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# Icelanders lead campaign against the sale of a national geothermal company, 2011

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) women](#) [1]
- [included participation by more than one social class](#) [2]

## Timing

18 July

2010

to:

31 January

2011

## Location and Goals

Country:

Iceland

Location City/State/Province:

Reykjavik

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

"This proposal, concerning the sale of Iceland's natural resources to the company Magma Energy, aims to initiate an open discussion and encourage reconsideration of this sale, ensuring that the interests of the public are being protected and that clarification is achieved on all aspects of this decisive case concerning the future of Iceland."

## Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches>Pop singer Bjork urged parliament to review the considerations of the sale of Iceland's geothermal power to a Canadian company, calling it an opposition to Iceland's interests
- 002. Letters of opposition or support>Icelanders sent letters urging parliament to abstain from selling Iceland's natural resources to a Canadian-based company, Magma Energy MXY.
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention>Bjork presented Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir with the people's intention to interrupt the sale of their geothermal energy to Canada's Magma Energy MXY.
- 006. Group or mass petitions

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 006. Group or mass petitions ›Pop singer Bjork presented Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir with a petition signed by 47,000 people
- 036. Performances of plays and music ›Pop singer Bjork organized a three-day karaoke festival where the public could learn about the issue of the sale of geothermal power and gather signatures for the petition
- 038. Marches
- 048. Protest meetings

Segment Length:

Approximately 1 month

## **Classifications**

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Environment

Group characterization:

- Icelanders who want to defend their country's rights to their precious natural resources.

## **Leaders, partners, allies, elites**

Leaders:

Icelandic pop star Bjork

Partners:

Icelanders

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Bjork, Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir

## **Joining/exiting order of social groups**

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

Approximately 1 month

## **Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence**

Opponents:

Canada's Magma Energy MXY

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

## Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

1 point out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Total points:

4 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

The campaigners are given 1 point to recognize that some Icelandic control of the resource was retained.

On 18 July 2010, Icelandic pop-singer and cultural icon Bjork called for Iceland's Parliament to review the sale of Iceland's geo-thermal company HS Orka to Vancouver-based company Magma Energy Corporation in order to consider the environmental and political implications of such a sale. Bjork argued that the sale of Iceland's natural resources, like geo-thermal energy, should be decisions made by all Icelanders, and not just those affiliated with the company.

Iceland's Left-Green party was concerned over this particular issue due to its environmental implications. Geo-thermal energy, which is used to heat over 90 percent of homes in Iceland, is accessed by drilling into the earth and extracting heat that is then converted into usable energy. Of this process, Bjork denounced the control Magma Energy Corp. would have over Iceland's geo-thermal-rich Reykjanes Peninsula for the next 65 years. She and others in solidarity did not want their country to become the "aluminum smelter for the planet," which could grossly upset the ecological balance in Iceland. Magma Energy Corp. planned to erect their firm next to the famous Blue Lagoon hot springs, a popular tourist destination, which would also harm tourism revenue.

Icelanders wrote letters of protest to their Parliament, urging them to review the case and open the decision up to a referendum vote. Bjork began a movement to collect signatures for a petition that opposed the sale of HS Orka to Magma Energy Corp. She capped off the drive for signatures with a three-day karaoke festival to protest the sale. The festival, aptly named Voice of the People, began on Thursday, 6 January 2011, and lasted until 8 January 2011.

On Monday, 17 January 2011, Bjork led seventy protestors in a march to the office of Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir. Sigurdardottir invited Bjork and a few protestors into her office to discuss the details of their demands, as well as to present their petition. Sigurdardottir conducted the meeting, then joined Bjork and others singing in solidarity outside her office. In an interview, Sigurdardottir revealed that she accepted the petition "with great pleasure." However, a referendum was never held.

Eventually, Magma Corp. agreed to sell 25% of its corporation to Icelandic pension funds, thus, allowing Iceland to retain up to 25% ownership in its geothermal power. Yet, Magma largely controlled geothermal energy in Iceland.

# Research Notes

Influences:

The movement was inspired by a different Icelandic movement which occurred in 2007 to oppose the sale of the same company, HS Orka (1)

Sources:

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

John Pontillo, 30/03/2013

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