

# Law-Enforcing Vigilantes in the Media Era? : An Investigation of Sea Shepherd ' s Anti-Whaling Campaign

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## Law-Enforcing Vigilantes in the Media Era?: An Investigation of Sea Shepherd's Anti-Whaling Campaign

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### **Abstract**

Japan's research whaling in the Antarctic Ocean has been conducted since 1987, when the moratorium on commercial whaling was put into effect. However, it has recently been placed in jeopardy because of a series of intense protests by the environmental organization "Sea Shepherd". Sea Shepherd is a marine wildlife conservation organization founded by the maverick environmental activist Paul Watson, a member of Greenpeace until 1977. Whereas Greenpeace has an element of "protest business" that exploits environmental issues as a means of raising funds from sympathetic donors, Sea Shepherd is more like a "vigilante group" or a "self-appointed policing organization" that takes aspects of international laws into its own hands. This article summarizes the history of Watson and Sea Shepherd to examine Sea Shepherd's (1) organizational goals and campaign agendas, (2) financial status, and (3) governing structure, in comparison with Greenpeace. The article also discusses Sea Shepherd's campaign methods, focusing on its

(1) anxiety-arousing tactics, (2) direct action, and (3) media manipulation.

## 1. Introduction

In February 2011, an incident occurred in which Japan's research whaling operations in the Antarctic Ocean were cut short by a series of intense protests by the "Sea Shepherd Conservation Society", an environmental organization headquartered in the USA. Although a number of environmental organizations are involved in anti-whaling campaigns, until recently Greenpeace had led the world's crusade against whaling. Greenpeace was a revolutionary organization in the sense that it developed an innovative way of recruiting members of the general public into a social movement by ingeniously, some might say "manipulatively", using the mass media. Although Greenpeace still maintains its anti-whaling policy, it has recently suspended the campaign against Japan's Antarctic research whaling.

In an earlier publication I examined the history and tactics of anti-whaling organizations by focusing primarily on Greenpeace and pointing out that behind environmental organizations' enthusiastic anti-whaling campaigns there was an element of "protest business", that is, the exploitation of an environmental issue as a means of raising donations.<sup>1)</sup> In this present article I assert that Sea Shepherd is more like a "vigilante group" or a "self-appointed policing organization" that takes "international laws" in its own hands and executes them at will.

I demonstrate this by examining the history of Watson and Sea Shepherd, followed by an investigation of Sea Shepherd's (1) organizational goals and campaign agendas, (2) financial status and (3) governing structure in comparison with Greenpeace. I then consider Sea Shepherd's anti-whaling campaign methods, concentrating on its (1) anxiety-arousing tactics, (2) direct action and (3) media manipulation.

## 2. The History of Paul Watson and Sea Shepherd

### 2.1 Watson's Youth

Watson was born in Toronto, Canada in 1950<sup>2)</sup>. He left home at 17 to work at the 1967 World's Fair in Montreal (commonly known as Expo 67). The following year he moved to Vancouver to join the Canadian Coast Guard, and at the age of 19, he embarked on a Norwegian bulk carrier on a voyage to Asia and Africa. It seems reasonable to suppose that Watson's spending his late teens in Vancouver, a city well-known for its liberal atmosphere and active social movements and his experience as a sailor, played a crucial role in settling his life's course.

The late 1950s to the early 1970s, i.e., Watson's adolescent years, was a period of social, cultural, and political turmoil around the world, especially in North America and Western Europe. During this period the dominant belief in economic development as a vehicle for human welfare was seriously challenged, allowing new social movements to blossom. In this turbulent era Watson joined the Sierra Club, one of America's oldest environmental organizations. Although the Sierra Club was a key player in the

environmental movement and instrumental in the creation of national parks in the USA, it was inclined to seek the conservation of nature without questioning existing social frameworks like capitalism, mass production, consumer lifestyles, and institutions of power. In other words, the Sierra Club was not radical enough to challenge the existing social structure. Frustrated by this, some of its members set up a protest group called “Don’t Make a Wave Committee” in order to protest the US Government’s plan for an underground nuclear test on the island of Amchitka, Alaska, in 1969. In 1971 this committee changed its name to Greenpeace.

Watson, as one of the early members of Greenpeace, joined the organization’s protest against French nuclear tests in 1972, embarking on their anti-whaling campaign in 1974, followed the next year by the legendary confrontation with the Soviet’s whaling fleet in the Pacific. The 1975 anti-whaling campaign was such a great success, thanks to the well-publicized pictures in which Greenpeace’s small rubber boats (with Watson aboard) audaciously confronted the Russian whaling fleet to save sperm whales, that the organization established its reputation worldwide. Since then Greenpeace’s name has become almost synonymous with concern for our planet.

In 1976 and 1977 Watson played a leading role in a Greenpeace campaign to protect seals on the east coast of Canada. The 1977 anti-sealing campaign was well publicized in the media, in no small part because of the support of the French actress Brigitte Bardot. Anti-whaling and anti-sealing have been Watson’s lifetime campaign agendas ever since.

## 2.2 The Establishment of Sea Shepherd

Watson established the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in 1977, when he was 27, as a result of disagreement over such issues as campaign tactics and organizational structure. The rift between Watson and other Greenpeace members widened to the extent that Watson was ousted from the Board of Directors by a vote of eleven to one (the single vote was Watson’s), resulting in his establishment of Sea Shepherd<sup>3</sup>). The responsibility for this rift appears to lie chiefly with Watson himself. Robert Hunter, a journalist and former Greenpeace activist supports this allegation. In his book on Greenpeace, Hunter wrote: Watson “seemed possessed by too powerful a drive, too unrelenting a desire to push himself front and centre, shouldering everyone else aside” (quoted from Scarce 1990: 101). This is a period in which Watson’s ego caused tension among Greenpeace members, and since then there has been a discord akin to sibling rivalry between Watson and Greenpeace.

In its early years, Sea Shepherd was unable to raise enough money to buy a ship to pursue environmental activities on its own. However, a turning point came when Watson met Cleveland Amory, founder of “the Fund for Animals”. Amory offered financial support to Watson. With this funding, Watson bought a trawler and named it “*Sea Shepherd*”, allowing him to embark on his journey with his own ship to protect marine life on the high seas. The prominent activities of Watson and Sea Shepherd thereafter have been widely publicized around the world.

The first direct action by Sea Shepherd was conducted in 1979 against a Canadian seal hunting expedition in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On the east coast of the country,

Canadians have long engaged in the harvesting of the white furs of harp and hooded seal pups before they molt and grow their dark-colored pelts. The method which Watson employed to protect seal pups was innovative. Sea Shepherd activists went on the ice and sprayed the seal pups with colored dye so as to destroy the value of the pelts. Since then Sea Shepherd has continued its anti-sealing campaign, despite frequent skirmishes with Canadian hunters and the Canadian Coast Guard, arrests and detention of its members by the authorities, and occasional confiscation of their ships.

Let us now turn to the examination of how Watson developed an interest in whales, and how Sea Shepherd has been committed to whaling issues ever since.

### 2.3 Watson and Whales

As mentioned above, Watson first became involved in anti-whaling campaigns in 1974, when he was still a Greenpeace member. However, it was said that in 1973 Watson made up his mind to dedicate his life to the protection of whales.

In 1973, an incident occurred at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, USA, well-known for the 1890 massacre of the Sioux by American troops. In protest against the murder of a Native American by white men, a group of Native Americans occupied a Catholic church there. Watson went from Vancouver to Wounded Knee to join the protest. After the incident was over, Watson was befriended by the Oglala Sioux and invited to their hut, which was made of buffalo hide and branches, for an initiation. In the hut, Watson apparently had a vision while in a state of hallucination owing to extreme heat and lack of oxygen. A huge buffalo, the animal that represents the Great Plains of North America, came up and spoke to him, telling him that he should concentrate on marine life, especially whales, instead of dissipating his energies on a wide range of animals (Watson 1981: 70). It was the most vivid dream Watson claimed ever to have had; and so he found his mission in life.

It seems that Watson often experiences events of this type. For example, elsewhere Watson describes his confrontation with the massive Soviet whaling fleet in the Pacific in 1975 as follows:

The massive head of this majestic sperm whale slowly fell back into the sea. He rolled and the water parted, revealing a single solitary eye. The gaze of the whale seized control of my soul and I saw my own image reflected back at me.... On that day, I left the comfortable realm of human self-importance to forever embrace the soulful satisfaction of lifelong service to the citizens of the sea.... The gentle giant died with my face seared upon his retina. I will never forget that. It is a memory that haunts and torments me, and leaves me with only one course to chart towards redemption for the collective sins of humanity. It is both my burden and my joy to pledge my allegiance to the most intelligent and profoundly sensitive species of beings to have ever inhabited the Earth — the great whales (Watson 1994: 165–166).

It follows from what Watson described that his attitude toward whales is peculiar, mystical, or some might even call it megalomaniacal. In Watson's (1994: 164) view,

“There is a state of war between some human nations like Norway and the nation of whales”. In this world of conflict, he is an “Ambassador” representing the will of “whalekind” “in an effort to reach a state of co-existence with humankind” (Watson 1994: 164). Watson declares that he is “prepared to die to defend the whales” (Watson 1994: 164). In this apocalyptic world, Watson is a missionary who preaches the wish of “whalekind” to humankind.

Anti-whaling is the campaign agenda on which Watson and Sea Shepherd have most ardently worked. Watson carefully avoids harming people, but he shows no hesitation in destroying property that he believes is used in illegal fishing activities. To give a few examples, Watson and/or Sea Shepherd rammed the infamous pirate whaling ship *Sierra* in 1979, scuttled two of Iceland’s whaling boats in 1986, and sank a Norwegian vessel in 1992. In recent years, Watson led the annual campaign against Japanese research whaling in the Antarctic Ocean. Although many countries and peoples including Spain, Portugal, the Faroe Islands<sup>4)</sup>, and the Makah<sup>5)</sup> have been targeted by Watson and Sea Shepherd, one can safely state that it is the Japanese whaling fleet that has been attacked the most fiercely.

The first Sea Shepherd campaign against Japan was undertaken to stop the slaughter of dolphins at Iki Island, Nagasaki Prefecture, in 1982. At that time, given that the dolphins caught valuable fish such as yellowtail tuna, the fishermen of the island drove the dolphins to the shallows, dragged them onto the beach, and stabbed them with spears. In 2003, Sea Shepherd activists came to Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, where the academy award winning documentary film “*The Cove*” was later filmed, to document on video the scene of the slaughter of dolphins in the bay. Two activists illegally cut nets to release the dolphins waiting to be killed, which resulted in their arrest. In 2010, Sea Shepherd again dispatched its members to Taiji to monitor and report the dolphin slaughter, intending to draw the attention of the world media.

The most spectacular activity to date of the crew of the Sea Shepherd against the Japanese whaling fleet was undertaken in the Antarctic Ocean, during the 2005–2006 whaling season. Sea Shepherd crews aboard their protest ship, the *Farley Mowat*, attempted to disrupt the Japanese whaling activities by entangling the propeller of the mother ship, *Nisshin Maru*, with ropes and ramming the *Farley Mowat* into the Japanese supply vessel, *Oriental Bluebird*. During the 2006–2007 season, the Sea Shepherd crews threw smoke pots and glass bottles of stinking butyric acid on the deck of the *Nisshin Maru*, and successfully entangled the propeller of another Japanese ship, the *Kaiko Maru*, with ropes. The damaged ship lost speed and was rammed by the Sea Shepherd’s ship, *Robert Hunter*. During the 2007–2008 season, Sea Shepherd again attacked the Japanese whaling fleet with containers of butyric acid and ropes. Two Sea Shepherd members forcefully boarded the Japanese ship, *Yushin Maru No. 2*, from an inflatable boat. Since the 2007–2008 season, Sea Shepherd has taken aboard its ship producers of Animal Planet, an American cable television show involved in producing documentary programs. The series of programs called *Whale Wars* has been broadcast throughout the USA and elsewhere.

During the 2008–2009 season, Sea Shepherd once again attacked the Japanese

whaling fleet with butyric acid and ropes, causing a collision. During the 2009–2010 season, Sea Shepherd’s speedboat, *Ady Gil*, collided with another Japanese ship, *Shonan Maru No. 2*. The captain of the *Ady Gil*, Peter Bethune, later boarded the *Shonan Maru No. 2*, resulting in his arrest by a Japan Coast Guard officer. Bethune was sent to Japan, brought to trial at the Tokyo District Court, and received a two-year prison sentence suspended for five years for trespassing, injuring, and other charges (*The Asahi Shimbun* 2010).

Sea Shepherd’s campaign against Japanese research whaling in the Antarctic Ocean intensified during the 2010–2011 season. The obstruction to the whaling vessels by attempting to damage the propellers with ropes, throwing smoke pots and glass bottles of stinking butyric acid on the deck, and directing laser beams at the whaling crews, forced the Japanese Government in February 2011 to halt operations for the season earlier than had been planned, in order to ensure the safety of the whaling crews.

### 3. Greenpeace vs. Sea Shepherd

In this section, Sea Shepherd is compared with Greenpeace in terms of organizational goals and campaign agendas, financial status, and governing structure.

#### 3.1 Organizational Goals and Campaign Agendas

Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd declare their missions as follows:

Greenpeace:

Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organization which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force the solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace’s goal is to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity (Greenpeace International 2011b).

Sea Shepherd:

Established in 1977, Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) is an international non-profit, marine wildlife conservation organization. Our mission is to end the destruction of habitat and slaughter of wildlife in the world’s oceans in order to conserve and protect ecosystems and species. Sea Shepherd uses innovative direct-action tactics to investigate, document, and take action when necessary to expose and confront illegal activities on the high seas. By safeguarding the biodiversity of our delicately-balanced ocean ecosystems, Sea Shepherd works to ensure their survival for future generations (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 2011a).

The goals of both organizations appear very similar. This seems natural when it is considered that Sea Shepherd was established by a dissident from Greenpeace. There are some important differences between the two, however. First, whereas Greenpeace advocates “non-violent” confrontation, Sea Shepherd proclaims that it will take a more “direct-action” oriented approach “when necessary” in order to implement international

laws. Second, Greenpeace takes a holistic approach to environmentalism; that is, its mission is to ensure a green environment and peace, not the protection of individual species. Meanwhile, Sea Shepherd takes both holistic and individualistic approaches, which is illustrated by its mission statement to the effect that they “conserve and protect ecosystems and species”. Third, whereas Greenpeace’s campaign is diverse in terms of its agenda and arena, Sea Shepherd concentrates on marine wildlife to the exclusion of land animals.

Sea Shepherd is not a protest organization like Greenpeace, but rather a “self-appointed policing” organization that takes international laws in its own hands. Its main grounds for the employment of direct action lie in “the United Nations World Charter for Nature”, adopted in 1982. Sea Shepherd asserts that Sections 21–24 of the Charter provide individuals with authority to act on behalf of and enforce international conservation laws (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 2011d). In addition to the World Charter for Nature, Sea Shepherd lists as grounds for its anti-whaling campaign the International Whaling Commission (IWC)<sup>6</sup> and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)<sup>7</sup>, and other international laws and charters.

It is true that the World Charter for Nature stipulates in section 21 that international organizations, individuals, groups and corporations shall, along with states “[i]mplement the applicable international legal provisions for the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment” (section 21c), and “[s]afeguard and conserve nature in areas beyond national jurisdiction” (section 21e). On the other hand, the World Charter for Nature does not refer to individual operations, including whaling. In addition, considering that research whaling is a legal activity permitted by Article 8 of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), and that Japan lodged an objection to the Antarctic Whale Sanctuary when it was adopted, it is difficult either to deny Japan’s right to harvest whales in the Antarctic Ocean or justify Sea Shepherd’s obstruction to the Japanese whaling operations.

As is now clear, Sea Shepherd’s assertion is not without problems, yet Watson does not seem to be bothered by this. Watson interprets international laws and charters in his own ways, and enforces the laws on anyone who he thinks may be breaking them. Although Watson and Sea Shepherd are sometimes called “eco-terrorists”, it seems more appropriate to call them “vigilantes” in that they attempt to uphold the existing laws and the *status quo*, instead of overthrowing them (Nagtzaam and Lentini 2008). A vigilante is a member of a self-appointed group of citizens who either attempt to prevent crimes being committed or to punish criminals in their community when legal authorities, such as the police, are not functioning properly. In fact, Watson claims as follows:

[N]obody is there and the law exists, so therefore the law must be enforced. And that’s what Sea Shepherd is. We are a policing body, but because we are self-appointed I guess we could qualify as vigilantes (quoted from Scarce 1990: 105–106).

### 3.2 Financial Status

In their study of British environmental organizations, Jordan and Maloney (1997: 54) concluded that the dynamics of campaigning organizations such as Greenpeace is a more traditional as opposed to the new type of environmentalism, and, as a result, they are better understood as protest businesses or pressure/citizen groups. "Protest Business" is a campaign activity that exploits social issues, including environmental problems, as a means of raising donations, or an individual or a group that is involved in such an activity. The characteristics of protest business are well described by Jordan and Maloney (1997: 22):

#### The Characteristics of Protest Businesses

- (1) Supporters rather than members are important as a source of income.
- (2) Policy is made centrally and supporters can influence policy primarily by their potential for exit.
- (3) Political action is normally by the professional staff rather than the individual supporter or member.
- (4) Supporters are unknown to each other and do not interact.
- (5) Groups actively shape perceptions of problems by providing supporters with partial information.
- (6) Supporters are interested in narrow issue areas. Particularity rather than ideological breadth is the agency of recruitment.

The assertion that some environmental organizations have become protest businesses is supported by experts on the whaling issue. For example, Ray Gambell, who has witnessed the whaling issue for almost four decades as a marine biologist and Secretary of the IWC, insisted that the anti-whaling campaign has become an established business:

One of the extraordinary things about the whaling issue is that it has generated its own industry. There are more than one hundred NGOs accredited as observers to the IWC meeting. Most of them have to raise funds from the public... It's a whole business which feeds on the bad news of the state of the whales: "We are helping to save the whales. Give us your money..." If there was no whaling and the Whaling Commission didn't exist, what would all these NGOs do? They would be out of a job! (interview, March 14, 2001).

The idea that environmentalists use the whaling issue for fund-raising seems to be shared by many pro-whaling people. They tend to be much harsher to the anti-whaling side. This is what Masayuki Komatsu, a former alternate commissioner for Japan to the IWC said on the matter:

"Save the Whales" campaigns have been the most effective tool for their revenue. Once misguided by the anti-whaling propaganda, the gullible public has donated generously to these NGOs... So, these NGOs end up producing ostentatious campaigns for "Save the Whales". The more they misguided the public, the more money flows into their coffers

(Komatsu and Misaki 2001: 119).

Dalton (1994) argues that recent research on social movements has been driven by two distinct approaches: resource mobilization theory, and new social movement theory. Resource mobilization theory presumes that the formation and practices of a social movement are influenced strongly by the organization's own rationality and economic needs. Resource mobilization theory is a departure from the traditional perspective that sees civil grievance as the basis of the social movement. It shares basic ideas with the rational-choice theory advocated by political scientists and economists. Both resource mobilization theory and rational-choice theory base their arguments on "pragmatic calculations of how to meet its resource needs and make maximal use of the available opportunity structures" (Dalton 1994: 6). In other words, organizational needs are paramount and abstract notions such as social justice and moral values play only a minor role. In contrast, in new social movement theory, cognitive and ideational factors are central. Attention is paid to the role of ideas and sentiments in the emergence and development of social movements. Theorists of this approach focus primarily on "the sources and functions of meaning and identity within social movements" (McAdam *et al.* 1996: 5).

If the assertion of Jordan and Maloney is right, the dynamics of Greenpeace is explained by resource mobilization theory. According to Greenpeace's 2009 Annual Report (Greenpeace International 2011a), the organization is engaged currently in six main issues; oceans, forests, genetic engineering, toxins, climate and energy, and peace and disarmament. As this list shows, Greenpeace covers a wide range of social issues that are not limited to environmental problems. Further, it costs a large amount of money to maintain offices in over 40 countries and pay salaries to more than 2,000 staff around the world. Greenpeace, which boasts uncompromising radical policies, draws heavily on supporter contributions because, in order to maintain impartiality, it has a policy of not accepting donations from companies or governments. To satisfy the supporters who make donations, Greenpeace, along with other campaign-oriented environmental organizations, is inclined to target attractive and simple issues such as the protection of large, popular animals. Otherwise, they would fail to gain the sympathy of their supporters and their donations.

Then, how could we explain the dynamics of Sea Shepherd? Concerning the campaign target, Sea Shepherd seems to be a type of organization that is easily explained by resource mobilization theory in that it primarily tackles popular issues such as the protection of whales and seals, the animals which appeal to the sentiment of the general public, and as a result, attract the largest sums of money from supporters.

Their financial status, however, shows a different picture. According to Charity Navigator (2011), America's independent charity evaluator, Sea Shepherd's total functional expenses were approximately \$7.07 million dollars in 2009. About 84.9% of the expenditure went on campaign programs, while 8.6% of the expenses was spent on administration (e.g. personnel costs), and only 6.3% was spent on fund-raising<sup>8</sup>). In contrast, Greenpeace's 2009 annual report (Greenpeace International 2011a) shows that

the organization's total expenditure was approximately €201.8 million, and that Greenpeace spent 54.0% of the expenditure on its campaigns and 31.3% on fund-raising.

In comparing the figures of Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace, and acknowledging that it might lead to oversimplification, it can be said that Sea Shepherd spends most of its revenue on campaigns, whereas Greenpeace spends a large proportion of money on fund-raising. This is the reason why Watson criticizes Greenpeace, saying that "they do not spend the money they raise on the purposes the money was raised for" (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 2011e).

Although there are some core members, Sea Shepherd basically draws heavily on volunteers so that it is able to minimize personnel costs. In the sense that it can minimize administrative costs and rely on volunteers who join the organization for self-fulfillment and the materialization of their own ideas, it is likely that the dynamics of Sea Shepherd is better understood in the context of the new social movement theory rather than resource mobilization theory. Having said this, it must be noted that Sea Shepherd has undoubtedly an element of protest business — the concept which is in tune with and therefore well explained by the resource mobilization theory, in that the organization concentrates on popular issues, such as anti-whaling, which brings money to its coffers.

### 3.3 Governing Structure

Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd differ in terms of governing structure. In Greenpeace, the representatives (called "trustees") of offices around the world gather together once a year to decide long-term strategies and budget ceilings of the organization. At this meeting, they elect an international board consisting of four members and a chairperson, which appoints an international executive director. This director is then placed in charge of the management of Greenpeace worldwide (Greenpeace International 2011b). A criticism of Greenpeace is that it can be said that the only thing supporters are expected to do is to donate, and that a small number of cadres have an authority to make every decision, which leads to the assertion that Greenpeace lacks democracy (e.g. Cascioli and Gaspari 2008). This is the very point Jordan and Maloney make as a characteristic of the protest business (Jordan and Maloney 1997: 22).

Sea Shepherd has a board of directors, including Watson. The organization also has eight boards of advisors whose role is to offer advice in each area: for example, there is a Legal and Law Enforcement Advisory Board, which includes Ian Campbell, the former environmental minister of Australia; the Animal Welfare, Humane and Animal Rights Advisory Board, including the famous animal rights philosopher Tom Regan; and the Media and Arts Advisory Board, which is by far the most charismatic because it includes world well-known celebrities such as the aforementioned Brigitte Bardot, British actor Pierce Brosnan (who played James Bond in 007 films), and Hollywood actor Sean Penn.

Yet there is no denying that Paul Watson, the founder and leader as well as one of the directors of the organization, has the overwhelming power and authority in Sea Shepherd and emanates a strong charisma. Charisma originally had a theological meaning of "gift of grace", but after being brought into sociological parlance by Max Weber (1968) in his discussion about domination and authority, the word has come to imply

predominantly the mysterious quality of a person. The following is Weber's (1968: 48) definition of charisma:

[A] certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities... It is very often thought of as resting on magical powers... What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subjects to charismatic authority, by his "followers" or "disciples."

Mysterious qualities like these are, along with his ego and consistent efforts and activities to save whales and seals over the past 40 years, contribute significantly to his presence in the organization.

Concerning charisma, Freeman and Kreuter (1994: 1) call whales "charismatic megafauna" in their co-edited book *Elephants and Whales: Resources for Whom?* The book examines how these two charismatic animals are conceived and managed around the world. It is very interesting to find how many traits elephants and whales share: they are the largest animals on land and in the sea; they are both believed to be highly intelligent; both are admired as icons in the environmental movement; and both are protected by the Western-led international community whereas local people in Africa and Asia often see them as nuisances that damage farm crops or fish stocks.

Let us now return to the main discussion. There is no denying that large "charismatic" animals attract the attention of the general public and their donations. In fact, Watson is especially keen on the protection of charismatic animals like whales, seals, sharks, and turtles. It seems that Watson's preferences reflect his longing for beautiful and large animals, along with his attention-seeking personality.

#### **4. The Anti-Whaling Tactics of Sea Shepherd**

This section investigates the anti-whaling tactics of Sea Shepherd in comparison to those of Greenpeace. I have previously pointed out that Greenpeace employs three main tactics for its anti-whaling campaign: namely, anxiety-arousing, direct action and media manipulation<sup>9</sup>). This seems even truer of Sea Shepherd. This is to be expected in that Sea Shepherd branched off from Greenpeace; we could say that Sea Shepherd is a radicalized version of Greenpeace. Let us briefly look at the anti-whaling tactics of Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd.

##### **4.1 Anxiety-arousing**

In the book *Risk and Culture*, Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) explored how risk and danger are conceived differently according to social forms. They analyzed the different characteristics of contemporary environmental organizations on the basis of Douglas's grid-group model. In short, "group" means the boundary that differentiates between inside and outside, while "grid" refers to all the other social distinctions, including social order and hierarchy. According to Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), contemporary

environmental organizations are categorized by their low grid and high group orientation, which they call a sectarian form. The organizations classified into this category are inclined to refuse to compromise with what they regard as evil. Although the members of the sectarian organizations have a strong sense of identity as a group, they tend to reject coercion and leadership, and have a voluntary orientation. For this type of organization, one of the best ways to keep their members together is “sustaining fear of pollution and other forms of ecological damage” (Milton, 1996: 94). In Douglas and Wildavsky’s words (1982: 127), “Either the backlash of God or the backlash of nature is an effective instrument for justifying membership.” If we apply this hypothesis to the whaling issue, we may say that all environmental organizations have to do to arouse the anxiety of the public and their supporters is to keep warning of the dangerous situation for whales.

In fact, these anxiety-arousing tactics, combined with half-truths and partial information, are “tricks” frequently used by environmentalists. The typical and classic example is anti-whaling organizations’ use of phrases like “Whales are endangered.” or “The whale is on the verge of extinction”. The use of words such as “whales” and “the whale” is misleading because there are more than eighty different whale species in the world. The fact is some whale species are threatened whereas others are not. The general phrase “whales are endangered” is no more meaningful than the phrase “cats are endangered”. Needless to say, the situation of Siberian tigers is different from that of Siamese cats, but those who have a strong environmental conscience would join the campaign and would be compelled to donate money for fear that all whale species were in danger of becoming extinct.

Even if environmentalists specify the whale species they are referring to, misinformation like this often intends to simply induce or arouse anxiety. The following example is from the bulletin of Sea Shepherd:

These whales are being killed in violation of the International Whaling Commission’s (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling and in violation of the whale sanctuary established in the waters around Antarctica... Japan is even boldly preparing to start slaughtering one of the most endangered of all species the Blue whale (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 1996: 31).

It is possible to raise a strong argument that Japan does not comply with the “spirit” of the whaling moratorium and the Antarctic Whale Sanctuary. However, scientific whaling in the Antarctic Ocean remains a legitimate activity because Japan at the time lodged an objection to the Sanctuary when it was adopted. The allegation that Japan is planning to target blue whales has no foundation, and Sea Shepherd did not provide any proof to substantiate this allegation.

Further, there is another noteworthy aspect of the anxiety-arousing tactics taken by environmental organizations such as Sea Shepherd; they rarely, if ever, show the estimated number of minke whales worldwide that are currently targeted by Japan and other whaling nations. This is in striking contrast to their willingness to show the estimated number of blue whales, which is so low that no nations currently harvest them,

and the number of minke whales caught<sup>10</sup>. The reason for this inconsistency seems simple: “The anti-whaling lobbyists haven’t publicized the real facts for the fear that this would take away some of the force of their arguments” (Ray Gambell, interview, March 14, 2001). Or, in the words of Pete Wilkinson, former Chairman of Greenpeace UK, “They will just omit to say something if it doesn’t support their cause” (interview, May 29, 2001).

#### 4.2 Direct Action

Direct actions — some people call them “stunts” — are a main recruiting and fund-raising tool for campaign-oriented environmental organizations such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd. It is not too far from the truth to say that spectacular actions are what make Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd distinct from most of the other environmental organizations. For them, direct actions are indispensable for exerting influence on environmental issues. Through high-profile actions, they tell governments and businesses what they want and, probably more importantly, what they do not want. Direct actions are also an expression of identity for them. Many of their supporters join Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd because of their fascination with dramatic actions. They are also likely to identify themselves with Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd through confrontation. The following remark by the chairperson of one Greenpeace organization is quoted in Dalton (1994: 87): “People join the organization because they like the sight of rubber boats in front of whalers and Greenpeace activists protecting baby seals”. In order to attract as much attention as possible from the media and, by extension, from the public, Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd stage events, film their spectacular actions and distribute the pictures to the world through state-of-the-art technology.

One of the most famous direct actions staged by environmental organizations is the aforementioned Greenpeace’s confrontation with the Soviet whaling fleet. It is worthwhile here to elaborate on this event and its implications, because it formed the very basis of Watson’s succeeding activities.

The highlight of the campaign occurred on June 27, 1975, about 80 km off the coast of California, when the Greenpeace ship, *Phyllis Cormack*, dispatched three high-powered boats after a period of pursuit of a Soviet whaling fleet in the Pacific (Greenpeace 1996; DeLuca 1999). One of the zodiacs, with Paul Watson and an ex-journalist turned Greenpeace activist, Robert Hunter on board, managed to place itself between a pod of sperm whales and one of the Soviet’s catcher boats as a “human shield” to protect the whales. In spite of the expectation that the whalers would not fire a harpoon in fear of hitting the zodiac or the activists, the Russians shot. The harpoon flew just over the heads of Watson and Hunter, and struck the back of a nearby whale, after which the sea turned to red with blood spouting from the fatally wounded animal. This dramatic scene was captured on video by other Greenpeace activists, and in a very short time was disseminated to news organizations around the world. This spectacular scene in which intrepid Western environmental activists challenged the colossal Soviet whaling fleet — comprising a huge mother ship and several high-speed catcher boats — captured the world’s imagination, occurring as it did during the Cold War and ongoing environmental

degradation.

By broadcasting this scene, Greenpeace successfully projected two simple but powerful contrasting images into the minds of the public. One was the contrast between courageous environmentalists as heroes who selflessly risked their lives for an environmental cause, and sinister whalers as ruthless killers who had no qualms about harming sacred nature. The other was between a monstrous whaling ship that looked like a fortress on the water, and helpless whales that were no more than small fish in front of the towering vessel. This scene exerted such a powerful impact on the public that the erstwhile images that had long been embraced were crushed and turned around: anti-industrial, hippie-like environmentalists became the guardians of the planet; daring whalers who once symbolized courage and the frontier spirit turned into ruthless murderers; large whales that were once feared as mighty leviathans of the deep were now reduced to game animals that needed human protection for survival. In this reversed world, David (whalers) became Goliath, and Goliath (whales) was now David; environmentalists also became David-like figures in that they confronted a gigantic whaling fleet (Hunter 1979). Yet this new David is different from the old one in mythology; he is now fully equipped with a magic wand — the camcorder with a satellite transmitter.

A direct action like this is conceptually close to what is called a “pseudo-event” in that it makes sense only when reported in the media. The word “pseudo-event” was coined by American historian Daniel Boorstin (1992). In his book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, Boorstin (1992: 11) raises four characteristics of a pseudo-event: (1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned it; (2) It is planned primarily for the purpose of being reported or reproduced; (3) Its relation to the underlying reality is ambiguous; (4) It is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is not far from the truth to say that all of these characteristics apply to the actions of Greenpeace and Watson.

Sea Shepherd takes more radical and confrontational direct action than Greenpeace. As discussed in section 2, when Sea Shepherd encountered a Japanese whaling vessel in the Antarctic Ocean, they did not just protest, but employed force without hesitation: they threw smoke pots and glass bottles of butyric acid at the Japanese vessel, attempted to damage the propeller of the vessel with ropes, and rammed it when given the chance. Harassed by the direct action of Sea Shepherd, as mentioned earlier, the Japanese government was left with no choice but to stop whaling operations and order the fleet to return to Japan. Since Greenpeace made their last protest against the Japanese whaling fleet in the Antarctic Ocean during the 2007–2008 season, Sea Shepherd has become the only player engaging in anti-whaling operations in the Antarctic.

### 4.3 Media Manipulation

The third tactic is media manipulation accompanied by propaganda, including misinformation. It is generally said that Greenpeace has acquired the status of the “green giant” through its outstanding media strategies. Sea Shepherd’s use of the media is even more sophisticated. An example is the attention the media and public focused on its

campaign against Japanese research whaling in the Antarctic Ocean. On its website (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 2011b), referring to the accident in which the *Robert Hunter* collided with the *Kaiko Maru* in February 2007, Sea Shepherd insisted that “The *Kaiko Maru* rams the *Robert Hunter* twice causing damage to the hull.” The collision between the *Ady Gil* and the *Shonan Maru No. 2* in January 2010 was reported on its website as follows: “The *Shonan Maru No. 2* deliberately rams and sinks the *Ady Gil*” (Sea Shepherd Conservation Society 2011b). In both cases, Sea Shepherd blamed the Japanese for the accident. In response to this, the Japanese side maintained that it was Sea Shepherd that rammed the ship, so their assertions conflicted with each other. Although who was to blame remains a subject of contention, when we consider Sea Shepherd’s history of ramming and scuttling many whaling ships, and that it was Sea Shepherd that came to the Antarctic Ocean in pursuit of the Japanese whaling fleet, it is not difficult to guess who was responsible.

Another well-known example of Sea Shepherd’s use of media manipulation was “Japan’s alleged shooting of Watson” during a skirmish between Sea Shepherd and the Japanese whalers in the Antarctic Ocean during the 2007–2008 season. The shooting incident was documented in the program *Whale Wars*, produced by Animal Planet. The incident was essentially as follows: Sea Shepherd crews on board of the *Steve Irwin* threw missiles at the Japanese whaling ship, *Nisshin Maru*. Watson is standing on the deck and shouts “Come on” at the Japanese ship, to provoke them. Suddenly Watson presses his hand on his chest. When he takes off his jacket, he finds a squashed piece of metal on his bullet-proof vest. One of the crew of the *Steve Irwin* shouts, “Captain was shot.” Another crew member remarks, “Someone tried to assassinate him.” Meanwhile, Watson regains his composure and remarks “They are very ruthless people who are involved in killing whales down here. I expected this kind of violence.” This “shooting incident” was immediately reported to the world media and covered by such networks as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

In response to the alleged shooting, the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), the Japanese agency responsible for the research whaling, counter-argued in its press release that the incident was “directed by the Animal Planet Filmmakers themselves in a ‘tail wagging the dog’ format.” and that “[t]his staged event involved Sea Shepherd”. The truth remains a subject of controversy, but considering that it is very difficult to shoot someone in the chest on a swaying vessel from another swaying vessel more than 100 meters away, and that after the “shooting”, the *Steve Irwin*’s crew kept their composure and the course of their vessel was maintained, it seems reasonable to suggest that the incident was faked to disgrace the Japanese whalers. That is, it is very likely that the “shooting incident” was staged to live up to the expectations of Animal Planet intending to dramatize the whaling conflict.

In fact, in his book discussing the protest strategy of the environmental movement, Watson writes about the fictitious nature of the media. The following two citations seem to illustrate that what Sea Shepherd did was just to put Watson’s media strategy into practice.

Objectivity is a myth, an illusion, a con and a trick. Objectivity in the media does not exist. The illusion of objectivity may work as a strategy but only a fool would believe it is a reality within the media culture (Watson 1993: 36).

If you can't achieve your aims through facts, then baffle your opposition with bullshit. Deceive with dazzling dramatics, fabricate fantasies fired forth with flair and shower your targets with flamboyance and fiery rhetoric. Give the public a circus and contain your message within. Educate through the media of entertainment. Exploit existing myths and create your own myths and legends (Watson 1993: 108).

## 5. Concluding Remarks

There are similarities between Sea Shepherd and Greenpeace in that both are committed to the protection of popular animals such as whales, and seek to draw public attention through such tactics as anxiety-arousing, direct actions, and media manipulation. Both of them have an element of protest business — the exploitation of an environmental issue as a means of raising donations. Meanwhile, there are some differences. In comparison with Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd tends to take an individualistic rather than holistic approach to environmental problems (i.e. the emphasis on the protection of individual species rather than the conservation of the ecosystem), spend most of the donations on campaigns instead of using the money for administrative purposes, including fund-raising and personnel costs, and rely on the charismatic leadership of Paul Watson.

Another crucial difference between the two is that Sea Shepherd tends to behave like a vigilante group; it interprets and enforces international laws in its own way regardless of what their target claims. Their use of missiles such as smoke pots and glass bottles of butyric acid, and ramming of the whaling ships, while not intended to harm people, easily endanger the lives of the people involved. Unlike past campaigns that lacked fast ships, fuel, and personnel, Sea Shepherd is now capable of deploying several high-powered vessels into the campaign field, and its confrontational direct actions have become increasingly ambitious and large-scale. A vigilante group can acquire its campaign funds as long as there are those who support their cause, so it is very likely that Sea Shepherd will remain the center of the anti-whaling movement, and keep drawing public attention for some time to come.

## Notes

- 1) For this see Kawashima (2010).
- 2) The following summary of the history of Paul Watson and Sea Shepherd draws on Deluca (1999), Greenpeace (1996), Hunter (1979), Ishikawa (2006, 2007, 2008, 2011), Morris (1995), Sasaki (2010), Scarce (1990), Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (2011b, 2011c) and Watson (1981, 1994).
- 3) Sea Shepherd was first named the “Earthforce Environmental Society”.
- 4) The Faroe Islands is a self-governing protectorate of Denmark and situated about 200 miles to

the north of Scotland. Because the land is not suitable for the cultivation of crops, the populace of the Islands is dependent on fishing. They have a long tradition of hunting pilot whales, the custom of which is called *grind* by the locals. The islanders drive the whales into a bay and kill them with hooks and knives. The event is carried out in open space and entails “bloody” scenes of butchering (Sanderson 1994).

- 5) The Makah is a native American tribe on the west coast of North America. They had a long tradition of hunting gray and humpback whales, but have suspended the whaling since 1920s because of the depletion of the stocks. After the species showed a sign of recovery, they planned to resume the hunting of grey whales in 1988 for the first time in almost 70 years, which was interrupted by Sea Shepherd.
- 6) The IWC is an executive body to formulate and implement regulatory measures in line with the spirit of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) which was signed in 1946 in order “to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry” (Stoett 1997: 162).
- 7) CITES is an international legal apparatus whose aim is to save wild species from extinction by regulating and restricting international trades. In CITES, species are listed in one of the following three appendices: Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction, and the species in this category are, with few exceptions, prohibited from being traded commercially; Appendix II includes species not yet threatened with extinction, but may become so unless trade is strictly controlled; Appendix III includes species that are protected in domestic law of each of the member states (Martin 2000: 29).
- 8) The total revenue of the organization was \$9.81 million dollars in 2009, of which approximately \$2.74 million dollars was capitalized as an excess for the year. If the total revenue including the excess was divided by campaign programs, the figure would fall to 61.6%.
- 9) For this see Kawashima (2010).
- 10) I examined pamphlets and websites of the WWF, Greenpeace, Sea Shepherd and IFAW repeatedly during my research. While the WWF and Greenpeace have included population estimates of large whales either in their pamphlets or on websites, I did not find these figures in any of Sea Shepherd’s publications.

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