Saunders, Clare. "Introduction." *Environmental Networks and Social Movement Theory*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 1–21. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544490.ch-001>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 09:18 UTC.

Copyright © Clare Saunders 2013. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

1 Introduction

LONDON, 1 APRIL 2009. 'Fossil Fools Day'. On this day activists from a number of different environmental and social justice organizations took to the streets for two days of action to call an end to 'climate chaos, economic meltdown and repossessions'. These actions were planned to coincide with a meeting of the leaders of the world's 20 richest countries: the G20. Their meeting was designed to negotiate a rescue package for the flailing world economy. There were three main protest actions, organized by different wings of what has been termed the environmental movement. The Campaign Against Climate Change, armed with a rapidly melting 'iceberg' (a large chunk of ice), held a 'climate emergency' demonstration and rally at the Excel Centre; around 4,000 Climate Campers pitched tents outside the Climate Exchange and shut it down; and there was a 'G20 Meltdown' street party outside the Bank of England.

After much deliberation, my husband and I decided that the Campaign Against Climate Change's legally approved demonstration outside the Excel Centre was the most approachable; it would, we believed, land us in the least trouble. Since it was billed to last from 12.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m., we were disappointed to find only around 40 people there for the lunchtime photo opportunity, with numbers dwindling rapidly to single figures by 2 p.m. Although there was a small rally in the evening, it seemed fruitless to wait all afternoon so we set off to visit the Climate Camp. But, before we had returned to the train station, we were stopped by police officers and searched under terrorism legislation on suspicion of intent to conduct criminal damage. If the police were behaving like that near a legally approved demonstration, what would they be like in the vicinity of the Climate Camp? Concerned about heavy-handed policing, we were put off from attending other events and returned home, instead.

Our experience in London that day is illustrative of several issues discussed in depth in this book. Why did only around 40 people attend a legal demonstration on what is, arguably, the most important issue facing humanity and all the species with which we share the planet? In particular, where were the Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace supporters? And why did the Climate Camp hold a separate demonstration rather than collaborate with the Campaign Against Climate Change?

Phil Thornhill, coordinator of the Campaign Against Climate Change, responded to the first question stating, 'Well, this is fairly typical of a Wednesday lunchtime demonstration' (personal correspondence, 1 April 2009). However, this could not account for the presence of thousands of people congregating elsewhere in central London at the same point in time. A better explanation, particularly to the second and third questions, stems from the fact that environmental organizations each have different strategies, degrees of reputability with decision-makers, organizational identities and resource constraints. The Campaign Against Climate Change's approach was a media-friendly stunt. Others might interpret it as a form of lobbying – attempting to politely persuade the G20 leaders to take climate change seriously. This is part of the Campaign Against Climate Change's broader goal to build a mass movement by attracting wide-ranging public support for demands for strong national climate change legislation and a robust international climate policy framework. In contrast, Climate Campers and G20 Meltdown participants, generally adverse to what they deem ineffectual lobbying, attempted to directly close down the institutions they considered responsible for causing climate change. Unlike the Campaign Against Climate Change and Friends of the Earth, Climate Camp and G20 Meltdown are fluid networks of activists, without formal organizational structures. Consequently, they are immune from some of the constraints faced by formal organizations. Formal organizations have to engage in organizational maintenance; it is necessary for them to maintain their memberships to keep themselves financially afloat and they have responsibilities towards their staff. The need for organizational maintenance is arguably a key reason why Friends of the Earth, conspicuously absent from events on Fossil Fools Day, had instead participated in the 'Put People First' march and rally the previous Saturday. This mainstream and legally authorized demonstration, organized by a coalition of over 100 environmental, social justice and labour organizations was a safer bet for an organization with a reputation to uphold. In the event, around 35,000 people marched against poverty, inequality and the threat of climate chaos. Unlike the Climate Camp and G20 meltdown, the Put People First march was non-confrontational and remained peaceful throughout, leaving Friends of the Earth's reputation and public image untarnished.

The choices for collaboration that are made by environmental organizations are, to a large extent, determined by these strategic, identity and resource differences. In this book, I consider the extent to which social movement theory can help us understand how and why these differences occur and why they have such a profound affect on the shape and form of networking between environmental organizations. The rest of this introductory chapter outlines the central aims of the book; provides a rationale for studying the environmental networks from a social movement theory

perspective; introduces the theoretical and methodological approach and gives a flavour of the chapters that follow.

Aims

This book has three central aims. The first is to evaluate and contextualize, in relation to British environmentalism, key strands of social movement theory. The second is to identify and account for interaction between environmental organizations¹ within environmental networks. The third is to make a theoretical contribution by introducing and applying an analytical framework that has potential to explain the nature of inter-organizational interactions in a range of social movement fields.

I use the term ‘environmental networks’ to avoid ‘environmental movement’, which I suggest is less analytically useful. The concept of a social movement is explored in more depth in Chapter 2, but suffice it for now to point out that the concept of ‘social movement’ does not comfortably sit with the broad range of environmental organizations commonly thought to be part of the environmental movement. To be too prescriptive about which organizations are in or out of a movement would preclude examination of interesting interactions between a wide range of organizations – across the networks’ spatial dimensions (national, regional and local) *and* ideological strands (conservationists, political ecologists/reformists and radical environmentalists). As I have illustrated in my previous work, the concept of social movement is rather sketchy on the amount of networking required to create a social movement dynamic (Saunders 2007a, 2011). Without getting fixated on the question of whether the networking is sufficient to constitute a movement, I examine interaction mostly in terms of collaboration in campaigns, with some reference to the sharing of information. The central question then becomes not whether a movement exists, but how one might explain the patterns of interaction found.

In order to make generalizations about social movements it may be considered necessary to look beyond environmental networks. Yet there are also good reasons for restricting the study to a single field of contention. I focus specifically on environmentalism in order to give the social movement theories discussed a decent airing in relation to one particular field of contention. This helps avoid accusations of cherry-picking case studies that fit the theories, or being charged with theory bashing (a term coined by Lofland 1983, described below). Equally, there are important reasons for focusing on the British case: it is one of the most active and well-developed environmental movements in the world. In many ways it has had a similar trajectory to the equally well developed environmental movement in Germany (Rucht and Roose 2007). The most striking difference between the British and German cases is that resistance to nuclear power has been stronger in Germany,

historically linking environmentalism with left-wing movements – something that has not occurred to the same extent in Britain (Rootes 1992). Despite this, the British environmental movement is not drastically different from many of its European counterparts: conservationist, reformist and radical environmental groups coexist in many Western European democracies (Rootes 2007). At the same time, the British case is illuminating because environmentalism in Britain is not torn by such dramatic divisions as it is in the United States. There, anthropes and misanthropes and preservationists and conservationists are in separate camps and are sometimes overtly hostile towards one another.

The research conducted for this book took place in London. The emphasis on London is justified because it has the highest concentration of environmental organizations in Britain (Rootes and Miller 2000). Of the 203 national environmental organizations listed in The Environment Council's *Who's Who in the Environment* (1999), 73 were located in London, as well as numerous regional groups such as the London Wildlife Trust and the Sustainable London Trust. London has also spawned vibrant local environmental networks (Rootes, et al. 2001). The abundance of different types of environmental organizations and networks provides plenty of scope for analysing interaction between and among environmental organizations working in different ways at multiple levels.

Why research networking among environmental organizations?

The most obvious reason for focusing on networking among environmental organizations is to address a gap in the literature. The three dominant phases of research on environmental movements have tended to overlook networking. The three phases are: new values, institutionalization, and radical conflicts/local oppositions (della Porta and Rucht 2002). The first suggested that environmentalism was spawned by new post-material values. The provision of economic security was considered to have made it more likely that people shift their attention to new non-material goals like securing a healthy environment (Inglehart 1971, 1987, 1990). The second phase noted how many environmental organizations had become increasingly tame as they became institutionalized – that is to say, as they grew in size, they developed formal organizational structures, gained access to policymakers and consequently lost their radical edge. The third looked at how radicals and locals crafted campaigns to supplement or supplant those of the increasingly tame national organizations.

While our understanding of environmentalism has benefited from many illuminating studies within these phases, there are some limitations in extant scholarship.

The commonly used approaches have tended to result in either broad-brush descriptions of environmentalism – which sometimes mistakenly assume ideological and tactical homogeneity – and analysis of individual organizations and/or specific conflicts. The focus on environmental networks deployed in this book extends work on environmentalism beyond broad-brush approaches and case studies. It finds heterogeneity rather than homogeneity and looks at groups campaigning on a wide range of issues, despite a special focus on campaigns against aviation and climate change. It also has the advantage deploying a multilevel approach, firmly placing frequently overlooked regional (by which I mean organizations working across London) and local organizations in the picture. And it allows us to explore interactions between different types of organizations that a focus on movements might have prevented. According to some scholars, for example, organizations that do not challenge the social order should not be included as part of a social movement (see Doherty's [2002] book on what he calls 'the green movement'). A focus on the system-challenging green movement (Doherty 2002) would prevent us from looking at conservation groups, local residents associations and not in my back yard (NIMBY) groups, each of which plays an important role in looking after the environment in one way or another (see Chapter 3).

Although an account made at the turn of the millennium stated that local environmentalism is 'very lively' and 'appears to be expanding in Britain' (Diani and Donati 1999 : 24–5), environmentalism in Britain has generally, with the exception of Lowe and Goyder's seminal work (1983), been interpreted through national organizations (e.g. Rawcliffe 1998). An exception is Doherty et al.'s (2007) work on local radical environmental networks in Oxford, Manchester and North Wales. By and large, though, when local environmental campaigns and organizations have been researched, findings often materialize as useful, but in some ways limited discussions of particular cases of contention (Seel 1997; North 1998; Barcena and Ibarra 2001; Fillieule 2002). To date, there has been little if any research on the relationship between local, regional and national environmental organizations in Britain, except for my own work (see Saunders 2007b).

The most extensive survey of local environmental activism to be undertaken was in a US context (Kempton et al. 2001: 578). The authors claim: 'We know of no census of local environmental groups previously reported in the literature'. They compared two sites of local environmental activism and concluded that case studies underplay their diversity. Their research also notes the general importance of local environmental groups: 'Local environmental groups are not pale, less influential versions of large national organizations, but are significant in their own right' (557). Drawing on Kempton et al., Lhotka et al. (2008) studied the extent to which local environmental groups exchanged information with one another in Alabama. Parisi

et al. (2004) similarly note the importance of local activism, but all three sets of scholars fail to locate local groups within broader environmental networks and none of them have considered environmentalism in Britain.

In addition to there being a lacuna in the literature, it is important to study environmental networks because they are a pervasive component of citizen politics in Britain (Carter 2001: 131). Formal environmental organizations, which are significant players in environmental networks, have a greater total membership than political parties. According to the Database of Archives of Non-Governmental Organizations (2010), 5–8 million people are members of environmental organizations² in Britain. Besides actual membership support, the British are generally favourable towards environmental issues. Between 1996–7 and 2006–7, recycling rates rose from 7 per cent to 31 per cent, and over half of the British public claim to be considering doing more of the following: reducing water use, reducing gas and electricity use, wasting less food and recycling more (Randall 2008: 149–51). The environment clearly matters to people. But why is interaction in environmental networks important?

The importance of interaction and networks

In both environmental and social movement studies more broadly, organizational interaction *within* movements has been under-studied (see Zald and Ash 1966; Ash-Garner and Zald 1987). Where intra-social movement networks have been researched, disproportionate emphasis has been given to the role of individuals' social networks in the mobilization process (e.g. Gould 2000; Passy 2003; Mische 2003).³

Even though there is little consensus as to what constitutes a social movement, most theorists agree that social movements can be conceived of as *networks of interaction* between individuals and organizations engaging in collective action aimed at achieving or resisting social change (Diani 1992a). This conceptualization is growing in popularity (Diani and Eyerman 1992: 7–10; della Porta and Diani 1999).⁴ Considering the abundant use of the term 'network' in social movement theory and its centrality in the concept of a social movement, it is somewhat ironic that systematic studies of intra-movement interaction are largely absent from the literature on environmental movements (note that Diani's work is an obvious and welcome exception, 1992 and with Rambaldo 2007).

The focus on networks also addresses Melucci's (1985: 799) concern over the inadequacy of the term movement. As he states, instead of using the term social movements, 'I prefer to speak of *movement networks* or *movement areas* as the network of groups and individuals sharing a conflictual culture and a collective identity' (emphasis added). While the possibility of a *broad* network of groups

sharing a conflictual culture and collective identity is debateable (Chapter 7), the emphasis on networks is well placed. One might go so far as to argue that to understand a social movement properly requires due consideration of interaction, otherwise research becomes over-focused on mobilization processes and organizational characteristics (Diani 1992b). Little wonder, then, that Ash-Garner and Zald (1987: 179) claim that 'inter-social movement organization relations are a central dynamic of any social movement'. Further, a focus on networks makes it possible to overcome the 'myopia of the visible' that Melucci (1989: 44) cautioned against. Research subject to the 'myopia of the visible' would involve focusing exclusively on the most visible aspects of social movements, such as active protest events. Consequently, it might miss underlying ideologies, collective identity formation and networking. Networks are important because they allow movements to be sustained during periods of latency. They also provide solidarity and reinforcement crucial for campaign success (Melucci 1985). Thus, some have argued that networks are nothing less than the glue holding movements together (Gerlach 1983: 145). Networks also bring organizations into contact with other allies (including political parties). Consequently, they make organizations difficult to repress, increase their recruitment bases, and encourage innovation and adaptability.

Despite the centrality of the concept of networks in social movement research, Jasper (1997: 61) has been critical of what he calls 'the network approach'. He suggests that networks are overemphasized and only show the expected. This criticism stems mostly from his tendency to equate the use of networks with an approach that constitutes a single paradigm. For him, the network paradigm seeks to explain collective action solely on the basis of the extent to which actors are embedded in existing systems of social relations, ignoring other attributes of actors – such as organizational size, ideology and strategy. Part of his critique is directed towards Diani (1995), who found relatively few ties between environmental organizations in Milan, and apparently overrated their significance. Jasper (1997: 61) suggests that 'we need to push beyond the network metaphor . . . to see what resources, rules, cultural schemas and patterns of interaction lie behind it'. My retort would be that this is *exactly* what this book does – it uses theoretical insights from social movement theories to explore networking. In this book, I look at resources through the lens of resource mobilization theory (Chapter 4), opportunities and constraints through political process theory (Chapter 5) and cultural schemas via new social movement theory (Chapters 6 and 7). My primary research has the additional advantage that London's environment network appears much more vibrant than Milan's, with 149 groups surveyed, contrasting with the 42 that Diani (1995) surveyed.

Doherty (2002: 18) also questions the significance of placing strong emphasis on network links, especially as a key determinant of the existence of a movement. He suggests that focussing on networks as an indicator of social movement membership prevents us from distinguishing between radical groups, reformist groups and those with conservationist orientations. It also makes Greenpeace appear a more marginal player than it really is. However, as this book will demonstrate, it is possible to look at networks while simultaneously distinguishing between different types of environmental organizations. Organizational attributes *and* network properties can be analysed in tandem. Indeed, my synthetic analytical framework (Chapter 8), which recognizes the importance of interactions between and among each of individuals, organizations, campaign targets *and* the polity necessitates that both be analysed together.

Theoretical approach

The theoretical approach I adopt in this book is embedded in a broad range of literature known as social movement theory. This body of theory is drawn from traditions across political science, sociology and social psychology. Social movement theory generally serves *predictive* or *explanatory* functions (or both). While I give most attention to resource mobilization (Chapter 4), political opportunity/process (Chapter 5), new social movement (Chapter 6), identity-oriented (Chapter 7) theories and the *Dynamics of Contention* approach (McAdam et al. 2001) (Chapter 8), I do not entirely dismiss other theoretical approaches that complement these. Thus, the chapter on resource mobilization draws on organizational ecology; my account of political opportunity/process theory is enhanced with pressure group theory and the discussion of new social movements looks more broadly at elements of subcultural theory.

It is important to draw on this broad range of theories in the light of related studies on coalition building *across* different social movements. Like studies on intra-movement networks, coalition building has been given scant academic attention (Van Dyke and McCammon 2010). Yet it is possible to draw upon the few studies that do exist, particularly those that focus on the possibilities for collaboration among disparate groups (Pharr 1996; Ferree and Roth 1998; Rose 2000). This body of research has found that the social movement theories explored in this book each have something to contribute to an explanation of the chances of successful coalition formation. With regard to resources (Chapter 4), money is considered crucial for generating allies, particularly across national borders (Bandy and Smith 2005). In relation to political opportunities (Chapter 5), unfavourable policies and links with the elite can stimulate cooperation; unfavourable policies can bring people

together when they feel threatened (McCammon and Campbell 2002); and links with elites provide an avenue contenders will readily coalesce around. On the issue of identity (Chapters 6 and 7), exclusive identities and strict ideologies have been found to restrict the chances of cooperation across movements (Ferree and Roth 1998), whereas flexible and multiple ones are facilitative (Barvoso-Carter 2001; della Porta 2005). And the role of individual movers and shakers who share connections from previous waves of mobilization is regarded as important in bridging different types of organizations (Rose 2000; Corrigal Brown and Meyer 2010). Van Dyke and McCammon (2010) found that the presence of political threats and common ideologies are sufficient conditions to explain coalition formation, and that social connections are an important add-on.

Given that elements of each of the theories work together to explain organizations' choices of allies across social movements, my intention is not to pit one theory against another to explain interaction within environmental networks, but to extract what is useful from each. I argue in Chapter 8 that the approaches are actually quite complementary. Thus, I avoid what might be viewed as a fashion among social movement scholars to engage in what Lofland (1993, 1996: 372) terms 'theory bashing'. This involves scholars attacking the work of their predecessors, sometimes unfairly, in order to carve out a theoretical niche for themselves. A quote from Killian (1983: 4) is reproduced here at length because it eloquently encapsulates strategies used by theory bashers. He suggests that 'theory bashing' is analogous to the means politicians use to oust opponents:

quote the opponent selectively and out of context, carefully deleting statements of his which do not sustain the caricature. In particular, studiously ignore refutations of charges which have been levelled before you, or others – just repeat the charges. Quote from the opponent's political speeches regardless of the date they were made – never concede that minds do change. At the same time, do not hesitate to borrow freely from the opponents' ideas without acknowledging that despite party differences there is indeed a great deal of overlap in the platforms. Give the ideas you borrow new labels so the voters won't recognise them. Finally, use guilt by association by putting the opponent in the same bag with the others of which you're sure your opponents will disapprove and then quote what they say as if he agrees with it. Vague labels such as 'right-wing', 'liberal' and the like are particularly useful in smearing your opponent. The overall message is an old, familiar theme – turn the rascals out!

In the study of social movements, new paradigms have emerged as old ones have tired. In the process, useful insights from earlier schools of thought have sometimes

been too easily dismissed.⁵ Collective behaviour theory, which was seen – not entirely accurately – to belittle the rationality of activists, was replaced with resource mobilization in the United States, and with new social movement theory in Europe. The two newer schools of thought developed independently with little exchange until relatively recently. Resource mobilization theorists emphasized rationality and organizational aspects (Chapter 4), whereas new social movement theorists (Chapters 6 and 7) focused on cultural aspects. Yet, despite it being routinely dismissed in the 1980s, elements of collective behaviour theory have continued to pervade the social movement literature without direct reference to it. By 1983, Jenkins' overview of social movement theories in *Annual Review of Sociology*, made no mention of collective behaviour theories, despite their prominence a decade earlier (see also Buechler 2004, especially 51). This suggests that collective behaviour theory had been thoroughly and perhaps inappropriately theory-bashed. I give collective behaviour theory the attention it deserves to avoid contributing to the routine – and unfair – dismissal of the foundations of social movement theory.

To avoid 'theory bashing', one could go so far as to suggest that separate theories do not really exist – they are just a way of categorizing the 'sprawling, diffuse and inchoate' social movements' literature (Lofland 1993: 48). To cut my way through the complexity of the literature, it is necessary that I discuss each theory in a separate chapter. However, in Chapter 8, I apply an analytical framework that enables the different theories to talk to one another. I do this on the premise that environmental organizations operating within environmental networks act both strategically and normatively, and with knowledge that a static and/or state-focused approach can do little to explain the dynamism of environmental networks.

The roots of social movement theory

It is necessary at this juncture to visit the roots of social movement theory. In so doing, I have two objectives: (1) To redeem what is salvageable from collective behaviour theory to avoid theory bashing; (2) To begin to illustrate why a middle-range theory (Merton 1968) as developed in the penultimate chapter of the book, might be more useful than a grand-theoretical account like collective behaviour in understanding interaction in environmental networks.

The stereotypical interpretation of the collective behaviour approach wrongly and unhelpfully conflates it with a particular sub-branch of collective behaviour theory based on relative deprivation (Gurr 1970) often in tandem with the spurious frustration-aggression link (Davies 1969; Neff Gurney and Tierney 1982: 35–9).⁶ Roughly put, the frustration-aggression thesis argues that protesters respond to their deprivation by forming crowds and, when in a crowd, lose their ability to behave rationally. At the extreme, the approach regards social movement protest

as politically and/or psychologically deviant. A quote from Le Bon's (1969: 22–3) classic book on *The Crowd* is illustrative:

Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike their mode of life, their occupations, their intelligence, the fact that they have transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think and act in a manner quite differently from that in which each individual would . . . ordinarily behave.

Mass behaviour theories that focus on the crowd might, at first glance, be considered irrelevant to social movements and to the focus on environmental networks in particular. Yet there is something about crowds that *does*, without doubt, encourage people to behave differently from the norm. Just think of the student demonstrations that took place in London in November 2010. A critical mass of thousands of students was necessary to transform a section of what was a peaceful demonstration into a riot in which serious property damage to the Conservative Party Campaign Headquarters occurred to the tune of over a million pounds. It was certainly the case that many participants were, as a *Daily Mail* reporter so aptly puts it, 'caught up in the dizzying excitement of civil disobedience' (Harper 2010). Yet, without the coordinated mobilization efforts of student unions throughout the country, the crowd would not have materialized. To routinely dismiss this as mindless violence also precludes consideration of the social and political context that generated discontent.

Although extensive property damage is rare in environmental protests (Rootes 2007), the comfort of being part of large crowd has undoubtedly encouraged environmental activists to behave differently from how they might have done if acting individually. For example, the 1,500–5,000 strong crowd (depending on which sources you consult) at the Twyford Down mass trespass in July 1994 gave individual activists more confidence to engage in illicit behaviour, making it easier for a number of them to violate the injunctions that legally prevented them from entering the site of that particular roads protest. Many of these activists were dissatisfied, even angry, as some strands of collective behaviour theory would predict. But to claim that they were atomized is way off the mark. Those activists were, and other environmental activists continue to be, mobilized through organized efforts, whether via specific organizations or direct action networks. Indeed, all of the campaigns and actions I focus on in this book (see Chapter 3), whether large-scale protests or small affinity group actions, were carefully planned by networks of individuals and/or organizations. Many collective behaviour theorists recognize the importance of such interaction within social movements, although this virtuous side of the story is rarely told.

Unfortunately, a number of scholars appear guilty of conflating the collective behaviour approach solely with the stereotypical interpretation. Hannigan (1985: 436), for example, suggests that collective behaviour theorists view social movements negatively – as disorganized, non-institutional, irrational, spontaneous and amorphous conglomerations of isolated individuals. Similarly, Jasper (1997: 20) places collective behaviour under the title of ‘the myth of the maddening crowd’ (McPhail 1991). Even Gamson, who was famous for popularizing study of the rational and institutional aspects of protest in the first edition of his famous – or, for collective behaviour theorists, infamous – *Strategy of Social Protest* (1975), lumped together Le Bon, Hoffer, Kornhauser and Smelser under the umbrella of mass theory and relative deprivation theories. After recognizing his mistake, in the second edition of that same book, Gamson (1990: 148) makes a worthy apology for making a ‘too sweeping rejection of collective behaviour theory’. Gamson had realized that the stereotypical view of collective behaviour theory differs markedly from the much richer symbolic interactionist perspectives put forward by a small number of collective behaviour theorists who looked beyond the crowd towards protest dynamics, such as Park and Burgess, Blumer, Turner and Killian, and Smelser.⁷

Park and Burgess (1924: 226–9) claimed protests were a rational response to social situations, emerging due to structural changes in the difficult transition from primitive communities to the state of global interdependence. Blumer (1986) added to these ideas, regarding social movements as ‘collective enterprises [seeking] to establish a new order of life’ (8), resulting from ‘cultural drifts’. Cultural drifts are not social-psychological, they are the gradual but significant changes in the way a society or group sees the world, incorporating such changes as the emergence of free education for all, universal franchise and emancipation of children (9). He even suggested that members of collective enterprises acquire a ‘we-consciousness’. This can be viewed as an early conception of collective identity (Chapter 7), which took the class dimension out of earlier Marxist-inspired notions of identity/consciousness. Drawing on Weber, Blumer (1986) argued that this ‘we-consciousness’ developed through an *esprit de corps*, where members feel a sense of belonging, rapport and solidarity with comrades through being together and participating in ritualistic behaviour such as sentimental symbols, slogans, songs and expressive gestures. Collective behaviour, he argued, did *not* emerge through a group of atomized individuals converging, but instead through *interactions* among participants.

Turner and Killian (1957) appended further useful concepts, most notably that of ‘emergent norms’, which were conceived as new ways of viewing the world developed through discursive practices and *interactions* between those engaged in collective behaviour, known as ‘milling’. According to their approach, a precipitating event – such as an environmental disaster – leads to a normative crisis, encouraging

people to rally together and engage in collective action to challenge the norms deemed responsible for causing the precipitating factor. Extraordinary social situations, brought into sharp relief through precipitating factors, they argued, lead people to jointly come to view collective action as timely, useful, appropriate and even as a moral obligation. Via ‘milling’, participants come to define and redefine the social situation, test out alternatives and abandon previous behaviours. Turner and Killian (1957) also coined the term ‘participation oriented movements’ for social movements in which satisfaction stems mostly from participation. These were, much later, reconceived in a branch of new social movement theory as expressive groups (Hetherington 1998). It seems that new social movement theorists – including Melucci (1989), Touraine (1981, 1984) and Habermas (1981, 1984) (see Chapters 6 and 7) – failed to build upon these useful concepts.

Smelser’s (1962) seminal work on collective behaviour is perhaps the most significant contribution to collective behaviour theory. It is regarded by Crossley (2002: 40) to be ‘one of the most persuasive and important’ in the field. Smelser bravely attempted to produce a rounded predictive model for the emergence of a variety of forms of collective behaviour. His ‘value-added approach’ argued that the more simple forms of collective behaviour – like the panic and the craze – have ingredients that are components of more complex forms – like social movements. In his own words ‘value’ is added as: ‘earlier stages must combine *according to a certain pattern* before the next stage can contribute its particular value to the finished product’ (19).

The most complex form of collective behaviour that Smelser referred to was the value-oriented social movement. Such a movement, he claimed, seeks a more satisfying culture, and is preoccupied with seeking the highest possible moral standards and abolishing sources of perceived evil. Examples include political and religious revolutions, sects and nationalist movements. But it also seems to suit the Green movement (the system challenging aspect of the environmental movement that Doherty [2002] focuses on), which had barely emerged when Smelser was writing.

Collective behaviour, he suggested, is based on ‘generalized beliefs’, which ‘restructure an ambiguous situation in a short-circuited way’ (Smelser 1962: 82). Smelser is vague about the meaning of short-circuiting, but it seems safe to assume he believed those engaged in collective behaviour simplify who or what is to blame for perceived injustice. The collective is then thought to ‘create a “common culture” within which leadership, mobilization and concerted action can take place’ (Smelser 1962: 82). He argued that, among other conditions, generalized beliefs would need to challenge the values of society for a value-oriented movement to occur, and to seek reform of societal norms for a norm-oriented movement to emerge. Less

complex forms of generalized beliefs were thought to be part of the recipes for simpler forms of collective behaviour (like riots and lynch mobs). Similar to Park he argued that such generalized beliefs emerge from a structural strain, which provides a source of tension. For generalized beliefs to result in collective behaviour a precipitating factor – an event that brings a social strain into view – is required. At this point, mobilization occurs as communication *networks* emerge, sometimes under the direction of leaders. The shape and form of collective behaviour depend also upon structural conduciveness and social control. Smelser (1962: 15) defined structural conduciveness as the extent to which a state is ‘permissive of a given type of collective behaviour’, and social control as the methods the state uses to contain an episode of collective behaviour.

Smelser (1962: 72) has been accused of overgeneralizing because he had a tendency to view what he purported to be rational collective behaviour as ‘clumsy or primitive in character’. In fact, social movements are qualitatively different from other types of collective behaviour as they have positive solidarity, ideology, organizations and strategies – making them, in reality more careful and sophisticated than Smelser implied (Traugott 1978). But the difficulty here is in squaring *episodes* of behaviour with movements. Although Smelser used the term ‘social movement’, he always emphasized *episodes* of behaviour rather than movements or networks as such. This was partly a result of how the field of social movement theorizing was scoped by previous scholars. We should not, therefore, be too surprised that the complexity and sophistication of movements and the relationships between different episodes of protest within movements seem underplayed. The emphasis on creating a general law-type theory for the emergence of forms of collective behaviour meant that a focus on the organizational level, in particular, was missing. It carried with it an assumption that protesters are a homogenous group. Weller and Quarantelli (1973), for example, criticize the concept of generalized beliefs, which they say implies a ‘unitary outlook of collective action’, which does not exist in social movements. In fact, as I show in this book, different environmental organizations engage in a wide variety of actions. Not all organizations in environmental networks, for example, will respond in the same way to situational factors, mobilization, values and norms, despite the importance of these concepts.

Regardless of these criticisms, Smelser and other collective behaviour theorists did recognize that collective behaviour is complex, is nested in the social order and has at least an element of legitimacy, even if it was sometimes wrongly branded as deviance. Smelser identified important determinants of collective behaviour, which have reappeared in more recent social movement theories. Structural strain, structural conduciveness, precipitating factors, and social control are concepts closely related to political process theory (Chapter 5). The concept of ‘situational

factors' – actors' awareness of opportunities – is also useful. It took political opportunity theorists until the mid-1990s to overcome their preoccupation with objective 'structures' and realize that the perception and evaluation of opportunities by activists are just as important in spurring on the emergence of a movement, and shaping movement form, tactics and goals (Suh 2001) as anything objectively measurable. Developed in the late 1980s, the framing approach, among other things, stressed the importance of problematizing a social or political issue and apportioning blame (Snow and Benford 1988). In some ways, its function is similar to that of a 'generalized belief' theorized by Smelser. The concept of generalized beliefs can be useful so long as it is not assumed that all activists within a movement have the same beliefs. To say that activists are homogenous in their positions and that these come from 'short-circuiting' is to take a step too far. Many environmental campaigns, for example, are based on rigorous scientific research, sometimes resulting in more sophisticated analyses than the research policymakers themselves draw upon.

Smelser also foreshadowed political opportunity structure theory by suggesting that differentiated societies – those with avenues for political participation (which political opportunity structure theorists later called 'open') – lead to norm-oriented movements, while non-differentiated societies – those with strong social control (termed 'closed' in the political opportunity structure literature) – lead to more broadly challenging value-oriented movements. Thus, it was a step ahead of broad-brush approaches to political opportunity structure theories, which wrongly assumed that all movement organizations within a given nation state would behave similarly to one another as a function of the political environment (Chapter 5). In line with the resource mobilization approach, collective behaviour theorists did note that some degree of organization – even if just restricted to 'milling' between individuals – is necessary to sustain a movement (Turner 1981: 8).

There are also links with new social movement theory. Laraña (1996: 1–13), writing on theoretical convergence between new social movement and collective behaviour approaches notes three main similarities. First, both view social movements as agents for positive, revolutionary or utopian change. The social movement theories examined in Chapter 6 discuss 'cultural drifts' in a similar fashion to Blumer (1986). Second, they share a focus on collective/shared identity and lifestyles of movement participants, and finally, they both define social movements inclusively as agents working through a variety of non-state focused media to promote or resist social change.

Although often subject to much disparagement, collective behaviour theory has been deemed the closest that theorists have come to generating a 'master theory' for explaining social movements. It 'has proved difficult to develop an alternative

conceptualization of similar explanatory potential' (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 14). But this should not detract from its biggest weakness: it has simply tried to do too much. In proposing general laws about a host of forms of collective behaviour, the peculiarities of particular forms of collective behaviour – like social movements – are downplayed, not to mention the peculiarities of particular organizations *within* movements. Arguably, the emergence of episodes of collective behaviour is not at the whims of such general social laws. Environmental networks, in particular, are not homogenous – they include a variety of different organizations with varying objectives and strategies (Chapter 3).

Methodological approach

I end the book with an illustration of the application of a synthetic analytical approach to social movement theory. This synthetic approach draws upon Bunge's mechanistic systemism (1997, 2004). While I do not seek to derive mechanisms as such, I draw on Bunge's concept of 'systemism', which fills the structure-agency gap by looking for feedbacks between the macro- and micro-level. Adopting this element of his approach allows me to avoid the individualism-holism divide, which has plagued social sciences – and especially social movement research – for centuries (Pickel 2004: 175). More specifically, it provides potential for uniting macro- and micro-level social movement theories. However, I modify Bunge's approach, which focuses just on individuals and structures, adding the organizational level and campaign targets in addition to the state to complete the picture. It is necessary to include the organizational level for two related reasons. First, the book's focus on interaction between environmental organizations makes it essential to factor the organizational level into my analytical framework. Second, the organizational level – whether the organizations are formal or informal – is crucial for understanding contention around environmental issues. Only within a group dynamic can grievances shared by individuals become public issues deemed worthy of collective action (Ferreer and Miller 1985: 46).

To be a little clearer: the synthetic approach I adopt presupposes that organizations choose their allies as a result of the way in which they interact with individuals, campaign targets, the polity, society and their previous relations with other environmental organizations – whether strategic or normative (Habermas 1981). The overarching task then becomes to identify how organizations' interactions with each of these sets of actors shape their choices of allies.

Although explanation is also the central aim of mechanistic research (Gerring 2007: 178), I elect to not use mechanisms based research to avoid charges of overstating generalizability *and* of conceptual confusion. Mahoney (2001), for

example, identified 24 different definitions of mechanisms by 21 different authors!⁸ Furthermore, the mechanistic approach is sometimes used as a form of cover for rational actor theory (see, e.g. Elster 2002). I do not wish to entirely distance myself from this approach, but I believe that overemphasis on rationality confines explanation to the realm of strategic action. This has been a key weakness of the resource mobilization school of thought (Chapter 4). While environmental organizations can sometimes behave rationally, such an approach puts strategic action in the spotlight at the expense of the normative, underplaying important lessons we can learn from cultural approaches to social movements (see Chapters 4 and 8). Nevertheless, I do draw on useful elements of the mechanistic approach and seek to capitalize on some of its advantages.

As with mechanistic research, my theoretical and methodological approach makes it possible to find a compromise between grand theories – like collective behaviour – on the one hand, and interpretivist ‘storytelling’, on the other (Hedström and Swedburg 1996: 281). Interpretivism can be criticized for collecting ‘disjointed anecdotal material’, which ‘enshrines mysteries instead of turning them into research problems’ (Bunge 1997: 421–2). Grand theory, on the other hand has been criticized for overgeneralization (Merton 1968) and even of emptiness (Hedström and Swedburg 1996: 299). As illustrated above, the grand theory of collective behaviour is clearly too general to explain the complex dynamics of interaction in environmental networks, even if a charge of emptiness is too harsh. Moreover, to explain interaction requires moving beyond compiling anecdotal material.

My approach also helps avoid a problem apparent in less sophisticated quantitative research, whereby correlation is assumed to equate to causation. In such studies, the ‘black box’ of explanation remains closed. In the case of research on environmental networks, such quantitative approaches might be able to tell us that there *exists* a relationship between formal organizational structure and proclivity to compete for resources, but they will fail to tell us *why* this is the case. This, of course, is less true of more sophisticated quantitative methodologies that aim to control for context and check for confounding variables.

Nonetheless, I would like to stress that I do not see my approach as entirely juxtaposed from the quantitative and interpretivist approaches against which mechanistic accounts have been contrasted. On the contrary, I would argue that it is important that an account of interaction in environmental networks incorporates some form of interpretivism, quantitative measurement or even both, for mixed methods can be useful tools to develop explanation. Neither am I universally opposed to the development of laws, even though I believe that broad or general laws cannot easily capture social and political dynamics at multiple levels required to explain interaction in environmental networks – hence the need for some form of

systemism. I share with mechanisms-based researchers the desire to 'elaborate, sharpen, transpose and connect theories' (Weber 2006: 120).

The main advantage of my approach is that it is self-consciously aware of the need to *explain* observed phenomena by looking not only at structure or agency, but at both. Furthermore, I would argue that my approach is ideally suited to the exploratory empirical work I have carried out on environmental networks. Even though I cannot prove cause and effect, my exploratory empirical contribution can help move closer to developing explanatory hypotheses that can fully explain interaction in environmental networks and social movements. Thus, this is to take up an approach that straddles positivist hypothesis testing and constructivism. Lichbach (2008) is critical of such an approach, because it can only be put forward as a first step towards determining causation. I will be the first to admit the impossibility of confirming cause and effect with my relatively small survey sample of 149 environmental organizations. But I purport that exploratory research is at least a good way to *begin* to understand causation.

This book, then, uses mixed methods to explain my own empirical research findings from fieldwork in London in 2002–3. More specifically, the approach seeks to answer the question: 'Why do environmental organizations interact with one another in the way that they do?' To approach this question, I first had to ask myself, 'How do they interact?' To discover how they interact, I analyse results from a survey of 149 London-based environmental organizations. To answer the 'why' question, I deductively use previous theory and empirical research on social movements, and draw upon interviews and participant observation. In so doing, I tease out actions and interactions of actors at multiple levels that can help explain observed patterns.

For in-depth interviews and participant observation, I selected a sample of organizations across the spatial dimensions and the ideological spectrum of environmentalism. This allowed inclusion of radical groups that did not respond to the questionnaire. The interviews determined key campaigners' prior network links, extent of activism/involvement and perspective on interorganizational interactions. A full list of interviewees is given in Appendix 1.

I spent approximately one day per week for several months engaged in participant observation in three very different environmental organizations: Friends of the Earth (that is Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland, from here on simply 'Friends of the Earth'), the Environmental Direct Action Group,⁹ and Chiswick Wildlife Group. Friends of the Earth is a national reformist organization, the Environmental Direct Action Group a regional (London-based) radical group and Chiswick Wildlife Group a local conservationist organization. As Friends of the Earth volunteer, I was responsible for implementing an action plan to involve

local campaigners in the organization's (2003–8) strategic plan (Friends of the Earth 2002b). In the Environmental Direct Action Group, I attended meetings, and helped prepare and carry out actions. For Chiswick Wildlife Group, I helped with practical conservation tasks and butterfly transects at Gunnersbury Triangle Local Nature Reserve on volunteers' day (see Chapter 3 for more detail on these three organizations). Two key campaigning areas were studied in depth. Climate change and aviation were selected because of their central importance for London's activists and because an array of organizational types have been involved.

For the survey, a postal questionnaire (Appendix 2) was sent to 440 environmental organizations to discover their collaborative and information-passing networks, and organizational characteristics. Although only 34 per cent of those contacted responded to the survey, I ensured that prominent London based national environmental organizations and their local groups responded. The response rate compares favourably with other surveys of social movement organizations.¹⁰ I also made sure to include a range of organizations across the environmental networks' spatial and ideological dimensions – even including a couple of radical organizations, traditionally considered least receptive to survey research. A list of the organizations that responded to the survey is given in Appendix 3.

Local environmental groups were sampled because there are so many environmental groups in London. Two locales were selected to explore the 'local' dimension of environmentalism: a pocket of southeast London, and an area in northwest London surrounding Heathrow Airport. The former has rich and lively local environmental networks, despite social deprivation and poor integration into Greater London's transport infrastructure (Rootes et al. 2001). The locale in northwest London was chosen because of its proximity to Heathrow airport and because its activist milieu is at least as, if not more, industrious than the southeast's. Having relatively recently lost a protracted campaigning battle against T5 (a fifth passenger Terminal at Heathrow Airport), action groups in the surrounding towns and villages were, at the time of field research, actively engaged in an on-going campaign against a third runway – an option that the then Labour government had, at that point, approved subject to operation of the airport remaining within emissions limits. Controversially, the Labour government argued that the new runway was important for economic prosperity, and that it would play a key role in meeting the predicted increase in aircraft demand as outlined in its aviation White Paper (Department for Transport 2003). After much campaigning, including a High Court Ruling in which the Labour government was found guilty of not properly consulting on a number of key issues, the plans were retracted. Anti-runway campaigners were delighted that the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, which came to power in 2010, dropped the plans.

The contents

Chapter 2 sets the scene by detailing the theoretical and empirical context. It defines environmental networks and gives a short history of their development. It includes some discussion of how environmental organizations might be categorized ideologically and spatially. Chapter 3 provides further contextual information on the campaigns and environmental organizations studied in depth. The following four chapters provide a critical evaluation of the major strands of social movement theory: resource mobilization, political opportunity structures, new social movement theory and the identity-oriented approach, respectively. Each of these chapters critiques and then contextualizes these theories in relation to environmental networks, illustrating them with examples of recent environmental campaigns in Britain. They then suggest how the different theories might anticipate environmental organizations to behave and to interact. Then, assessments are made of the theories' applicability to the interaction in environmental networks as uncovered by the London-based survey and fieldwork. More specifically, the empirical element of Chapter 4 explores the extent to which local groups find national and regional groups supportive and whether or not this is a result of national environmental organizations over-prioritizing organizational maintenance or being hampered by bureaucracy. Issues of resource constraints, funding, competition, conflict, reciprocity and the division of labour are investigated. Chapter 5 looks at the effects of political opportunities and structures at national and local levels upon network linkages between organizations that comprise environmental networks. Chapter 6 considers new social movement theory, evaluates its newness and discusses whether it can illuminate our understanding of environmental networks. In Chapter 7, individual activists' and organizational identities are considered. The development of organizational cultures and their impact upon networking is discussed.

As will be demonstrated, each theory has its strengths and weaknesses. To fully explain environmental networks requires considering aspects of all theories. Chapter 8 examines a significant attempt to unite the theories: the *Dynamics of Contention* research programme of McAdam et al. (2001). After evaluating McAdam et al.'s approach, it introduces an alternative analytical framework, which suggests that organizations' choices of allies might be determined on the basis of their relationships to society, the polity, their campaign targets, historic interactions with other environmental organizations and with individuals, both strategically and normatively. The synthetic approach is illustrated with reference to campaigns against climate change and aviation expansion.

The concluding chapter includes a comparison with observations of environmentalism in other countries to locate the findings and theoretical

developments in the broader literature. To draw the book to a close, the key findings – both theoretical and empirical – are summarized and their implications for environmental networks and social movements more generally are discussed. I find that issues of resource maintenance influence environmental organizations' choices of allies. While well-financed moderate conservationist and reformist environmental groups will seek to maintain their office space, staff and reputations, radicals will want to maintain their strong sense of collective identity. This can set radicals and moderates apart from one another. However, this does not mean that large national environmental organizations are insensitive to grassroots campaigns. Particularly when environmental campaigns reach a democratic dead end, the ground for collaboration between radicals and reformists is fertile. Thus, to explain interaction between environmental organizations requires not only consideration of rational (resource mobilization and political process) and cultural theories (new social movements and identity). What is also required is consideration of the dynamic interplay between environmental organizations, the individuals that participate in them *and* those whom they challenge.