

## The Why and the How of Shell Must Fall

### Background & Strategic considerations



Amsterdam, April 2021

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# 1. Shell Must Fall!

At the 2019 Shell shareholders meeting, Code Red, CluB, and Gastivists announced Shell Must Fall! : A Campaign aimed at dismantling Shell.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2S7F6Ln0vg&t=28s>

Shell represents a huge obstacle to the necessary climate transition. The way the multinational operates and is organized ensures that the climate, environmental and human rights, as well as other ethical considerations will always lose out to the possibility of making a profit. It is time for everyone to see and acknowledge that Shell is not going to change. The only solution is to structurally dismantle the company to build a just future without Shell. Shell will never tear down its own infrastructure, the company will not compensate workers and affected communities, or repair ecosystems. It is time to dismantle this obstacle in our path.

In this Toolkit, we provide information about the Shell Must Fall campaign. We talk about our aims and how Shell Must Fall fits into a long tradition of opposition to Shell. Then we cover how you can take action against Shell yourself and become part of Shell Must Fall, with practical tips and inspiring examples. We hope you find this Toolkit useful! Do you have tips or ideas on how to make it even better? Let us know at [info@code-rood.org](mailto:info@code-rood.org)

## **Demands made by Shell Must Fall:**

- **DISMANTLE SHELL** by any legal, economic, or political means necessary
- Provide a **JUST TRANSITION** for the workers in the fossil industry
- Ensure **REPARATIONS** for affected communities and ecosystems
- Build a decentralised and socialised **ENERGY DEMOCRACY** for all

## **a. Introduction**

This Toolkit is intended for anyone who is interested in the Shell Must Fall campaign and wants to take action against Shell themselves. The Toolkit is for both more experienced activists and activists who have little or no action experience. This Toolkit contains information and ideas for substantive discussions along with practical tips for effective and safe actions.

The idea for creating this Toolkit came about after we organised several decentralised days of action in 2020. Our original plan was to organise a mass action to block Shell's shareholder meeting in May 2020. However, because of Corona, we were forced to take action locally and in smaller groups. We found that this form of decentralised, simultaneous actions with different groups in different places was effective, and we believe it will continue to play an important role in activism in the future. With this Toolkit, our aim is to be able to remotely support groups that take action independently, and integrate them as part of a larger campaign.

We hope this Toolkit is helpful! Do you have tips or ideas about how to make it even better? Let us know at [info@code-rood.org](mailto:info@code-rood.org)

This Toolkit consists of 3 parts:

### Part 1: Shell Must Fall

This section is about the Shell Must Fall campaign. Why does Shell need to be dismantled in the first place? What are our goals? How does Shell Must Fall fit into the long history of resistance to Shell and where do we stand at this point? This section is intended to inform and stimulate conversations and discussions about taking effective actions with your group.

### Part 2: Practical Tips

In this section we provide practical tips around organising and carrying out an action with either a smaller or larger group. This section also includes tips for conversations and discussions you can have in your group to

strategize and ensure that everyone can participate fully and be heard.

### Part 3: Action inspiration

In this section, we show several prior actions to help inspire your own action.

#### **b. Why we need to dismantle Shell**

*The text below is based on SOMO's research report "Still Playing the Shell Game," with contributions from various experts and organisations. The full report can be read here: <https://futurebeyondshell.org/the-shell-game/>*

Of course, a just transition is not just about addressing Shell, but about the entire system that allows Shell to operate as they do. As one of the largest oil and gas companies in the world, Shell has influenced and benefited from this capitalist, (neo)colonial system. Shell is iconic in the oil and gas industry, and its business model is typical of a modern multinational that takes good care of (is profitable for) its executives and shareholders. This business model is not unique to Shell, but Shell executes it exceptionally well!

As we think about the future and about structural and sustainable change, it is important to ensure that we do not repeat these structures of inequality and exploitation again. Inspired by our action at Shell's 2019 shareholder meeting, a research group looked at Shell from different angles. They identified four obstacles Shell uses to impede a just transition: Shell's main priority remains profit maximization, the company thrives on inequality and undermines democratic decision-making, and Shell's scenarios and marketing are misleading. It is therefore important that Shell has no place at the table where our future is decided.

#### **Obstacles to a just transition**

##### **Obstacle 1: Shell is driven by profit maximisation**

Over the past 20 years, Shell has chosen to spend \$237 billion buying back shares and paying out profits to shareholders. No priority has been given to investing in research, or retraining workers, for a more climate-friendly future. Instead, Shell has deprived societies around the world of income by paying no or little taxes, and Shell has saddled us all with global warming. There is a huge gap between what the company's top executives earn and the average wage that workers are paid. The CEO earns 277 times as much as an average Shell employee in the Netherlands and up to 4050 times as much as an employee in Nigeria. Every euro that is spent on excessive payouts to executives and shareholders, or is shifted to tax havens, is a euro not spent on providing decent wages, or retraining workers for climate-resilient jobs, or cleaning up oil spills, or compensating affected communities.

##### **Obstacle 2: Shell thrives on inequality and the violent exploitation of peoples and ecosystems**

Shell has grown large thanks to oil reserves that are extracted from colonized territories and has always had close ties with the Dutch colonial rulers. The relationship between oil interests and colonial interests in the Indonesian Archipelago was so explicit that historian and journalist Paul van 't Veer argues that Dutch imperialism at the turn of the 20th century "smelled of oil." The colonial administration facilitated oil concessions, provided state engineers, and actively protected the oil reserves of the Dutch East Indies from exploitation by other foreign oil companies.

These colonial ties allowed Shell to grow, and the Dutch colonizers to expand their territorial power. Some of the practices that Shell developed in colonial times are continued today through investment treaties and carbon offset schemes. Shell's history shows that the company does not hesitate to provide fuel for, and participate in, violent events. The damage done to black and indigenous communities and their territories, which still has not stopped, demands recognition and reparations.

If Shell is held responsible for exploitation and environmental destruction, the company will not be able to make the profits it does today. Inequality and exploitation are inextricable parts of the Shell business model. Therefore, Shell cannot be part of the world we want: fair, just, and environmentally sustainable.

Read more about Shell's collaborations with repressive and undemocratic regimes (just a few examples from a long list):

Nigeria: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/shell-nigeria-oil-payment-corruption-scandal>  
South Africa: <https://constantinereport.com/the-neptune-strategy-shell-propped-up-apartheid-in-south-africa/>  
Myanmar: <https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2017/09/14/shell-myanmar-government-rohingya-violence/>  
Brunei: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2019.1678591>

### **Obstacle 3: Shell undermines democratic decision making**

Since the beginning of its existence, Shell has had access to policymakers to secure its own interests. People who switch between careers in Shell and the Dutch government - so-called revolving door relationships - give Shell direct access to the highest decision-making bodies in the Netherlands and enable Shell to establish contacts with politicians of high status and influence. These relationships help the company shape policies in its favour, especially bilateral and free trade agreements. This has ensured that these agreements often provide far-reaching protections for companies and investors against any government measures that might interfere with their expected profits. In this way, the threat of private litigation (arbitration) and the associated damages can deter governments from taking measures to combat climate change.

### **Obstacle 4: Shell misleads public opinion**

Shell develops future scenarios, and uses marketing campaigns and misleading advertising, to present itself as an indispensable player that can guide society through the energy transition. With the help of controversial marketing firms such as Edelman, Shell tries to conceal its contribution to global warming and its involvement in social and environmental injustice. In addition, to gain public support, the company works with "trusted" partners to justify itself. Even children are fed with Shell's inaccurate historical and scientific information. This goes so far that some children are introduced to information about climate change and renewable energy for the first time through Shell's educational programs. Shell uses advertising and marketing to suppress the sense of urgency about climate change, to appeal to the general public, and to stay at the negotiating table with the government. In this way, they influence both the pace of the energy transition (not too fast) and the direction (continued demand for fossil fuels). Through this, Shell has succeeded in shifting responsibility to the consumer. The marketing turns climate change and the energy transition into a demand problem, rather than one driven by supply. The company promises innovative solutions that allow storage of CO<sub>2</sub> so that supply can continue unimpeded.

If multinationals like Shell continue to influence and determine the energy transition, we will continue to run into these obstacles. So every time Shell proposes a new technology or structure, we must critically examine it to make sure it is not reproducing the same profitable, anti-democratic, and exploitative business model.

So, what does a sustainable future for Shell entail? We say: fossil fuels, and therefore companies like Shell, have no future within a just system. That is why we demand the dismantling of Shell. By "dismantling" we mean a controlled phase-out and a radical, responsible transformation of Shell's ownership and economic activities. This purposeful crumbling of Shell will be part of a just transition.

### **c. How we can dismantle Shell**

*The text below is based on TNI's research report *The Future We Want*. You can read the entire report here: <https://futurebeyondshell.org/the-future-we-want/>*

As we have shown above, large international companies like Shell consider energy as a way to maximise their profits. But to meet people's needs, while staying within the limits of the planet, we need a very different logic than that of free market capitalism. We see part of the solution in new forms of public ownership - by municipalities or citizen and worker collectives, often in the form of cooperatives - that serve the common good. State ownership could also play a key role in dismantling companies like Shell. Though, we might want to remain skeptical of government intentions due to the revolving door between policy makers and Shell shareholders.

There are viable alternatives for a post-Shell future in which we abandon the idea of mega-corporations and opt for communal, public, democratic, and decentralized systems of energy generation, distribution, and supply and in which we prevent environmental and human rights violations through legislation, regulation, and strict enforcement.

Costa Rica is demonstrating that it is possible to build an effective and fair electricity system based on public ownership. In 2017, hydropower, geothermal, wind, solar, and biomass energy sources accounted for 99.7% of the energy mix there. The vast majority was generated by state-owned and socially owned power

generators. The Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE) produced 66% and subnational public utilities and four rural energy cooperatives together produced another 7%. These cooperatives have more than 1,900 employees and supply electricity to more than 390,000 users. COOPELESCA is one of these cooperatives, and one of its tasks is to maintain the country's natural environment. By 2015, the cooperative had offset its entire carbon footprint, mainly through the purchase of land at risk of environmental pollution. The cooperative also engages residents in the creation and implementation of local development plans, which encourage and support community initiatives.

### **Why now?**

Resistance to the climate crisis has increased, and the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated both the need and the possibility for rapid change. Activists, academics, scientists, and governments increasingly recognize the need to move beyond our dependence on fossil fuels. The time has come for strategic analysis and discussion about how to build a post-Shell future.

In early 2020, the price of oil made an unprecedented drop, caused by an "oil war" unleashed by Russia and Saudi Arabia. They wanted to push U.S. shale oil producers out of the market. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this price decline - oil prices reached historic lows and even negative values. The impact on oil companies was enormous, especially in the expensive U.S. shale oil sector. For smaller oil-producing countries, such as Algeria, Ecuador, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, and Venezuela, the situation exacerbated existing economic difficulties, with mounting budget deficits and a loss of financial reserves.

Shell has announced that its total emissions are likely to have peaked in 2018 and its oil production in 2019. It is clear that the era of fossil fuels is coming to an end. We must seize this moment of transition to push for real change and a redistribution not only of energy, but also of power. Moments of crisis and change can be opportunities for the powerful to become even more powerful, but also for real systemic change for the betterment of all people. The transition away from fossil fuels is a unique opportunity to push for this systematic change. A long history of struggle and resistance gives us the creativity and courage to imagine a better future and to begin building it.

### **A just transition**

With Shell Must Fall, we are making the case for a just transition. A just transition is one that ensures that the costs of quitting fossil fuels are not borne by working or marginalised people and communities, or by ecosystems. This means changing how societies - and production - are organised, rather than simply replacing one energy source with another. Climate and labour movements are increasingly coalescing around the idea that it is impossible to break dependence on fossil fuels without tackling the entrenched structures of institutional inequality and racialized and gendered capitalist exploitation that have driven us to the brink of ecological disaster and social crisis.

- A just transition looks different in different places
- A just transition is anti-racist
- A just transition is a class issue
- A just transition is a gender issue (and the future is feminist)
- A just transition is about more than climate
- A just transition is about democracy

The demands of Shell Must Fall (see Chapter 1, page 2) are founded on the idea that we should not let Shell fall unchecked, but rather take control of the company and force a just transition.

*'The last thing we need in the middle of a climate crisis is an oil giant meeting with its shareholders to determine how they are going to increase their profits.'*

A shareholders' meeting, or AGM (Annual General Meeting), is a yearly meeting where shareholders of a company come together to make important decisions, including on dividends. Companies like Shell are required by law to hold such meetings. Royal Dutch Shell is a PLC (Public Limited Company), the British equivalent of a *Naamloze Vennootschap* (N.V). This is a legal entity whose capital is divided into shares that are freely transferable. The public limited company is 'unnamed', because in the case of NV there is no requirement to keep a list of shareholders.

Each year, these anonymous, non-liable shareholders are paid profits (dividends) on the shares they own. Shell is known for its stable returns to remain attractive to investors in a capitalist system. We see, for example, that Shell occasionally chooses to buy back shares itself - sometimes with borrowed money! - as a result of which the profit has to be divided over fewer shares and a share thus becomes more profitable. Also, this keeps the price artificially high. These are strategic choices, because every euro can only be spent once!

## 2. Opposition to Shell has a long history

Shell Must Fall is a newcomer to a long history of resistance to Shell. Recently, there has even been an exhibition on *People Powered Movement against Shell*. Unfortunately, this Toolkit does not have space to highlight all previous struggles against Shell, but we would like to describe a few examples that serve as inspiration for us and may inspire others.

### a. Resistance to Shell's involvement in South Africa

Not so long ago, Shell was the target of militant resistance and an extensive international boycott campaign in the Netherlands and Europe. Despite a United Nations trade embargo, Shell supported the apartheid regime in South Africa. This regime had no oil resources of its own and was entirely dependent on imports of oil, which Shell supplied. Shell also operated coal mines in South Africa, and was the largest foreign investor. Therefore, Shell became the target of an international boycott and the focus of the divestment campaign of official anti-apartheid organizations in 1985. Not much later, direct actions from local activist groups also followed.

In November 1985, thirteen gas stations in the Netherlands were rendered unusable in one night. One station even burned to the ground. This was the starting point for perhaps the most extensive sabotage and action campaign in Dutch history. Hose-cutting at Shell petrol stations became all the rage. It was easy to copy and the filling stations were everywhere, often in remote locations. Shell gas stations were vandalized throughout the Netherlands. There were also collective action nights - with a record 34 filling stations tackled simultaneously. The action campaign also spread to other countries, and especially in Denmark, West Germany, and Sweden with great results.

*Karin from 'Blij dat ik Snij': "And it's just their most vulnerable point. There are these stations everywhere, often in remote places, and without complicated means you can make things unusable there. Very democratic. There is also a strong symbolism involved. Shell can say what it wants, but we cut that hose off, or throw junk in gasoline and they can't sell the stuff. Point. It's fairly innocent, it doesn't scare the hell out of innocent people, but it's effective." (translated from <http://www.ravagedigitaal.org/1990/51/11.htm>)*

According to a Shell spokesman, at least a thousand gas stations had been rendered temporarily unusable thanks to activists. For some activists, the snake-cutting did not go far enough - in light of the injustice of apartheid, they went further, for example with arson. In this way they wanted to harm Shell, as an ally of the regime. The group Revolutionary Anti-Racist Action (RaRa) may be known for actions against five Makro branches, but it is important to remember that they also attacked Shell infrastructure. From another angle, a blockade of the Shell Lab in Amsterdam-North was organized in the spring of 1989. A broad coalition

mobilized thousands of activists for three days as part of the *Spectacle Blockade*, similar to Shell Must Fall's original plans to block the shareholders' meeting in May 2020 with thousands of people.

This history of resistance to Shell shows several things: that even in the past the company put profit above all else, but also that action against it need not be complicated. Furthermore, we learned that activists can count on support and ultimately can successfully contribute to change. We are not the first to resist, and although we are still fighting the same dirty company, the Apartheid regime has disappeared.

History also provides practical input for decentralized action possibilities. Actions at gas stations in the past were easily replicated by small groups. With a relatively simple and safe action one contributed to the fight against apartheid. Also, a small group could decide how far they wanted to go. Some groups set fire to the place, while others handed out flyers. In the past there were waves of action that hit Shell petrol stations all over the world at the same time - will sea level rise now lead to new waves? And what do we want them to look like?

The history of resistance to Shell's involvement in South Africa shows that some material damage to Shell pump stations was not enough to bring down the multinational. Even the militant attacks in the late 1980s did not force Shell to leave South Africa. The actions did contribute to undermining the apartheid regime, because they strengthened the boycott campaign against Shell in South Africa. In 1988, even the World Council of Churches called on 400 million Christians to boycott the company.

In early 1990, Nelson Mandela was released and the opposition movement, the ANC, was legalized. With a sense of symbolism, one of the first acts of the ANC was to take over the Shell headquarters in Johannesburg and make it its own. This also slowly brought the action movement against Shell to an end. With the release of Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid, the motivation and legitimacy for the resistance against Shell disappeared. For Shell Must Fall this is different - it is not just about Shell's ties to dictatorial regimes, or its human rights violations, environmental disasters, tax avoidance, and contribution to climate chaos; it is about all these things together - Shell itself must fall. And not in 100 years, but in this decade.

#### **Read more?**

*When Shell was besieged by all means in the 1980s*, by Kees Stad (from which the above is largely inspired): <https://globalinfo.nl/Achtergrond/toen-shell-met-alle-middelen-belaagd-werd-in-de-jaren-1980>

### **b. Frontline communities in opposition to Shell**

In places where resources are extracted, there is almost always local resistance. Whether on the west coast of Ireland where the local community resisted a Shell gas field and pipeline, in Groningen, or the decades-long resistance to Shell in the Niger Delta. Farmers, fishermen, frontline communities, unions, and groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and indigenous, environmental, and human rights NGOs, have always challenged, resisted, and denounced Shell's impact on their land, water, and human rights.

Often resistance to fossil multinationals in the global South is larger and more militant than in rich countries. The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) managed to mobilize mass resistance against Shell in the Niger Delta, led by Ken Saro-Wiwa, in the early 1990s. MOSOP was very violently crushed by the Nigerian military and its leaders were assassinated in 1995. Read more about this history here: <https://code-rood.org/nl/2020/11/10/het-verhaal-van-de-ogoni/>

After the mass nonviolent movement failed to move forward, some communities decided to remove Shell by force. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) formed in 2005 and gave Shell and other multinationals an ultimatum to leave or face violent attacks. A guerrilla war against oil infrastructure began by using fast speedboats and attacks on oil platforms, pipelines, and offices, along with kidnapping actions. At its peak, the resistance managed to reduce oil production in the Niger Delta by more than a third, leading to higher global oil prices.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement\\_for\\_the\\_Emancipation\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Emancipation_of_the_Niger_Delta)

It is important to make the international connections. To make connections to the many resistances against oil multinationals in other countries and to understand how colonialism still permeates unequal economic relations and capitalist exploitation of the global South. For example, you can read more about Shell's role in Indonesia in the colonial era and the local resistance from workers and the population (article in English): <https://futurebeyondshell.org/birth-of-a-corporate-colonial-player/>



However, in this Toolkit we focus mainly on the context of the Global North. Shell has its headquarters in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. We, as people living in the Global North, therefore have a responsibility to shape resistance to fossil capital close to home and in doing so we aim to support communities in other countries.

### 3. Shell Must Fall campaign

Decades of campaigns have tried to make Shell a *better multinational*. But Shell still does not care about the ecological devastation it creates or the human lives it destroys. As has clearly described, Shell will never, by itself, do what is needed: (1) leave fossil fuels in the ground and dismantle infrastructure, (2) ensure a fair transition for workers, (3) ensure just compensation and restoration for affected communities and ecosystems, and (4) make a rapid transition to a decentralized and socialized energy democracy for all.

That is why we say, SHELL MUST FALL! It's time to close the offices, dismantle the derricks, and tear down the gas stations. It's Time to Make Shell History!

#### The name

The name Shell Must Fall was inspired by the South African Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall campaigns, in which students called for the decolonization of education and large-scale social and economic change, including addressing deep-seated racism and inequality. The fossil giant Shell is built on the same colonial structures and exacerbates existing inequality and (climate) racism. This must be stopped. Like the student activists from the campaigns in South Africa, the Shell Must Fall campaign is fighting for systemic change and a more just world.

With Shell Must Fall we are building a movement strong enough to dismantle Shell. We do this by, on the one hand, making Shell's many crimes visible and opposing the company in as many ways as possible. On the other hand, we invest in research about what it takes to dismantle a fossil giant like Shell and what a future without Shell would look like under the title *A Future Beyond Shell*. This research is fueling our actions and the messages we are spreading about a future without Shell.

#### A movement against Shell

In 2019, the Dutch action group Code Rood (Code Red), together with CLuB and the Gastivists, launched *Shell Must Fall* at Shell's shareholders meeting in The Hague, much to the irritation of Shell's board. The first mass action was to be a large-scale blockade of the shareholders' meeting in 2020. Unfortunately, these grand plans had to be cancelled at the last minute because of Corona.

Shell Must Fall is a movement for everyone who agrees with the demands (see chapter 1, page 2) and goals (see below) with which we move the demands closer step by step. Only together can we break the power of the fossil industry and dismantle Shell. In Part 3 of this action Toolkit, we describe the action principles that Shell Must Fall actions must meet.

The **goals** of Shell Must Fall are:

- Making **Shell's** wide range of **crimes** visible to a wide audience: These crimes go beyond causing climate chaos and downplaying, distorting, and obscuring the truth about it for decades. Shell is also guilty of human rights violations, corruption, tax evasion, and greenwashing. Putting profit before people and nature is deeply rooted in all layers and facets of the company. **Shell cannot and will not change into a company where a sustainable, fair, and just future is paramount.**
- With this campaign we want to damage Shell's **reputation** as much as possible, so that partners and shareholders withdraw, employees are less proud of their employer and may even leave, politicians will no longer give Shell advantages or allow it to have a say in policy, and consumers will boycott Shell.
- Working with partners, we will **research** what it takes to dismantle a fossil multinational like Shell and what a future without Shell looks like.
- In addition, with this campaign we will make visible **the underlying system** that causes climate disruption, exploitation, and destruction of nature: capitalism and colonialism, and its interconnections with other oppressive power systems such as racism, sexism, and fascism.

- We are contributing to the **politicization and radicalization of the climate movement** and building a movement of like-minded organizations and people with whom we can work in unison - but from different strategies - to bring down Shell (and companies like Shell).
- Last but not least, within this campaign we want to put the **systemic change** we envision into practice as best we can and collectively develop a vision of the future for a different, more sustainable and equitable system.

### a. Shell Must Fall movement: cooperation and decentralized actions

Although a mass blockade is a very good way to involve a large group of people in Shell Must Fall, it is not the only way to build a strong movement. Collaborating with and mobilising all kinds of action groups whose goals correspond to the Shell Must Fall goals can also take shape in other ways: for example, by organising decentralized actions. In 2020, we organized decentralized action days at various times, where groups in the Netherlands and abroad took action under the #ShellMustFall.

In January 2020, the Shell Must Fall Everywhere action week took place. As part of this action week, people in various Dutch cities took action against Shell. In Amsterdam, for example, handprints of (fake) oil and blood were left on a large Shell logo on the Beursplein, to underline the destructive impact of their activities. In The Hague, in collaboration with Extinction Rebellion, the entrance to Shell's headquarters was blocked. About 25 people were arrested for this.

Instead of a mass action, we organized decentralized, corona-proof activities in May 2020. There were demonstrations, one and a half meters away, at the headquarters in The Hague. In Prague, the Czech climate action group Limity Jsme My occupied three Shell gas stations. In Berlin, Ende Gelände demanded the dismantling of Shell with a bicycle demo. At several Shell petrol stations in the Netherlands and Denmark, the tank hoses were chained up with bicycle locks, making them unusable. There were also numerous small actions in Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. Finally, in Portugal, Climáximo organized an online protest via Manif.app with more than a hundred people. Read more: <https://code-rood.org/nl/2020/05/21/actie-in-tijden-van-corona-decentraal/>

### b. Commemorative actions for the Ogoni 9

On November 10, 1995, nine Nigerian activists from Ogoniland were hung for their (peaceful) opposition to Shell. One of the nine men, who later came to be known as the Ogoni 9, was well-known Nigerian writer and political leader Ken Saro-Wiwa. Read more about the murders of the Ogoni 9 and Shell's role here: <https://code-rood.org/nl/2020/11/10/het-verhaal-van-de-ogoni/>

Exactly 25 years after the murder of the Ogoni 9, on November 10, 2020, we organized nine commemorative events at Shell locations and at organizations that partner with Shell. These included Extinction Rebellion, Climbers4Climate, Doorbaak, Advertising Fossil Free, and Fossil Free Culture. Read more about this action: <https://code-rood.org/nl/2020/11/10/solidariteitsacties-ogoni-9-10-november-2020/>

### c. Reflections

Even in corona times, we can (and must!) continue to take action, although sometimes it will have to be on a smaller scale. Shell is almost everywhere in the world - and with it there are action targets almost everywhere. Decentralized actions sometimes lack the collective energy of a mass action, but under the banner of this campaign you can still feel part of a larger movement with a small group. In some cases, decentralized actions may even be able to make more of an impact, as they may be less expected by authorities and Shell than a pre-announced, mass action. A major advantage of decentralized actions is that different groups can plan an action themselves, in their own environment, and in line with their own level of readiness for action.

So far, unfortunately, we have also found that the national media impact of our decentralized actions is limited. The actions are reported in the local media, but the Shell Must Fall story - questioning the very existence of multinationals like Shell - almost did not reach the mainstream. At the same time, we find that the actions do help to popularize the "Must Fall" idea within the climate movement itself, both in the Netherlands and abroad. There, the right of fossil multinationals to exist is increasingly questioned, while "reforming" and "changing from within" was previously the norm.

Reflecting on where we stand as a movement and the political, economic, and social context in which we

operate is important for making strategic choices in future actions. While the impact of any action is never predetermined and often has unexpected elements, we can shape our resistance smartly and strategically where different groups can play different roles within a diversity of tactics.

## 4. Where are we now as a climate movement

### **Momentum for the climate movement**

In recent years, the climate movement and public willingness to take action for the climate has grown significantly. In 2019, we saw tremendous **momentum** for the climate movement: Extinction Rebellion spread all over the world, with groups of people everywhere, often for the first time, organising civil disobedience against the climate crisis; It was a summer of climate camps, in more and more places, often coupled with mass actions; Two Ende Geländes with more participants than ever; A Hambacher Forest that for the first time in decades was not smaller after the winter; And of course, the massive school strikes of Fridays For Future: A New Generation that drove more people into the streets against the climate crisis worldwide than ever before.

The momentum seems to have been nipped in the bud by corona, but is in fact alive and well. A growing number of people are concerned about the climate crisis and feel that far too little is being done. This was shown, for example, in a survey of local organisers of the March 2021 Climate Alert. For two thirds of the local organizers, the Climate Alert was the first climate protest they had organized. For one third it was even the first climate protest they had participated in.

At the same time, the climate movement is still young, lacking in self-confidence and organization, and lacking a clear shared political vision. It sometimes seems as if we have to reinvent the wheel all over again. Because there are many new people in the movement, and volunteers are limited in their time, there is little sense of a shared history and shared lessons. So we need to work on getting the climate movement better organized, for example through strong local groups and local coalitions. Developing a **strong political vision and shared narrative**, centering on climate justice and anti-capitalism, is also essential. We can collectively learn lessons from struggles and action groups in the past and in other countries.

### **Little diversity in tactics**

The current climate movement primarily uses legal demonstrations and nonviolent, civil disobedient actions, such as blockades and disruptions. While these tactics are important and useful, climate activists are also wondering whether the urgency of the climate crisis does not call for more robust actions such as the disabling (temporarily or otherwise) of machinery or fossil infrastructure. Action tactics that were widely used in the recent past seem much less widely accepted at the moment - not least within the movement itself - while the seriousness of the problem has only increased.

There is a fairly strong belief that "nonviolent" resistance is the most effective and only strategically correct choice. Going beyond civil disobedience would remove sympathy and support in society and with it the potential for a larger movement. This is a more than justified consideration. However, it is also often claimed that history shows that social change is best achieved through non-violent resistance. In this regard, reference is made to the abolition of slavery, the suffragettes, the independence of India, the American civil rights movement, the struggle against apartheid, and the Arab Spring. Although nonviolent action played an important role in all of these movements, in all cases sabotage and destruction of property was also part of the resistance. Different groups can play different roles within a movement, all contributing in their own way to a common narrative.

### **The era of the fossil industry is coming to an end**

As described in section 1.c. above, the fossil industry is in crisis. And that is an opportunity for the climate movement: <https://code-rood.org/nl/2020/04/10/2020-is-een-rampjaar-voor-de-olie-industrie-en-dat-is-een-enorme-kans-voor-de-klimaatbeweging/>

It is now up to us to initiate a movement toward a sustainable future that is not founded on the same principles of exploitation and perpetual growth that created the current crisis.

### **Society polarises- inequality increases further**

We also see that society is becoming increasingly polarized, in part due to the ever-increasing inequality of the last few decades. The corona virus is exacerbating this inequality and polarization. The extreme right is gaining ground with the narrative that migrants and "the left" cause all the problems, while leftist narratives are not gaining sufficient footing and leftist politics are severely divided. The right does not prioritize climate policy (or even denies the need) and guards the power of multinationals under the guise of "preserving jobs."

Neoliberalism is alive and kicking here.

The right and the extreme right are increasingly succeeding in positioning working people against the climate movement. This is something we as a climate movement have not yet responded to well. This is why we also have come up with steps that align ourselves with workers in the Shell Must Fall campaign. One of our demands is a just transition for workers, but we don't yet have a clear plan on how to connect with workers (and worker unions) and move forward together. Workers can and must play an important role in climate justice campaigns. If they strike for a day, they can achieve more than a mass action by the current climate movement.

*It is important to make it clear to oil sector workers that they will benefit from a government supported transition to a sustainable and future-proof industry. ... This means that we have to make a clear distinction between employees on the one hand and shareholders and management on the other: You don't get people to change their minds by calling everyone in the oil sector a criminal. This ties in perfectly with the People's Bailout principles: Save employees and communities, not the bosses. It also means that the need for direct contact between climate activists and people in the oil sector and their unions has become especially important.*

From: <https://code-rod.org/en/2020/04/10/2020-is-a-disaster-year-for-the-oil-industry-and-thats-a-huge-opportunity-for-the-climate-movement/>

### **What does this analysis mean for us?**

From this analysis, we draw three main conclusions that will shape our activities and priorities in the coming period:

#### **1. Develop and consistently communicate a strong narrative that places climate justice and social equity at its core**

We must embrace a narrative that makes it clear that it is better for everyone (except the bosses and the very rich) if Shell falls in a controlled way: for workers, the climate, frontline communities, ecosystems, and society. We need to make sure that we convey a compelling narrative as a counterweight to right-wing anti-migrant and pro-capitalist narratives.

Instead, we need to tell a story in which we (1) address the problem of inequality by critiquing the systems that ensure an ever-increasing concentration of money in the hands an ever-smaller group, and (2) make it clear that we can address the climate and ecological crises in a just way.

#### **2. Commit to further movement building**

We need to work towards a stronger, more decisive and strategic climate movement, both domestically and internationally. Corona has forced us to organize more online and we have slowly gotten used to this. This provides opportunities to collaborate remotely and coordinate plans. In addition, we can invest even more in setting up and strengthening local groups and local coalitions that operate independently but are also able to act together.

#### **3. Embracing a diversity of tactics**

We can think more strategically about deploying a diversity of tactics depending on the goals we are pursuing. Direct actions, civil disobedience, and certain forms of sabotage such as disabling fossil infrastructure can make the urgency of the climate crisis visible and be legitimized by the seriousness of climate disruption. Moreover, they can often directly address harmful practices. Legal and non-legal actions with strong symbolic value are important for telling the story of climate justice and engaging a broad constituency. Moreover, symbolic actions can cause people to organize, to make new contacts, to do things they might never have done before. This all contributes to a stronger and better organized climate movement.

All of these tactics are important. Groups can weigh for themselves which tactics suit them and the context in which they operate best. Moreover, since each action will have different goals, the tactics may also differ: if you want to grow as a group, a legal demo may be useful. If you have an experienced group, direct action is among the possibilities. Mass mobilizations and actions, climate camps, and militant, decentralized actions can actually reinforce each other.

## Read more about different action tactics and theories of change

- *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*, Mark & Paul Engler - an overview of strategic nonviolent action to influence public debate and change politics;
- *How to blow up a pipeline*, Andreas Malm - accessible book that advocates radicalizing tactics to combat climate change.
- *How non-violence protects the State*, Peter Gelderloos - <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-gelderloos-how-nonviolence-protects-the-state>
- Many particularly worth reading articles on la ZAD and the resistance to an airport: <https://zadforever.blog/>
- *How to win campaigns - Communications for change*, Chris Rose - A practical guide for creating and running successful campaigns
- <https://www.beautifultrouble.org> - Creative tools for a more just world

## 5. Moving forward

We hope that this part of the Shell Must Fall toolkit has sparked new ideas and conversations among activists and action groups. In part 2 and 3 of the toolkit we will provide more practical guidance and inspiration for organizing a Shell Must Fall action. We would like to thank you for reading the toolkit and your commitment to making Shell fall ☺ The struggle for a better future is not easy and we can only do it collectively. We are looking forward to working together with action groups around the world, in solidarity, sharing the hard work, the joy, the successes and the losses we are facing. We are not alone in this, let's make Shell history, together!