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7 Collective Identity and Solidarity: Unity or Factionalism?

This chapter picks up where Chapter 6 ended by considering, in more depth, collective identity and solidarity, and how they impact upon interactions between groups in environmental networks. Perhaps by virtue of its theoretical slipperiness, collective identity is often hailed an important feature of social movements for the role it plays in unifying activists and organizations, and so helping them develop solidarity, agree on shared concerns and engage in collective action. Environmental networks are broader than movements, consisting of a multiplicity of groups, some of which *do not* challenge the social order. Partly because of the broad range of groups that exist within environmental networks, I diverge from the view that collective identity is a movement-level process. Instead, I argue that collective identity is a *group*-level process. I suggest that although it can unite activists within a *group*, it is not always beneficial for broader *environmental networks*. Although organizations within environmental networks have a broad shared concern, I show in this chapter how their differing collective identities can actually be quite divisive. Those activists who are highly committed to an organization with an encompassing collective identity will be likely to develop a strong sense of solidarity with other activists similarly committed to that organization. The resultant solidarity can lead to the construction of a 'we-them' dichotomy between organizations working to the same ends. This increases the chances of hostility between organizations, and can cause factions within environmental networks.

The empirical part of this chapter is based on case studies of the three environmental organizations in which I conducted participant observation. To reiterate, these are Chiswick Wildlife Group, Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group (see Chapters 1 and 3 for more information on these organizations). The organizations were selected because they broadly represent the three main fields of action of organizations within environmental networks; conservationism, which, to recapitulate from Chapter 2, involves a direct concern for hands-on protection of natural sites, reformism, which seeks to bring about change by incremental reform, and radicalism, which seeks fundamental systemic change and engages in direct action and lifestyle change to achieve it.

Note here that the reference is to fields of actions rather than to ideologies (see Chapters 2 and 6). The Environmental Direct Action Group did not respond to the survey as group members felt uncomfortable in doing so.¹ However, it was clearly one of the most radical environmental groups active in London at the time of fieldwork. London Reclaim the Streets (RTS) had recently folded, and London Earth First! had not yet been re-formed (it existed in the 1990s and re-formed during the period of study). According to survey responses, the other two groups have very different ideologies measured by the indicators I explored in Chapter 6 (Table 6.3). Chiswick Wildlife Group believed that the environmental problems it works to address are caused by erosion of countryside and overconsumption, and that these problems could be solved by practical conservation. For Friends of the Earth, overconsumption and globalization were considered to be the main causes of environmental problems, whereas participatory democracy and reducing consumption were considered solutions.

What is identity?

Identity is a knotty concept. Essentially, it is the basis for recognizing others and recognizing the self. It is permanent yet fluid, individual yet collective, and a precursor to social movement formation yet also a barrier. Three types of identity are important in the study of social movements: individual, collective and public identities (Jasper 1997: 87). This chapter is concerned with individual identity – to the extent that it contributes to and is affected by social movement participation (Klandermans and De Weerd 2000) – and also with collective identity. Despite conceptual confusion in the literature (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285), many studies of collective identity have suggested that it is something that should be highly valued for its binding effects on social movements. Collective identity has been presented as both a process and an outcome, apparently as a precondition for collective action, to help overcome the free-rider problem (Polletta and Jasper 2001) and to give activists a shared senses of meaning and a sense of belonging (Diani 1995; Hetherington 1998). The concept of collective identity is so central to the literature on social movements, and new social movements in particular, that it has been suggested that the networks of organizations and individuals that constitute movements cannot be deemed to be part of a movement unless they also share a collective identity (Diani 1992a; Diani and Bison 2004).

Regardless of the importance of collective identities in definitions of movements, it is clear from the literature that there is some confusion over whether ‘collective identity’ is a term best applied to the movement organization (or group) level, or to whole movements. As we shall see in this chapter, the term is more frequently used to refer, and – particularly for the case of environmental networks – seems

better applied, to the group level rather than the movement level. Far from uniting environmental networks, this actually gives collective identity the potential to create conflicts between organizations that define themselves differently and have different fields of action, even if they, as part of the same movement, share a more broadly conceived concern.

It will be argued that when an individual becomes thoroughly immersed in a movement organization and where collective identities are encompassing, strong solidarity is the net result. Strong solidarity exists when individuals within a collective have shared behaviour that differentiates them from other groups and from the norms of society. Strong solidarity evolves from the process of developing an encompassing collective identity in which there are high levels of commitment from activists who spend a considerable amount of time together, and who tend to identify solely with a particular movement organization and so develop a cliquey and exclusive movement culture. Solidarity is weak or absent when activists exhibit few behavioural differences from societal norms and where movement organizational culture is easily accessible to outsiders. Organizations with a non-comprehensive collective identity might consist of activists who have little in common, and who have little commitment to the organization besides, perhaps, an instrumental gain. Non-comprehensive collective identity and weak or non-existent solidarity within a movement organization is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather like Granovetter's (1973) concept of 'the strength of weak ties', non-comprehensive collective identities might result in a lack of solidarity between activists within a particular organization, but allow for bridges to be built between organizations and across movements with relative ease because of their weaker 'we-them' distinctions.

Although she frames it as a critique of my approach to collective identity, this is exactly what Flesher Fominaya (2010a) found in relation to three Madrid-based autonomous global justice groups that she researched ethnographically. Those three groups had weak group-level collective identities, allowing them to unite without conflict under their general anti-capitalist stance. The story may have been different were she to have included groups with encompassing collective identities in her study. What I show in this chapter is the corollary of, not a contradiction to, Flesher Fominaya's findings. Encompassing collective identities and strong solidarity (the opposite of Flesher Fominaya's 'weak' collective identity) can come at the expense of hostile relations with other movement organizations as part of the process of setting and affirming boundaries between the 'we' and the 'them'. In fact it appears that the greater the commitment and individual-identity shift involved in the effective participation within a movement organization, the greater the extent to which collective identities are defended at the expense of other movement organizations. At the extreme, this can result in committed activists fostering unintentional lies

and misunderstandings about other organizations in an attempt to justify their own viewpoints and means of protesting.

Conceptualizing collective identity, movement culture and solidarity

There is so much discussion of identity in the social movements' literature that Snow and McAdam (2000: 41) claim that 'one could easily get the impression that identity is the key concept in social movement research today'. Nonetheless, identity remains a concept that is difficult to pin down, not least because of its nature as a process rather than an end product. Castells, for example, defines identity as nothing less than 'the *process* of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes that is given priority over other sources of meaning' (Castells 1997: 6).

For the rest of this chapter, I shall focus on both *individual* and *collective* identity. In analysing individual identity, I focus on how it can be defined and influenced by social movements through cultural influence. I review competing definitions of *collective identity* and its implications for solidarity within, and rivalry between, social movement organizations.

According to Johnston et al. (1994: 12) it is important to note that 'individual identities are brought to movement participation and changed in the process'. But different types of participation and types of movement organizations affect self-identity to varying degrees. Direct-debit supporters of protest-business type organizations have negligible changes to their identity. The furthest a participant's identity may be manipulated is through purchasing the tee shirt or affixing a car sticker (e.g. passive membership of Friends of the Earth and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)²). At the other extreme, a cult of personal transformation would have far-reaching effects on the individual, whose identity would become absorbed by their group's identity. Radical environmental organizations – as with radical social movement organizations generally – require a much greater degree of behavioural conformity, and a more significantly revised self-identity that is partly a result of a consensually defined collective identity (Snow and McAdam 2000: 55). Horton (2003: 65), for example, notes that

At the 'radical' extreme . . . activists often favour highly mobile and 'close to nature' modes of dwelling, such as yurts and benders. 'Radical' activists also sometimes embody a 'counter-cultural' ethos through transgressive styles of hair and dress.

At the 'radical extreme', behaviours that are inconsistent from societal norms are consistently required, and, because individual behaviour change is essential for

participation in such movement organizations, the collective identity will be more encompassing and the resultant solidarity stronger.

Although it is difficult to define an individual identity, because, as I have already stated, identity is a *process* under continuous reflexive revision, it is at least clear that it refers to the self-definition of an *individual* person; that is to say, it is about how the individual differentiates himself/herself from others. The definition of collective identity is much more complex. It too refers to a *process*, but this time one that results in differentiation of a particular collective from others, resulting in a sense of 'we-ness' (della Porta and Diani 1999: 85; Snow and McAdam 2000: 42). The added difficulty in the conceptualization of a collective identity is that it is often unclear whether the collective entity to which it refers is a group or a movement. Indeed, the complexity of the concept is probably one reason why 'there is no consensual definition' (Snow and McAdam 2000: 42).

Melucci (1989: 34), who can probably be credited with popularization of the term collective identity in social movement literature, defines it as an 'interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level)'. For him, collective identity is a reflexive, dynamic and never settled process, hence his insistence that it 'is *not a thing*, but a system of relations and representations' (Melucci 1995b: 50). By this, Melucci implies that collective identity is not static, but instead, consistently defined and redefined by actors involved.

Although Melucci insists that collective identity is not a 'thing', he does refer to outcomes of collective identity. In this sense, he merges the process and outcome approaches to collective identity. I am by no means the only scholar to consider that Melucci was concerned with both of these aspects. Karl-Dieter Opp's (2009: 210) careful 'disentanglement' of Melucci's work on collective identity suggests that Melucci believed that

A collective identity exists, by definition if there is a group (i.e. individuals with at least one common goal) with common beliefs, with common normative convictions, that is connected by social relationships (i.e. there is a social network) and by emotional bonds.

Common goals, beliefs and normative convictions are clearly stated in the above as products of the processes of social relationships and emotional bonds. The other thing to notice about Opp's (2009) disentanglement of Melucci's work is that he refers to a group, not to a movement. Even though Melucci suggests that collective identity can occur both between several individuals (in a *group*) and/or 'at a more complex level' between several organisations' (within a *movement*), much of his writing implicitly suggests that where it really takes place is at the *group* level. He suggests that it allows movement organizations to produce working definitions of

themselves, to define their territory and scope. It 'determines the criteria by which members recognize themselves and are recognised' (Melucci 1996: 32). It does this through three processes – the setting of goals and strategies, the activation of relationships and shared decision-making, and emotional investments (Melucci 1989: 35). For Melucci, a collective identity results in 'unity of collective action', and yet he admits that 'social movements are not unified and homogenous realities' (Melucci 1996: 74–8). Therefore, perhaps, movements as a whole are too heterogeneous to share a collective identity even though activists within a particular movement organization might.

Indeed, Melucci is by no means the only author to regard collective identity as a feature of *groups* rather than movements. For Taylor (1989: 771), collective identity is 'the shared definition of a *group* that derives from members' common interests and solidarity'. According to Snow and Oliver (1995: 578–9), collective identity is something that evolves from the actions of *group* members. Klandermans and de Weerd (2000: 74) similarly suggest that 'collective identity concerns cognitions shared by members of a *single group*'. Owens and Aronson (2000: 195) stress the group dynamic of collective identity even more explicitly:

Collective identity is a *distinctly group level* concept referring to how a group identifies itself . . . Consequently, collective identity is derived from the group's own self-identification. (Emphasis added to the word 'group' in all quotes given in this section)

It is probably correct to view collective identity as a group-level process rather than a movement-level one, not least for reasons given by Rootes, who, consequently, prefers to use the term 'shared concern'. He rightly suggests that collective identity is not a feature of entire movements because 'it appears to assume or require a degree of consensus which is unusual in the factious milieu of movement politics' (Rootes 1997b: 325). On reflection, it does not seem possible for an entire archetypal movement – which typically incorporates networks of organizations and individuals from a broad range of organizations and standpoints – to share those processes and procedures that trigger the process of collective identity formation. All organizations and activists within a broad movement certainly do not share identical definitions of their field, or agree on scope and territory, set and work to achieve shared goals, determine strategies collaboratively or engage in shared collective action. Neither do they all share a sense of 'we-ness' with other movement organizations working on different minutiae of a broader shared concern. This is especially true for environmental networks, which are broader than the 'green movement' (Doherty 2002). Furthermore, collective identity is believed to be shaped by the framing of opportunities and constraints, which will vary between organizations depending on

their status and strategy (Chapter 5) and can never be shared by environmental networks that incorporate organizations and individuals with ideological and tactical differences. In short, the three components deemed essential in the formation of a movement's collective identity – a shared 'we', a common opponent, and a common view of those neutral to the problem (della Porta and Diani 1999: 87) – are unlikely to be ubiquitous across the broad range of organizations that make up the environmental networks that I focus on in this book.

Despite many claims that collective identity is something involving processes distinctly at the group level, and the concept's inapplicability at the movement level, many scholars make grand claims about the role of collective identity at the movement level. Melucci, for example, claims that collective identity leads to the formation of a social movement, and gives movements continuity and permanence (Melucci 1996: 74). For others (e.g. Diani 1992a) collective identity is a characteristic that all social movements share. However, there is clearly a mismatch between definitions of collective identity, which either specifically emphasize the group level or evoke processes that could only possibly take place within groups, and the grand claims of its role in binding movements together. Collective identity (in the singular) at the movement level does not always exist within broad ranging movements, like the environmental movement and global justice movement (GJM), but *collective identities* do. It might, however, be possible to talk of a single collective identity among more narrowly defined movements, such as 'the direct action movement' (Doherty et al. 2007), or the autonomous anti-capitalist movement that Flesher Fominaya (2010a) has researched. For broad ranging movements that include some organizations with encompassing collective identities and others without them, it would be more analytically useful when referring to the concept at movement level, to talk of either *collective identities*, in the plural, or, if we instead take the lowest common denominator of shared interests, to use the term 'shared concern'.

Scholars of what has become known as the GJM (della Porta 2007) could be said to have twisted the original meaning of collective identity by suggesting that the GJM's identity is heterogeneous, fluid and tolerant (della Porta 2005; Flesher Fominaya 2010b: 399). If this 'movement' is that heterogeneous, there is unlikely to be much interaction between the various parts of the movement, meaning that the affective bonds and sense of 'we-ness' required for collective identification may actually be missing. To defend against this charge, Flesher Fominaya (2010a) uses the argument that the activists she researched feel part of a global movement for justice. But who is to say that these individuals have the same idea of what this global movement is? If they do not, then it seems implausible for them to share a collective identity.

Because the three environmental organizations I focus on in this chapter are very different from one another, and because one of the three has an encompassing identity, it is necessary that we consider collective identification for the purposes of this chapter, at least, to be a *group-level process* within environmental networks. This is further justified with reference to Boström's (2004: 74) work on the Swedish environmental movement. Although he conflates ideology and identity, he concludes his account stating that

it would seem irrelevant to speak of a 'green ideology' that is common for the environmental movement, even though its organizations share ideas and goals on the conceptual level. Instead, it is more relevant to consider a *broad range of green identities* and frames that are more or less related to each other and more or less workable in different arenas. (emphasis added)

The resultant group-level shared beliefs and a sense of 'we-ness' may shape individual participants' personal identity. If a group's collective identification encompasses the individuals involved they will more closely conform behaviourally with others in their group than they would with broader social norms, and the group's demands and beliefs will strongly resonate with them, resulting in solidarity. Shared concern, on the other hand, is considered to be a static and constant *movement-level belief*. Thus, while environmental organizations might have different collective identities from one another, which may change over time, all environmental organizations share the broader concern to protect or enhance the environment (Chapter 3). Castells (1997: 172) agrees, stating that the environmental movement's shared concern is 'about the relentless, multiform destruction of nature'. However, Castells is probably wrong to assume that this leads to 'a great deal of osmosis in the relationship between conservationists and radical ecologists' (ibid.) because of the role that intra-group solidarity can play in creating strong distinctions, and sometimes some animosity, between radicals and conservationists. The culture of movement organizations, to which the discussion now turns, contributes to the 'double-edged' outcome of solidarity. It is sometimes positive and sometimes negative. But first for a little conceptual clarity; if *collective identification* is the group-level process of defining a 'we', *collective identity* is the 'we', *culture* is the milieu out of which collective identification builds collective identity, and *solidarity* is one characteristic of collective identity.

A collective identity, then, emerges through the culture of movement organizations, defined by Williams (2004: 94) as 'the norms, beliefs, symbols, identities, stories and the like that produce solidarity, motivate participants and maintain collective actions'. Culture is incorporated into groups (not necessarily movements) by

'a given set of rituals, practices and cultural artefacts', and may be defined in a language that is unique to the group (Melucci 1995b: 44–5; Polletta and Jasper 2001: 284). It provides individuals with a sense of belonging, strengthened by ritualistic movement activity resulting in 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim [1984: 152] note here the relevance of interactionist collective behaviour approaches, see Chapter 1). A strong and binding communally negotiated collective identity (or, as I prefer to call it, an 'encompassing collective identity') fosters solidarity (Hunt and Benford 2004: 439). Activist groups that build and support their collective identity from the bottom up tend to have more solidarity than organizations that furnish activists with a preformed ideology that is filtered top-down. Instead of having a bureaucratic economy, radical environmental movement organizations have a "libidinal economy" (Goodwin 2004) of friendship, solidarity or love that shapes the dynamics of the group' (Doherty 2002: 10).

Part of the process of manufacturing a movement organization's external image is concerned with marking boundaries around the organization and defining its unique niche within the social movement field (Chapter 4). This process of 'boundary demarcation' is widely recognized to be an important step in the formation of a social movement organization's collective identity (cf. Taylor and Whittier 1992). For rank-and-file activists, the result, when collective identity is encompassing, is for them to be able to easily make 'we-them' distinctions between adherents and non-adherents, and between organizations. As Jenkins (2008: 102) suggests:

logically, *inclusion* entails *exclusion* if only by default. To define criteria for membership, of any set of objects is, at the same time, also to create a boundary, everything beyond which does not belong.

While some regard collective identity and solidarity as synonymous, it is more useful to see collective identity as a process, and solidarity as a possible outcome. Unlike collective identity, solidarity is a rather stable characteristic of social groups. A high degree of solidarity is the result of the individuals involved having committed a large proportion of their private resources to 'collectively mandated ends' (Hechter 1987: 18).

Solidarity may be a positive thing for the activists involved, in terms of providing a sense of belonging, but the double-edged sword analogy is applicable to solidarity in practice. According to Misztal (1996: 34), it can lead to 'sectarian solidarity' that may have serious negative ramifications. She notes this because high levels of internal solidarity are often derived at the expense of developing intensely antagonistic relations with other groups through sharpening the 'we-them' distinction. At the extreme, this results in groups with high levels of internal solidarity

regarding organizations with similar aims (shared concerns), but conflicting tactics, as the enemy within.

How people come to distinguish between those with whom they have solidarity and others to whom they have no such obligations is a complex process of classification that has serious consequences, and it is in this light that Sennett's (1998) description of 'we' as the 'dangerous pronoun' makes sense. (Crow 2002: 28)³

Sennett (1998: 137) defines the 'dangerous we' as an often defensive demarcation of a community, which is likely to involve 'a rejection of . . . outsiders'. It is 'a false locution when used as a point of reference against the outside world'. The notions of 'sectarian solidarity' and "'we" as the dangerous pronoun' are, it seems, useful lenses through which to view conflict between organizations. The paradox is that a greater degree of internal solidarity within an organization may result in a proclivity for exclusivity and that the process of collective identity and resultant sectarian solidarity can actually divide rather than unite organizations in environmental networks.

The concept of sectarian solidarity is similar to inter-movement 'exclusive solidarity', which has been found to lead to divisions between social movements. Ferree and Roth (1998) found exclusive solidarity among West Berlin Labour activists and feminists. In this example, activists from the two different movements failed to collaborate in a women's workers strike because each group viewed the other as something distinct from their own 'we'. This 'can be seen as an indicator of the estrangement between the feminist avant-garde and the average unionized, working woman, the different worlds that at least one feminist thought unbridgeable' (Ferree and Roth 1998: 643). Very similar processes take place *within* environmental networks.

The exclusive identity of radical environmentalism

Radical environmental activist organizations do have a tendency to have an anti-capitalist ideology (Doherty 2000: 74), which Marangudakis (2001) suggests is an obstacle to making extensive movement alliances, amplified by their withdrawal from the social praxis. Many ex-road protesters have taken up lifestyle activism – living communally in almost independent eco-villages, and participating in pagan rituals – a personal politics that represents resistance to modernity and a preference for ancient traditions.

Paradoxically, many radical environmental organizations unsuccessfully attempt to be open and decentralized with the aim of being inclusive to all who wish to participate, hailing themselves exemplars of participatory democracy. Due to the

processes behind the ‘tyranny of structurelessness’ (Freeman 1972), such a bold attempt at egalitarian politics often fails. These processes allow for experienced activists to become de facto leaders. It is especially prominent in groups that do not practice skill sharing and/or which have tight friendship groups. In practice, it can mean that the groups we would expect to be most egalitarian tend to have their meetings dominated by a small informal cadre (Saunders 2009b). George Monbiot (2000) explains the process in relation to the late Reclaim the Streets:

The direct action movement insists that it is non-hierarchical – but this has never been true. Some people, inevitably, work harder than others, making things happen whether or not everyone else in the movement agrees. Consensus, often unwittingly, is manipulated or over-ridden, as people with a burning vision, with time and energy, drive the rest of the movement forward.

For the London Underground Collective, a radical environmentalist coalition that evolved out of Reclaim the Streets, attempts to be open and inclusive have resulted in poor organization and sometimes utter chaos. Similarly, within the Camp for Climate Action, there is a core of committed protesters who shape the Camp, exerting hegemony within an apparently non-hegemonic movement (Pursey 2009).

Furthermore, the strong subcultural currents in radical environmentalist circles along with negative media coverage make them relatively alienating in comparison to membership of more conventional environmental organizations, which, in just requiring a donation demands much less commitment and fewer changes in behaviour and therefore get more public support. Reclaim the Streets used to jest about the presence of the CID who take photographs and make random identity checks of attendees at their meetings – which is likely to make newcomers feel neither safe nor welcome. Reclaim the Streets and other radical environmental groups are paranoid (and justifiably so) of infiltration by agents of social control, which hardly makes for a welcome greeting, especially if you look too conventional. It is similarly off-putting to enter a Climate Camp. One is required to pass through a barrage of police who search participants from top to toe before permitting entrance (Saunders and Price 2009). Although less the case with the Climate Camps, to be made welcome at Earth First! gatherings and Reclaim the Streets type urban squatted social centres requires at least a minimal degree of subcultural capital.⁴ As a key radical activist in Southwark told me in interview ‘I think dreadlocks is a good start. But I mean, it’s that ridiculous. If you went dressed up in certain [way] – maybe you need a certain type of personality as well’. Direct action camps especially,

very often have an aggressive counter-cultural vibe, which most people will find alienating . . . You don’t even need to visit a camp to feel alienated; the

spectacularisation of our movement has ensured that most TV viewers can now safely view eco-direct action as an alien 'phenomenon', rather than a challenge. (Anon 1999: 155)

As a Newbury bypass protester phrased it,

the cultural vanguardism of the campaign was alienating people from getting involved . . . although DIY culture has grown . . . it has become more and more of a clique because there seems to be a certain style one must conform to. (Anon 1996: 29)

The exclusivity of radical environmental organizations is heightened further by their tendency to develop (as predicted by new social movement theory, and cultural studies [see Chapter 6]) new and collective identities. These are patent in the form of lifestyle – dress, speech and rituals unique to the movement, as activists seek to fulfil their need for identity and belonging in a culturally impoverished social climate.

Earth Firsters share informal yet common lifestyle codes, for instance living in housing cooperatives or squats, rejecting car use, consuming soya milk, rejecting consumerism, and embracing 'drumming, drugs, dress and dreads' (Wall 1999b: 92–3), the last being a symbol of 'counter-hegemonic social resistance movements' (Kuumba and Ajanaku 1998: 227). The Dongas at Twyford even developed their own symbolic language, a particular favourite being shouting 'ayayayaya' at the top of their voices to provide a source of moral support and solidarity in the face of eviction from protest sites, undermining confidence of police and security guards in the process (Plows in McKay 1998: 138–9). Positive emotions and solidarity are further strengthened by rituals such as singing, dancing and consecrating protests sites sacred (Jasper 1997: 209; Szerszynsky 2002). Symbolism and expressivity are also widely used by radical environmentalists, with two of the most historically prominent artistic expressions of resistance being on the roads protest sites of the M11 – Wanstonia Free State (*Aufheben* 1998) and M77 – Pollock Free State. Seel (1997) compares the artwork within the Pollock Free State to the destruction caused by road building using the analogy of J. R. Tolkien's spiritually enlightening Lothlorien contrasted with the doom and gloom of Mordor. Throughout London, empty buildings are squatted by activists at every opportunity to form social centres and eco-art galleries, a prime example being the 1998–9 Cultures of Resistance and Cultures of Persistence (sic) exhibitions ' . . . an art gallery, a café, a bar, a squatted space near Tower Bridge, a place to gather and socialize, a coming together of artists, activists, musicians, sound systems, film-makers, chefs, performers and different aspects of a creative culture' (Cultures of Persistence 2000: 1). Maffesoli

(1996: 77) suggests that such 'theatricality founds and reconfirms the [neo-tribal] community' and shows how activists, as Melucci suggested new social movements do generally, seek to control their own living conditions directly.

Collective identity and solidarity in three environmental organizations

Although it is not possible to accurately generalize the traits of conservationist, radical and reformist organizations from the three case studies of Chiswick Wildlife Group, Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group, they can at least give us some indication of the collective identity and solidarity forming processes that take place within different types of organizations in environmental networks. I shall assess whether there is a collective identity that these organizations share, or whether the term 'shared concern' might be more appropriate. I also discuss the extent to which solidarity is encompassing or non-comprehensive in different types of organizations, and whether strong intra-organizational solidarity seems to result in 'sectarian' behaviour.

Chiswick Wildlife Group

Overall, the shared goal of Chiswick Wildlife Group is to protect the nature reserve from development and manage it for biodiversity. Participants are mostly volunteers, who devote time to the cause either because they love nature, covet a job in conservation or both. If there is a collective identity in the group, it is defined by the committee, which is responsible for working out what the 'we' will do. To some extent, it is questionable whether Chiswick Wildlife Group volunteers share a collective identity at all. Rather than working out definitions of the collective and plans for action in an interactive manner, the committee devises the management plan which volunteers and staff follow, sergeant-major style. In other words, rather than there being a 'we shall do this . . .' and 'we believe that . . .' process of collective identity affirmation, there is instead a 'I will do this . . .' and 'you will do that. . .' and ' . . . we will follow the management plan at all costs' process.

Although Chiswick Wildlife Group volunteers meet weekly and know each other well, their 'activism' does not permeate their lives beyond their collective conservation efforts at the reserve, and many of the skills they acquire are not used in their daily lives, nor govern their behaviour. All the volunteers I became acquainted with during 6 months of participation (every Tuesday) were very 'normal'. There were no vegetarians or vegans, no dreadlocks, all participants were retired or had jobs, drove cars, and happily used the conventional (rather than eco-friendly) hand wash and washing up liquid, non-organic milk and non-fair-trade tea and coffee available

on site. One volunteer commented: 'I am not as green as I should be, although I do buy some organic food' (Karen Roberts, volunteer warden, interview, February 2004). The group is very inclusive and welcoming to any person genuinely wanting to help, and one immediately felt welcomed and a part of the loose-knit collective. As another volunteer told me 'we would always welcome anyone, and they could have a cup of tea and a biscuit!' (Emma Robertshaw, in interview, February 2004). No individual would be excluded on the grounds of their political views. Indeed, the ravers were the only sector of the public to which there was hostility. They had brought in sound equipment without permission and their communal fire had ruined the meadow.

It is therefore posited that the collective identity of Chiswick Wildlife Group is not so encompassing as in other types of environmentalism. This is because the conservationist identity is not often related to a broader set of values and has little impact on lifestyles and behaviours of its participants. Indeed, conservationism requires little more than a love of nature regardless of overarching political beliefs. Symbolic identifiers of conservationists, such as hiking boots and binoculars, are not indicators of a political ideology, just as pruning brambles or counting butterflies are behaviours that can easily be carried out by people with a wide range of values and beliefs.

Partly because of its local remit, Chiswick Wildlife Group has little contact with other environmental organizations locally or nationally, except its mother organization, London Wildlife Trust, and the Butterfly Conservation Trust that it liaises with for butterfly surveying. Its only criticism of London Wildlife Trust has been what Chiswick Wildlife Group volunteers believe to be a lack of appropriate support. Its non-comprehensive collective identity results in a lack of a coherent 'we'. This is partly the result of the lack of need to define themselves against opponents (that don't exist) or in line with adherents. It does not have strong views about wider environmental issues – 'we don't reach out much beyond conserving this patch' (Emma Roberts, volunteer warden, interview February 2004) – and there are environmental contradictions in some of the things it does. For example, it frequently accepts grants from companies despised by radicals, including British Airport Authorities and Shell. This allows these businesses to share in the glory of having done something positive for the environment when they are actually responsible for many environmental abuses. This is the kind of practice that organizations with a more encompassing collective identity like Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group, would abhor and stringently avoid. In this case, a non-comprehensive identity results in a weak solidarity, and little or no marking of boundaries between the group and others and individual participants and non-participants. Although its lack of relations with other groups is partly attributable to

its narrow remit, there is a clear lack of sectarian solidarity, which could, at least partly, be a result of its non-encompassing collective identity.

Friends of the Earth

Although the 1980s was a prosperous decade for Friends of the Earth under the leadership of Des Wilson, many members of staff resented his leadership not least because of his preferred method of transport to work – the latest fashion sports car – because it was considered far from environmentally friendly and in stark contrast with the aims of the organization (Lamb 1996). Unlike in Chiswick Wildlife Group, participation in Friends of the Earth has generally permeated the lifestyles of its members of staff and activists, beyond their working day/group meetings. Nick Ferriday, Chair of West London Friends of the Earth, for example, commented in interview how his participation in Friends of the Earth changed his life. Although he has

always been interested in wildlife . . . it was literally Friends of the Earth that made me change . . . I remember going to a Friends of the Earth meeting for the first time . . . it did actually change my life. (interview, June 2003).

His interest in nature spurred on an interest in broader issues, but it was Friends of the Earth that ‘did actually change . . . [his] life’. This implies a shift in personal identity in order to fit in with the more demanding lifestyle changes and thought-provoking ideas that being a Friends of the Earth activist involves. Like other Friends of the Earth activists, he engages in a green lifestyle to the extent that he buys organic food, recycles his rubbish, avoids unnecessary consumerism and tries to reduce his energy use. Most members of staff in the Local Groups Department (now called the Capacity Building Team) appeared to get their take away lunches from Fresh and Wild, an organic health food shop close by, and Claudia Satori, then Local Group’s Development Officer commented in interview that ‘most people are pretty good, like you would never see anyone drinking a can of Coke’ (in interview November, 2003). Indeed, the staff kitchen areas at Friends of the Earth’s headquarters are very different from the Chiswick Wildlife Group kitchenette – not just in terms of their quantity and size, but also because they are stocked with organic and fair trade tea, coffee and soya milk. The detergents are eco-friendly, and there are even bleach-free organic sanitary wares in the ladies’ toilets.

This type of reform environmentalism is different from conservationism in a number of ways, but one stark difference is the more encompassing collective identity noticeable through lifestyle changes or behaviours that staff and activists engage in to achieve greater consonance with their environmentalist identity. However, although there is a fair deal of solidarity among Friends of the Earth staff and activists,

it is difficult for them to build strong affective bonds with one another because of the sheer size of the organization and the work demands placed upon them. There is also a qualitative difference with the radicals who live out their activism at their leisure. In Friends of the Earth, activism is staffers day-to-day work. Although staff may be able to build some solidarity through regular staff development away-breaks, and spending a lot of time in the same office space, these interactive moments usually fail to escape the confines of particular departments. As a volunteer, the culture of the organization feels more like a standard bureaucratic office space than a 'movement milieu' – with the exception of the ethical refreshments and detergents.

The bureaucratic nature of the organization, which Friends of the Earth is trying to make more participatory, is well illustrated by its decision-making style. The board ultimately decides the mission and targets of the organization, even though such decisions are increasingly based on broad consultation with all staff and local groups, and reports from external consultancies. Despite consultations, the idea of 'we' is rarely, if ever, defined consensually by the entire collective. The result is that the mission statement is fairly broad, allowing those with varying beliefs and campaign priorities to sign up to the principles, while providing scope for the adoption of different campaign styles between departments.

Similarly, local groups campaign on different issues and in varying styles depending on their expertise and local environments. Even though local groups have autonomy, they are often saved the bother of constructing their 'we' concept as the national Friends of the Earth stance on issues filters through to them. At Friends of the Earth's 5-year consultation plan meeting for local groups in September 2002, for example, local activists were presented with a rationale as to why Friends of the Earth's organizational campaigning priority is Corporate Globalisation. This was decided on the basis of bids put in from campaign staff and an internal decision (excluding local groups).⁵ This provided local group members with a prefabricated ideology and strategy rather than a discursively agreed solidarity-building discussion. Friends of the Earth briefings fulfil a similar role by outlining the key issues, and are given to local group members on request and when a day of action is planned. Often, the packs sent out to local groups for days of action include a list of 'sticky questions' that amount to Friends of the Earth party-line answers provided for activists to learn pretty much by rote.

The fact that local groups spend less time working out their personal views on issues and campaigns gives them a weaker sense of 'we' than they would have should they have furnished their views independently of national Friends of the Earth. But local Friends of the Earth groups do also work on local issues, often using their own knowledge to work out their own fields of opportunities and constraints. It is probably therefore more accurate to suggest that Friends of the

Earth has a shared concern for environmental justice, but that local groups and departments each have their own collective identities. Nonetheless, the fact that they all work together as a broader collective, makes the overall organization fairly inclusive to outsiders, preventing cliques and strong solidarity. This is one reason why Friends of the Earth defines itself as the 'broad church' of environmentalism in Britain (Kenward, Friends of the Earth Local Groups Coordinator, personal correspondence 2002).

Despite disagreeing with radicals over campaign tactics, and the fact that Friends of the Earth's official stance is to not condemn or condone illegal direct action, it does regard radicals as important allies. Paul de Zylva (Head of England Regions at Friends of the Earth, interview February 2004) claimed that he has 'sympathy for them, even though he has suffered personally at the hands of a few'. In 2003, when direct activists occupied a crane on the site of Terminal Five at Heathrow airport, de Zylva (Head of Friends of the Earth England) had nothing but praise for the action because of the press coverage it generated. Friends of the Earth Climate Change Campaigner, Nick Rau, thought that the Environmental Direct Action Group's participation in office occupations gave diversity to the movement and worked to all environmental organizations' mutual benefit. Friends of the Earth has worked fairly extensively with the Environmental Direct Action Group on campaigns against the Baku Ceyhan pipeline, and in the No New Oil coalition (now called Peak Oil). Indeed, the only organizations that Friends of the Earth would seek to avoid cooperating with are those which have unclear motives. For example, Friends of the Earth has avoided working with the Countryside Alliance, which never had clear motives, and has now been exposed as primarily a blood-sports lobby (de Zylva, in interview, January 2004).

While 'moderate' organizations can benefit from the radical flank effect, as the campaigns of radicals serve to make their own demands more reasonable, radical organizations have less to gain from what they view to be the namby-pamby tinkering of reformists, and are often more overtly critical of their contemporaries.

Environmental Direct Action Group

Activists in the Environmental Direct Action Group commit a generous amount of personal time to it. The group strategizes via email (up to eight messages per day, with some requiring urgent response), and at weekly meetings in addition to attending social events and actions. This creates greater solidarity than what was present in both Friends of the Earth local groups that typically meet on a monthly basis and do little in between, and the weekly meetings of Chiswick Wildlife Group.

At its extreme, radical activists in London live, eat and breathe in the most environmentally and socially friendly manner possible to the extent of squatting,

freeganism⁶, sharing drugs, visiting social centres and attending culturally affirming parties, gigs and film nights. There are clear links between squatting culture and activism as the former coheres well with anarchistic principles that form the backbone of the belief structure of the Environmental Direct Action Group.

In the Environmental Direct Action Group, belief and behaviours reinforce one another to the extent that there is a degree of homology that coheres their environmentalism as a way of life. For instance, a belief that global capitalism is an underlying source of environmental and social problems tends to encourage certain types of behaviour, such as growing dreadlocks, attending counter-cultural festivals and engaging in direct action, as symbolic identifiers of beliefs. On engaging in these behaviours, beliefs are reinforced. For example, listening to protest music or attending festivals where there are like-minded people can make activists feel assured that others share their views, legitimizing and reinforcing them. Engagement in direct action is a behaviour stemming from beliefs that may, especially when deemed successful, increase an activist's passion. This is a reciprocal process whereby behaviours prop up beliefs and vice versa.

Unlike in Chiswick Wildlife Group and to a lesser extent in Friends of the Earth, there is evidence of a movement culture. Almost as many active members in the Environmental Direct Action Group had dreadlocks as did not, one meeting I participated in consisted entirely of vegans and at least two regular participants were squatters. At an all night 'Synergy' festival of grassroots resistance and alternative art, five dreadlocked activists manned the Environmental Direct Action Group stall. Many of the Environmental Direct Action Group protests are accompanied by a sound system that frequently plays political songs. During this process of homology where beliefs are expressed in behaviour and vice versa, the culture of radical protest is affirmed.

Besides linking belief systems and behaviours, direct action, especially sharing risks of arrest, or physical damage to oneself (Doherty 2000), serves to strengthen bonds between activists. Environmental Direct Action Groupers, like the radical activist quoted below see themselves as a 'family', almost to the extent of a lifelong bond:

You know that if it came to it, that person would put their life at risk and lay down to protect you. You know that when the shit hits the fan that they'll be there. (Bongo interview, June 2001)

This process of homology that occurs through participation in movement culture leads to solidarity. The downside of this is that homology leads to strong solidarity and can create cliques of activists who know one another exceedingly well and share similar beliefs and behaviours at the expense of extra-group

relations. Personally, I found the Environmental Direct Action Group cliquey (in its inaccessibility to newcomers rather than network terminology) because of the extent of knowledge activists had concerning their key campaigns, overuse of acronyms, occasional use of coded language, the location of meetings, and the intensive demands made upon participants. They are certainly closer to the 'exclusive' pole (Melucci 1996: 326–7) of movement affiliation than all of the other organizations discussed in this book.

The pace of the group is so fast that if a participant misses a couple of meetings and then turns up again, s/he will easily lose the thread of discussions. Newcomers are thrown in at the deep end and at their first meeting could easily be asked for their views on group literature, be persuaded to run a stall at a fete and help plan a direct action event. The group meets in a relatively rundown part of London that is decorated with 'Danger! Regular muggings are taking place' warnings, in an accessible but unwelcoming back street.

Despite these strong indications of a high level of intra-group solidarity, activists involved with the Environmental Direct Action Group are less happy to use the word clique to explain the nature of group relations:

I don't know about cliquey, but I did find it quite hard in that they expect everyone to have the same beliefs as them. (Dorey [Greenpeace staff member and Environmental Direct Action Group campaigner], interview January 2004)

Freeman [Friends of the Earth/the Environmental Direct Action Group campaigner] argues:

Maybe it is not as cliquey as it appears. It appears cliquey and they do have discussions about this but it doesn't seem to get very far. They do try to avoid this and not everybody wants to go to a meeting in a squatted old run down building. It was the same with living in camps. That in itself excludes a lot of people. (interview, February 2004)

But she does not doubt that it at least appears cliquey. This has important ramifications for environmental networks.

If the culture of the Environmental Direct Action Group has homologized and there is a degree of solidarity that has led to clique-type tendencies, this implies that it is easy to define who is and who is not part of the group. This definition could be rooted in appearance, behaviour, beliefs or all three. As discussed earlier in this chapter, a further corollary is that this can become dangerous in terms of resulting in limited or negative relations with the rest of the movement by creating 'sectarian solidarity' (Misztal 1996: 34), likely when solidarity is high. It can result in barriers to

newcomers, exaggeration of the inadequacies of other groups and/or open hostility towards them.

The Environmental Direct Action Group's relentless anti-capitalist stance makes some conflict with national organizations that work with governing structures and businesses inevitable. Whereas the Environmental Direct Action Group argues that a company like BP (Beyond Petroleum) should not exist at all, Friends of the Earth, like Greenpeace, has been part of a 'trend over recent years to be advocating solutions . . . making the case for investment in renewables' (Juniper interview with Seel June 2000).

Unlike the Environmental Direct Action Group, Friends of the Earth are not ideologically disposed to being anti-market. But . . . what can the market do? How can it work? What constraints need to be put on it? What kind of economic mechanisms can start bringing externalities into what the stock market does for instance? (Juniper interview with Seel, June 2000)

The debates over the efficacy of the Kyoto Protocol provide a good example of the conflict between the Environmental Direct Action Group and other more reformist environmental organizations. This issue demonstrates how differing identities can make collaboration difficult between radicals and reformists and how the process of sectarian solidarity plays out in practice and can be damaging for environmental networks.

For the Environmental Direct Action Group, scepticism about the Kyoto Protocol set in at COP6 in 2000 (the sixth United Nations Framework on Climate Change Conference to the Parties meeting). Since then, they have developed a comprehensive critique of Kyoto, believing that it will not lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that to avert dangerous climate change, a drop in the levels of carbon dioxide emissions by 60–90 per cent is required. In contrast, the

Kyoto Protocol was supposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5%, in the end it's 1% so not that great . . . and I just don't think the government are doing anything. I don't think they can. (Coleman [the Environmental Direct Action Group] interview, November 2003)

Environmental Direct Action Groups consider the protocol dangerous as they believe it will lead to public complacency and misguided faith in international decision-makers' capacity to effectively deal with climate change. Aside from the objection to the 'minute' reductions in emissions that it entails, the Environmental Direct Action Group also say the protocol will bolster those very state-making institutions and power structures it so despises

it [Kyoto] would entrench a new, 21st century version of colonialism in international law, whilst side stepping the core issue of our need to cut society's dangerous addiction to fossil fuels, not to mention economic growth. (the Environmental Direct Action Group literature, 2003)

As government representatives and corporate interests dominate the COP meetings, they are seen as holding little hope. Environmentalists did not design and negotiate the treaty, but it seems to radicals that oil executives, bankers, financiers, and co-opted NGOs were the main players. According to the Environmental Direct Action Group literature, what is required instead is 'international action . . . by individuals, communities and movements to challenge the power structures and create new ones'.

Their critique of the Joint Implementation and Clean Development Mechanism clauses echoes some of the concerns of academics (e.g. Grubb et al. 1999) and thus appears well founded. The text of a leaflet handed out during the solidarity action outside the UN offices at the time of COP9 (December 2003) that spells out the Environmental Direct Action Group's concerns is shown in Table 7.1.

The Campaign Against Climate Change agreed that the Kyoto Protocol has been betrayed and undermined, but rather than seeing it as a propagator of public complacency, it viewed it as a positive focal point around which public support could be built:

Kyoto is one of the things that we do that . . . [the Environmental Direct Action Group] don't do. Which I think is really important because I think that there is more scope for communication to the general public in making a campaign around Kyoto than anything else. I think that Kyoto has done more to raise awareness of climate change than anything else. (Thornhill [director of the Campaign Against Climate Change] interview, June 2003)

The Campaign Against Climate Change is also supportive of Kyoto because opposing it would undermine the work of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace who are regarded by the Campaign Against Climate Change's director, Phil Thornhill, to be the most powerful players in the fight against climate change (interview, June 2003). Indeed, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have been campaigning to secure the enforcement of the Kyoto agreement since its inception; to abandon it now would mean wasting years of campaigning effort. The other reason Thornhill gives for focusing on Kyoto is because it relates specifically to climate change issues⁷, whereas campaigning against oil pipelines can detract from a focus on climate change because of other environmental, social and human rights issues they encompass.

Table 7.1 The Environmental Direct Action Group's assessment of Kyoto: 'Why Kyoto is Pants'

NOW HERE'S WHY IT'S A TRAVESTY:

The targets are crap. The average reduction on 1990 levels is 5.2%, with 3 countries actually negotiating increases. The scientists say we need to reduce emissions by at least 60% on 1990 levels simply to stabilize things. Seeing that the rich world is responsible, we're going to have to cut emissions by up to 90%. 5.2% is a pretty pathetic start even without the loopholes.

Carbon Trading. The greatest weakness of the Protocol may be that it proposed an international commodity market in carbon. This allowed the talks to become dominated by the vested interests of financiers pushing for a new market opportunity on the back of vast creative accounting loopholes:

1. Joint Implementation allows countries to trade their emissions reductions – an accounting fiddle.
2. The Clean Development Mechanism allows rich countries to offset domestic emissions by funding dodgy projects in the third world which claim some vague climate change objective. It's a gift to the logging, nuclear and hydropower corporations.
3. Banking credits. Rich countries can 'bank' carbon credits and use them to offset future emissions after 2010. This is a recipe for corruption, future evasions, and rampant carbon speculation.
4. Land use changes and forestry. Countries can offset land use changes and tree planting against their reductions.
5. Air transport and shipping are excluded from the targets. On top of tax-free fuel, it's another huge incentive for international air transport. Planes are extremely polluting and the fastest growing source of emissions.
6. The Third World is not in it. Any long-term solution must be just and must involve everyone. At the moment it's a kind of carbon-based colonialism.
7. Who controls it and who polices it?

Implementation is still unresolved, but it's pretty certain that it will remain as it is now: controlled by a small group of powerful rich nations and administered to serve their economic interests.

If implemented, (a big 'if'), the actual reduction in emissions achieved over 20 years will be less than the increase in US emissions in just 1999 and 2000.

Environmental Direct Action Group activists frequently misread the Campaign Against Climate Change's, Friends of the Earth's and Greenpeace's support of Kyoto as an ineffective compromised approach and a willingness to accept small and inadequate carbon dioxide reductions. As one Environmental Direct Action Group activist expressed at a group meeting:

I can't understand why they [reformist groups] are promoting a toothless climate change treaty. Can't they see that it's nothing but hot air? The emissions reductions are too small, and I don't think supporting such a weak treaty can help, really.

However, in reality, Friends of the Earth was arguing that the Kyoto Protocol was far from perfect. But rather than agree with Kyoto's inadequate emissions reduction targets, Friends of the Earth continued to call for UK reductions of greenhouse gas emissions of 80–90 per cent by 2050, when the government was, in 2003–8, committed only to reductions of 60 per cent (Friends of the Earth 2003e).

Instead of taking the offensive with regard to emissions trading, Friends of the Earth accepts that it is part of the agreement and is working with the system to improve it. For example, the Emissions Trading Directive is seen as a potential vehicle for getting emission levels capped (Worthington, 2003). Despite its obvious inadequacies, Friends of the Earth conceives of Kyoto as an international decision-making process that can be strengthened and improved. As the 'only serious international framework for tackling the cause of climate change' (Friends of the Earth Media Advisory, 2003) and as the first sign of hope for an international treaty Friends of the Earth cannot refuse to promote and strengthen it.

The difference of opinion between the Environmental Direct Action Group and the reformist camp has implications for interaction between the organizations involved. There is a notable degree of animosity between the Campaign Against Climate Change and the Environmental Direct Action Group who not only have different principles of organization (the Campaign Against Climate Change has a hierarchical decision-making structure dominated by a single leader, whereas the Environmental Direct Action Group is run by consensus decision-making) but differing perspectives on the efficacy of Kyoto as a campaign target. The differences are great enough to warrant a strong 'we-them' distinction to such an extent that Freeman, who is involved in both organizations, referred to the Campaign Against Climate Change in an email to the Environmental Direct Action Group strategy list as 'the other group':

I . . . you called the Campaign Against Climate Change 'the other group' . . .

SF Did I, oh no!

I And I found that interesting

SF I was thinking that because it reminded me of the Houses of Parliament where the Lords are referred to as 'that other house', it is an old tradition that you don't mention the House of Lords . . . or maybe it's the Lords that don't mention the Commons, any way, whatever it is, one of them doesn't mention the other . . . there are some people, especially those who are heavily involved in the Environmental Direct Action Group that think 'our group is totally right and the other one is wrong'. (Freeman interview, February 2004)

The split between the Campaign Against Climate Change and the Environmental Direct Action Group may not be absolute, but there was certainly very visible tension. The Environmental Direct Action Group was very resistant to having its logo displayed on the Campaign Against Climate Change's annual climate change march leaflet (in 2003) and unanimously revoked the request. Environmental Direct Action Group activists were upset when activists involved with the national network of the Environmental Direct Action Group gave permission without securing consensus from the London group. This resulted in the logo being emblazoned on the bottom of the leaflet. One leading activist from the national Environmental Direct Action Group suggested that:

Although he [Phil from Campaign Against Climate Change] is more supportive of Kyoto than we might be . . . I think that it is fair enough to bang on about the US pulling out of Kyoto as this was a serious problem for making international progress.

Speaking almost verbatim of the process of 'sectarian solidarity' he went on to suggest that

It is a classic mistake of leftist political groups to obsess on small differences in ideology and ignore much larger commonalities. After all, 99.9% of people would not be able to spot the difference between us.

Both groups are passionate about the need to address the issue of climate change and share an antipathy towards the United States for the negative role it plays in global climate, oil and war politics. There certainly appears to be an element of sectarianism, but some participants in the Environmental Direct Action Group were disappointed that the facilitator of the national Environmental Direct Action Group implied that they were being 'needlessly sectarian and possibly competitive'. Despite being more distant in issue focus, ideology and tactics, the Environmental Direct Action Group appears to have a preference for working with Friends of the

Earth over Campaign Against Climate Change. Sectarian solidarity appears at least partially responsible.

Although Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group have a fairly constructive relationship, other organizations in the direct action wing of the environmental movement have remained hostile towards Friends of the Earth since it left the M3 protest site when threatened with an injunction in 1992. Within the Environmental Direct Action Group there are a wide variety of views, some activists feeling 'glad that they [Friends of the Earth] are there' and others seeing Friends of the Earth as part of the problem rather than the solution because, by dealing with the political establishment, it legitimizes state decision-making procedures. 'Bert' for instance claimed in an email discussion that

I don't think there is an overall 'Friends of the Earth stinks' opinion amongst us. I got the feeling there was quite a range of opinions. To me, mostly I am glad they are there, but I'm also regularly frustrated by them, and do agree that when push comes to shove that their approach is part of an overall system that needs to be radically restructured. (email discussion list, February 2004).

It is the latter view that leads to the breeding of untrue rumours and contempt. For instance it is argued quite vehemently in *Do or Die* radical environmental journal that Friends of the Earth is a 'foe' to the direct action movement because of its reformist nature and cautious approach to direct action (Anon 2003: 9). Some the Environmental Direct Action Group participants have been critical of Friends of the Earth's apparently reformist approach on GM food, which involved the drafting of the GM Liability Bill. This was regarded as a reformist cop out that would allow GM crops to be planted under various conditions. However, the Bill was worded in such a manner as to make legal commercial growing of GM crops in Britain impossible. It could equally be argued by reformists that direct action is an ineffective means of preventing GM crops being grown as it does not make GM crop-growing illegal and is generally reactive – trashing crops after they have been planted and only where they can be found and identified. Yet reformist environmentalists rarely, if ever, voice such complaints about the efficacy of direct action, regarding it instead as another arrow for the bow of the environmental movement. Misunderstandings or simple ignorance like this serve to fuel animosity between radicals and reformists and sharpen further the 'we-them' distinction.

The more encompassing a collective identity, and behavioural adaptations, the more likely it will be that activists seek to justify the actions of their own group at the expense of downplaying the significance of others. This process of downplaying the

positive role of other organizations can be based on unintentional misunderstandings about their goals and actions. These misunderstandings can be interpreted in part as a result of the 'we-them' boundaries that are drawn by activists within particular organizations. As one activist expressed:

Some people think 'oh, Friends of the Earth, they are just so hierarchical and boring'. And some people from Friends of the Earth think 'these are just anarchists running around the street and doing something silly'. So there are misunderstandings all around. (Sheila Freeman, Post and Volunteers Coordinator, Friends of the Earth, February 2004)

Cat Dorey (Greenpeace Ocean's Campaigner) said with regard to criticisms that have been directed towards Greenpeace from the Environmental Direct Action Group that

A lot of them . . . aren't legitimate, I mean, they don't know these things. Most of them have never worked with Greenpeace and have never done anything with them. It is all hearsay. (Cat Dorey, Greenpeace Oceans Campaigner in interview January 2004)

Perhaps as part of an attempt to place themselves on the moral pedestal and to justify the amount of personal and intellectual resources devoted to their cause, the Environmental Direct Action Group activists frequently criticize other organizations, sometimes only on the basis of misunderstandings. Reality is sometimes twisted to fit in with the overgeneralized idea that 'NGOs, political parties – these professional priests of assimilation are simply vampires . . .', which justifies their quest to ' . . . do some staking' (Anon 2004: 9).

Concluding remarks

This chapter has focused mostly on the concept of collective identity, and argued that for environmental networks it is better regarded as a group-, rather than a movement-level process. The differing identities, issue foci and campaign actions of Chiswick Wildlife Group, Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group serve to demonstrate that it is not possible for these three organizations to share a collective identity, let alone for an entire set of environmental networks to do so; that is, unless I choose to water down my definition of a collective identity until it becomes virtually meaningless. Given that different organizations within a movement cannot and need not share a collective identity, it then becomes possible to conceive of collective identity as something with the potential to lead to rivalry between groups that are each competing to have their own views universally accepted.

Unlike in radical environmentalism and to a lesser extent in reform environmentalism, it is possible to be a conservationist without becoming immersed in movement culture. The cognitive praxis of conservationists is highly biased towards conservation issues, rather than broader environmentalism. In contrast, reform and radical environmentalism have more encompassing movement organization identities, require an attribution of the source of a problem and the choosing of a course of action based on opportunities and constraints, and are more often called upon to defend their beliefs to adversaries and mainstream culture.

Radical environmentalist organizations, more than other types of environmental organizations, are most prone to developing 'sectarian solidarity'. It is therefore harder for them to build up effective trust-benefit relations with other organizations, for it is likely that they will always be more sceptical of the work of 'them', which is constantly juxtaposed against their 'we'. They have a more encompassing collective identity than conservationists and reformists, are more likely than their contemporaries to view environmental problems as the result of systemic imbalances, tend to be motivated by sheer passion for the environment, commit generous amounts of personal time living the ethos of their political beliefs, and their identities are negotiated from the bottom up. Unlike conservation groups, both reformist and radical groups require some form of behaviour coherence. But while reformists have a collective identity that is often not systemically challenging, their activism shapes their lifestyles. In contrast, conservationists need not alter their lifestyles at all in order to work or volunteer in the conservation field, and they tend to learn their conservation knowledge from the more experienced in a top-down fashion. Whereas criticism from conservation and reformist organizations towards other environmental organizations might be attributed to organizational competition dynamics, the same cannot be said of non-competitive radical environmental organization networks. Therefore it seems that sectarian solidarity is a more apt means of explaining the conflict between radical environmental organizations and their contemporaries.

Clearly conservationists are closest to the direct-debit archetype, in which individual identity is hardly shaped at all by movement involvement, whereas radical environmental organizations are closer, but by no means synonymous to cults of personal transformation. Sheila Freeman, an activist who uncomfortably works with both Friends of the Earth and the Environmental Direct Action Group, effectively summed up the problems involved in becoming closely associated with one particular organization 'I can sort of see that if you are really committed you would begin to get the idea that the other groups are wasting their time'.

Although it is not universally problematic for environmental organizations within environmental networks to have differing collective identities – because these can

give individual environmental organizations incentive to adapt, learn from one another, work in broad-based coalitions and take advantage of the radical flank effect – it can sometimes be problematic. The point at which it becomes problematic is when environmental organizations begin to work against the aims of others and become overly critical of them as a result of their immersion in and defence of their own organization. This is well demonstrated by campaigning for and against the Kyoto Protocol. While the Environmental Direct Action Group's critique of Kyoto reflects academic appraisals (Grubb et al. 1999), the overall stance it takes on the issue appears to be in direct contradiction to Friends of the Earth, Campaign Against Climate Change and Greenpeace. As such, the Environmental Direct Action Group's critique could serve to undermine the good progress that its contemporaries have made towards securing an albeit inadequate but groundbreaking international climate change protocol that they are seeking to strengthen.

We should therefore challenge the assumption that collective identity always has a binding effect on environmental networks. To the contrary, it has the potential to dangerously factionalize them. A similar conflict dynamic between radical and reformist social movement organizations has been reported to occur in several social movements (see e.g. Barkan (1986) on the civil rights movement; Downey (1986) on the anti-nuclear movement; and Strobel (1995) on the women's movement). The process of creating 'sectarian solidarity' via the formation of encompassing collective identities could be a convincing explanation of its cause.

But of course, collective identity cannot alone fully explain patterns of interaction in environmental networks. For that, we need to look at the political and social environment, organizations' strategies and status *and* their culture and identity. As we learned from Chapter 6, we also need to find a way to move away from the limits of a synchronic approach. I begin to step up to this challenge in Chapter 8.