Saunders, Clare. "Environmental Networks and New Social Movement Theory." *Environmental Networks and Social Movement Theory*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 121–150. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544490.ch-006>>.

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6 Environmental Networks and New Social Movement Theory

This chapter is centred on new social movement theory. This body of theory developed in the late 1960s as contention across Europe peaked. Contemporary social movements of the time were thought to have ‘stretched the explanatory capacity of older theoretical perspectives’ (Johnston et al. 1994: 3), particularly of collective behaviour. The theory is sometimes juxtaposed as being located poles apart from resource mobilization theory, which I discussed in Chapter 4. This is because resource mobilization theory emphasized the rational and formally organized aspects of social movements, while new social movement theory has largely focused on fluid participatory networks. Others make the distinction between resource mobilization theory and new social movement theory on the basis of their geographical roots. Thus, resource mobilization theory is often referred to as the ‘US-approach’ and new social movement theory as the ‘European approach’. However, there has been a great deal of exchange across the Atlantic since the approaches emerged, and scholars now increasingly use concepts from both schools of thought.

As with other social movement theories, the strands of literature that are lumped together under the banner of new social movement theory are divergent. Scholars associated with the approach offer different reasons for movement emergence, assign different characteristics to new movements, and have been largely unable to agree on an overarching theory. I introduce the key strands of the theory, and supplement this with discussion of newer approaches to identity and subcultures. The diversity of approaches need not be viewed as a problem. Instead it could be conceived as a rich ecumenical approach that helps understand *aspects* of movements, which in themselves are complex.

I begin this chapter by introducing new social movements as distinct from old movements. In practice, though, scholars have tended to find that new movements are not actually all that novel. Therefore, I move on to a more thorough discussion of claims about ‘newness’. The chapter then evaluates new social movement theory. I argue that a key weakness of new social movement theory is that it assumes – as do broad-brush approaches to political opportunities (Chapter 5) – that new social movements are homogenous. More specifically, it presupposes that all organizations that comprise new social movements are engaged in the work of

seeking cultural change. Masking variation in this way is not useful for a study of environmental networks because it glosses over the fact that many environmental organizations are formally organized and *not* oriented towards social or cultural change as such.

After teasing out implications of the theory for interaction in environmental networks, I return to the London survey data. First, I explore whether the ideologies of organizations in environmental networks fit the new social movement archetype. I find much more homogeneity than I had expected given the different levels of resources (Chapter 4), strategies and statuses (Chapter 5) of environmental organizations. This suggests that it is not ideologies alone that determine whether environmental organizations will cooperate or compete. I then present network diagrams which illustrate how movement networks in southeast London have varied over time, by comparing a period in which protest was peaking to a spell of relative latency.

What is new social movement theory?

New social movement theory seeks to explain why 'new' movements formed in the 1960s, what their characteristics were, and their significance (Johnston et al. 1994: 9). Essentially, the theory acts as a bridge between macro-structuralist theories and micro-theories of identity formation. Previous theoretical approaches, especially collective behaviour, were, perhaps inappropriately (see Chapter 3), deemed inadequate for explaining 'new' protest manifestations in the late 1960s and 1970s, initially observed in the student movement, and succeeded by the peace, civil rights, feminist, ecologist and self-help movements. It was noted, perhaps exaggeratedly so, that these movements had commonalities distinguishing them from traditionally studied labour movements (Table 6.1) (Offe 1985; Pakulski 1991; Laraña and Gusfield 1992: 6–9). As Habermas (1981: 33) suggested, 'in short, the new conflicts are not sparked by problems of [labour and product] distribution, but concern for the grammar of forms of life'.

What is new?

Much scholarly attention has been focussed on questioning the extent of newness of so-called new social movements. As Steinmetz (1994: 179 in Wall 1999b) suggests, 'a cottage industry has grown up around the project of proving that new social movements were not really so new after all'. It is important to explore these arguments to allow for an assessment of the newness of environmental networks.

There are three main claims about newness. The first considers new social movements, including the environmental movement, to be 'new' in a metaphorical

Table 6.1 New social movement characteristics

Ideology
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anti-modernism/anti-‘progress’¹
Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decentralized, non-hierarchical, participatory• Not class-based• Amorphous/fluid• Direct participation
Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resist colonization of the life-world or manipulation of identity and needs• Freedom of expression, communication and cultural reproduction• Symbolic resistance• Solidarity and autonomy as objectives in themselves

sense. According to this approach, they are new to the extent that they have only relatively recently come under scholars’ radars because of the adoption of a new analytical lens. The second claim, which I already briefly visited in the introduction to this chapter, considers 1960s–1970s movements to be new in terms of their characteristics – especially, how they differ from the nineteenth century labour movement and other class-based conflicts. Third, they are classified as being new for the simple reason that we live in a ‘new’ type of society which has demanded a unique response from civil society (Melucci 1984, 1995a, 1995b). The third argument has been given the most emphasis in the literature.

Explaining ‘newness’ of NSMs by the emergence of a new scholarly lens

The study of social movements has been subject to the ‘postmodern turn’. This has witnessed scholars interested in social movements looking beyond a Marxist approach. The Marxist approach focused on the meta-narrative of the labour movement as the source of a social revolution. Once scholars moved away from a near obsession with this idea, they were able to consider instead a broader range of influences upon society and politics. Although new movements may not be distinctly new in historical terms, or in their shape or form, the extent of scholarly interest that was generated in response to them and the emphasis on cultural aspects of social movements clearly was new. As Scott (1990: 24) states, ‘. . . what we see here is not a retreat from the political sphere, but an extension of politics to cover a wider range of concerns and social relations’.

The focus on the labour movement meant that nineteenth century manifestations of the women's movement and religious movements were largely ignored or, considerably later, passed to historians. Only relatively recently have they been a topic of post hoc analytical political sociology. According to Nash (2002a: 112), following Calhoun (1994), the overemphasis on the labour movement stems not only from the pre-1960s structural bias in sociology, but is also 'due to the rationalist, instrumental bias of sociology itself'. If sociology can be charged with this, political science can be criticized for being even more obsessed with instrumental political action. Yet the labour movement failed to bring about the revolution that many theorists had hoped for, thus beginning what has thus far has proven a wild goose chase of searching the broader social movement milieu for a revolutionary agent with which to replace it.

Hence, at least for European scholars of social movements, the labour movement became the benchmark against which 'new' movements were compared. It was not so much that these movements were actually regarded as new in themselves – their precedents cannot have gone unnoticed – but rather that scholars were exploring new ground. Certainly, the study of environmental movements is newer than the study of the labour movement. This is positively confirmed by comparing results of a British Library catalogue search under the exact terms 'environmental movement' and 'labour movement'. Particularly noteworthy is that the number of recorded entries in the British Library catalogue with a publication date pre-1970 is zero for the environmental movement compared to 171 for the labour movement.

The theory of 'protest cycles' (Tarrow 1998) further explains the degree of scholarly interest that different movements have ignited. Such cycles of protest 'correspond with moments of intensified collective action', which is clearly what was witnessed across Europe in the late 1960s (della Porta and Diani 1999: 189). The entire cycle is described 'as a parabola; from institutional conflict to enthusiastic peak to ultimate collapse' (Tarrow 1998: 168). The argument that Tarrow puts forward can be clearly represented in diagrammatic form, building upon his own parabola metaphor (Figure 6.1).

From this perspective, we might deduce that what was new about new social movements was that scholars followed them from virtually the beginning of this life-course, starting with the student movement that appeared to act as a springboard for a whole host of other related movements (see the explanation of phase 2, Figure 6.1). At the same time, the labour movement was clearly within the 'demise'² half of the life-course pattern. The notion of waves is more than a theory. It also appears to have a close fit with actual patterns of protest. Jai Kwan Jung's (2010) analysis of Kriesi et al.'s (1995) protest event data in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland illustrates how a favourable political

Figure 6.1 Tarrow's Protest Cycles

opportunity structure coupled with electoral competition appeared to stimulate the rise of protest, and that institutionalization and the emergence of radical protest accompany the dip after a peak. Patterns of environmental protest in Britain 1988–97 also seem to resemble small waves, although the end result has never been a dearth of contention on environmental issues. The steady march towards institutionalization in the early 1990s was broken by a wave of direct action before environmental protest began to tail away again in the late 1990s (see Rootes 2007: 25). Although no one has published in-depth environmental protest event analysis since 1997, it appears that environmental protest has risen again with the advent of annual marches and a host of direct actions networks forming to protest against climate change.³

Although such a theory can help explain why environmental movements did not receive a great deal of scholarly attention before the 1960s, this fact alone does not seem to justify the title ‘new’ in the light of historical evidence that environmental

movements and networks have long histories and precedents (Nedelman 1984: 1033; Wall 2000). As Ray (1993: 60) suggests, 'movements like environmentalism, pacifism, feminism were significant around 1890–1900 or before'. As we saw in Chapter 3, first-wave environmentalism, which manifest as conservationism, was active in Britain in the early nineteenth century.

Explaining newness of NSMs by their distinction from old movements

Table 6.2 synthesizes a number of attempts to compare old and new movements (Cohen 1983: 98; Dalton et al. 1990: 13; Scott 1990) using the labour movement as the referent object for 'old' movements. Perhaps the largest problem with these types of comparisons is the way in which they convey old and new movements as polar opposites. In reality, movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s have features of the labour movement, and vice versa (Calhoun 1994). Thus, Touraine's (1981) distinction between (old) movements of organization and power, on the one hand, and (new) movements of cultural innovation and social movement, on the other, is an artificial bifurcation. Tucker (1991), for example, shows that the labour movement was not so far removed from the characteristics of new social movements as had been assumed. Syndicalists, for example, have coveted a new, decentralized democratic state and labour movements have used cultural symbols throughout history.

While old movements have some new movement characteristics, supposed new movements have some old movement characteristics, too. Rucht (1988) showed how ideologies and practices of the German women's and environmental movements failed to fit ascribed new social movements characteristics. He found differences in recruitment fields, organizational infrastructures and action and mobilization structures. While both movements had similar political and ideological orientations in that they sought widespread public participation, a democratic society and an improved quality of life within a holistic worldview, they differed drastically in other respects. The social base for the environmental movement was much more differentiated and diverse than the women's movement. He argued that this was due to mobilization potential of 'not in my back yard' (NIMBY) type campaigns. One could suggest that this was also the result of the low levels of demand placed upon supporters of environmental organizations, when often all that is required is a donation.⁴ He also found that while the German women's movement had remained at the grass-roots level and been organized through informal networks at regional and local levels because of distrust for hierarchical structures, the German Green movement had developed many hierarchical and formal organizations, including large expert membership organizations

that dominate the movement, and a political party: Die Grünen. To recapitulate from Chapter 5, this again illustrates why broad-brush approaches to political opportunity structures might be problematic. Finally, while the women's movement sought *quality* of membership, emphasizing values and demonstrating the locus of change through everyday behaviour, the environmental movement sought *quantity* of membership, using the weight of numbers of monetary supporters to help influence concrete policies. Rucht's use of these case studies serves well to remind us of the need to be wary of the differences between ideal-type new social movements and empirical reality.⁵ Yet he also seems to gloss over differences *within* the two movements he examines.

Many of the environmental organizations I focus on in this book (see Chapter 3) have features of old movements, others have features of new movements and some have a mix and match of characteristics from both old and new. With reference to the 'old movements' column of Table 6.2, it would not take too much of a stretch of the imagination to claim that the Campaign to Protect Rural England is formal, Friends of the Earth works by way of instrumental reason and NIMBY groups are self-interested. In addition, climate campaigns might be thought of as oriented towards the universal, while Greenpeace strategically operates in the absence of

Table 6.2 Comparing the characteristics of 'old' and 'new' movements

Type of . . .	OLD MOVEMENTS	NEW MOVEMENTS
Rationality	Formal	Substantive
Reason	Instrumental	Value fundamentalism
Interest	Self-interest	Collective interests
Scope	Universalism	Particularism
Ethic	. . . of responsibility	. . . of ultimate needs
Action	Strategic	Exemplary
Organizational form	Hierarchical	Fluid
Democracy	Formal	Participatory
Milieu	Closed, class based	Open and supported by counter-cultural networks

democratic principles. On the other hand, looking now to the 'new movements' column of Table 6.2, the Environmental Direct Action Group practices value fundamentalism, climate campaigns press for collective interests, the Women's Environmental Network is 'particular' through its focus on women, the Climate Camp seeks to be exemplary, Earth First! and other radical networks are participatory (at least in theory, see Chapter 7), and the campaigns against the Criminal Justice Act (see Chapter 5) represented the sort of counter-cultural networks that new social movement scholars envisaged.

As environmental networks share characteristics of archetypal old *and* archetypal new movements, it is perhaps better to follow Scott's (1990: 133) line. Instead of trying to artificially force movements into one camp or the other, Scott sees the distinction as a useful way to divide the functions of different organizations within a single movement. This works especially well for the organizations included in the environmental networks I focus on in this book. However, even more dynamism needs to be built in because sometimes the *same* organization can behave both strategically and culturally (Chapter 8).

Explaining the newness of NSMs by their emergence in a new society

Partly in response to accounts that noted common features of both old and new movements, 'new' social movement theorists have sought other ways to account for the newness of the 1960s movements. Arguments focusing on the newness of society see new social movements as both symptoms and redressers of problems in post-industrial/programmed (Touraine), information (Melucci), late capitalistic (Habermas), or a range of other epithets ascribed to contemporary society.⁶ Although scholars have idiosyncratic interpretations, Ray (1993: 59) usefully synthesizes the approaches, suggesting that they indicate a society with minimal class conflict, a growing tertiary sector or 'new middle class', expansion of cultural consumption and leisure, new types of social protest and an expanding welfare state. To complete the list, I would add the alleged importance of 'post-material' values and the processes that have led to increasing state surveillance and domination of politics and lifestyles by corporate interests, which (at the state level) Habermas (1981) has called the 'commodification' of culture and the 'juridification' of politics.

These aspects of 'modern' societies are neatly encapsulated in four key theoretical contributions, which I briefly visit: the new middle class thesis (Offe 1985), the post-material thesis (Inglehart 1971, 1987), the process of 'colonization of the lifeworld' (Habermas 1981) and the Meluccian notion of the 'information society' (Melucci 1985).

The new middle class

If we were to step back in time and ask a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century political scientist to describe the main features of the political landscape *at that point in time*, they would note that political parties were class-based – defined in terms of the division of labour between owners of the means of production, and the bearers of the work load. Such a politics was concerned with the sectional interests of classes, dominated by the elites, with the corporatist state at its heart. Hence, during that period, the labour movement was the key focus of much research (see above). By contrast, contemporary society has a ‘new’ kind of politics (Crook et al. 1992), sometimes called ‘disorganized capitalism’ (Lash and Urry 1987). Traditional class identity has been lost through fragmentation of regulated markets, the institutionalization of production, capital accumulation and markets, and the shrinking of the semi-skilled and working-class occupational base (Lash and Urry 1987). New politics is multifaceted. Disintegration of standard conceptions of social class has led to social differentiation and, consequently, diversity of lifestyles.

This new politics is thought to have allowed for the emergence of a ‘new middle class’ – a new class of people working in services and welfare professions (Offe 1985; Lash and Urry 1987). These people are considered responsible for propagating values espoused by social movements. Their employment in services and welfare positions is thought to be both consequence and cause of their resistance to the state. On the one hand, individuals in the new middle class are thought to take up their chosen employment positions because ‘welfare and creative professions provide acceptable sanctuaries to those who wish to avoid direct involvement in capitalist enterprises’ (Parkin quoted in Rohrschneider 1990: 4). On the other hand, their lack of a strong and binding traditional class identity is thought to allow them to develop universalistic concerns based on human rights (Cotgrove and Duff 1980). So while new social movements are not *on behalf of* a class, they remain a politics *of* class (Offe 1985).

The evidence in support of the new middle class thesis is in the balance. Rohrschneider (1990) in his exploration of the basis for environmental concern found that there is only a slight relationship between new middle class membership and support for environmental groups. And Bagguley (1992: 30) shows, using cross-national comparisons of social movements, that those countries with strong service classes do not have the strongest new social movements. Part of the problem might be, as Nash (2002a: 106–7) says, that the diverse group classified as ‘the new middle class’ do not share similar backgrounds, conditions of employment or opportunities in the way we would expect from the term ‘class’. Despite findings that seem to contradict the new middle class thesis, a recent survey of five climate protests in four countries – London, Utrecht, Copenhagen and Brussels throughout

2009 and 2010 – finds that 75.3 per cent of participants self-identify with the upper- or lower-middle class.⁷

New Values and the post-materialism thesis

The debate on new values is essentially based on Inglehart's (1971, 1990) post-materialism thesis, which argues that new values developed across Western democracies in the post-Second World War period as a result of unprecedented levels of economic security. Through his broad surveying of the values of the populace of European societies, he noted an increasing trend towards economic goals – measured through indicators like military security and availability of provisions essential for survival – to be supplanted by quality of life concerns, such as equality and concern for the environment. He made explicit the exponentially cumulative impact of generational change, arguing that over time larger proportions of the population of Western societies develop post-material concerns. Hence, they come to express these concerns through 'new' social movements.

At least by 2050, according to Inglehart's crude calculations, we should have a whole population of post-materialists, but that fact alone does not necessarily mean that everyone will be involved in every type of social movement that reflects post-materialist concerns. Thus, Inglehart's thesis fails to shed any light on differential rates of involvement in social movements among those with post-material concerns – why do some people choose to support the peace movement rather than organizations within environmental networks, whereas others choose not to be involved at all? And just because someone is concerned about the environment, for example, does not mean that they will become involved in environmental organizations or environmental protest. The relationship between values and protest action is actually rather weak. Klandermans and Oegema (1987), for example, found that while three-quarters of a random sample of residents of a community near Amsterdam were sympathetic to a protest against cruise missiles, only 1 in 20 actually participated in the protest. A final criticism is that Inglehart takes it as given that the correlation between the emergence of new values and the upsurge of new movements implies cause and effect. As we all know, correlation does not imply causation, and who is to say that new movements were not responsible for bringing about new values rather than vice versa?

Social change

Broader social changes are regarded by many to be responsible for the emergence of new social movements. The key theorists are Habermas (1981), Touraine (1981, 1984), Offe (1985) and Melucci (1989, 1996), who, despite disagreeing on details,

present similar theoretical arguments. They document shifts in society that have implications for social control that new social movements react against. Even though they are not strictly new social movement theorists, sociologists from Marcuse to Foucault and Althusser to Bourdieu make claims consistent with Touraine, who argues that 'contemporary society is subjecting itself to even stricter control and surveillance in such a way that social life is nothing more than the system of signs of an unrelenting domination' (Touraine 1984: 71). This well-documented trend is the cornerstone of much new social movement theorizing.

Social control, it is argued, has changed from being class based, broadening and deepening to expend influence over organizational systems, symbol formation and even interpersonal relations (Melucci 1980: 218), invading – or as Habermas would put it 'colonizing' – the everyday lives of individuals and making society culturally impoverished (Habermas [1981, 1992], see also Edwards' 2004 reworking of Habermas' theory). In this complex society, which Melucci calls the 'information society', goods are mass produced, based on 'information systems and symbolic universes controlled by huge [branded] organisations' (Melucci 1994: 109; Klein 2000; Edwards 2007). In the relentless push for progress and profit, these systems and symbolic universes are thought to erode self-help systems while the state placates society through the welfare state, despite its inability to halt or reverse embedded problems including environmental destruction, poverty and military superfluity. The moral duties of the state go wanting because of the increasing plurality of sites of power. Melucci, in particular, identifies multinationals, health experts and the world media systems as sources of 'dominant' codes, while Offe, Habermas and Touraine hang onto neo-Marxist notions of class- and system-based domination. Whatever the source of domination, new movements are seen to result. They are thought to act as magnets for seeds of discontent that the system cannot integrate. The discontented respond by forming new identities and alternative ways of organizing for positive change, purposely bypassing the state (Melucci 1984: 829). The theory seems to chime with some radical activists' concerns. A radical environmentalist, writing about his/her observations on society, for example, wrote the following for the *Earth First!* journal.

Around us has grown a web of domination, a web of mediation that limits our experience, defining the boundaries of acceptable production and consumption. Domesticating authority takes many forms, some of which are difficult to recognise. Government and religion are some of the more obvious faces of authority. But technology, work, language with its conceptual limits, the ingrained habits of etiquette and propriety – these too are domesticating

authorities which transform us from wild, playful unruly animals into bored unhappy producers and consumers. (Anon. 2000: 171)

Let us turn to examine Melucci's (1984, 1995a, 1995b) theory of new social movements in a little more depth. He sought to defend the concept of a new social movement – a concept he claimed to have been responsible for introducing. According to Melucci, the 'real' way to tell whether a movement is 'new' was to consider if the meanings behind the movement and the movement's place in the system of social relations are new. Since we live in the information society, movements that have arisen in this new historical time period are by implication 'new' in relative terms (even if they do have characteristics of old movements). 'Old movements' – by which he means labour movement *and* pre-1960s manifestations of the women's movement – were, he suggests 'about the quest for citizenship and their identity was already given' (Melucci 1994: 116). He suggests this because they sought enfranchisement of already defined social groups. In comparison, in contemporary society, a degree of emancipation is already manifest in that we all are enfranchised to vote. This has weakened social divisions that pervaded life in the old politics. Hence, 'in new movements, citizens form themselves into social networks where a collective identity is negotiated and given shape' (1994: 117). What is different is that this identity is not ascribed. I return to discuss identity within environmental networks in Chapter 7.

In his 1995 essay, 'The New Social Movements Revisited: Reflections on a Sociological Misunderstanding', Melucci (1995a) explicitly lays out seven ways of conceptualizing the newness of new social movements:

- 1 Information resources are at the centre of new conflicts. Activists now have much more self-reflexivity as a consequence of the wide availability of information and conflicts are no longer solely about production and distribution of material goods.
- 2 Action becomes self-reflexive with positive action played out through lifestyles and the wider cultural habitus.
- 3 Movements now have a planetary dimension. Partly due to the availability of information, there is awareness of global issues. As information can be condensed and can travel at high speeds, movements are able also to sustain informal global networks.
- 4 For new movements, there is an important relationship between latency and visibility. They act as 'laboratories in which other views of reality are created [during latency]. They emerge [i.e. become visible] only on specific grounds to confront a public authority of a given issue' (114).

- 5 The effects of movements cannot be measured on a political level; they have immeasurable effects too, such as the reversal of cultural codes – a slow but pervasive process.
- 6 They provide public space and express the double meaning of the terms representation and participation. Representation means both presenting your interests, but also means that your arguments become watered down as they travel through political channels. Participation means taking part, but also belonging to the system and community. New social movements emphasize the latter in favour of the former.
- 7 New social movements 'raise the challenge that recasts the language and cultural codes that organise information' (Melucci 1994: 102), creating new meaning that challenges master codes.

The first two arguments characterize newness in terms of the type of society that we live in. Unfortunately, defending newness in this manner amounts to what could be considered a circular argument. It could lead sceptics to the conclusion that, since new movements have wide-ranging precedents and many features common with old movements, the *new* society creates similar movement forms to those which the *old* or industrial society did and therefore explains little, if anything, about social movement shape or emergence. Information and resources may be central to our society, so why do new (in temporal terms) movements form that do not match the ideal-type characteristics of new social movements shown in Table 6.1?

Arguments 4–7 fall flat because old movements also have some, if not all of these characteristics – for instance, labour movements also exhibited an important relationship between latency and visibility (Scott 1990). Latency possibly acted as a laboratory for the formation of views of the world through workingmen's clubs, pubs and other work-based social events for the labour movement. The dissent only made itself visible through actions such as strikes, sit-ins and boycotts. As the work of Tucker (1991), Ray (1993) and Nedelmann (1984) showed the impacts of 'old' movements could be measured beyond the political level – some were indeed culturally and identity oriented. Due to the class-based nature of industrial society, the conflict between representation and participation was most probably also evident to working-class men and women in industrial society. Frequently excluded from formal representation, the limits of representation were at least to some extent countered by the strong sense of working-class solidarity and a stronger, not weaker, sense of community.

So what then is the big deal about new social movements? This leaves defenders of the 'newness' argument with only one string left for their bow; only Melucci's third point on the newness of social movements remains unscathed. The point

he is making there is that movements now have a planetary dimension and an unprecedentedly large scale of action and scope of issues. Many agree (e.g. Brand 1990; Inglehart 1990; Rochon 1990) that this was what was new about new social movements. Student, environmental and peace movements were, indeed, working on global issues. Yet, had not the anti-slavery movement done that decades earlier? The archetypal old movement, the labour movement, also has a planetary dimension, having spawned campaigns against sweatshops and for human rights (Waterman 2001). And Rupp has shown how the women's (1994) and lesbian, gay and bi-sexual rights (2011) movements both have long transnational histories.

Are environmental networks new social movements?

Environmental networks writ large *cannot* be labelled as new social movements because of the many different types of organizations involved – from insider pressure group organizations through to radical protest networks (see Chapter 3). Scott (1990) looked at the German Greens and came to the conclusion that 'new' movements only manifest in real life at the early stages of the protest lifecycle, with a permanent state of 'newness' restricted to movements' fundamentalist wings.

Despite a general consensus that radical environmental organizations – the more fundamentalist wing of environmental networks – are new social movements, some fit a particular conception of a new social movement better than others. In this section, I show that attempts to find textbook examples of new social movements can be viewed as problematic because they can be too easily accused of cherry-picking evidence to fit. It is also worth stressing that equating a single group or organization with a movement is to blur the concept of a movement, which, in most accounts is considered to be a *network* of several organizations. In the examples I explore below, Clark (2000) and Storr (2002) suggest that particular organizations – the Exodus Collective and Reclaim the Streets, respectively – are social movements.

Storr (2002: 193–4) notes how Reclaim the Streets has the new social movement characteristics that Melucci emphasizes. She regards Reclaim the Streets to be a reaction against the information society. She illustrates its concern with ownership, control, the distribution of alternative information and redressing master codes to reveal underlying truths about cars, roads and capitalism. Reclaim the Streets uses the symbolism of the car as a means of attacking wider car culture and the 'insidious'⁸ capitalism that it supports. Reclaim the Streets, she suggests, also exhibits signs of antagonism towards the corporate ownership of information resources (via hostility to professional journalism), it is self-reflexive, has a planetary dimension (e.g. international networks and concern for global issues) and displays the relationship between latency and visibility – being drawn from counter-cultural networks of squatters, travellers, hunt saboteurs and ravers.

For Clark (1990), the Luton-based Exodus Collective – which provided communal living space, workshops and parties and engaged in environmental projects for activists and youth – is an almost perfectly fitting example of resistance to Habermasian colonization of the lifeworld. This, he argues, is because it is active in producing ‘cultural moments of resistance’, has created a discursive space, resists formal political institutions and has an egalitarian structure.

Unfortunately, such analyses leave us with grounds for some suspicion that the authors are not robustly testing the theories’ relevance for modern environmental protest. These could, instead, be seen as generalizations made from case studies that authors have purposely selected with prior knowledge that they will be fitting cases. A further problem is that they assume that all radical activists within these networks share the same principles. However, in-depth interviews I have conducted with Climate Camp activists have shown that even within a supposedly radical environmental organization, activists hold a variety of green positions, from reformist and instrumental through to deep green and cultural (Saunders 2012). Even though it is great to see these complex theories being related to real life examples of contention, studies like Storr’s and Clark’s unfortunately do little to further theoretical developments within the field of social movements. Part of the problem is that they look at individual organizations, not the broader networks required to talk of environmental networks, or, indeed environmental movements (Chapter 2). At best, these studies – and my own – therefore suggest that it is difficult to classify any movement or even a sub-movement as a fully fledged new social movement.

Alternative ways of understanding contemporary movements

Although new social movement theory is useful for studying environmental networks to the extent that it introduces useful concepts – such as solidarity and identity – the practice of trying to decide whether environmental networks constitute a new social movement is mired with difficulties. This is especially so when we consider two major caveats: first, theorists are unable to agree on the defining characteristics of a new social movement and second, so many different types of environmental organization are involved in the so-called environmental movement that it cannot be easily applied to the wide variety of organizations we find in environmental networks.

Consequently, scholars have reacted against the concept of new social movements and have tried to find a better alternative. Alternatives include identity politics, subcultures (Hebdige 1979), DIY culture (Purdue et al. 1997; McKay 1998), neo-tribalism (Maffesoli 1996) and expressive identities (Hetherington 1998).

Identity politics best represents those networks of individuals and/or organizations that are united by common ascribed identities such as age, gender, ethnic

background or skin colour. To the extent that some environmentalists manufacture an identity (for instance, they refuse to buy a car, become vegetarian and may even grow dreadlocks), the term identity politics can be useful. However, some radical environmentalists promote localization that supports *difference* between localities as a counter trend to corporatist globalization. In some situations, ascribed identities do not bring radical activists together, but actually keep them apart.

For McKay (1998) who writes about the DIY culture, radical environmentalism of the 1990s is seen as part of a wider counter-culture incorporating 'party and protest'. The DIY culture includes such arenas as self-organized workers, unemployment centres, activist spaces, squats, protests, street parties and free festivals. As with the concept of 'subculture', the notion of a DIY culture is useful for uncovering those latent networks – that is, networking behind the scenes that sustains activity during periods when protest is less visible. For the purposes of this book though, it is too broad to be useful since it includes a wide variety of types of social groupings that are not embedded in environmental networks. While some radical environmentalists live in squats and attend free parties, not all of them do. Nonetheless, it is worth documenting that there are some important overlaps between DIY culture and the type of social movements Habermas and Melucci envisaged. Within DIY culture, activists really do live out experiments at the seam of society, spreading cultural innovations. The actions that DIY activists engage in have an end in themselves.

Although some of the earlier writers on subcultures had been misled into believing that subcultures were based on the 'profoundly superficial level of appearances' (Hebdige 1979: 17) which leads to the tendency to preconceive subcultures with a 'decorative sociology' mindset, at least some aspects of subcultural studies are useful in the study of radical environmentalism. Especially useful are the concepts of 'bricolage' and 'homology'. Bricolage is a term that originated in the visual arts to refer to the way in which artefacts can be gathered and given new meaning. It was adapted by scholars of cultural studies to understand youth subcultures. As Moore (2004: 312) writes with reference to the 1980s punk subculture:

Punk style shocked, parodied, and conveyed ambiguity by appropriating banal commodities (safety pins, vegetable dye, Vaseline), essential badges of Britishness (the Union Jack, the Queen), and the tools of conventional gender roles and sexuality (cosmetics, pornography), thus disorienting the 'natural' uses and meanings of those by situating them with a new 'bricolage' of fashion and attitude.

Environmental activists have, similarly, sought to shock and parody using art forms. Art not Oil, for example, campaigns against the sponsorship of art galleries by oil

companies using alternative art to spread its message. In April 2011, around 100 Art not Oil activists staged a 'sleep-in' at the Tate Modern dressed in 'BP-branded sleeping gear', changing the usual meaning of the BP logo.⁹

Whereas bricolage refers to unusual use of common artefacts, homology, refers to some coherence in the use of artefacts. As such, it refers to the link between values, 'lifestyles . . . subjective experiences and musical forms to express or reinforce . . . focal concerns' (Hebdige 1979: 135). Hebdige commented that homology existed in punk subculture only to the extent that chaos ruled. By contrast, radical environmental activists share, to an extent, an alternative value system and lifestyle which makes their subculture cohere as a way of life (this is followed up in Chapter 7). Activists' use of bicycles instead of cars (Horton 2011), for example, has a meaning beyond the chaotic bricolage of punk.

Despite suggestions that subcultures are not real entities but merely constructs of socio-analysts, as 'catch-all terms for any aspect of social life in which young people, style and music interact' (Bennett 1999: 599), subcultures are 'real' for some of the people involved in them. Neal, a 'hippy traveller' interviewed by Muggleton (2000), for example, remarked that one's clothes reflect one's lifestyle and values – similar to the idea of subcultural capital. This insight from subcultural studies reinforces the idea that lifestyles and appearances associated with subcultures are important to participants, not forgetting that they might be able to help us predict the degree of exclusivity of subcultural groupings.

A further critique of subcultural studies is their tendency to view subcultures as temporary but nonetheless static phenomenon. In reality, there is much less coherence between lifestyle, symbolism and values than subcultural theory allows for. Maffesoli's concept of 'neo-tribes' can be applied in order to bolster subcultural theory. Maffesoli embraces the idea that modern subcultural groupings are not stable entities, but are instead characterized by their instability and fluidity manifest in occasional gatherings followed by dispersal (Maffesoli 1996: 76) – pretty much like the annual Earth First! Summer Gatherings and Climate Camps, which are frequently attended by some stalwarts, but consist mostly of a dynamic and changing attendee base. According to Maffesoli (1996: xi) 'as the highest social good, the members of [neo-]tribes are marked by wearing particular types of dress, exhibiting group specific styles of adornment and espousing the shared values and ideals of the collectivity'. What distinguishes Maffesoli's argument from the concept of subcultures is recognition of the fluidity and dynamism of modern collectivities. Maffesoli's argument also avoids presenting a false clear-cut distinction between mainstream culture and subcultures, neither of which are easy entities to define (Clarke 1990: 180). The implication is that any research focused on fluid entities would do best to study them over time.

Hetherington (1998) takes a similar stance to Maffesoli with his concept of 'expressive identities'. This term covers a wide range of modern radical and expressive movement arenas that closely match a list of (aspects of) movements originally designated as new social movements – for example gay rights, environmentalists, youth culturalists, and new ageists. He suggests that they all have in common the search for 'authentic experiences and personal growth' based on identification with and empathy for the rights and freedom of marginalized groups. They meet and protest in self-liberated autonomous spaces. Activists are glued together by emotional and moral solidarity, have an emphasis on the body as an expressive source of communication and identification with others, and focus on aspects of social life that are regarded as irrational by modern societal institutions (Hetherington 1998: 5). The reference to the body might seem strange in reference to environmental activism. However, he defends its use in this context with reference to how activists use their bodies in direct actions. For example, in the anti-roads protests of the 1990s, many physically blockaded sites for new roads against the bulldozers. More recently, in 2010, Climate Camp activists super glued themselves to the front doors of several Royal Bank of Scotland branches to protest against its investment in tar sands.

Certain radical environmental groups are clearly within a DIY space, are associated with subcultures – such as the squatters subculture – resemble a neo-tribe and/or share expressive identities. These theoretical concepts are all useful for understanding elements of radical environmentalism. They are not necessarily useful as an alternative label to new social movements for, as with social movement theories, textbook examples can be cherry-picked at the expense of generalizable theory. What they are most useful for is sharpening awareness of the identity-based, fluid and amorphous nature of the radical elements in environmental networks.

Evaluating new social movement theory

There is much that can be said in praise of new social movement theory. It has brought the cultural aspects of social movements to the fore, and has offered many useful insights that resonate with the practices and experiences of some social movements and/or activists. However, its biggest weakness is overemphasis on culturally challenging participatory aspects of social movements at the expense of the formally organized and rational. Strictly following a new social movement theory approach would lead us to the mistaken position that all environmental campaigning groups are fluid participatory networks, which, of course, they are not (see Chapter 3).

Another weakness is the assumption that broad shifts in politics and society alone are adequate for the emergence of new social movements. The debates about new types of society refer solely to Western industrialized societies, thus making new social movement theory unable to account for protests spawned by conflicts in less developed countries, such as the Brazilian landless movement, which encouraged radical environmentalists from the West to join protests labelled 'anti-globalisation' (Crossley 2003¹⁰), or even the more recent uprisings in the Middle East. By doing this, it ignores the importance of resources, mobilization processes, opportunities and organization. These weaknesses are heightened by a general disregard of the relationship between cause and effect (Hannigan 1985: 446–7; Bagguley 1992: 28). Equally, new social movement theorists are especially vague about the features of a so-called post-industrial society. This leads them to misleadingly propose that all post-industrial societies create similar movements, overlooking domestic differences between countries and undermining important lessons from critiques of the political opportunity approach (Chapter 5). One thing new social movement theory is unable to do is to account for the presence of very different types of environmental organizations (Chapter 3) within the 'environmental movement', which has been labelled 'new'.

A final criticism relates to the concept of newness being outdated. Many of the new social movements that emerged in the 1960s have now become at least partly institutionalized (Scott 1990: 90). It can also be argued that the 1960s new social movements' critique of the welfare state gave governments a valid excuse to begin to dismantle it, which has created a newer cohort of social movements among the marginalized – with focuses such as AIDS and homelessness (Lentin 1999: 6.2). Although I have been able to quote a radical environmental activist talking about processes that seem akin to colonization of the lifeworld, Crossley (2003: 298) argues that the anti-corporate protests of the 1990s and early 2000s (which included radical environmental activists) have only a 'basic "fit"' with the theory. He argues this because Habermas, in the 1980s, was talking about the *state* as the agent responsible for colonization of the lifeworld under welfare capitalism. Times have moved on. Crossley argues that we no longer live under welfare capitalism, but instead under corporate capitalism. After a period of intense and intensifying privatization, modern activists see themselves as subject to colonization of the lifeworld due to pressures from markets, transnational corporations and the international financial institutions that support them, not so much from states.

Implications for environmental networks

If protest really does come in waves as Tarrow (1998) proposed, then we would expect organizations involved in environmental networks to collaborate most when a protest cycle is peaking (at Phase 3 of Figure 6.1). Indeed, this is the point at which movements are thought to be increasingly channelled through organizations. However, as the protest cycle enters the demise phase, cooperation tails off. Tarrow suggests that at Phase 5, many organizations within a movement become institutionalized, while the radical organizations become violent, generating concern over law and order. This would suggest that, as we explored in Chapter 5, radical outsiders and institutionalized insiders dissociate when protest tails off.

Tarrow's concept of protest cycles illustrates the dynamic nature of social movements, which Hetherington and Maffesoli also emphasize. Movements are not always visible: they also, during troughs in protests cycles, go through spells of latency. Latency does not signify a lack of activity, but rather involves 'the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning, on which networks themselves are founded and live from day to day . . . [and] potential for resistance or opposition is sewn into the very fabric of life' (Melucci 1989: 70–1). Latency can be sustained by emotions. As Taylor (1995: 224) explains, with reference to feminist movements, women who remain committed during periods of latency 'have often been motivated not only by a deep sense of anger at gender injustice, but by the joy of participation, the love and friendship of other women, and the pride at having maintained their feminist convictions in the face of strong opposition'.

Committed activists from previous waves of protest are regarded as the fertile seeds from which new waves of protest grow (Hetherington 1998: 3). Even when a particular political challenge has ended and movements themselves become latent (through victory or failure), wider subcultural networking remains active, providing the context for new waves of protest on related themes. McAdam (1989) for example, in his study of activists' post-Mississippi Freedom Summer Project (1964) biographies in the United States, found that a sample of past activists were more likely to become involved in other related counter-cultural movements. Of the activists, 79 per cent had previously been involved in the civil rights movement. In 1984, 22 years later, 11 per cent claimed to be very involved in the environmental movement, compared to 3 per cent in the sample of those who were invited to, but *did not* participate in Freedom Summer. Of Freedom Summer Participants, 60 per cent, as compared to 41 per cent of non-participants, claimed to have leftist political orientations. McAdam (1989: 754) concludes that 'activism by its very nature broadens the base of the activists' links to movement organizations and other activists'. Similarly, McNaughten and Urry (1998) cite Bramwell's (1994)

research that showed a huge crossover of supporters between the student and environmental movements as part of a wider counter-culture. In the early days of Earth First!, nearly all of the founding members (a group of 12 activists whom Wall (1999a) refers to as 'the first cohort') came from previously latent, or at least lower key green, peace and animal rights networks. This results in the extraction of resources and repertoires from the wider amorphous counter-culture. Similar can be said of the non-violent direct action protest repertoire of the anti-roads movement. Melucci (1994: 831) suggests that the passage from latency to visibility is carried out by umbrella organizations that provide the finance and organization, yet respect the autonomy of submerged groups – the exact same role ALARM-UK and Road Alert! played for the anti-roads movement in the 1990s.

Alex Plows (2006) predicted a 're-emergence of Eco-action' after the Blackwood roads protest of 2004. She predicted that the 'latent/emergent (Melucci 2006) networks and campaigns are starting to become more visible as they build up capacity' (Plows 2006: 463). Thus, she anticipated a '(re)cycle' of direct action campaigning over roads or airport expansion on the basis of the success of camp strategies and the discursive linkages made between issues like globalization, oil and climate change. Her assessment was not far off the mark. What actually manifested was a spate of direct action on climate change, supported by the Camps for Climate Action (Saunders and Price 2009; Saunders 2012). The Camps for Climate Action drew on submerged networks, and played a crucial role in bringing climate change protest into visibility.

If we were to believe that the organizations comprising environmental networks were a new social movement, we might expect them to be fairly homogenous. We would anticipate shared ideological standpoints, organizational strategies and democratic principles. We know from Chapters 3, 4 and 5 that organizations within environmental networks have very different democratic structures, and that strategies vary across the insider-outsider continuum. But do they share ideological positions? I answer this question in the empirical section of this chapter (below).

On the other hand, we might expect there to be distance between organizations that have a hierarchical 'old' movement structure and those that have a participatory and open structure. That the old and new are sometimes seen as polar opposites suggests that they might have little to do with one another. However, as we already know, many environmental organizations mix and match features of old and new movements. It is also true that, in practice if not in theory, participatory radical environmental organizations are considerably more closed than they aspire to be. Radical environmental networks are strange creatures in that, quite paradoxically, they are both closed and open to outsider participation. On the one hand, they practically involve small affinity groups working together on direct actions. These

bring together a small hardcore of activists who often know one another well and who generate the type of expressive identities to which Hetherington refers. They often keep their actions secret to everyone outside of these small groups for fear of having their plans rumbled by the police. This has the effect of making it hard for newcomers to feel comfortable or learn the ropes. One likely effect is the development of – as both colloquialists and social network analysts would term it – cliques. On the other hand, they have a Melucian neo-tribe dynamic, which involves large numbers of less committed activists dipping in and out of participation in certain of their meetings or gatherings, which are open to anyone. The solidarity generated in the former may militate against the building of broad and open networks in the latter. It also has negative ramifications because cliques may develop at the expense of antagonistic relations with other movement organizations.

In contrast, passive membership, or even working as a staff member in groups like Friends of the Earth precludes the need for underground meetings. It also requires little behavioural conformity or identity transformation. This makes cliquey behaviour much less likely, especially so for Friends of the Earth, which aims to be the ‘broad church’ of the environmental movement. At the polar opposite are green communal living type groups, which, again, are likely to be much less inviting towards the inquisitive individual, especially if s/he lacks subcultural credibility. The implications of the effect of identity transformation, or the lack of it, in environmental networks are fully explored in the next chapter.

New social movement theory in practice:

The London data

Ideological factions?

An exploration of measures of ideology from the survey of London’s environmental network shows some surprising similarities between new social movement theory’s idealized new social movement ideology and elements of the ideologies of environmental networks. To try to capture ideology, the survey asked a number of questions about possible causes and consequences of environmental problems (Table 6.3). This draws on my typology of environmental ideologies, developed in Chapter 2 (see Table 2.5). The two most commonly given causes of environmental problems were: ‘poor planning decisions’ (42.9%) and ‘over-consumption in consumerist society’ (32.1%). The most popular solutions were: ‘improved planning decisions’ (52.7%), participatory democracy (36.6%) and reduction of consumption (22.3%) (see Table 6.3). While predominance of reformist/instrumental causes

Table 6.3 Measuring the ideologies within environmental networks

Question	% of environmental organizations (n=114)
<i>Which one or two* categories best represents the underlying sources of environmental problem(s) that your organization works to resolve?</i>	
Erosion of nature/wilderness	13.3
Urban growth	20.5
Poor planning decisions	42.9
Failure to cost environmental goods	13.4
Over-consumption in consumerist society	32.1
Unequal distribution of resources	13.4
Domination of nature under capitalism	14.3
Globalization	11.6
<i>Which one or two categories best represent the overall solution to the environmental problem(s) that your organization works to resolve?</i>	
Practical conservation/management of reserves	18.8
Halting building on Greenfield sites	16.1
Improved planning decisions	52.7
Technological innovation	11.6
Participatory democracy	36.6
Reallocation of resources	6.3
Reduction of consumption	22.3
Self-sufficient communities (i.e. bioregions)	8.9
Anarchy	3.6
Revolution	3.6

Note: many organizations did not follow these instructions literally. Some identified just one cause and solution, others identified up to three of each.

and solutions as expressed by the prominence of planning negates new social movement theory, a different pattern emerges when we subject the results to a principal component analysis.

Principal component analysis allows us to simplify data from a multiple battery of questions (like those shown in Table 6.3) allowing us to point to a smaller number of categories. In particular, it is a useful exercise to conduct in order to check for the presence of the three distinct ideologies – the conservationist, reformist and radical ideologies I explored in Chapter 2. For a conservationist ideology, we would expect erosion of nature/wilderness and urban growth as causes of environmental problems to be paired up with practical conservation/management of reserves and halting building on Greenfield sites as solutions. For a reformist, we would expect the causes of poor planning decisions and failure to cost environmental goods to load – or be paired – with improved planning decisions and technological innovation. The radical ideology – which most closely matches what we would expect of a new social movement – would ascribe over consumption, unequal resource distribution, domination of nature under capitalism and/or globalization as responsible for causing environmental problems that are solvable by a mix of participatory democracy, resource reallocation, reduction of consumption, self-sufficiency, anarchy and/or revolution. Is this how the factors ended up being grouped in factor analysis?

The component matrix is shown in Table 6.4. The most significant component, which explains 18.9 per cent of the variance in the data, has positive coefficients for all four causes and three of the solutions to environmental problems that we would ascribe to radicals, and which would identify environmental networks as ideologically in tune with an ideal new social movement. This is the only component that loads neatly in tune with what we would expect were there three distinct ideologies in London's environmental network. In other words, only the presence of a radical – or new social movement type – ideology is confirmed. Component two loads positively on the causes and solutions of environmental problems that we would expect of conservationists, but these coincide with some more radical causes (domination of nature under capitalism and globalization). All of the other components mix and match items from different ideologies. Important in all but component 6 (the component that explains the least variance – just 5.9% – in the data) is globalization as a cause of environmental problems. Thus, Melucci's (1995a) emphasis of the planetary dimension in new social movements seems highly applicable for environmental networks, regardless of other aspects of their ideologies. Most strikingly, this would suggest that it is *not* ideological difference that determines the networking patterns to which I referred in Chapters 4 and 5. As suggested in Chapter 2, the concept of ideologically structured action (Dalton 1994)

Table 6.4 Component matrix for the ideologies of environmental networks

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Variance explained*	18.9	11.2	10.6	8.7	7.2	5.6
<i>Environmental problems are caused by . . .</i> erosion of nature	-.213	.061	-.697	.059	.150	-.095
. . . urban growth	-.346	.316	-.163	-.355	-.063	.518
. . . poor planning decisions	-.549	.106	.676	.029	-.010	-.058
. . . failure to cost environmental goods	-.173	-.107	.438	.505	.255	.235
. . . over-consumption	.343	-.433	-.010	-.434	.050	-.413
. . . unequal access to resources	.142	-.427	-.394	.266	-.402	.036
. . . domination of nature under capitalism	.708	.209	.000	-.045	-.025	.326
. . . globalization	.690	.415	.150	.017	.024	-.138
<i>Environmental problems can be solved by . . .</i> practical conservation	-.215	.140	-.380	.296	.203	.014
. . . halting building on greenfield sites	-.341	.230	-.430	-.174	.422	-.074
. . . improving planning decisions	-.644	.093	.386	-.201	-.042	-.146
. . . technological innovation	-.198	-.066	-.046	.095	-.831	.055
. . . participatory democracy	.525	-.419	.268	-.055	.207	-.143
. . . reallocation of resources	.123	-.360	.060	.428	.259	.372
. . . reducing consumption	.546	-.438	-.048	-.014	.033	.131
. . . self-sufficient communities	.332	.055	.114	-.592	.019	.416
. . . anarchy	.542	.562	.078	.115	-.079	-.062
. . . revolution	.427	.639	.016	.320	-.085	-.196

Note: Items that load positively are highlighted to ease interpretation.

*The six components together account for 62.0 per cent of variance.

seems to overlook practical constraints that prevent ideology dictating the behaviour of social movement organizations (Klandermans 2000; Snow 2004: 396).

Latency and visibility

It is quite clear that many of the ties between environmental groups that were generated during the anti-roads protests of the 1990s, and which spent a decade being latent, were reinvigorated in the course of anti-aviation and climate change campaigning. As predicted by Melucci, the two umbrella groups, Alarm-UK and Airport Watch, have been important in preventing NIMBYism and bringing these networks back into visibility. John Stewart, chair of Airport Watch (see concluding remarks to Chapter 1) has been able to draw on previous links that were established throughout the course of his campaigning against road building. Stewart had been responsible for circulating information on direct action techniques from Road Alert around the network of aviation campaigners. He has maintained links with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) which was very active in the successful campaign against an airport at Cliffe. Many organizations became linked through their association with Airport Watch, which transformed certain parts of environmental networks from latency allowing for the emergence of a powerful and highly visible campaign force.

Network maps based on data collected at two different points in time (Figures 6.2 and 6.3) further illustrate the importance of key campaigns and umbrella organizations in bringing environmental networks into fully fledged visibility. In these network maps, each circle (or node) represents an environmental organization that answered the questionnaire and which claimed to be part of a network. If a node has an arrow pointing towards it, this indicates that another organization claimed it was one of its top five collaborative partners. The size of each node is scaled to give an indication of the popularity of each node (i.e. how many times the organization was listed by another).

Figure 6.2 shows the environmental network in southeast London in February 2001. At this point in time, a large-scale community campaign was just coming to a head. Numerous local groups, many of which were supporters of the Crystal Palace Campaign, were vigorously campaigning against Bromley Council's decision to build a 14-screen multiplex cinema on the site of the ancient Palace (for more detail on this campaign, see Saunders 2007c).

The same network questions were asked in a survey of the same organizations nearly two years later, once the campaign had been won. In January 2003, even the once popular Crystal Palace Campaign did not consider itself to be part of a network of environmental organizations, and the rest of the movement was considerably more fragmented (Figure 6.3).

Key

- Organizations campaigning against Crystal Palace Multiplex park
- ▨ Organizations with a key brokerage role¹¹

See Appendix 4 for a key that gives labels for the nodes.

Figure 6.2 Southeast London's environmental network, February 2001

We could argue that Figure 6.2 illustrates cooperative interactions in the local environmental network of southeast London at a peak of a 'wave' of protest. Yet although the protest was in apparent decline two years later (Figure 6.3), it certainly had not followed the trajectory set out by Tarrow (1998. See Figure 6.1 of this book). There was, for example, no evidence of a counter movement, the non-violent parts of the movement did not become institutionalized, and complete collapse has *not* been the end result. However, what these networks do confirm, as new social movement theory would predict, is the fluid and amorphous nature of movement networks, which seem to change over time depending on the grievance base, political opportunities, the networking capabilities of key activists and social capital in the community. We should also note the presence of a number of key brokers – organizations that brought together a substantial number of others in the network, thus putting them into indirect contact. Of the top seven brokers, five of them were directly involved in the Crystal Palace Campaign. These brokerage organizations ceased to work in the same way once the Crystal Palace Campaign had been won.

Much of the impetus for their action had been removed. Brokerage organizations can be thought of as bridging organizations (Roth 2003), which strive to overcome factionalism. In this regard, note, in particular, how the Environment Office (node 37 in Figure 6.2) bridges the radical and reformist organizations.

The Crystal Palace Campaign was clearly a temporary coming together of a variety of organizations and individuals. Certainly, the capturing of networks in two different points in time shows the limits of adopting a synchronic approach to them – a warning I take from Hetherington (1998). Despite their temporary nature, local campaigns, like the Crystal Palace campaign, do not meet the characteristics of a neo-tribe. Most significantly, many participants did not share subcultural traits. Instead, the participants of the Crystal Palace campaign had a plethora of styles and beliefs. Importantly, I should stress that what brought the Crystal Palace campaigners and the protests against roads and aviation expansion into fruition was not only the umbrella organizations and the reinvigoration of latent networks. The lack of formal political opportunities also spurred these networks into action (Chapter 5). At Crystal Palace, three local authorities (the site bordered three southeast London boroughs) supported the plans for a multiplex cinema and rooftop car park. As with the roads protests, the absence of opportunities to bring about change through the democratic system led to a very active protest wave that brought direct activists and more conventional campaigners together in a pitched battle against the local authorities and developers (Saunders 2007c). This story warns us against reading new social movement theory in isolation from other social movement theories like political opportunity/process

See Appendix 4 for a key that gives labels for the nodes.

Figure 6.3 Southeast London's environmental network, January 2003

theories (Chapter 5). Upon winning or conclusive failure of a campaign, the capacity for bridging seems to break down, resulting in network fragmentation.

Although the network looked sparse and segmented once the Crystal Palace campaign had ended (Figure 6.3), there were latent networks that my study – limited by its focus on entities at least informally organized – was unable to pick up on. By 2003, many of the radical activists that had been living at the Big Willow Protest Camp at Crystal Palace had moved on to squats in the surrounding area. A key informant advised me that this group of activists would feel uncomfortable with a researcher in their midst. Although I was unable to gain access to these undercover networks, it is clear that such ‘invisible’ or ‘latent’ networks are important in keeping radical activists together and helping them retain solidarity in the interim period between more visible waves of protest. Thus, we are also warned against focusing too heavily on the visible networks at the expense of the submerged. To study the latter, however, would require in-depth ethnographic research, which would depend heavily upon gaining the trust of activists in the network under study. Examples of ethnographic studies of activism include those by Graeber (2009) and Juris (2008), both of whom have successfully embedded themselves in the protests against economic globalization.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has introduced many strands of new social movement theory. This is a challenge because of the diversity of approaches. But what really ties the various strands together is a belief that something ‘new’ was afoot with the emergence of ‘new’ radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Although it is difficult to prove what was actually new, the most commonly used arguments refer to either a cultural turn in social sciences, changes in modern society, or both. However, even these sets of arguments have their weaknesses, for how do we explain earlier manifestations of these movements in an ‘older’ society?

Nonetheless, I have shown that some aspects of newness chime fairly well with elements of the praxis of more radical organizations in environmental networks. Somewhat surprisingly, the ideological element seems to have a more generic fit right the way across environmental networks than we might have initially expected. Ideologically structured action (Dalton 1994) cannot be said, therefore, to dictate the shape of environmental networks. Thus, new social movement theory cannot, alone, account for patterns of interaction in environmental networks – other factors besides ideology must be at play. Strategically oriented actions perhaps play a much more significant role than new social movement theory is able to account for. Moreover, collective identity is shaped by activists’ perceptions of political opportunities and constraints just as the contingent political opportunities an

environmental organization faces depend on its external image that is crafted as part of its mission to 'survive'.

Despite the need for new social movement theory to be supplemented by other theories, it should be stressed that it has been useful for emphasizing the role of informal networks in seeking cultural change – something that resource mobilization theory overlooks. The attention given to dynamism and fluidarity draws our attention to the fact that environmental networks are constantly evolving and warns us against taking a static approach. The theory also resurrects, from collective behaviour theory, the notion of strain. For example, new social movements, like the environmental movement, are thought to be a response to changes in society that have brought environmental issues into sharp relief.

We now look in more depth at a particular aspect of new social movement theory, the nature and role of which is also contested: identity. After that, I turn to consider how the different theories I have discussed might be integrated to provide a more thorough explanation for the shape and form of environmental networks.