objects are enshrined in national law “preferably of a constitutional nature”.<sup>95</sup> The preamble to the Treaty is also of critical importance, in that it specifically states that the “***granting of financial assistance in the framework of new programmes under the European Stability Mechanism will be conditional, as of 1 March 2013, on the ratification of this Treaty***”. The insertion of this comment into the Treaty preamble became the topic for the entire referendum debate, rather than the Treaties 16 Articles. It was widely believed (not only from activists who campaigned against the Treaty) that the referendum vote for Treaty acceptance was ultimately determined on the ability of the nation state to access future funding programmes if required.

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<sup>93</sup> Regulations of EU Parliament & Council No’s. 1173-1177/2011 – 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Council Directive 2011/85/EU – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>94</sup> See European Commission guide to fiscal governance 14/03/2012. (See [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/articles/governance/2012-03-14\\_six\\_pack\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/articles/governance/2012-03-14_six_pack_en.htm))

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

The referendum in Ireland was held on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012. The Treaty was accepted by the electorate, with 60.3% voting in favour and 39.7% against. No referendum on the 'European Stability Mechanism' was put before the Irish electorate.

## *Appendix C*

<i>Appendix C</i>												
<b>MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS</b>												
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (1)	2013*	2014*	2015*	
<b>Unemployment</b>	4.40%	4.40%	4.50%	6.30%	11.80%	13.60%	14.40%	14.70%	14.60%	14.10%	13.10%	
<b>GDP (€Bn)</b>	150194	177729	188729	178882	161275	156487	158993	163600	167700	174100	181400	
<b>GNP (€Bn)</b>	138776	154465	162209	153565	132911	130202	127016	133400	133900	137800	142300	
<b>Gen Gov Debt (€Bn)</b>	44443	43699	47155	79603	104626	114223	169131	192461	203420	209268	211875	
<b>Debt/GDP</b>	27.30%	24.60%	25%	44.50%	64.90%	92.20%	106.40%	117.60%	121.30%	120.20%	116.80%	
(1) 2012 figures per CSO Data. See also CSO data in IFAC report April 2013.												
Source: <a href="http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/publications/economicstatstetc/budgeteconom.pdf">http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/publications/economicstatstetc/budgeteconom.pdf</a>												
Dept of Finance Budgetary and Economic Statistics October 2012.												
* Projections based on Budget 2013 Data in Irish fiscal Advisory Council report April 2013.												
Source: <a href="http://www.fiscalcouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/FARApr13.pdf">http://www.fiscalcouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/FARApr13.pdf</a>												

## *Appendix D*

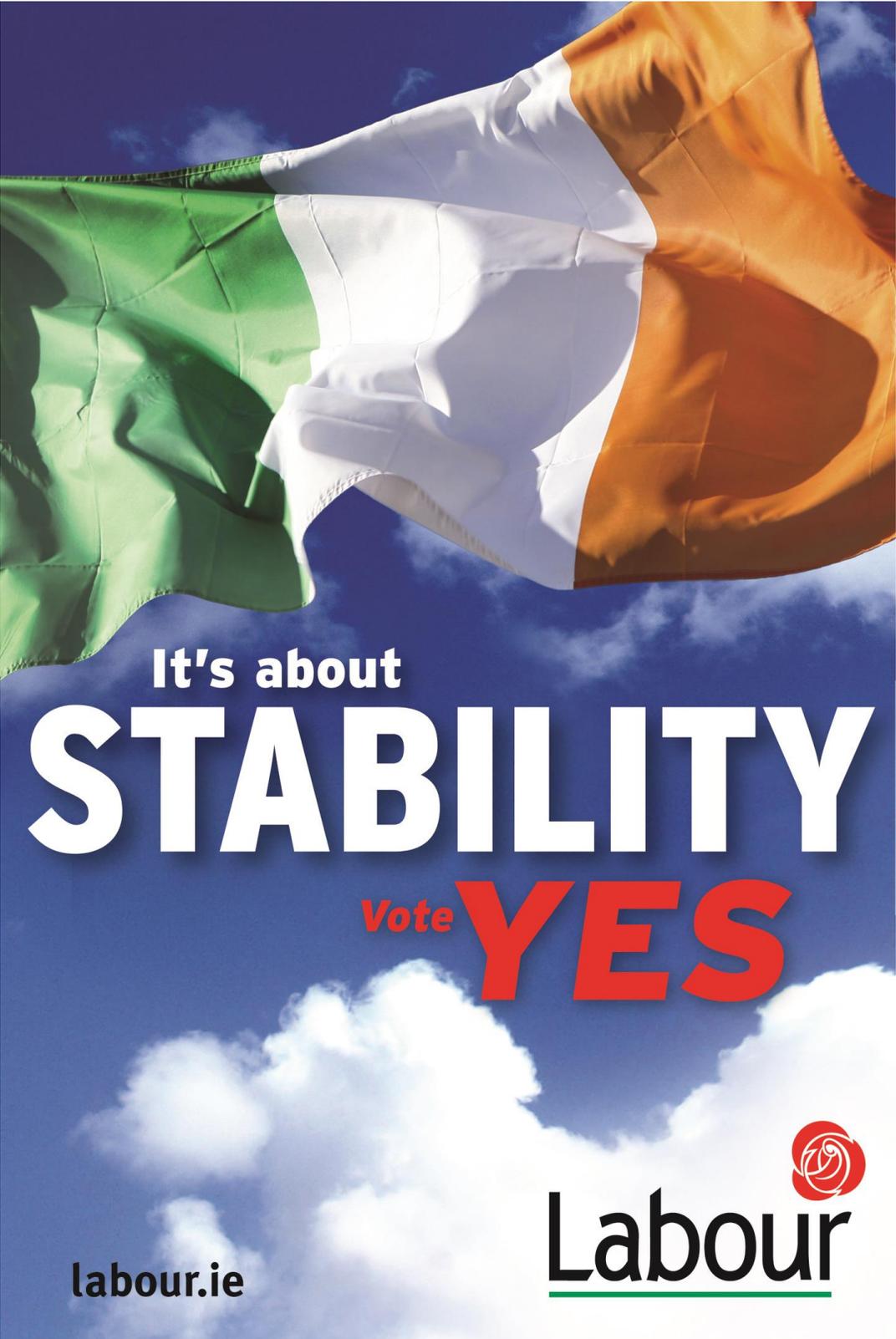
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## *Appendix E*

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**1 EU Foreign Minister**

**1 EU Foreign Policy**

**1 EU voice at the UN**

---

**= 1 EU Government?**

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behind the**

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## *Appendix F*

