

Growth in the UK climate direct action movement: Experience, politics and practice

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Abstract

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of a new radical social movement focused on climate change. This thesis explores the experience and negotiation of growth within the climate direct action (CDA) movement, and provides an ethnography of its politics, values and strategies.

The thesis is situated at the intersection of meso level studies of movement and organisational growth, and micro level studies of individual participation. It argues that the field of social movement studies has neglected the ways in which participation is actively shaped by the understandings and practices of movement activists; and that dominant structural approaches to participation and growth offer only a partial account of these dynamics. Accordingly, this thesis provides an experiential account of participation, retention and growth, which are considered together rather than separately, within the context of the heightened organisational and political ambiguities of a radical social movement.

Using ethnographic, insider, collaborative approaches to inquiry within two UK CDA networks, Rising Tide and the Camp for Climate Action, this thesis provides an account of newcomers' encounters with the CDA movement's cultures, politics and strategies, and of their experiences of seeking membership in CDA groups. It identifies movement building practices that are in use, and explores participants' complex, divergent understandings and perceptions of growth.

Findings suggest that growth is a fragile production in the CDA movement. Newcomers struggle with the movement's radicalism, and a contested current of autonomous values renders the purpose and priority of growth subject to an ongoing process of negotiation. Moreover, newcomers' experiences, and movement growth, are shaped by a core tension: whilst growth is seen to be required to achieve social change, and is necessary for organisational survival and meaning-making, growth also threatens personal and group identities, and has the potential to undermine what defines the movement.

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Preface

This thesis represents an activist-academic's story of the emergent climate action movement. Before we begin, I set the scene by telling you, the reader, how I came to write this particular story, and how I came to be one of its characters.

My journey into the climate action movement could form a case study for an introductory textbook on recruitment to social movement activism. I had a progressive upbringing, complete with hippie parents who took me on peace marches in the early Eighties, ran a vegetarian restaurant and took me hiking in the wilderness of the Canadian west coast. My interest in the environment stretches back as far as I can remember, focused as a child on a love of nature and animals, and as a teenager on a deep sense of outrage at the injustices of environmental degradation. I did an undergraduate degree in Geography and Environmental Studies, and then found jobs as a researcher for an environmental law think tank, and an administrator for a forest protection charity. At this point – with upbringing, cultural socialisation and attitudinal sympathy all pointing in the right direction – the stage was set for the transformative experience that tipped the balance towards direct action on climate change. Seeking adventure and new beginnings, I moved to London to do a Master's degree at UCL. The course, the dissertation and the job that followed focused on methods of persuading individuals to adopt more environmentally-friendly behaviour. For me, these highlighted the fact that individual behaviours are constrained by complex social, political and economic systems, and led me to believe that the 'small steps add up to make a difference' school of thought just wasn't enough. At the same time, I was introduced to London Rising Tide by a close friend from the MSc course, who later became my partner. The systemic, capitalism-based political analysis of the group struck a chord in me, having become sceptical of individualised approaches to environmental problems, frustrated with the single-issue politics of the NGO that I had worked with in Canada, and outraged at government inaction in the face of mounting evidence about climate change. The rest, as they say, is history. A transitional time in my life, being alone in a new city, a strong social tie, and a direct opportunity for engagement piled on top of my previous disposition to participate. The knowledge, skills and personal capacities I had developed through my previous jobs and studies, the trust I was accorded by being vouched for by a known activist,

and the support I received from having a one-on-one mentor all made my trajectory of involvement painless and rewarding from an early stage.

So, I joined London Rising Tide in October 2004 and never looked back. After the point of first contact, I moved quickly and easily to an intense level of participation, first with the London Rising Tide group, and later with the organising of the national Rising Tide network. Through Rising Tide, I became involved in organising actions during the G8 protests at Gleneagles in 2005, which began to introduce me to the national network of social centres and radical activists. I went to the first meeting about the Camp for Climate Action in January 2006, and was heavily involved at local, national and working group levels from that point onwards. When I moved to Norwich in November 2007, I helped to set up the Norwich Rising Tide group. Although I curtailed my participation during the writing-up phase of the PhD, I have remained very involved with these networks throughout the research process.

When I began the PhD in September 2005, I faced the challenge and the freedom of starting with a blank slate, having torn up my previous research proposal about behaviour change initiatives. In the early months of formulating research questions, despite being newly inspired by climate activism, I had no intention of studying the movement. Too messy, I thought – and I wasn't half wrong. However, rather than focusing on how citizens could be persuaded to behave more ethically (or, more commonly and more depressingly, why they are unlikely to be moved), I realised that I wanted to understand those who were 'doing different'; those who had managed to bridge the value-action gap; those who had developed strong ethics and transformed them into action. And, with the ideal case study sitting right under my nose, with a participant community that I was already engaged in, I took a deep breath and dived in.

I was following a grounded theory approach to investigation from the outset, and my research questions evolved significantly over the course of the project. Initially, I was interested in how people became activists. In reviewing the literature, I realised that this was well-trodden territory for social movement scholars, and also became frustrated at the restricted view that researchers appeared to take towards participation. Being almost daily engaged in climate activism, I was aware of how much time was spent on movement building, and of the fact that the story did not end with the newcomer coming to his or her first meeting. Accordingly, I set out to investigate newcomers' experiences and activists' retention practices past the point of

first contact. At this point, I saw a close link between my academically original research questions about retention, and my ability to contribute through the research to what I felt was a straightforward goal of CDA networks – to build a mass movement of people taking direct action against the root causes of climate change. However, I had to re-evaluate my assumptions about this goal during the pilot phase of the research, when I realised that, first, not everyone felt comfortable with the idea of recruitment and retention practices, and second, there appeared to be a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the desire for a mass movement. Although the questions raised by this gap did not fit neatly into my existing conceptual framework, I decided, like a good grounded theorist, to once again take a deep breath, and “follow the argument where it leads” (Tawney in Burgess, 2005: 273). What follows in this thesis is the product of that journey.

Acknowledgements

I want to offer my deepest thanks to the people who participated in this project: to those who took part in the interviews, for their time and exceptional insights; to participants in the London and Norwich Rising Tide groups and the national Camp for Climate Action organising process, for trusting me enough to say ‘yes’ to participant observation; and to all those who commented on early research proposals and took part in workshops about the project during its initial stages, for making me see the important things. There would be no thesis without you, and it is impossible to tell where my ideas end and yours begin – so thank you, so much. I have had both the opportunity and the challenge of telling these stories, of turning hundreds of people’s experiences, opinions, passions and differences into one story, committed to paper in black-and-white. I do not expect, in such a diverse and opinionated group of people, that my interpretations will be agreed with by all or even most. But I hope, even if only – or perhaps most importantly – as fodder for a good debate, that you find something of value in this project, and I am so grateful for your contributions to it.

I am also grateful to the academic communities at UEA, UCL and beyond, and particularly to my supervisors. Jackie Burgess has been with me from the beginning of this journey five years ago, and I am very grateful for her warmth, encouragement and exceptional intellectual guidance throughout the project. Thank you also to Gill Seyfang for her thoughtful advice, and for always being ready to listen or lend a helping hand. Thanks are also due to Irene Lorenzoni, Jenny Pickerill and Ian Welsh for attending and providing excellent advice at my upgrade workshop; and to the School of Environmental Sciences at UEA and the Graduate School at UCL for funding this research.

I would like to thank all my friends and colleagues in ZICER, for conversations both intellectual and comical, and especially Tom and Michelle. To my triad of proofreaders – Bob, Brenda and Foye – thank you so much for taking the time, for your quick turnarounds, and for your sharp eyes. I am also very grateful to my family, Anne, Bob and Daniel, for their lifelong support and quiet but total confidence in my abilities. Finally, to my partner Foye, thank you for inspiring me to both activism and the PhD in the first place, for pushing boundaries, for being my best

sounding board, for being so wonderful through both the ups and the downs, and for being the one person who can always make me laugh.

Above all, I thank the growing community of climate activists – those I have worked with on a daily basis, and those I have never met. Thank you for your passion, intelligence and drive; your refusal to accept the world as it is and your vision of something radically better; and your commitment to making it happen.

Chapter 1: Climate action: the birth of a new movement?

Social change is a journey that we make as we go along. It's based on ordinary people taking collective action ... the more of us join in, the better it will be.
(Camp for Climate Action Handbook, August 2008)

We're witnessing the birth of a new protest movement to force action on global warming.
(The Independent, 4 September 2006).

In only a few short years, climate change has moved from a fringe issue to one that hovers near the top of government, media and public agendas, and one that has become the meta-issue for environmentalists of all ideological hues. There is now widespread agreement about the threats posed by climate change, and about the need to prevent emissions from reaching dangerous tipping points. In conjunction with the dramatic ascendance of this issue, a radical social movement committed to taking direct action against the root causes of climate change has emerged and grown over the past four years (Block, 2008; Cappiello, 2008; Hari, 2006; North, 2008; Vidal, 2008). This climate direct action (CDA) movement has not sprung out of nowhere, but draws on the repertoires, capacities and activists of previous cycles of radical activism (Plows, 2008). Nonetheless, in a relatively short space of time, taking direct action on the causes of climate change has moved well beyond the purview of a handful of radical activists, as demonstrated by the thousands of people who attended the Camps for Climate Action in the summers of 2007 and 2008. The past three years have therefore been a time of growth and dramatic change within this emerging movement. How has this happened?

This thesis tells a story from inside the changing UK CDA movement, about what it is like to experience and bring about a growing radical social movement. This thesis asks the broad question: **how does a radical social movement grow?** More specifically:

1. How do newcomers experience, enter and make sense of the CDA movement, and what can this tell us about movement building and growth?
2. How and why do movement groups and individuals act upon newcomers, and how is this interaction experienced?

3. How are movement building and growth perceived, negotiated and experienced?

In answering these research questions, this thesis aims to make a unique contribution in four ways. I adopt a cultural and experiential rather than a structural approach to inquiry, and provide ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the dynamics of participation, growth and movement building. I suggest that new insights may be provided by uniting meso level studies of movement and organisational growth with micro level studies of participation and retention; and by uniting the perspectives of newcomers, movement groups and individual activists. These fresh approaches to inquiry are pursued within the context of the radical CDA movement, which allows for an investigation of the extent to which the dynamics of growth and participation are shaped by the movement’s radicalism; and using an ethnographic, insider methodology. These research questions and approaches to inquiry will be expanded upon in section 2.4.1 in light of material presented in this introduction and in Chapter 2.

The remainder of this chapter provides an introduction to social movement studies of growth, and to the CDA movement. I begin by introducing the reader to the study of social movements, and situating this thesis within the two broad areas of research addressing movement emergence and change, and individual participation. Next, I discuss the diverse conceptualisations of ‘growth’ that exist in the field of social movement studies, and suggest that to date, the social movement studies literature has not yet provided an adequate account of the experience and negotiation of growth. I then outline the ways in which this thesis adopts a new approach in order to address this gap.

Next, the UK CDA movement’s issue context is discussed, with a focus on contemporary environmental and climate change politics and action. I then trace the genealogies of the CDA movement, and outline a brief history of the two case study networks for this research, Rising Tide and the Camp for Climate Action (CCA). The CDA movement is then positioned within the wider social movement sector focused on climate change. The reader is also introduced to the CDA movement’s politics, strategies and modes of organising, with a focus on the ways in which these make the CDA movement radical. I conclude by outlining the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Social movement growth: towards a new approach

Although climate change as its issue of contention makes the CDA movement and its activities important to understand, at its core this is a thesis about social movements. Social movements have long fascinated scholars not only as phenomena in their own right, but as windows on the social world, and on why people act as they do. As central sources of social, cultural and political change, movements question social norms, accepted traditions and ways of organising in society; reject claims of institutional legitimacy; attempt to revitalise the public sphere; and model other, desired future worlds through protest and movement culture (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003). Social movements thus not only challenge injustices and transform social, economic and political structures, but also create new ideas, values, knowledge and institutions, and through their activity, help to reveal and build new societies. Movements are prophets (Castells, 1997), cultural challengers (Melucci, 1996) and knowledge producers (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

Although contentious politics have been present throughout human history, until relatively recently their scholarly investigation was scattered across disciplines, such as psychological studies of collective behaviour, mainly in the US, and political theorists' analyses of class struggle, mainly in Europe (Crossley, 2002a). Following the ruptures of the 1960s and the associated and apparently sudden emergence of a range of social movements around the world, social movement studies rapidly developed into a field of investigation in its own right. Despite the great strides made in describing and understanding social movements over the following four decades, the field has suffered from a "theoretical provincialism" (McCarthy, McAdam and Zald, 1996: xii), marked largely by a schism between European and North American schools of thought. Broadly speaking the North American tradition can be characterised by its commitment to empiricism and a structural interpretation of movement emergence, participation and other dynamics. European approaches are more theoretically-driven and explore the ways in which social movements mobilise around broad societal fault-lines. In the last decade, there has been a rapprochement between the two schools of thought, resulting in productive cross-fertilisation, and the emergence of a 'cultural' approach, which is concerned to understand the internal, relational life and meanings of social movements in particular contexts (see Chapter 2 for a full review).

We can identify six areas of investigation that have preoccupied movement scholars across disciplines and approaches: movement values, goals, strategies and tactics; the definition of outcomes and evaluation of success; the composition and organisation of movements and their constituent groups; relationships between movements and non-movement actors; movement emergence, change and decline; and how and why certain individuals support, join, commit to or leave social movements. Although this thesis touches upon all of these areas, it is the final two that lie at the heart of this project. However, as I shall now proceed to outline, I suggest that answering the question of how a radical social movement grows requires that these two areas of inquiry be drawn together in a new way. Specifically, I suggest that answering this question requires that a meso level understanding of movement and organisational growth be brought together with micro level understandings of participation and retention.¹

Conceptual tools with which to explore questions about the ways in which participants enter, remain in and make sense of social movements are readily available in the well-developed social movement studies literature on recruitment and participation – although, as I will outline in Chapter 2, this literature has theoretical and empirical shortfalls which this thesis seeks to address. Finding conceptual tools with which to understand the experience and negotiation of movement growth is much more difficult, and, I contend, this represents a significant gap in social movement research.

Despite the fact that movement emergence, development and decline – a trajectory in which questions of growth must arise – has been one of the most studied lines of inquiry by scholars from both the North American and European traditions, I would suggest that the concept of growth remains ambiguous in the field of social movement studies. The term is often used lightly, without definition, and interchangeably with other concepts such as diffusion and development. In one key introductory text by Della Porta and Diani (2006), for example, no definition for growth appears in the text, and no references to the term are to be found in the index. Throughout the book, ‘growth’ is referred to in the context of the spread of belief, the

¹ ‘Meso’ is commonly used to describe movement and organisational level dynamics, whilst ‘macro’ refers to broad political and cultural contexts, and ‘micro’ is applied to individual level processes (Cohn, Barkan and Halteman, 2003; McAdam, 1986, 2003; Scully and Creed, 2005; Staggenborg, 2002).

development of a group, an increase in the number of organisations, and the emergence and rise of a new movement. Such diverse understandings of the meaning of growth may be found throughout the literature. Growth has been conceptualised as, variously, patterns of emergence in populations of movement organisations (Archibald, 2008; Minkoff, 1997); increases in protest activity and/or the spread of movement ideas to new areas of society (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Jenness, 1995); the generalised development or forward progression of a movement or an organisation (Tarrow, 1994; Zald and Ash Garner, 1987 [1966]); and the expansion of organisations (Kriesi, 1996; Riger, 1994).

The latter two conceptualisations appear to offer the most potential for understanding the experience and negotiation of growth. In regards to development, there is certainly no shortage of studies that attempt to theorise the stages of movement emergence, change and decline (Coy and Hedeon, 2005; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991; Moyer, 1990; Tarrow, 1994). Organisational development has received less attention, and is most closely associated with the work of resource mobilisation theorists, who use the economic logic of supply and demand in a commercial industry as a metaphor to explain the dynamics of formal social movement organisations (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Zald and Ash Garner, 1987 [1966]). In the majority of this work, whether the causes are internal or external, the changes are in leadership or in political opportunities, the implication is that change happens *to* groups or movements, which are portrayed as somewhat hapless victims of fate. There is a need, I suggest, to pay greater attention to the agency of movement participants, and to explore how and why participants actively grow and transform their groups and movements – or at least are in some ways implicated in their development – and how they negotiate the consequences of growth and change.

In regards to expansion, most studies of this nature adopt a large scale quantitative approach, by, for example, examining changes in the membership size of large NGOs over time (Bosso in Carter, 2007; Kriesi, 1996; Rucht and Roose, 2001). With the exception of Riger's (1994) work, which raises important questions about the ways in which participants may disagree about growth, and may find it to be a challenging process – but which focuses on professionalised organisations and has a problematic heritage in resource mobilisation theory (see section 2.1.1) – there is a dearth of studies from an in-depth, experiential perspective.

In short, I suggest that to date the social movement studies literature has not yet provided an adequate account of what it is like to be part of and to bring about a growing radical social movement. Existing studies do not often consider growth as expansion in numbers of participants; and when they do, they mainly adopt large-scale, external, structural perspectives, and an almost exclusive focus on formal, professional movement organisations. What can be learned about growth from an in-depth look inside a particular social movement? How do activist groups and individuals shape growth as one form of movement development or change? What attitudes are held towards growth? What is different about growth for movements and organisations that do not seek to influence or win the support of institutions, do not have staff, and are organised non-hierarchically?

Perhaps most importantly, what can be learned by asking these questions at the same time as asking questions about participation and retention? Thus far, there has been little effort to link studies of growth (however it is conceptualised) with studies of recruitment and retention practices which seek to achieve growth, nor with research into participation (ie. the addition of new participants to a movement) as a creator of growth. This thesis takes the potential value in drawing these questions together as its point of departure, and represents an exploratory attempt to do so. In summary, I suggest that there are empirical and theoretical shortfalls in both meso (group and movement) and micro (individual) level studies of movement growth, which I address together in this thesis. In doing so, I aim to shed new light on the nature of growth as expansion, and of growth as change, in a radical social movement.

1.2 Introducing the climate direct action movement

Having provided a rationale for the questions I ask in this thesis, and suggested that there is a need to consider these questions in the context of radical movements, I now introduce the reader to the CDA movement as the case study for this research. In this section, I will show why the CDA movement is an appropriate case study for this thesis, and why it is important to study in its own right. I begin by situating the CDA movement within the broader context of British environmentalism and its responses to the rise of the climate change issue, and by suggesting that radical perspectives are important to examine in light of the institutionalisation of large sections of the environmental movement. I then examine the recent history of radical UK direct action movements, paying particular attention to the anti-roads and alter-

globalisation movements as the direct antecedents of the CDA cycle of action. I also provide a short history of Rising Tide and the Camp for Climate Action, which form the ethnographic sites of study for this thesis (see section 3.3.1 for the rationale behind their selection). Finally, the reader is introduced to the CDA movement's key political, strategic and organisational characteristics, and the way in which these make the movement radical.

1.2.1 Contexts: environmental and climate action

Whilst I describe the history of radical direct action in the UK in section 1.3.2, in this section I focus on the broader environmental movement and its over-arching responses to the rise of climate change, positioning these as forces which have shaped the CDA movement and, in some ways, tell us why it is important.

Environmentalism has a long history, and the roots of the contemporary green movement stretch back at the very least as far as the preservationists and conservationists of the 19th century. The birth of environmentalism as a contemporary social movement, however, is often traced to the 1960s, and milestones such as the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (Carter, 2007). As the environmental by-products of industrialisation and the rapid economic growth of the post-war years began to be felt, and scientific progress produced new measures to detect and describe these consequences, environmentalism blossomed during the 1970s (Smith, 2006). No longer focused on the protection of landscapes, the rise of modern environmentalism marked the recognition of the earth as a fragile system, one that was being severely damaged by the impacts of human activity (Carter, 2007). Although marked by notable peaks and valleys in environmental concern and action, in the decades that followed, environmentalists' issues of contention – amongst them biodiversity loss, deforestation and desertification, acid rain, genetic modification, and above all climate change – have shifted from fringe to familiar. However, the uptake of the complex normative ideas that underpin contemporary environmentalism – about how decisions should be made and by whom, about holism and systems thinking, about the nature of progress and its relationship to economic growth, and about the relationships between nature and culture, local and global, present and future generations – has been far more modest.

Nonetheless, many commentators agree that environmentalism is one of, if not the most influential of the social movements that emerged during the 1960s and

1970s, and that “the environmental movement has become a significant political actor and agent of change” (Carter, 2007: 7). However, many have also suggested that this influence has come at a price: that of de-radicalisation and institutionalisation. Carter argues provocatively:

There is general agreement that the environmental movement in North America and Western Europe has become increasingly institutionalised ... overall it seems that the mainstream environmental movement has chosen reform over revolution. It has cast off any radical social movement roots in order to work within the political system; thus participatory principles and unconventional tactics have been replaced by professionalization and conventional methods (2007: 148).

Links are commonly drawn between the institutionalisation of environmental movements and the consolidation of the ecological modernisation discourse, which offers the “seductive appeal” of insisting that economic growth and ecological sustainability are compatible (Baker, 2007: 297; Blühdorn and Welsh, 2007). As a result, in many environmental organisations, there has been an ideological softening of opposition to capitalism, industrialisation, technology and bureaucracy, and an increasing willingness to enter into partnerships with companies and the market (Mol, 2000). In short, there is an argument to be made that over the course of the brief history of contemporary environmentalism, the broad position of environmentalists has shifted from outsider to insider, and from protest to partnership. Whilst this has allowed the environmental movement to become a powerful political actor, it has also resulted in a de-radicalisation of the agendas of many of the major environmental groups. Importantly, this shift has also contributed to both a polarisation and a reinvigoration of radical environmental discourses and action, which directly challenge and develop alternatives to the institutionalised, insider strategy (Carter, 1997; Mol, 2000).

A parallel, but much shorter, trajectory may be outlined for action on climate change, which has both shaped and reflected the wider shifts outlined above. Although climate change only appeared on most environmentalists’ radar in the late 1980s, in the short space of time since then, climate change has moved to the centre of political agendas, and has arguably become “the greatest recruiting sergeant that the greens have ever had” (Smith, 2006: 31). In the last decade, the existence of climate change, the threat posed by its current and future impacts and the need to take urgent action to reduce emissions have become increasingly accepted across scientific and

political communities (Carter, 1997; O’Keeffe, 2006). Climate change has moved from a fringe issue to one of central political importance, and has become the meta-issue within which other green concerns are framed (La Branche, 2008). Between 2005 and 2008, as publics and politicians alike digested the dire warnings about the scale and urgency of the problem contained within the Stern Review and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report, and as Al Gore and the IPCC shared the Nobel Peace Prize for their climate change awareness raising efforts (Kristof, 2007), the terrain of struggle surrounding climate change began to shift. Debate turned from the need to raise awareness about the existence of and threat posed by climate change, to negotiations about stakes and solutions. Contemporary struggles are thus concerned with who benefits and who loses out from proposed solutions (Sumburn, 2007), with disputes arising between advocates of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ proposals for change. For example, there have been clashes between “those espousing ‘weak green’ options such as use of biodiesel, and those who will emphasise the social and economic fallout caused by the rising price of grain” (Plows, 2008: 106). The emergence of the carbon market has been another flashpoint, not only surrounding the relative effectiveness of market-based solutions as mechanisms of reducing emissions, but also about their legitimacy and equity, particularly with respect to the developing nations which they purport to benefit (Corbera, Brown and Adger, 2007; Smith, 2007).

In some respects, therefore, the rise of climate change has changed the context in which environmental groups operate. Because it is inextricably linked with other key political issues such as energy and food security, health, migration and uneven development, and because of the widespread agreement about its urgency, climate change has brought ‘the environment’ closer to the heart of public and political agendas, and has accorded the environmental movement a new status and a greater degree of authority (Smith, 2006). On the other hand, the rise of climate change and the environment to prominence has also potentially contributed to the process of institutionalisation and de-radicalisation discussed above, by, for example, mainstreaming environmental concern and producing ‘selective accommodation’ in government institutions through ecological modernist policy instruments (Blühndorn and Welsh, 2007), thereby drawing many in the environmental movement further towards an insider, partnership strategy.

As a further point of departure for this thesis therefore, I suggest that, whilst the British environmental movement is large and diverse, a significant majority of its actors' agendas have been emasculated through a combination of institutionalisation and the embracing of an ecological modernisation paradigm. Further, I propose that those radical actors that have not pursued an 'insider' strategy are therefore both intellectually and normatively important to study – intellectually, in terms of how they remain, function, and position themselves 'outside'; and normatively, because of their potential to reveal flaws in dominant approaches to environmental problems, and to envision and enact alternatives. With carbon emissions rising rather than falling, and many if not most other indicators of environmental sustainability worsening rather than improving (Lynas, 2007; Marks *et al.*, 2006; Porritt, 2006; UNEP, 2007); and with powerful critiques being levelled at the inequalities built in to many proposed measures to combat climate change (Smith, 2007), those actors that seek to keep alive, pursue, and raise the bar for a vision of 'strong' ecological sustainability and social justice, and how they attempt to do so, warrant scholarly attention.

1.2.2 Genealogy and history: a new moment of radical struggle

In the 1980s, tens of thousands people protested about nuclear power. In the 1990s, road building topped the environmental protest league. And in the last 18 months, a broad carbon movement has tentatively emerged. Groups such as Plane Stupid, the Climate Camp, Rising Tide, Leave it in the Ground and others are now picking up the activist baton (Vidal, 2008: no page).²

Having outlined the broad environmental movement in which the CDA movement is embedded, I now want to situate it within an unfolding history of UK struggles for radical social change, which includes but extends well beyond environmental concerns. I suggest that the CDA movement can be viewed as the current cycle of a long-standing direct action movement, which has addressed a variety of issues over the years, but is linked by "activist communities which have arguably been the backbone of UK protest activity over several generations since the 1970s" (Plows, 2008: 93). Thus the CDA movement has not simply emerged 'ready-made' as a new response to climate change, but draws on repertoires of tactics, targets, frames and culture based on previous movement cycles (Carter and Morland, 2004). As environmentalism proposed core ideas such as limits to growth and

² I quote directly from numerous unpaginated online sources in this thesis. These are referenced in the same manner as paginated sources, but the page number is replaced by 'no page'.

developed critiques of capitalism, technological complexes and industrialisation throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Mol, 2000) – all of which remain part of the repertoire of frames in use in the CDA movement today – a different set of equally important repertoires have been drawn from non-explicitly environmental movements of the past forty years.

From the 1960s new Left and student movements come the roots of counter-culture and alternative notions of community. From second-wave feminism, at its height in the 1970s, comes cultures of political organising that seek to avoid hierarchy and oppression. The 1980s brought the peace/anti-nuclear movement and its use of non-violent direct action and protest camps, as well as encounters with new counter-cultural currents in the form of New-Age travellers and anarcho-punks, and the more militant tactics of animal rights activists. The 1990s saw the consolidation of a specifically environmental direct action movement resisting road-building and later genetic modification, and the rise of anti-capitalist/alter-globalisation/global justice (ACAG) movements, both of which will receive further consideration below (Carter and Morland, 2004; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Plows, 2008; Wall, 1999). Whilst the issues of contention have changed, these cycles of action are linked by a wider opposition to threats to humans and the natural world in the name of the capitalist, patriarchal, liberal democratic world order; by the ability to show webs of interconnectedness between issues; and by efforts to imagine and demonstrate new forms of utopia and alternative ways of living ‘despite capitalism’ (Jordan, 2008; Plows, 2008). Thus alongside the repertoires of resistance outlined above run currents of proactive alternatives, including squatting, intentional communities, permaculture, alternative technology, local food production and social centre projects (Carter and Morland, 2004; Plows, 2008).

The closely linked anti-roads and ACAG movements deserve special attention, as many activists involved in the CDA movement directly participated in these protests, and because they are the direct antecedents of the CDA cycle, and are thereby the source of many of its particular organising strategies, action tactics and political frames. As well as the launch of a new government road-building programme, a number of broader factors came together to create the conditions for the emergence of a radical UK environmental direct action movement focused on preventing road-building, which also apply to the rise of the ACAG movement specifically in the UK context. These include the institutionalisation and de-

radicalisation of environmental agendas and NGOs towards the end of the 1980s, as discussed above; the political space opened by the failure of traditional socialism; and the emergence of rave and DIY (Do It Yourself) culture, as well as its repression through the 1994 Criminal Justice Act. The anti-roads cycle is very much embodied by the Earth First! network, which emerged in the UK in 1991, drawing initially from the repertoires and activists of the peace and anti-nuclear movements. The prospective or actual construction sites of new roads quickly became a focus for protests and occupations, which attracted both New-Age traveller and deep-green elements at rural sites such as Twyford Down, and punk, rave and anarchist elements at urban sites such as the M11 in London. The M11 campaign was instrumental in re-founding Reclaim the Streets, which was in effect the London arm of both the anti-roads movement and the Earth First! network. The trajectory of Reclaim the Streets, whose famous street parties became increasingly less framed in terms of car culture and more in terms of capitalism and globalisation, reflects to an extent the course of the wider anti-roads movement. By 1999/2000, the direct action movement had moved away from roads, and was increasingly engaging with the global ACAG movement, as well as the issue of genetically modified (GM) foods (which in many cases was framed in the terms of the ACAG movements) (Carter and Morland, 2004; Doherty, Paterson and Seel, 2000; Plows, 2004, 2008; Wall, 1999).

Gallons of ink have been spilled by scholars and activists alike in theorising the ACAG movements,³ which are argued, amongst other things, to have redefined, consolidated and/or absorbed the positions, issues and movements which constitute it; and, through physical and symbolic challenges and intellectual framing work carried out in newly-created real and virtual spaces, to have played a role in de-legitimising both the institutions and the ideal of neo-liberalism (Blühdorn and Welsh, 2007; Carter and Morland, 2004; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; McDonald, 2002; Welsh, 2007) – amongst many other, less celebratory accounts. These movements have most often visibly coalesced in mass protests at summits of world leaders, such as the G8, and at negotiations of transnational trade bodies such as the WTO and IMF. The rise of so-called ‘summit-hopping’ (Goaman, 2004) has offered both the vast potential of ‘convergence space’ (Routledge, 2003), in which a very wide range of campaigns,

³ See, for example Ainger *et al.*, 2003; Bircham and Charlton, 2001; Escobar, 2000; George, 2004; Goaman, 2004; Gordon, 2008; Juris, 2008b; Klein, 2000; Mertes, 2004; Routledge, 2003; Starr, 2005.

networks, ideologies, tactics and agendas temporarily come together under the aspirational principle of ‘unity in flight’ (Young in Maples, 2000), and the much critiqued challenges presented by the cyclical, spectacular, symbolic and non-proactive nature of such protests. Although the ACAG certainly “didn’t start in Seattle and [it] didn’t stop on 9/11” (Starr, 2005: 19), there has been an unmistakeable rise and fall of the ‘movement of movements’, and it is its decline which has partly paved the way for the CDA movement. This partial decline⁴ may be partly attributed to internal movement responses to the flaws described above, and partly to the changed global contexts in which the movements are now operating. As I write, banks around the world are being re-nationalised, and

the liberal-democratic-free-market-capitalist future that was the only flavour on offer at the turn of the century has gone out of fashion in 2008...What is to come now that the ‘American Century’ has ended, now that food prices can’t be kept in check, climate change rolls on, the world’s financial architecture seizes up (Turbulence Collective, 2008: no page)?

In this context, it can be argued that “neoliberalism is dead (in some ways), as is (again: in some ways) the movement against it... We need a story, a hope, a hook to move: and at this point, the alterglobalist movement is clearly a movement without a hook, without an enemy, without a goal” (Müller, 2008: no page). To many commentators, it appears that climate change is beginning to offer the ‘hook’ around which at least some elements of the declining ACAG movements are beginning to coalesce again.

This is the backdrop against which the CDA movement in general, and Rising Tide and the Camp for Climate Action (CCA) in particular, have emerged. Narrowing my focus once again, I will now briefly summarise the histories of these two networks, before concluding the section by proposing that the emergence of the CCA represents a crucial moment in the development of both the UK direct action movement, and broader environmental and ACAG struggles.

Rising Tide was formed in 2000 as a coalition that sought to bring a more radical voice to the civil society presence at the UN Conference of the Parties climate

⁴ Juris, for example, argues that the ACAG movements have not declined, but have shifted to an emphasis on local projects that are rooted in communities, and proactive global gatherings in the form of the World Social Forums. Although these activities are less visible to the public and less intense for activists, “if we take into account the submerged, localized, routinized, and increasingly institutionalized (by which I mean the building of new movement institutions, not the existing representative democratic ones), then the movement remains alive and well” (Juris, 2008a: no page).

negotiations in The Hague. Although its 'political statement' initially attracted signatories internationally, Rising Tide as an active entity quite quickly became a primarily UK-based network. Upon forming as a network, a number of local groups were established around the UK, but by 2002 these had dwindled to a coordination group in Oxford, which focused on education, training, and network administration, a small group in Reading which concentrated on awareness-raising activities, and an active London group, which was one of the entities that emerged following the demise of London Reclaim the Streets, and which focused on carrying out direct action. The twin activities of outreach and action both continue to be important to the network, which positions itself as a bridge between more covert and action-focused networks such as Earth First!, and more visible, awareness raising-focused NGOs. Following the first CCA in 2006 Rising Tide experienced a new wave of group formation, and by 2008 there were eight active local groups in the UK. A North American Rising Tide network was also established in 2006, which developed quickly in size and profile and, in conjunction with a re-invigorated Australian network, helped to re-establish Rising Tide as an international network.

The immediate trigger for the first CCA in 2006 was the mobilisations around the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, particularly the 'Hori-Zone' rural convergence space that was established as one of the bases for autonomous activists (Harvie *et al.*, 2005; Plows, 2008). This represented an innovation from past summit convergence spaces, in that it was not only a place to stay and plan actions, but it also sought to overcome the 'anti-everything' stereotype of summit protests and demonstrate positive examples of ecological sustainability and direct democracy (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). The 2005 G8 protests therefore not only mobilised a new generation of UK activists, but also provided new networks and skills that were put to use the following year; the bulk of the initial organising work for the first CCA was carried out by activists with prior involvement in either the G8 or previous ACAG movements, or anti-roads and anti-GM direct actions (Plows, 2008). When the CCA project was initiated in early 2006, its stated aim was to draw together education, direct action and practical ecological sustainability in one event (see Figure 1.1). However, early CCA participants also hoped to spark a mass, ongoing direct action movement on climate change; to bring a critique of the growth economy and corporate/state-led solutions to wider civil society debates on climate change; and to use the climate change issue to unite diverse movements, including urban ACAG,

anti-war, more traditional environmental, and permaculture/alternative technology networks.



Figure 1.1 CCA core aims: direct action, sustainable living and education
Photo credits, top to bottom: Amy Scaife, Mike Russell, Amelia Gregory

The first camp, attended by 700 people, took place in 2006 outside Drax coal-fired power station, near Selby in North Yorkshire, and prompted one commentator to assert that “we’re witnessing the birth of a new protest movement to force action on global warming” (Hari, 2006: no page). Following the camp, many of the regional ‘neighbourhoods’, which formed both the physical and decision-making structure for the camp, established action groups in their local areas. These have increased in number over the three years of the camps, with some being exclusively focused on organising the following year’s camp, but the majority being equally concerned with taking action locally. In 2007, an influx of new participants became involved in the camp organising process, many of whom were of the ‘post-Seattle’ generation whose frustration with mainstream politics was forged by the lack of response to mass protests against the war in Iraq (Plows, 2008). The 2007 CCA, which had a much higher media profile than in the previous year (see Figure 1.2), and was attended by 1,600 people, was held at Heathrow airport to resist the construction of a third runway. Inspired by the CCA at Drax, two camps were also held in the US in 2007. In 2008, with new coal on the UK political agenda, 1,200 people attended the CCA at Kingsnorth power station in Kent, site of the proposed first coal-fired power station in the UK in 30 years. A total of 6 camps were also held in Australia, Canada, Germany and the US in the summer of 2008.



Figure 1.2 Intense media interest in the 2007 Heathrow CCA
Photo credit: Mike Russell

Thus the CCA not only succeeded in its initial aim of instigating a new wave of direct action on climate change in the UK, but it also inspired the proliferation of both the ‘climate camp’ tactic and its associated action networks on a global scale. With plans being laid for climate camps across Europe and for mass global protests surrounding the post-Kyoto negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009, and coordination increasing between the climate camp networks internationally, it appears that climate change is emerging as a new focus for activists and networks previously associated with the ACAG movements (Halpin and Summer, 2008; Juris, 2008a). Moreover, “there are definitely attempts to develop an anticapitalist climate change politics ... Seen from here, it all begins in the UK in 2006, with a ‘climate action camp’” (Müller, 2008: no page). The period in which the fieldwork for this research was conducted, between 2006 and 2008, and the CCA as a key site of study, together therefore represent a very significant moment, for a number of reasons. In the UK, the emergence of the CCA represents a new cycle in the ongoing UK direct action movement, and has been a focal point around which anti-roads and ACAG activists of the 1990s and early 2000s have come together with a newer generation, many of whom are turning to direct action out of frustration with governments’ perceived failure to act, either on anti-war sentiment or, more recently, on climate change (Gordon and Michaels, 2008; Vidal, 2008). The UK camps have also inspired an international climate camp movement which, in turn, is arguably the base from which a radical response to climate change is being constructed as a new narrative for the global ACAG movements. Accordingly, conducting the research for this thesis during the period in which the CDA movement first emerged and then rapidly grew, afforded me a unique position from which to not only address the research agenda on participation and growth outlined above, but also to provide the first empirical account of a new and globally significant social movement.

1.2.3 Defining the CDA movement as a radical actor

The remaining task for this chapter is to set out a shared understanding of what constitutes the CDA movement. What makes it different from other social movement actors on climate change? Why should it be described as radical? These questions have already been partly answered in the section above, and can only fully be answered in the empirical chapters of this thesis. My aims in this section are to justify my positioning of CDA as a radical social movement; to provide the reader with a

brief introduction to the movement's politics, strategic repertoire and modes of organising; and to define some concepts used in this thesis.

First, can CDA be described as a social movement? I suggest that it can, if only because the concept itself is usually so broadly defined. For example, for Melucci, the term 'social movement' "designates that form of collective action which (i) invokes solidarity, (ii) makes manifest a conflict, and (iii) entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place" (1996: 28). The concept of social movement is therefore an elastic one, which can encompass networks of only a handful of participants up to a movement as diverse as transnational environmentalism, which contains many other movements within it (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Moreover, many scholars argue that movements exist and can be described as such if "people both inside and outside of it believe that it exists, act 'as if' it exists", which can be applied to the CDA movement (Crossley, 2002b: 676; Castells, 1997; Hetherington, 1998).

Second, CDA can be understood as a *radical* social movement. The model created by Fitzgerald and Rodgers (2000), shown in Figure 1.3 below, shows how opposing characteristics such as disruptive vs. conventional tactics or structural vs. individual locus of change may be combined to create ideal-type reform (or moderate in their terms) and radical social movement groups. Although of course such an ideal-type model masks the complexity of strategic and ideological positions in existence within movements, Fitzgerald and Rodgers' characterisation usefully sets out my basic definition of a 'radical' social movement group.

| | Moderate SMOs | Radical SMOs |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Internal structure | Hierarchical leadership; formal bureaucratic organization; development of large membership base for resource generation | Nonhierarchical leadership; participatory democratic organization; egalitarian; “membership” based upon involvement; support indigenous leadership |
| Ideology | Reform agenda, emphasis on being a contender in the existing political system; national focus; support government military involvement | Radical agenda; emphasis on structural change; flexible ideology; radical networks; global consciousness and connections; antimilitaristic stance |
| Tactics | Nonviolent legal action | Nonviolent direct action; mass actions; innovative tactics |
| Communication | Able to rely on mainstream forms of communication | Ignored/misrepresented by media; reliance on alternative forms of communication (music, street theater, pamphlets, newsletters) |
| Assessment of success | Potential for plentiful resources; manipulate resources for the self-interest of the organizations’ longevity; formal rationality; success measured in terms of reform of existing political/economic system | Limited resources; may be purposefully short-lived; substantive rationality; contribute to larger radical agenda; subject to intense opposition and government surveillance |

Figure 1.3 Ideal-type characteristics of radical and reform social movement groups

(Source: Fitzgerald and Rodgers, 2000: 578)

Accordingly, we can identify ways in which the networks that constitute the CDA movement differ from some of the many other social movement actors on climate change. CDA networks are non-hierarchical and non-professionalised, as opposed to the major NGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the many others large organisations that are part of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. CDA networks emphasise the need for structural and political as well as personal and community-based change, setting them apart from initiatives such as Transition Towns and Carbon Rationing Action Groups. Finally, CDA networks adopt direct action as a key tactic, which distinguishes them from the lobbying tactics favoured by most of the major NGOs, or the mass march model adopted by Campaign Against Climate Change. It is the combination of all of these features that makes CDA a radical social movement actor (unlike, for example, Greenpeace, which combines direct action with corporate partnerships and lobbying techniques, within the context of a bureaucratic organisational structure).

CDA networks can additionally be distinguished from other actors – and our understanding of its radicalism extended – by the presence of a current of autonomous politics within the movement. The label ‘autonomous’, meaning to self-legislate, can

be distinguished from the term ‘anarchist’, meaning without government, and the term ‘autonomous’ is often employed to describe contemporary movements that have enlarged the terrain of struggle beyond anarchism’s traditional targets of state and capital, to include all forms of domination, oppression or hierarchy (Albert, 2001; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). The extent to which autonomous politics influences the CDA movement is a matter for empirical investigation in this thesis; however, three key autonomous ideas that run through the empirical chapters will be defined here. First is the notion of prefigurativity, which can be defined as a politics in which “people seek to conduct their struggle and personal interactions in ways that mirror the kind of society they intend to build ... or, to put it another way, means should mirror ends” (Carter and Morland, 2004: 18). In this light, autonomous movement strategies and modes of organising, such as direct action and horizontality, are inherently political, as they represent the ends in the making. Second and third are autonomous values of diversity and open-endedness. Autonomous politics rejects both a unified formal ideology (hence my use throughout this thesis of the term ‘political analysis’ in its place) and the idea of a single, finished revolution, in favour of an open-ended, ever-evolving politics that commits itself to making room for diverse viewpoints, tactics, and goals (Gordon, 2008).

Thus positioned, as a radical social movement influenced by autonomous politics, what remains to be introduced is the CDA movement’s politics, strategies and modes of organising. Recognising the diversity of opinion that exists within CDA networks, the movement’s broad politics can be described by addressing three questions that can be asked of the beliefs of social movements: what is wrong? What are the solutions? Who should do the job and how (Lofland, 1996)? In terms of the problem, the growth economy and associated corporate power and profit are positioned as (the) key root causes of climate change; more broadly, many would argue that climate change is a symptom of an unjust, undemocratic and socially and ecologically unsustainable capitalist order. Solutions require radical changes in social systems and structures, rather than reforms of existing institutions; and lifestyle change, whilst important, is seen to be constrained by wider political, economic, cultural and physical infrastructures. The CDA movement is ‘for’ climate justice; equity lies at the heart of proposed solutions, which must address climate change whilst simultaneously reducing, rather than increasing, inequalities both between and within nations. Market-based solutions are rejected, and governments are positioned

as part of the problem rather than a source of solutions due to the priority they place on maintaining economic growth. Instead, and crucially for this thesis, social change is seen to be led by ‘ordinary people’, mobilised through the efforts of social movements. Growing the CDA movement itself is therefore often positioned alongside other key goals of confronting the causes of climate change and developing equitable solutions.

The key elements of the CDA movement’s strategic repertoire are direct action, education, outreach, and the construction of proactive alternatives. Direct action may be defined as “taking social change into one’s own hands, by intervening directly in a situation rather than appealing to an external agent (typically a government) for its rectification” (Gordon, 2008: 17). Direct action includes but is not limited to civil disobedience, does not always require breaking the law, and although popularly understood to involve confrontational and challenging acts such as blockades and sabotage, also has a constructive and creative dimension (Cutler and Bryan, 2007). Education and outreach may occur through the actions themselves, by engaging with passers-by for example, or through dedicated activities such as workshops, public meetings, and talks and stalls at public events.

Finally, the CDA movement is organised through decentralised, autonomous networks, in which decisions are made horizontally. In principle, both power and tasks are distributed amongst groups rather than concentrated in one; groups can make decisions that affect only them without consulting the wider network or deferring to a central group; and all participants in a group and all groups in a network have equal power. Both Rising Tide and the CCA have a network structure, with local groups and a national decision-making process. With respect to Rising Tide, local groups take action autonomously, and the national infrastructure is limited to a decision-making email list, on which two or three people from each local group are represented, and an annual national meeting. The organising structure of the CCA consists of local groups, which take action locally and organise the logistics of the on-site neighbourhoods; working groups, which deal with the nuts-and-bolts organising of outreach, legal support, on-site practicalities such as toilets and power, and so on; and a monthly national meeting or ‘gathering’, attended by a shifting collection of between 60 and 100 people, at which decisions that affect the entire process are made.

1.3 Summary and outline of the thesis

In this introductory chapter, I have raised a set of questions about social movement growth that together represent an area of study requiring further investigation, and have described the CDA movement and why it is an important site of study. Specifically, I suggest that the social movement studies literature has not yet provided an adequate account of the experience and negotiation of growth, and that to answer the question of how a radical social movement grows, there is a need to draw together meso and micro level questions about growth, participation and retention. I propose that the radicalism of the CDA movement is not only important in order to explore unanswered questions about growth, but also due to the institutionalisation of much of the broader environmental movement. Moreover, the CDA movement embodies a new and significant moment in the history of radical activism both in the UK and globally, and this thesis represents an ethnography of its politics, values and strategies.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I situate this research within the emerging cultural approach to social movement studies, and review the social movement studies literature on participation, recruitment and retention. I identify two silences in this well-developed research agenda. First, whilst recruitment up to the point of entry and long-term commitment have both been well-studied, the early days of involvement have been under-investigated; or have been addressed with the aim of theorising ongoing participation, rather than considering the experience of being a newcomer. Second, the social movement literature has ‘black-boxed’ the practices by which movement groups and individuals actively seek and shape involvement, a gap which is particularly acute with respect to the meanings these practices have for movement participants, and the way in which they are experienced by newcomers. Finding the social movement literature wanting, I turn to movement-based texts and organisational theory to provide additional purchase on questions of participation and retention. However, these approaches primarily share the rationalist, structural bias of much social movement studies research, and do not offer a balanced perspective between the individual newcomer, the group and existing members. Together with the critique of social movement studies of growth made in this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 thus opens up the empirical areas of inquiry to be addressed in, and provides a rationale for, the novel approach adopted by this thesis.

Chapter 3 outlines and justifies the ethnographic, insider, collaborative approach to study that was adopted in this research, as well as the choice of participant observation and in-depth interviews as primary methodological tools. The chapter also traces the steps involved in the research process, from identifying Rising Tide and CCA as case study sites, to carrying out the interviews, to analysing and writing up the resulting data. The collaborative nature of the research is also discussed, as are ethical dilemmas involved in insider, activist research.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 document the empirical findings of this thesis. Chapter 4 explores the ways in which newcomers make sense of the CDA movement's tactics, cultures, modes of organising and politics (which I collectively refer to as the movement's core political features); and the experience of seeking membership in CDA groups. I suggest that although the experience of involvement is shaped by a wide range of factors, it is the CDA movement's core political features that are most influential. Chapter 5 identifies and describes a range of 'inclusivity' strategies in use within the CDA movement, as well as attitudes towards and barriers to its practice. Although inclusivity is shown to be helpful in facilitating the process of membership-seeking, newcomers require different levels of inclusivity support, and it cannot guarantee retention. The chapter also investigates the extent to which experienced activists have an accurate understanding of newcomers' experiences and motivations. Building upon the resistances to inclusivity highlighted in the previous chapter, Chapter 6 explores the diverse meanings that movement building and growth have for CDA participants, and identifies key tensions about both the methods used to seek, and the consequences of, growth. A lack of clarity about the purpose for movement growth is identified, and the current of autonomous politics that exists within the CDA movement is interrogated in an attempt to understand this ambiguity.

After reflecting on the nature of a grounded theoretical, activist-academic research process, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by conducting an integrative analysis of participation, retention and growth in order to demonstrate the fragility of growth as expansion in the CDA movement. The experience and consequences of growth as a form of change are also considered, particularly in light of the CDA movement's radicalism. Finally, the chapter provides an assessment of the potential of the cultural approach to social movement studies and offers some suggestions for further research using this approach; and highlights some lessons about movement building and

debates about values, goals and strategy of particular relevance to CDA movement activists.

Chapter 2: Pushing and pulling into activism

In this chapter, I position the arrival of new participants as a form of growth as expansion, and consider existing studies of individual participation and group movement building practices. In doing so, I situate my research within the relatively well-developed field of social movement studies that addresses participation and recruitment, and identify empirical, theoretical and methodological gaps within it that this thesis aims to address. However, this chapter also looks beyond the boundaries of social movement theory, and draws on the work of ‘movement intellectuals’ (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991), and on organisational theory and small-group research. My reluctance to restrict my conceptual toolbox to one particular theoretical approach is also evident in the way in which I use social movement theory. As we shall see, although the thesis is primarily situated within the cultural approach to social movement studies, and although I am critical of the goal-rational, resource mobilisation perspective which permeates much research on participation and recruitment, I employ concepts when they are useful to the discussion at hand, without rejecting them outright on the basis of their theoretical provenance. In adopting such an approach, I am following Lofland, who argues for “answer-improving not theory-bashing” (1996: 372), and Wall, who cautions against over labouring a particular theoretical approach, which can “suffocate accounts of living movements with lofty, opaque and often irrelevant intellectual baggage” (1999: 15).

The chapter begins by outlining the two broad traditions, linked to North American and European schools of thought, and their key topics of inquiry which have historically dominated the field of social movement studies, and situates the thesis within an emerging cultural, relational approach to study. The bulk of the chapter then provides a closer examination of the study of involvement, recruitment and retention in social movements. The thorny question of how and why individuals participate in social movement activism is subjected to an in-depth analysis. Participation as a search for meaning and micro-structural accounts of differential participation are outlined, and processes of immersion into activism, as well as factors leading to long-term commitment and/or withdrawal, are discussed. Next, I argue that the field of social movement studies has tended to neglect the ways in which participation is actively shaped by movement groups and individuals, and provide an

overview of recruitment and retention practices, drawing on movement-based texts and organisational theory to supplement the limited work available from within social movement studies. In the conclusion to this chapter, I first outline the ways in which this thesis seeks to extend existing research on participation and movement building, by considering what happens after initial points of contact, in terms of newcomers' early experiences of activism and activists' retention practices; and by simultaneously adopting and giving equal consideration to the perspectives of newcomers, experienced activists and the group as a whole. Finally, I draw together arguments made in this chapter with those presented in Chapter 1 in order to describe four unique points of departure for this thesis.

2.1 Approaches to the study of social movements

This section provides an overview of the two dominant approaches to social movement analysis that have emerged over the past 30 years. I begin by discussing the North American tradition, which can be distinguished by its empirically-driven research agenda, its particular interest in the (micro and macro) structures that shape movement emergence and individual participation, and its commitment to the rational subject. I then consider European approaches, which are theoretically-driven, adopt a relational and contextual view of subjectivity, and explore the ways in which social movements respond to and mobilise around the broad tensions and fault-lines that define contemporary society. Finally, I summarise the emerging cultural research agenda that has resulted from, and is in turn producing, increasing engagement between the two perspectives. This cultural approach is interested in exploring the meanings, dynamics and lived experiences of the internal life of movements. Before continuing, a proviso about my categorisation of social movement research into European and North American approaches is warranted. This division is based on a genuinely different approach to research, and is a convention that permeates the literature on social movements. However, I want to emphasise that this geographical labelling is an analytical device, referring to the approach to research rather than its region of origin. Obviously, some studies are conducted by North American scholars within a 'European' research paradigm, and vice versa. Equally obviously, my discussion below is based on an ideal type of each tradition, and many studies would fit more comfortably somewhere in between the two poles.

2.1.1 North American approaches

Until the 1970s, the study of social movements in North America remained a branch of sociological investigations into collective behaviour, with social movement activity understood as one type of collective behaviour exhibited by a particular group as a result of specific grievances. Such behaviour was characterised as the irrational and emotional actions of poorly integrated members of society, with research typically focusing on mobs, crowds and riots (Crossley, 2002a). Whilst such conclusions have now been thoroughly discredited, Crossley (2002a) conducts a useful exercise in reclaiming the productive elements of early collective behaviour theories, focused on seminal research carried out by Herbert Blumer and Neil Smelser during the 1960s. Blumer's explanation for social movement emergence centres on the notion of strains, which cause social unrest as actors are shocked into action when their expectations and habits no longer match social conditions. Through either gradual social change or the active work of 'agitators', agents develop a collective self image and are drawn into collective action. Smelser's work takes this generalised theory and creates an additive model of mobilisation, in which the following elements work together in an interactive, non-linear way to either foster and/or militate against movement formation: type of social system, strains, growth of generalised belief, precipitating factors/events, mobilisation of participants for action, and operation of social control/repression. Crossley (2002a) argues that this kind of research took seriously an exploration of the ways in which agents make sense of and create meaning from struggle, as well as the importance of emotional rationality, both of which were to become lost in later approaches. However, collective behaviour theories paid too little attention to factors such as cultural backgrounds, differential resources available for struggle and inequalities between groups. Moreover, their insistence on hardship and marginalisation as the foundation of movement emergence became empirically untenable with the explosion of the mainly middle-class student movement of the 1960s (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

During the 1970s, resource mobilisation theory emerged in an attempt to both discredit the 'irrational mob' explanations of collective behaviour theorists, and to explain the classic 'free rider' problem of collective action. This perspective sees the individual as rational and detached, calculating the personal costs and benefits of action and inaction based on signals from his or her environment. In this way, taking

part in collective action is explained as a rational decision by actors seeking to maximise material or symbolic rewards, and minimise costs that might accrue due to non-participation (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). In a related theoretical vein, political process theory suggests that social movements are formed as the costs of mobilising decrease due to openings or closings in the political system, mobilising when the system is neither too closed or repressive (in which case the costs would be too high), or too open (in which case social movements would be unnecessary) (Tarrow, 1994). Once mobilisation has occurred, individual organisations emerge, which must compete with one another to gain resources, ranging from the belief and cultural capital supplied by adherents, to the financial and material support required to run an office or a campaign (Zald and Ash Garner, 1987 [1966]).

These early theoretical models have grown in sophistication over the past 30 years through an ongoing process of critique and refinement, as the approach has solidified into the foundation of North American social movement studies. For example, movement emergence is now understood to result not only from opening and closing in political systems, but also from those that occur in wider structures such as media routines, cultural norms and legal mechanisms (Wall, 1999). Comparative studies have also explored how varying types of protest are generated in different countries (Kriesi, 1996). However, the fundamental, mechanistic theorisation of the rational and calculating actor has persisted through successive iterations of North American social movement theory, and lies at the heart of much influential work on framing, networks, movement cycles and repertoires and inter/intra-organisational dynamics. This perspective has been sharply and consistently critiqued as part of a project that extends far beyond social movement studies, which aims to offer an alternative theorisation of agency that does not rely on instrumental rationality and the detached, autonomous actor. As Crossley states, “Agents are not minimal ‘calculating machines’. They are social beings endowed with forms of know-how and competence, schemas of perception, discourse and action, derived from their involvement in the social world” (2002a: 176). Moreover, “movement politics involves more than the collectively rational choice to mobilise resources and act on interests that are transparent to a subordinate group ... it requires discursive construction of interests and identities in an ongoing process of moral and intellectual reform” (Carroll and Ratner, 2001: 605).

Over and above this theoretical critique, resource mobilisation theory has also frequently been found to be unsuccessful in predicting behaviour, which, since it is fundamentally empirically driven, makes the approach all the more problematic (Crossley, 2002a). For example, oppressed and poorly resourced groups do not necessarily need access to elite resources to mobilise, as demonstrated by the successes of civil rights groups and direct action networks (Wall, 1999). Equally importantly, participation in social movements cannot necessarily be explained by the promise of either material or symbolic rewards: most forms of activism generate personal economic losses rather than gains, and in many of the less visible types of activism, standard symbolic or cultural rewards are limited, or only circulate amongst a small group of people (Wall, 1999; Plows, 2002). Clearly, self-interest and rational choice alone can by no means account for participation, and we must look for other sources of motivation.

Thus, although 30 years of North American research has provided us with a productive view of the internal life of movements, organisations and individual participants, “in the end, the success of the approach has emptied again the social dimension of the mobilization of resources it had first disclosed” (Melucci, 1996: 289). Here, Melucci draws our attention to a critique of North American research as reductive and mechanistic that is more fully developed by others. As Plows argues, “mobilisation is not formulaic ... much social movement literature ... gives the impression that it is providing some sort of formula for mobilisation and the existence of movements ... namely ‘social networks + POS [political opportunity structure] + resources + collective identity = mobilisation!’ ” (2002: 131). McAdam (2003), a leading North American researcher on social movement participation, has also recently critiqued the structural determinism of much of his own tradition, in which a causal factor or regularity is pointed out, but the underlying dynamics that might be able to explain the phenomenon remain un-explored. This can be related to the approach’s traditional reliance on quantitative methods and correlative studies, and although ethnographic approaches such as interviews have begun to make an appearance more recently, the underlying positivist thrust to the research remains. Finally, many argue that there is a tendency within the North American tradition to adopt each new theoretical approach, from resource mobilisation, to framing, to networks, as a ‘magic bullet’ theory and to attempt to use it to explain all elements of

movement dynamics, emptying the concept in the process of any useful analytical power (Bevington and Dixon, 2005; Edelman, 2001).

2.1.2 European approaches

European approaches to the study of social movements are closely, if not indistinguishably, associated with the notion of new social movements. The ‘new’ social movements (NSMs) are those that emerged from the 1960s student movement and include the environmental, peace, animal rights, and women’s movements, amongst many others.⁵ NSM theory emerged as scholars became increasingly dissatisfied with the Marxist insistence on class struggle as the only social movement and as the fundamental agent of societal change (Crossley, 2002a). The activities and ideologies of the NSMs made it clear that seizing state control was no longer the primary objective. Rather, corporations, the public and the self were now equal if not more important targets of social movement activity (Doherty, Paterson and Seel, 2000), and the challenge they presented was cultural as well as material, and about autonomous identities as much as material equality (Hetherington, 1998).

In seeking alternative theorisations of struggle and conflict, European NSM research therefore draws heavily upon contemporary social theories that describe the often problematic characteristics and consequences of life in late modern society under industrial capitalism. Scholars such as Giddens (1991) suggest that modern institutions and abstract systems have created existential isolation and personal meaninglessness, in which people’s daily routines are empty and separated from the moral resources that are needed for a satisfying life. Habermas, meanwhile, argues that modernity is characterised by the ‘colonisation of the lifeworld’, in which the penetration of state control into all aspects of personal life causes a loss of personal freedom and of cultural and symbolic meaning, which both creates grievances and ignores the consequent public pressure (Crossley, 2002a). Melucci (1996) further contends that the impacts of extended control by power structures (including but not limited to the state), combined with the individualisation which has occurred as we have shifted from being members of groups to isolated individuals, results in a

⁵ Long-standing but relatively fruitless debate surrounding the ‘newness’ of these social movements, which clearly have roots that extend far beyond the 1960s, can be dispensed with by positioning NSM theory not as an attempt to explain these particular movements as somehow different to older movements, but as an exploration of the tensions which define contemporary societies and around which such movements mobilise (Crossley, 2002a; Doherty, Paterson and Seel, 2000).

constant search for autonomy and self-realisation. NSMs thus mobilise around the understanding that “the very foundations of society are at stake or in contest” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 27). NSM activity reveals, interprets, resists and demands debate around these deep seated tensions in society, and seeks to “challenge the basic presuppositions and organising principles which fuel modernity’s juggernaut” (Giddens, 1991: 208). NSM theorists place a particularly strong emphasis on the role of NSMs as ‘cultural laboratories’, in which movement members prefigure the changes they demand, thereby both modelling and producing the knowledge, lifestyles, ways of organising and alternative public spheres of the sought-for better world (Melucci, 1996).

Identity movements have been a particular focus for NSM theorists. The role of identity in NSM theory rests upon contemporary understandings of identity as constructed rather than given, changeable rather than enduring, multi-layered rather than single, and always constructed in relations with others (Hetherington, 1998). Life in late modern society is seen to involve a constant search for self-identity; as more traditional sources of identity have been stripped away, the reflexive project of the self has become open-ended (Giddens, 1991). NSMs are understood as both a response to this loss and a new potential source of identity. In this context, the individual is the fundamental site of change, with daily life representing the front line of struggle (Shepherd, 2002). Thus,

through their action, movements affirm the necessity for addressing the individual dimension of social life as the level where new forms of social control are exerted and where social action originates. They claim for real the bogus priority the day-to-day-experience, affective relations, and the deep motivations of individual behaviour have received in a society that intervenes in the very roots of individual life (Melucci, 1996: 106).

Action on the self is regarded as being as or more important than action on and in the public sphere, and is seen as a core component of NSM activity (Melucci, 1996). NSM activity also involves the reclamation, advocacy and defence of non-given identities, in that NSMs struggle against the notion that chosen or constituted identities are in any way less significant than the identities of birth with which they coexist (Maples, 2000). This type of identity politics is a politics of difference that emphasises and celebrates diversity, choice and resistance; it involves challenging and reclaiming stereotypes and performing and displaying radically different identities (Hetherington, 1998). Here, there are debates about the extent to which such identity

politics can constitute the collective action that defines social movement activity, and appeals to be cautious of overly celebratory analyses of identity-based movements (Scully and Creed, 2005). Whilst in many cases identity activism provides much needed advocacy of diversity and particularity and may offer opportunities for new alliances, it also risks resulting in fragmentation, tribalism, exclusivity and intolerance (Edelman, 2001). Perhaps more importantly, appeals to identity can obscure fundamental struggles over power and material redistribution – in other words, identity politics risks fighting for a particular sense of self rather than attempting to ameliorate baseline conditions of injustice or oppression that cut across diverse selves (Carroll and Ratner, 2001).

With its theoretical foundations rooted in attempts to understand the multi-layered and often problematic conditions of life in late modern society, the European approach offers the potential for a richer understanding of movement origins than does the North American approach (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). However, such a breadth of analysis often does not allow for a detailed examination of specific movement activity, strategy, internal dynamics, and so on. Similarly, European NSM scholarship is theoretically-driven, and there is a marked lack of empirical studies that could offer such a closer look at NSM activity, particularly regarding the ways in which responses to broad social strains are channelled into collective action (Crossley, 2002a). Those European researchers who do conduct empirical work often turn to North American perspectives to provide their theoretical scaffolding (although usually preferring ethnographic rather than quantitative methodologies). European approaches also offer a more convincing theorisation of the subject. Rather than the rational, detached actor that persists in the North American tradition, the European actor is firmly embedded in specific social, cultural and geographical contexts. In interpreting situations and making decisions, the subject makes use of practical consciousness, emotional and communicative rationality, and relational experience gained from embeddedness in the social world (Bedford, 1999; Burgess *et al.*, 2003; Crossley, 2002a; Giddens, 1991; M. Smith, 2001; Whatmore, 1997). This understanding of subjectivity paves the way for a new set of questions to be asked in social movement studies, concerning the ways in which actors interpret and make meaning from their action, based on their integration into specific contexts.

2.1.3 Cultural approaches

It has begun to be acknowledged that a cultural turn is taking place within social movement studies, a shift which has been particularly marked within North American research (McAdam, 2003; Morris and Braine, 2001). Emerging from an increasing dissatisfaction with the reductionist theoretical and methodological approaches that dominated under resource mobilisation theory, and an increasing engagement with European perspectives, a joint research programme is emerging with an interest in exploring the meaning of activism and the lived experience of activists in particular contexts (Edelman, 2001). For North American researchers, this programme is both about applying notions of culture and meaning to micro-structural accounts of activism (Diani, 2003), and developing a more relational, less atomistic perspective (Passy, 2003). For European scholars, the emerging challenge is to apply theoretically rich understandings of societal strains and individual agency to finer-grained analyses of the internal life of movements. Together, this cultural research agenda argues for the need to explore activists' practices and ways of organising in particular contexts and on their own terms, and for the need to understand what activists "get out of what they are doing" (Hetherington, 1998: 38).

In adopting such a contextual view of movements and individual agency, cultural approaches also highlight the communicative and relational nature of social movements, pointing to the need to study both interpersonal interaction as well as the contexts in which these take place. In this approach, social movement groups and networks are understood to be composed of communicative interaction; they are "sets of relations sustained by conversational dynamics within social settings" (Mische, 2003: 259). Such an understanding calls for what Routledge terms 'process geographies'; that is, the study of "processes of interaction and relationship" at work in social movements (2003: 333). Focusing on these interactions can help to reveal a wide range of important and otherwise invisible processes, and the driving factors behind them. Thus McDonald (2002), for example, encourages scholars to move away from studying individuals as isolated units, and consider the important interactions that take place amongst them. For as Plows states, "This is where and how movement praxis and collective identity is forged, re-shaped, revised and reconfirmed ... on the ground in countless interactions between activists" (2002: 378).

Cultural approaches are also about moving beyond sociology as the dominant discipline in social movement research: “Drawing on the insights of feminism and other areas of critical theory, a growing body of research documents the complex (including gendered) identities and contested meanings that shape grassroots struggles” (Mills, 2005: 120). Anthropology, for example, with its interest in culture and lived experience, is very well positioned to take up a more cultural, ethnographic participation research agenda (Chuang, 2004), and although the discipline does engage in social movement research, it unfortunately remains at the sidelines of the field (Edelman, 2001).⁶ Geography also has much to offer, particularly in terms of the contextual, placed dimension to the cultural research agenda (Pile, 1997; Routledge, 2003). Wolford, for example, one of the few social movement scholars to have considered how place and space influence social movement involvement, suggests that participation is “shaped by – and shapes – the way people internalize and engage with their specific material and symbolic spatial environments ... [people’s] cognitive frameworks, both collective and individual, [are] constituted through the lived experiences, perceptions and conceptions of space itself” (2004: 409-410). Doing justice to a contextualised approach to participation also requires that we consider specific movements in particular places, as opposed to trying to develop understandings of participation that work across all movements, issues, and types of activism. As Morris and Braine argue, “theoretical work on social movements has too often assumed that all movements confront basically similar tasks and operate out of the same internal logic. This assumption is problematic when applied to the organizational and material factors structuring movement activity; it completely breaks down when applied to cultural dynamics” (2001: 20).

In the context of celebratory statements about the “triumphant return” of culture to social movement studies (Morris and Braine, 2001: 20), a word of caution is warranted about the risks of unreflexively overlaying elements of a cultural approach onto North American approaches to research, and particularly its flawed theorisation of agency. Melucci (1996), for example, expressed concern that collective identity was being inserted into many studies as a resource to be mobilised, without due consideration of its theoretical origins in the challenges of life in late modern society.

⁶ Moreover, anthropological social movement studies have been critiqued from within their own ranks for being overly focused on sociological abstractions, and neglecting the identities, life histories, relationships between, and individual understandings of activists (Holland and Lave, 2001).

Moreover, as with identity-based approaches, some scholars have cautioned against fetishising the construction of meaning at the expense of due consideration to enduring conditions of power, privilege and inequality (Holland and Lave, 2001; Morris and Braine, 2001). Similarly, some authors worry about romanticising activism, for example in the tendency to see “all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated” (Abu-Lughod in Moore, 1997: 89). Whilst these critics do well to remind us of the need to avoid being overly celebratory, and to remember that social movements are about fundamental issues of power and injustice, they mount no significant challenge to the importance of further pursuing the primary agenda of the cultural approach to social movement studies – that of exploring the experience and meaning of activism in particular contexts and the relational processes that drive movement dynamics.

2.2 Participation and involvement

The question of how and why individuals come to take part in social movement activism is one of the most commonly asked in social movement research, and has generated a vast body of literature. It is also an incredibly complex question to answer, since the influencing factors range from broad societal cleavages to national political structures to local networks to personal biographies, and it ultimately involves gaining an understanding of why people do what they do and are who they are. Whilst there exists within social movement studies a ‘canon’ of sorts that attempts to tackle this question of participation, which is closely linked to North American micro-structural accounts of differential participation, I argue that a more holistic picture of participation can be gained by going beyond this canon to include theorisations of participation as a search for meaning, and activist practices of recruitment and retention. I begin by examining belonging, self-actualisation and self-expression as three needs that denizens of late modern society have found more difficult to meet and which participation in social movement groups may satisfy. However, only some people seek to meet these needs through activism, so the following section considers the question of differential participation, or why, given a broad set of common social circumstances, certain people take part in particular forms of collective action. Five key micro-structural factors are identified and discussed: upbringing, attitudinal affinity or frame alignment, biographical availability, trigger

events, and social ties and networks. Next, models of the ways in which these factors work together in processes of immersion are presented, and frame transformation, learning and identity construction are discussed as ways of theorising initial steps into activism. Factors which lead to long-term commitment and to movement withdrawal are briefly identified to add to our understanding of processes of participation. I conclude the section by arguing that participation cannot be wholly understood from the point of view of the newcomer, and that the social movement literature has neglected the study of the ways in which activists and movement groups actively seek and shape the participation of newcomers.

2.2.1 Participation as a search for meaning

As discussed in section 2.1.2 above, contemporary social theorists have been engaged in a project to suggest that broad social forces make life under late modern capitalism risky and challenging (Beck, 1995; Crossley, 2002a; Giddens, 1991; Melucci, 1996). In this section, I focus on one area of this project, and examine three clusters of human needs that have become more difficult to meet in late modernity, and that people might be seeking to satisfy by joining social movements: **collective identity**, **self-actualisation** and **self-expression**.⁷ Whilst this discussion is therefore clearly linked to European perspectives that position social movements as mobilising around key tensions in society, North American and cultural researchers have also contributed to the explanations for participation presented in this section.

As the fundamental need to belong and to identify as part of a group has become more difficult to satisfy in late modernity, people have had to actively seek out new sources of belonging and **collective identity** (Daloz *et al.*, 1996; Giddens, 1991). Collective identity refers to a shared sense of ‘we-ness’, and involves an individual’s cognitive, moral and emotional attachments to a group and its members (Hunt and Benford, 2004). In its most developed form, collective identity produces a group which is no longer seen as a totality of individuals, but an entity or actor in itself (Melucci, 1996). In order for collective action to have meaning for participants, they must gain some personal fulfilment from it, which Melucci (1996) argues stems primarily from the group’s collective identity. The fact that social movement

⁷ Throughout the thesis, I use **bold** font as a sign-posting strategy in some of the longer sub-sections. Words or phrases are bolded in the introductory paragraph to signal that they represent the key concepts or arguments for the section, and the same term is bolded again when that argument is reached in the text.

participation offers fulfilment of the two key needs of collective identity and belonging has become one of the most broadly accepted factors in explaining why people get involved (Hunt and Benford, 2004), and the construction and maintenance of collective identity has been argued to be one of the primary activities of social movement groups (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

There are several important dimensions to participation in the small communities of social movement activism that facilitate a sense of belonging and collective identity. First, activism is “an affectual form of sociation” that turns upon the emotional experience of closeness (Hetherington, 1998: 53). Changing family dynamics, the isolation of city living, and a host of other factors of modern life can create an unwanted emotional vacuum that can be filled through participation in a social movement community (Wall, 1999). Hetherington compares this to a ‘neo-tribe’, whilst many others describe the way that the family-like characteristics of some social movement groups provide needed emotional belonging and support to their members (Klandermans, 2004). A related appeal is the social life which often accompanies membership in activist networks, and which offers the promise of fun and new friendships or relationships (Plows, 2002). The second dimension involves the ever increasing mediation of personal relationships and the consequent search for authentic, non-instrumental and direct modes of relating with others (Hetherington, 1998). Many empirical studies have shown that a desire for friends, mentors, partners in crime and in debate – those who can understand us and whom we can relate to on an equal and direct footing – is a strong motivator in movement participation (Melucci, 1996; Plows, 2002; Wall, 1999). Finally, a lost sense of unity (Melucci, 1996) is restored in social movement participation through the experience of working together with like minded people towards shared goals (Horwitz, 1994), which importantly are often set against those of wider society.

Thus collective identity is in part built through an oppositional definition to the outside world, which is achieved through active boundary work involving social, symbolic and physical structures and practices that heighten group members’ awareness of their own commonalities (Hunt and Benford, 2004); and is regulated through support, surveillance, rewards and sanctions (Mansbridge, 2001; Zavestoski, 2003). Holding an oppositional collective identity unifies a group, and allows its members to feel secure in the knowledge that even if outsiders ostracise them for failure or oddity, they will find respect and appreciation within the group (Berglund,

1998). Hetherington (1998) suggests that a collective oppositional identity also fosters a sense of moral election, in which people see themselves as members in a chosen group with a more authentic experience, and which advocates a 'better way'.

Although collective identity remains one of the most popular explanations for participation in social movements, some scholars worry that it has become a conceptual 'fudge', used to fill in the gaps in a theory's explanatory power (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2004). Recent work has also argued that the preferred organisational forms of the anti-capitalist/alter-globalisation movements present an empirical challenge to the collective identity thesis (McDonald, 2002). With overlapping, shifting and temporary memberships, often pivoting around one-off actions or mobilisations, McDonald suggests that it is difficult to develop feelings of belonging based on shared traits, goals and experience. Rather than solidarity, McDonald proposes an emotional 'fluidarity' as the means by which individuals find their place within movement groups, which are bound together based on "a shared struggle for personal experience" (2002: 126).

Participation in social movement activism can also be seen as a search for meaningful personal experience. Melucci (1996) describes this pursuit of **self-actualisation** as a reaction to the excesses of modern society, in which materialism, consumption and scientific and technological rationality have replaced and continuously challenge more authentic and spiritual forms of personal fulfilment. Many activists describe a sense of purpose, and a desire to do something meaningful with their life, as one of their primary motivations for participation (Borshuk, 2004). Horwitz defines activists' search to contribute to projects bigger than themselves as 'generativity': "a focus on ... contributing to the future shape of society [and] the wider social and political world" (1996: 45). Wall (1999) adopts a slightly more instrumental view of this search for purpose, suggesting for example that the high unemployment rates in the UK during the 1990s played a role in causing many middle class young people to turn to activism and DIY (do-it-yourself) culture as projects in which they could put their acquired education, skills and talents to good use. Similarly, McDonald (2002) describes the middle class green culture in the United States as an outlet for the expression of cultural capital by, for example, offering opportunities for personal involvement in decision-making. Hetherington goes so far as to suggest that in this context, movement participants are seeking "a means of valorising their own identity as real and significant" (1998: 71).

Thus by participating in social movements, people are seeking self-actualisation, defined by Horwitz as “fulfilling one’s unique potential” (1994: 359). As an activist, one can be a philosopher, an educator, a writer, and a host of other ‘popular experts’, roles which can be difficult to find and occupy in wider society (Eyerman and Jamison, 2001). Movements may offer a wide range of opportunities for personal growth, from acquiring scientific knowledge and practical know-how, to developing a sense of personal and group efficacy, to increasing one’s confidence and interpersonal skills (Mansbridge, 2001). The opportunity for leadership within movements is also an important factor, which can be related to the search for status and distinction (Crossley, 2002a). Finally, people can gain an improved sense of self-worth by participating successfully in a group and gaining approval from others (Shepherd, 2002). Thus movement participation entails a search for personal fulfilment in two different ways: by offering a meaningful outlet for people’s skills and desire to contribute, and by providing concrete opportunities for personal development.

Movement participation can also be a vehicle for more emotional forms of **self-expression** and meaning-making. As part of a project to re-legitimise emotional rationality, social movements have been interpreted as emotional as well as political communities. Melucci (1996) argues that social movements only make sense if understood in the context of the emotional meaning they have for their participants, and that it is this emotional dimension which distinguishes collective action from mere behaviour. Emotions fulfil a range of functions related to participation in social movements, from the micro level at which emotions draw bystanders into a public rally, to the macro level where cultural shifts legitimise certain emotions as rationales for protest (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2004). Some suggest that activism is about generalised anger and rebellion, broadly conceived – against authority, family, or society at large (Pile, 1997; Wall, 1999). People may also be drawn to activism because the type of action in itself offers a source of emotional meaning. Direct action, for example, is exciting, fun, sociable and adrenaline-filled (Mills, 2005; Plows, 2002; Wall, 1999). A number of authors also refer to a nebulous sense of doing something, anything, with activism as an antidote to despair and inertia (Plows, 2002; Shepherd, 2002). In an extract from his field diary whilst conducting research at a protest camp, Anderson characterises it this way:

Now at A/C [Ashton Court] I feel my eff. range is bigger, I'm doing something, I'm part of something wider and I'm not angry – it's good fun, and feeling like I'm doing something. We exist, we cost £, we change passers by attitudes, we make people think. We make the next one harder. We are standing up for what we believe in (2004: 50).

Longer-term affective emotions of love, trust and respect provide the satisfying in-group emotional relationships, collective identity, cooperation, and ease of communication that can help to explain participation and commitment (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2004).

Activism may not only involve the expression of emotions, but also of identities, lifestyles, and (sub) cultures (Doherty, Paterson and Seel, 2000). Hetherington (1998), for example, suggests that social movements can be best understood as expressive communities, in which the performative, aesthetic, and social elements of activism are as or more important than external political influence. However, although these internal and expressive elements of activism are important, this perspective goes too far in conflating activism with lifestyle, and fails to acknowledge either the ethical imperative behind, or “the full social and political significance of contemporary protests” (Szerszynski in Maples, 2000: 133).

This section has dealt with three clusters of ways in which social movement participation may satisfy fundamental human needs by helping people find meaning in their lives, and to construct meaning from their actions. This provides an understanding of some very important driving forces behind participation, but does not account for the diverse ways in which different people respond to these forces. In the UK, and indeed in most of the developed world, we are all experiencing the same conditions of late modernity, and all have the same human needs to belong, develop and express ourselves. However, people can and do attempt to satisfy these needs through participating in a wide range of communities. In order to understand why some people respond to these conditions by taking part in social movement activism, and a certain type of activism at that, the next section therefore discusses ‘differential participation’ or why, given a broad set of common social circumstances, certain people take part in particular forms of collective action (McAdam, 1986). I am not arguing that one or the other approach provides a more accurate or useful portrayal of participation; simply that each answers questions that the other does not.

2.2.2 Differential participation

Explaining differential participation (or differential recruitment) has been one of the central questions that have preoccupied social movement scholars. Why some people get involved in a particular form of activism is a difficult and complex question, and a satisfying answer would ultimately be individually unique, involving processes that work together in a symbiotic fashion, and that are very difficult to tease apart (Lofland, 1996; Mansbridge, 2001). Nonetheless, a comprehensive research agenda stretching back to the 1970s has identified a series of common factors that can help to explain why some people become social movement activists: **upbringing, attitudinal affinity, biographical availability, trigger events, and social ties and networks**. I discuss the role played by each of the five factors in this section, and draw them together in the next to show how they interact in processes of immersion.

In general, activists are not born but made, through lifelong processes of cultural socialisation which influence their disposition to take collective action. Processes of socialisation “provide information about how to act politically, produce political efficacy, and legitimize more extreme political tactics” (Corning and Myers, 2002: 705). The most influential element of cultural socialisation is a person’s **upbringing**, and parents’ fundamental role in shaping a future activist cannot be over-emphasised, both in terms of their own level of awareness and involvement and the way in which they raise their children. Empirical research consistently shows that activists are likely to have parents who were in some way active in political or social projects, and/or who had progressive values (Berglund, 1998; Corning and Myers, 2002; Daloz *et al.*, 1996; Edelman, 2001; Plows, 2002; Wall, 1999). Research also points to the fact that childhood and early adulthood are the most important life phases in the development of an activist. It is during childhood that the fundamental values and orientations that will eventually lead to participation are formed. Early adulthood is frequently characterised as a transitional phase, in which the seeds of an activist identity (including values, attitudes, family dynamics and experiences) that were sown in childhood may receive the fertilisation they need to flower into activism in adulthood (Ball, 1999; Horwitz, 1996). However, socialisation and upbringing alone are insufficient to predict activism, as the different life courses taken by siblings clearly show (Wall, 1999).

In the early literature on differential participation, the alignment of a person's attitudes and values with a movement's goals, issue focus and ideology – or **attitudinal affinity** (McAdam, 1986) or frame alignment (Snow *et al.*, 1986) – was considered the most important predictor of participation. However, the value-action gap (Blake, 1999) quickly became apparent, and researchers either looked elsewhere to explain participation, or concentrated on refining their thesis. For example, in an empirical study that compared the attitude-based rationales of people who applied to but withdrew from, and those who applied to and attended, the Freedom Summer civil rights activist project, McAdam (1986) found that attendees had more intense and more other-oriented attitudes than those who withdrew. Despite the fact that attitudinal affinity alone has been found to be an insufficient explanation for movement participation, it does play an important role: people's values, attitudes and frames shape how they understand the world and their place in it, and affect the issues people care about, the meanings of how they act, how they attribute blame, how they interpret others' actions, and the form of collective action they are likely to take (Samuelson, Peterson and Putnam, 2003).

The notion of **biographical availability** – the “absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities” (McAdam, 1986: 70) – was developed as an early response to the failure of attitudinal affinity to predict participation. Although empirical studies have met with mixed results in terms of biographical availability's ability to predict participation, the concept has been most usefully applied in terms of the age at which people are likely to be most involved in activism. This tends to be the age at which people have gone beyond the range of their parents' significant influence, but before they become tied down with work and parental commitments that might preclude both the time investment and risks that are involved (McAdam, 1986; Wall, 1999). This has been borne out in empirical studies of the UK environmental direct action movement, in which most people involved in high risk activism were found to be between 25 and 35 (Doherty, Plows and Wall, 2002). Finally, Passy (2003) adds the important point that it is self-perceived, rather than externally-identified, biographical availability that matters, with many parents, for example, continuing to remain active in even risky forms of social movement activity.

Most activists can point to an experience, event, encounter or moment in their lives that played a vitally important role in their journey into activism. Authors describe these **trigger events** variously as moral shocks, epiphanies or crisis points, in which a person's relationship to their social, moral or physical contexts is brought into sharp relief (Alleyne, 2000), or which disrupt the "taken for grantedness" of the world around them (Kempton and Holland, 2003: 333). These are experiences which challenge one's fundamental values (Ball, 1999) and force one to face altered risks and possibilities (Giddens, 1991). There are innumerable types of experiences which, for a particular individual at the right time, might be fundamentally transformative. These range from the large scale, such as experiencing another culture or directly encountering injustice (Ball, 1999; Daloz *et al.*, 1996), to the personal scale, such as the breakdown of the body or the failure of cherished projects (Giddens, 1991). They may include encounters with a meaningful person who acts as a mentor, or with a social movement group, whether the event was designed as a recruitment opportunity or not (Daloz *et al.*, 1996; Plows, 2002). Most people emphasise the urgent need, following the experience, to seek out some form of action, whether it is blowing the whistle on unethical practices at work, going on a demonstration, or joining an activist group. Taking action has been theorised as the necessary final element required to complete the process of transformation (Ball, 1999; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2004). Obviously transformative experiences do not happen in a vacuum; life has come before them, and there must be a 'readiness to change', as evidenced by the fact that often in people's accounts of transformation, the catalyst for change had been present once or many times before, but did not become a transformative experience until the time was right (Ball, 1999).

In recent years, the role of **social ties and networks** in shaping participation has come to dominate the differential participation research agenda. As Diani points out, "the notion that prior social ties operate as a basis for movement recruitment ... [is] among the most established findings in social movement research" (2003: 7). Many go a step further, arguing that since social relations and networks lie at the heart of all of the other factors discussed above, and since the social relations that exist within the networks in which people are embedded shape a person's point of view, and the frames by which they interpret the world, networks are arguably the most important factor in accounting for differential participation (Passy, 2003). According to this view, the networks in which people are embedded play a fundamental role at

all of the stages in the long and complicated journey towards participation. During the early phases, networks are involved in the socialisation processes that shape people's fundamental dispositions. In the middle phases, networks provide the conditions for the frames which shape people's identification with a particular political issue or ideology, thus bringing them culturally closer to the movement; and networks can also solidify or catalyse this identification at critical junctures by providing opportunities for action. At the final stage, the choices about whether to take a specific action or join a particular group are made in relation to others, both within and outside the movement (Passy, 2003). Network theory has progressed from an interest in 'proving the case' for networks as a key factor in predicting participation, to identifying and specifying different types of social ties (eg. formal vs. informal ties, public ties to organisations vs. private ties to individuals, or ties to the movement vs. outside the movement) and their ability to predict different types of participation. The type of tie, its level of strength and directness, and which functions it fulfils all affect both the likelihood of participation and the nature of it once it occurs (Diani, 2004). So, for example, private ties have been found to be the most important factor in influencing the intensity of the resulting participation; the more ties a newcomer has to individuals in the movement, and the more central to the movement those individuals are, the more likely they are to participate; and interpersonal ties become less important to participation as the organisation to be joined becomes more visible (Diani, 2004; Passy, 2003).

However, reading the n^{th} correlative study concluding that x social tie leads to x type of participation begs the question: what processes make it so and how do they work? The subjects, relationships, practices, strategies and processes at work in these networks remain a black box, and recently there have been a number of calls for research that identifies and unpacks these processes. Mische (2003), for example, calls for flesh to be put on the bones of these untheorised social ties, by studying them within the practical contexts of activist groups. Corning and Myers (2002), meanwhile, call for the need to explore the processes by which people become integrated into social movement networks, as opposed to continued studies that prove that networks do indeed prompt people to act. These calls are not restricted to network theories of differential participation, with McAdam (2003) highlighting a more general need for qualitative studies of the interactive dynamics that can explore and help to explain structural findings relating to movement processes such as

participation. As yet, there have been few responses to these research calls (*cf.* Mische, 2003 for an exception), and this is one of the key gaps in the literature that this research aims to fill.

2.2.3 Becoming an activist: trajectories of involvement

‘Joining’ a movement is not a discrete occurrence with firm boundaries, but an ongoing process of immersion. Many researchers have attempted to understand how the factors discussed in the previous section work together to shape this progression into activism. I begin this section by outlining an influential **stage model** of involvement. Next, I will summarise three different approaches to understanding the process: **frame transformation**, **learning** and **identity construction**. The section will conclude with a discussion of explanations for long-term activist **commitment** and for **withdrawal** from movements.

McAdam’s early (1986) **stage model** of the involvement process, whilst holding problematic assumptions about attitudinal availability as the starting point for activism, remains highly influential (see Figure 2.1). Essentially, a combination of socialisation, attitudinal availability and trigger events leads to an initial contact with activism, after which the newcomer builds more social ties to and gets further drawn into the movement, deepens his or her ideological commitment, goes through personal change, participates in more intense activism, and so on. (McAdam, 1986; 1989). McAdam builds on this model in an attempt to explain the progression to higher-risk activism: once a newcomer has attended a one-off, low-risk event such as a rally (perhaps initially as a bystander, or perhaps having been persuaded by a friend), “each successive foray into safe forms of activism increases the recruit’s network integration, ideological affinity with the movement, and commitment to activist identity, as well as his receptivity to more costly forms of participation” (1986: 70). This model is supported in empirical studies of the UK environmental direct action movement, which show that most participants in high risk Earth First! actions had previously been involved at a lower level of intensity and risk with more conventional organisations such as Friends of the Earth (Wall, 1999).

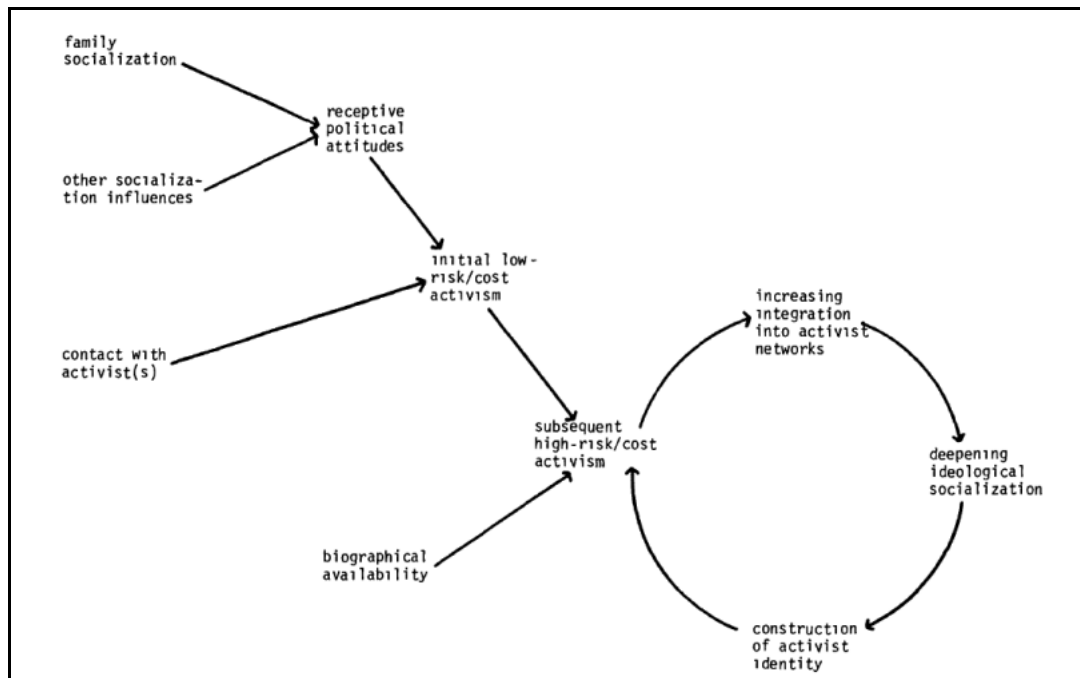


Figure 2.1 McAdam's model of the involvement process

(Source: McAdam, 1986: 69)

McAdam's original model has formed the basis for much analysis of differential participation over the past 20 years. Passy's (2003) updated version shows how this model has grown in sophistication, and incorporated more recent influential concepts from social movement theory, whilst the basic premise remains very similar. According to Passy, socialisation creates an initial disposition to get involved by providing the conditions for the development of frames that create identification with and interest in a certain political issue. As well, social ties with people or organisations help to bring people into 'cultural proximity' with the movement. The latent disposition to act is often translated into action through a specific opportunity or event. Finally, people must overcome barriers to participation in a specific action or group (such as travel costs, lack of time, lack of confidence, fears about repercussions at home or work, concerns about legal consequences, etc.), and the final decision to do so is made in the context of relationships with other people, both within and outside the movement (Diehl, 2004; Passy, 2003).

Although these models provide a useful way to conceptualise how the factors described above work together to draw a newcomer into a social movement, they do not provide much insight into what is happening as newcomers take these initial steps into activism. **Frame transformation** (Snow, 2004) offers one possible avenue to such a greater understanding. As activists become more embedded in the movement,

they undergo a process of frame transformation: fatalism is replaced by efficacy as they come to see themselves and the group they are joining as effective agents of change (Crossley, 2002a, Mansbridge, 2001); the primary agent of action shifts from 'I' to 'we' through the development of collective identity; and issues of concern expand from the more local and personal to the more complex and global (Robinson, 2001). The process of involvement can also be seen as a **learning** process, or a "build-up from a less to a more knowledgeable stage" (Alleyne, 2000: 17) as new knowledge, skills, ideology, worldviews, tactics, rhetoric, symbolic practices and social activities are learned (Wall, 1999). Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1994) identify six dimensions of learning that occur upon entering a new group: becoming proficient in relevant tasks, learning the formal and informal relations and power structures of the group, acquiring the local language and jargon, forming relationships, absorbing the group's goals and values, and coming to know and understand the meaning of a group's traditions, customs, myths and rituals.

Several authors have turned to theories of **identity construction** to understand the process of involvement. Specifically, the concept of identity salience has been applied to understand the inter-locking processes through which an activist identity is constructed. If people are always negotiating amongst multiple, competing and often conflicting identities, how do people develop and then increasingly consistently 'foreground' an activist identity (Holland and Lave, 2001)? In other words, how does 'activist' come to be a salient identity; that is, one that is more acute and ever-present than others, and that is one of the primary ways that people define themselves (Clayton, 2003)? An activist identity becomes more salient when it is drawn on in increasing numbers of situations and as the person becomes more committed to that identity, to the point where it becomes fully integrated across the multiple identities of their self-concept (Zavestoski, 2003). This process of a new identity becoming more salient is described by Holland and Lave (2001) as 'transvestivism': as we play at being the 'other', we are on our way to becoming that other, and since we construct our identities through social interaction, we are always open to being pushed and pulled, "drawn into one transvestivism and then another" (Holland and Lave, 2001: 18).

According to McAdam, who has again been influential here, there are three initial processes in the construction of an activist identity: 1) contact with an activist or other movement advocate creates a positive link between the movement and an

identity which already has some salience for the individual, who then 2) seeks confirmation from people who normally support that identity, and 3) reconciles participation with the demands of counter-identities (and those who would normally support those counter-identities) (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). As newcomers take steps into activism, they begin to identify themselves as actors in that (increasingly familiar, or salient) world by investing themselves in it, taking responsibility and feeling accountable in their involvement. An important moment in this process is when others come to see you as an activist (whatever the initial circumstances in which you have taken on that role) and treat you as such, leading you to start seeing yourself as one, and to start bringing your actions into line with that self-perception (Kempton and Holland, 2003). Because an activist identity is constituted and chosen, it must be continuously reaffirmed and legitimised through action, talk, framing, emotion, interaction and the performance of lifestyles⁸ – all of which also play a critical role in the earlier phases of shaping of an activist identity (Hetherington, 1998; Hunt and Benford, 2004). These practices are also about a search to achieve identity consistency, or “caring about how one’s ... behaviour fits what one claims to be” (Kempton and Holland, 2003: 333), both in terms of achieving a consistent self, and in terms of fitting in to one’s group (Shepherd, 2002).

Although this thesis focuses on the initial phases of involvement, a brief discussion on sustained commitment versus withdrawal can provide additional understanding of the dynamics of involvement. **Commitment** has been theorised as being composed of three dimensions: normative (a moral imperative), affective (emotional and cultural rewards) and continuance (continued participation is encouraged by past investment which makes withdrawal more difficult) (Klandermans, 1997). Commitment may be generated passively, in terms of rewards or features of the group or its members that encourage an activist to remain involved, or actively, whereby activists consciously develop strategies to sustain their participation. Passive commitment mechanisms include feeling that the group or movement is achieving results; receiving positive feedback from other participants; being empowered through action and learning; and taking on greater responsibilities (Diehl, 2004). Active strategies to sustain commitment include cultivating an activist

⁸ In framing terms, frame alignment is not static once achieved, but requires constant reassessment and reproduction (Snow *et al.*, 1986).

identity and social network; managing competing responsibilities, particularly work and family commitments; integrating activism into everyday life; and guarding against burn-out by setting limits on participation and focusing on process rather than outcomes (Downton and Wehr, 1998; Lofland, 1996). Downton and Wehr's study of long-term peace activists concluded that those who were best able to sustain involvement were those who creatively managed their lives around their activist participation.

For the vast majority of movement activists, however, intense involvement does not last forever; one study of the UK environmental direct action movement found that most people did not take part in direct action for more than 10 years (Doherty, Plows and Wall, 2002). Over time, therefore, activists may either shift their focus, often to lower-risk or less intense activity (Plows, 2002), or **withdraw** altogether. In these cases, the processes of immersion discussed in this section occur in reverse, as failures of the social relations required to sustain collective identity and individual commitment cause an activist to partially or fully disengage from the movement (Klandermans, 2004). Potential triggers for exiting include ideological or organisational disillusionment; changing group goals or composition; increases in group conflict, external repression or time demanded; the appearance of new external commitments or new significant others who oppose participation; or changing time of life (Lofland, 1996; Nepstad, 2004). Nepstad (2004) has therefore modified McAdam's (1986) original model of differential participation to show how attitudes, biographical factors, encounters and social networks can work to facilitate disengagement as well as involvement (Figure 2.2).

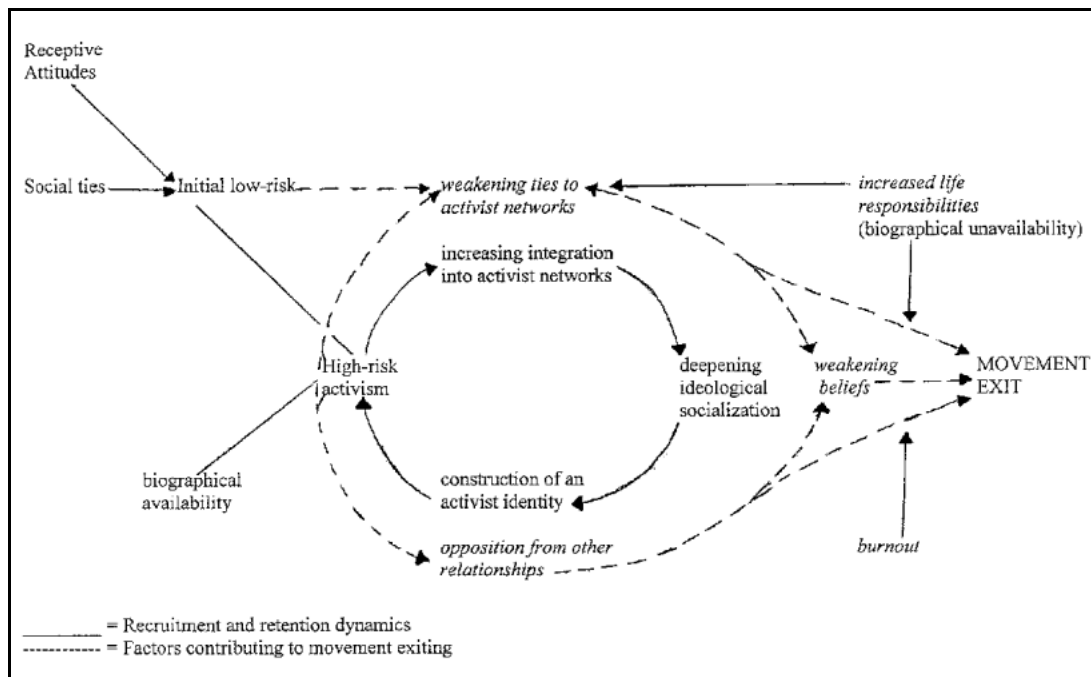


Figure 2.2 Nepstad's model of involvement and disengagement
(Source: Nepstad, 2004: 46)

Whilst the research agenda on trajectories of involvement has yielded a rich array of empirical studies, I would suggest that these suffer from a structural bias. In the attempt to theorise the progression into activism, there is a lingering sense of linearity and universalism, as if the stages in these models could be passed through in a predictable fashion and in a similar way by all participants, and were not marked by discontinuity and diversity. Moreover, despite the attempts that have been made to understand what happens during this progression through theories of frame transformation, learning or identity construction, none of these theorisations offer an account of what it is like to be a newcomer to activism, and to experience these processes. Moreover, I would suggest that existing research on participation emerging from the field of social movement studies considers processes of involvement largely from the point of view of the emerging activist. From individual constructions of meaning in response to broad societal conditions; to attitudes, biographies and social ties; to shifts that occur upon entering the movement, the individual is foregrounded and the movement is backgrounded, as if social movement groups and existing activists played no role in shaping involvement. Even in network-based studies, which have paid considerable attention to the importance and nature of ties to existing activists, these activists and the groups of which they are a part are a blank slate – another empty and untheorised element of participation (Mische, 2003). As Borland

argues, “Participation in social movements has been an area of scholarly interest at the individual level, not the organizational level. The way that SMOs actively structure participation ... has been ignored” (2005: 14). Similarly, Plows laments that there is “hardly any recognition [in the social movement literature] of how hard activists work to achieve these processes [participation], how difficult they are” (2002: 133). I contend that to fully understand the nature of involvement in social movement activism, we must also understand the ways in which movement groups and individuals seek and influence involvement through movement building practices.

2.3 Recruitment and retention

The ‘black-boxing’ of the role of movement groups and individuals in shaping the involvement process is reflected in a notable scarcity of scholarship on recruitment and retention practices. In this section I present the limited body of work that exists on recruitment and retention. I then turn to practice-based texts by and for activists and to organisational sociology as necessary supplements to my conceptual toolbox. Before progressing, it is important to emphasise that ‘recruitment’ is commonly used in the literature to describe the range of factors that lead individuals to get involved, as described above; whereas here I mean the practices of activist groups or individuals that are designed to recruit newcomers to their group or movement. Similarly, retention is often used to describe factors that shape commitment (Nepstad, 2004), whereas I mean activist practices designed to keep newcomers involved.

2.3.1 Recruitment and retention in social movement studies

Recruitment strategies may be mediated through some form of communication or may occur face-to-face, they may take place in either public or private settings (Snow, Zurcher and Sheldon, 1980), and they may be conducted by groups as a whole or by individual activists. Much of the limited research on recruitment takes the form of a catalogue of recruitment strategies. Diehl (2004), for example, identifies door knocking, information stalls, inviting friends and acquaintances and mail shots as common strategies, and discusses how different types of community groups employ different strategies depending on their organisational culture and goals. Hirsch (1990) additionally identifies educational and consciousness raising events, public meetings, teach-ins, rallies and demonstrations, and outlines how different strategies appeal to

different recruitment incentives with, for example, protest events generating empowerment and collective effervescence, and educational events fostering personal transformation and solidarity. Similarly, Cohn, Barkan and Halteman (2003) categorise recruitment incentives that groups can employ into values-based (ideological) and micro-structural (friendship, cultural and solidarity), and argue that groups must provide a range of incentives from both categories in order to interest as diverse a population as possible. Here we can clearly see how accounts of recruitment practice very often slip into a discussion of individual motivations for participation. By these accounts, recruitment appears to be primarily about entry points, or events, interactions or physical places which, either by design or in addition to their primary purpose, connect potential members with opportunities for action or other forms of movement participation.

However, as with network ties above, these are ‘empty’ points of contact. Suggesting that a site or event is a common entry point into a movement begs the question of what happens during these initial contact zones? How and why do these moments cause some newcomers to begin to become ‘liable’ to the ties of activist spaces and values (Anderson, 2004)? How do existing activists interact with newcomers, and what are they trying to achieve? The literature on recruitment and participation offers little in the way of answers to these questions. In studies unrelated to recruitment, a little more insight may be provided. For example, an empirical study of the protest camps of the UK anti-roads movement found that activists organised open days, guided tours of natural areas under threat, children’s activities and musical evenings for local residents. All of these were designed as “techniques to enable locals to meet activists in a familiar, ‘people-friendly’ format” (Seel and Plows, 2000: 122), with the aim of breaking down boundaries through face-to-face discussion, persuading people of the importance of the cause, and ideally encouraging them to join the protest and thereby potentially the movement. In some cases where the protest site was supporting a pre-existing local campaign, activists appointed a ‘grassroots liaison’ to work with local residents, with the aims of encouraging them to take more radical action and to expand their concerns beyond the destruction of their local area to include a wider environmental analysis, in hopes that a radicalised local group would be left behind when the protest camp disbanded (Cathles, 2000; Seel and Plows, 2000). An undergraduate dissertation (De Bruijn, 2005) which examined the different attitudes to recruitment held by student campaign groups on a single campus

prompts another set of questions neglected by social movement theorists: how do social movements feel about recruitment, and how does this vary within and between groups?

Despite a recognition that a social movement group's success is largely defined by whether its organisational arrangements serve to retain members (Kanter, 1968), there is a similar, if not greater scarcity of research on retention (Nepstad, 2004) – perhaps partially because there is a case to be made that movement groups themselves often pay less attention to retention than they do to recruitment (Lofland, 1996). Retention, or the practices designed to help newcomers get and stay involved beyond initial contact or entry points, has also been referred to as 'cultivation' (Lofland, 1996) or the 'stickiness problem' (Albert, 2002). Again as with recruitment, the limited research on retention tends to work backwards from the individual's point of view, asking what group factors or practices produce commitment and what psychological mechanisms can be appealed to, rather than considering practices from a group perspective, or asking activists what they do to retain members. For example, Kanter's (1968) early research on commitment in religious intentional communities identified commitment-producing group processes such as material sacrifice and renunciation of external emotional ties upon joining, communion (offering meaningful experiences of collectivity that tie the self to the group), mortification (the exchange of a private identity for a group-controlled collective identity) and surrender (whereby individuals give up their decision-making power to the greater good of the group). A more recent study argued that for retention to occur, participants must feel good about their group: the creative opportunities it provides, its support for an individual's contribution, its pleasant working environment, and its effective organisational and decision-making processes (Downton and Wehr, 1998). Whilst these processes are no doubt important in retaining members, many of them are not explicitly designed to do so.

Nepstad's (2004) work is a rare example of research that attempts to understand retention from a group point of view. She recognises that whilst some individuals can make their way into social movement activism of their own accord, movement groups can help to facilitate initial and continued involvement through retention practices, which must reinforce commitment, as the authors above agree, but also overcome potential exit factors. In terms of reinforcing commitment, Nepstad identifies plausibility structures such as rituals and story-telling that provide support

in times of doubt over efficacy and support in face of external counter-pressures; and community support mechanisms such as retreats and collective living that help to strengthen members' normative commitment and build emotional ties amongst members. With respect to exit factors, retention practices include managing fear through emotion-focused discussions and pre-protest meditation, and offering financial support and child-care for members who faced prison sentences. Nepstad suggests that such active retention practices are particularly important in radical, high-risk movements, where external opposition, activist burn-out and turnover are high, and doubts about efficacy are likely to be greater. However, there is little insight into the diverse attitudes that movement groups or activists hold towards the role of retention or the effectiveness of different strategies, nor of how individual activists interact with newer members or one another to facilitate ongoing involvement. Lofland resurrects Herbert Blumer's work to emphasise the importance of interaction in studying retention:

The gaining of ... members rarely occurs through a mere combination of a pre-established appeal and a pre-established individual psychological bent on which it is brought to bear. Instead, the prospective ... member has to be aroused, nurtured, and directed, and the so-called appeal has to be developed and adapted ... [this] occurs from contact of person with person, in a structured social situation wherein people are interacting with one another (1996: 249).

This brief discussion of research on recruitment and retention within social movement studies has hopefully begun to show that participation is clearly not the result of a one-sided progression (Jordan, Clarence and Maloney, 2005), but of all of the complex processes by which a person is 'pushed' into activism, in combination with an equally important set of movement building processes by which s/he is 'pulled' into activism. This recognition entails an understanding of the recruiting activist as an active rather than a passive actor and of the ways in which members of movements and networks attempt to draw in new participants. However, the existing literature within social movement studies continues to emerge from the perspective of the newcomer getting involved, and does not provide us with a satisfying understanding of the practices and intentions of movement groups and existing activists. I now turn to movement-based texts and the sociology of organisations to provide some purchase on these questions.

2.3.2 Beyond social movement studies: movement-based texts

Perhaps unsurprisingly, since movement building practices are argued to be a core movement activity, taking up as much time as more overtly political or externally focused activity (Corning and Myers, 2002; Hetherington, 1998; Wall, 1999), there is a reasonably substantial and accessible body of advice produced by and for activists about recruitment and retention. This advice may be produced by prominent ‘movement intellectuals’ (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991) such as Michel Albert and Susan George in the form of published activist handbooks; by anonymous individuals on online discussion forums; by groups that specialise in training and capacity building; or by campaign groups for internal use. In many cases, there is a strong understanding of participation, commitment and withdrawal mechanisms as discussed above. For example, Albert (2002) identifies the factors that he feels keep people in movements as opposed to leading them to withdraw, which include being part of a growing community, being appreciated and supported, feeling personal accomplishment and having the sense that one is contributing to a valuable project; versus feeling insecure due to having one’s motives and behaviour questioned, lacking evidence of progress, being confused over what the movement stands for, and finding that needs that were previously met are now going unmet. Albert concludes that a movement must

uplift rather than harass its membership, to enrich its members’ lives rather than to diminish them, to meet its members’ needs rather than neglect them. To join a movement and become more lonely is not conducive to movements growing. To join a movement and laugh less doesn’t yield ever larger and more powerful movements (2002: 143).

Albert also points out the role of movement culture in attracting and retaining a diversity of members, arguing that participation must “provide people full, diverse lives that real people can take part in, not merely long meetings or obscure lifestyles so divorced from social involvement that they preclude all but a very few people from joining” (Albert, 2002: 144).

Activist texts combine this understanding of commitment with a strong emphasis on practical recruitment and retention strategies, and more detailed discussions of what newcomers might be feeling and what activists should do during initial points of contact. George (2004), for example, extends Nepstad’s understanding that only some newcomers can make their own way into activism

without help by suggesting that it is only the most confident newcomers who do not need help, whilst most feel unsure, are concerned about their lack of knowledge and skills, and worry that they are being a burden rather than a help. In order to overcome these more relational challenges, George suggests strategies such as assigning a buddy to each newcomer to offer support and explanation, ensuring that there is social time after meetings, and striving to find appropriate tasks for newcomers. George also provides a set of ‘commandments’ for meetings, which includes providing information about the group on tables and hand-outs, asking newcomers to identify themselves and welcoming them personally, cautioning speakers against the use of jargon, and announcing a next event at the end of the meeting. The checklists for attracting, engaging and keeping members by Friends of the Earth and Seeds for Change provided in Appendix 1 cover much of the same ground. Taken together, these activist texts offer a good understanding of motivations for involvement, barriers to initial participation and exit factors; some initial insight into practical strategies used by groups (and, importantly, individual activists) to recruit and retain new members; and a recognition of the importance of interaction in initial periods of contact. However, these texts do not discuss how these strategies are practiced or what either newcomers or existing activists might be seeking through this encounter.

2.3.3 Beyond social movement studies: group socialisation

Another area of work that can be drawn upon to fill in the gaps left by the social movement literature on recruitment and retention is the sociology of organisations and small groups. Although social movement research and organisational theory have remained largely separate fields, there has been a recent effort to draw the two closer together, with Davis and Zald noting that “the basic dynamics of collective action are common across movements and organisations, and both confront similar “human resource challenges” such as recruitment, retention, socialisation, coordination, and so on” (2005: 349). Whilst the extent of this commonality is questioned by some, a point to which I will return in the conclusion to this section, for the moment I want to focus on organisational theory’s concept of **socialisation**, and the ways in which it can enrich our understanding of **newcomers’ experiences**, and of **retention** practices.

Socialisation can be defined as “a process of mutual adjustment that produces changes over time in the relationship between a person and a group” (Moreland and

Levine, 2001 : 69). Using their stage model of group socialisation, Moreland and Levine have pursued a decades-long research agenda into the processes by which a newcomer becomes integrated into a prospective group (Moreland, 1985; Levine and Moreland, 1994, 1999; Levine, Moreland and Choi, 2001; Levine, Moreland and Hausmann, 2005). Unlike much of the counterpart research within social movement studies, their research acknowledges that a newcomer's experience is fundamentally shaped by the attitudes and practices of existing group members, and recognizes that groups practice not only recruitment (to achieve initial participation), but socialisation (to integrate newcomers). In Moreland and Levine's account of socialisation, both the group and the individual attempt to change each other to maximise their goals and needs, respectively. In the process, five stages are passed through: investigation (as the newcomer sizes up the costs and benefits of participation and compares the prospective group to their previous experiences, and as the group attempts to determine if the newcomer is an appropriate group member); socialisation (as defined above, and in which newcomers alter their self-concepts to include the new group membership); maintenance (in which the group and the individual negotiate to find an appropriate role for the new participant); re-socialisation (following a potential divergence point which could lead the newcomer to drop out, the group and newcomer attempt to restore their previous goal and need attainment); and remembrance (following exit, both the group and the individual reflect on and evaluate the now-ended relationship). In many groups, each of these phase transitions is marked by a ritual or other milestone, which tests and increases newcomers' commitment, provides information and advice, validates their knowledge and position in the group, and facilitates their identity transition (Levine, Moreland and Hausmann, 2005).

Obviously, Moreland and Levine do not have a monopoly on the concept of socialisation, and more recently some have adopted a slightly less goal-rational and competitive perspective. For example, Haski-Leventhal and Bargal develop a similar stage model of socialisation, but describe the process as one of sense-making in which, "as a person enters a new and unknown organisation, s/he tries to make sense of what is revealed by collecting social cues and information" (2008: 69). Haski-Leventhal and Bargal critique standard models of socialisation for failing to "elaborate on the person in the process and on the transformation of perceptions, attitudes and behaviour" (2008: 70) and set out to describe the common emotions,

relationships, perceptions, motivations and commitment levels at each stage. For example, emotions shift from excitement mixed with fears and fantasies before entry, to avoidance and frustration as a newcomer, to the highs and lows of established involvement, to fatigue and detachment as participants progress towards exit, and conclude with sadness and relief following withdrawal. Meanwhile, satisfaction and commitment levels start low, peak during emotional involvement, and tail off towards retiring; whilst attitudes to volunteering shift from romantic idealism before entry, to limited idealism as a newcomer, to realism and cynicism as an established volunteer. In terms of relationship to the organisation, newcomers feel marginal, become increasingly important during emotional involvement, and are influential and central in the organisation at the established phase. Although Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) emphasise that stages are not reached simply as a result of the passage of time but due to events and processes, in a similar fashion to the theorisations of the progression into activism discussed above, there is a sense of linearity to their account that does not seem to allow for the possibility that these emotions might be felt by participants at all lengths of involvement, or that all these emotions might be felt at the same time, or that different newcomers might experience the stages very differently (*cf.* Woodsworth, 2008).

Thus the concept of socialisation can offer purchase on **newcomers' experiences**, behaviours and strategies – not as neophyte political activists, but as newcomers to the social relations of a particular group. Being new to a social group is understood to be full of uncertainties, with newcomers spending the majority of their time and effort observing others, seeking clues as to how to behave and interact, and attempting to find their niche, or “a secure position from which to operate” (Mills, 1984: 83). Because newcomers are constantly on the alert for changes that they should be making to their behaviour in order to fit in to the group, being new is often characterised as a difficult, stressful and anxiety-ridden experience within the literature on small groups and organisations (Brown, 2000). Newcomers therefore seek to leave their marginal status behind and assume a more central position as quickly as possible, which promises a greater sense of belonging, increased control over one's environment, and a more positive self-identity (Levine, Moreland and Hausmann, 2005). Historically, organisational theorists have taken the opposite path to social movement scholars by foregrounding the role of the group in integrating new members, and neglecting individual agency. More recently, socialisation scholars

have begun to acknowledge that newcomers can actively shape their own involvement through strategies of ‘self-socialisation’. These strategies include performing the role of newcomer as expected; seeking information, which may be achieved either overtly/actively or covertly/passively and includes tactics such as asking questions, comparing one’s behaviour to others’, and observing and mimicking veterans’ actions and interactions; seeking mentors for interpretation, advocacy and emotional support; and collaborating with other newcomers for information, advice and mutual support (Levine and Moreland, 1999; Scott and Myers, 2005). Progressing beyond newcomer status depends on both the individual, in terms of his or her personality, versatility and previous experience (Mills, 1984) and the group’s composition, in that newcomers tend to self-categorise, and the greater the experience of others in the group, the longer it will take to stop feeling new (Levine and Moreland, 1994).

Socialisation can also enrich our understanding of all the ways a group strategically acts with and on a newcomer, including but going beyond **retention**. Thus a group’s aim through socialisation is not simply to ensure that a newcomer does not leave, but to increase the newcomer’s skills, motivation and commitment, and to assimilate newcomers into the group’s culture, norms and values. Existing group members monitor a newcomer’s behaviour, and if it violates group norms or does not live up to group expectations, they may reduce a newcomer’s responsibilities or punish them in some way for their mistakes (or increase responsibility and offer rewards if a newcomer performs well) (Levine, Moreland and Choi, 2001). Thus socialisation theories recognise the extent to which individual group ‘oldtimers’ shape a newcomer’s experience: “newcomer socialization cannot succeed without the active cooperation of oldtimers, and this cooperation depends on their commitment to the newcomer” (Levine and Moreland, 1999: 273). In other words, not all newcomers are created equal, and certain factors increase oldtimers’ willingness to spend time and energy (which must be taken away from other tasks) socialising the newcomer. These include relevant skills and knowledge; prior familiarity with the group or a similar group; demonstrable commitment to the group and high motivation to be accepted; personality (adaptable, autonomous, reasonably high self-esteem); and demographics (age, class), with veterans more motivated to help newcomers who are similar in some ways to them (Levine, Moreland and Choi, 2001). Research on group socialisation also begins to show that attitudes to socialisation and its importance and effectiveness may vary. For example, it has been found that previous experience of trying to

socialise newcomers may affect future efforts, in that a negative past experience may cause a group member to be less willing to spend time in the future on socialisation, or demand higher criteria for entry (Levine, Moreland and Choi, 2001). Thus whilst a socialisation perspective does not identify practical retention practices in the way activist texts do, it does, unlike social movement theories of recruitment and retention, include an individual and interactional as well as a whole-group perspective. Moreover, it prevents an overly celebratory analysis of retention, in that it shows that existing group members act strategically on newcomers based on their own set of interests and experiences.

Organisational theories of socialisation thus offer a much-needed extension of the understanding of recruitment and retention provided by the social movement literature by foregrounding the actions, interests and strategies of the group and its members. Whilst recent attempts to apply organisational theories to social movement studies are therefore potentially productive, important theoretical and empirical challenges remain. Theoretically, socialisation research specifically and organisational studies more generally are largely based on a competitive, resource mobilisation model and a rationalist understanding of individual human agency, which have been the subjects of a sustained theoretical critique (see section 2.1.1). The language of competition and goal-rationality is strongly in evidence, in which socialisation is conceptualised as a power struggle between the group and the newcomer, as each seeks to maximise their separate needs (Levine, Moreland and Choi, 2001). Successful socialisation is seen to be different for the group and the individual, with little room for the possibility that the process may be mutually beneficial, or that newcomers and oldtimers may want to cooperate out of shared human empathy or towards goals that extend beyond the organisation.

Much of this may stem from the fact that empirically, the vast majority of socialisation research is focused on work contexts and organisations as business enterprises. Thus there may well be limits on the extent to which organisational theories can be applied in social movement contexts. Both the character of the organisation and the experience of entry may differ in significant ways between social movement participation and employment in a business, with the former having a higher level of organisational ambiguity (less clearly defined goals, diffuse target audience, organic organisational structure and absence of membership criteria), and fewer training and socialisation processes (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Haski-

Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). An aim of this research, therefore, is to consider these processes not only within a non-work context, but within the vastly heightened ‘organisational ambiguity’ of the CDA movement, in which the active rejection of hierarchies and the embracing of autonomous, fluid organising processes is a core value. Finally, attempts to integrate organisational and social movement studies have tended to retain the quantitative, macro-scale methodological preferences of organisational behaviour theorists, which struggle to provide a fine-grained analysis of the internal life of groups (Lounsbury, 2005).

2.4 New avenues of inquiry into involvement and retention

This chapter has provided an overview of attempts by social movement theorists to answer the key question of why and how individuals join and stay in social movements, and has laid out a series of conceptual tools with which to begin to approach the question of why and how groups and individual activists seek to involve newcomers in their movements. Throughout, I have pointed out theoretical and empirical shortfalls of the approaches covered, and where possible have sought to supplement these deficits with alternative approaches or lines of inquiry. However, in doing so I would like to suggest that two absences in the available literatures have been highlighted: an experiential account of the early days of participation, and an adequate theorisation of individual and group retention practices and their meanings in the (radical) social movement context.

In regards to the former, the social movement literature summarised above provides a good understanding of the long and complicated process by which an individual comes to the point of first contact with a movement, the shifts in identity, knowledge and frames that follow and, at the other end of the temporal spectrum, what causes an activist to commit to a movement over the long term or to withdraw. What is largely absent from this discussion is an experiential, ethnographic account of what it feels like to be a newcomer to social movement activism. In general, “differential participation after recruitment remains a black box in the social-movement and voluntary-association literatures” (Cohn, Barkan and Halteman, 2003: 311). Cohn, Barkan and Halteman conducted an empirical study of a professionalised NGO in an attempt to redress this absence, and concluded that the determinants of post-recruitment participation mirror those at work before initial involvement (see Passy and Giugni, 2000 for a similar argument, and Snow *et al.*, 1986 for a counter-

argument). However, this study simply investigated predictors and determinants of participation in a new context, and provided no further insight into the experience of being new. Whilst there are no shortages of biographies of activists' lives or ethnographies of movement groups, which tell rich stories of what it is like to be an activist, none make initial participation a key focus.

Organisational sociology provided some additional purchase on the experiences and strategies of newcomers and the stages they pass through on their way to becoming full members, but these tales continue to be told from a god's eye view rather than with an ethnographic gaze, and focus on observed behaviour and learning rather than lived experience: "organizational socialization research has focused on how newcomers learn to think and act rather than how they feel" (Scott and Myers, 2005: 68). Moreover, the work-based context for most socialisation research makes productive comparisons problematic. Haski-Leventhal and Bargal's recent (2008) research on the organisational socialisation of volunteers is one exception, although there are arguably as many differences in context between a company and their professionalised non-profit group as there are between that group and the fluidity of autonomous CDA networks. This thesis, therefore, aims to offer a first-hand, experiential account of the early stages of activism in a specific context, and answer questions such as: What does it feel like to be a newcomer to radical climate activism? How do newcomers encounter and make sense of the defining features of a particular social movement? How do newcomers react to and interact with existing activists? What does it take to no longer feel new and to become a fully involved member of an activist group?

With respect to retention, the second silence within the social movement literature, as I argued above, the field has been guilty of viewing participation as a one-sided process, and neglecting the ways in which activist groups and individuals seek and shape involvement through processes of interaction. As Jordan, Clarence and Maloney acknowledge with respect to their case study group, the RSPB is "not simply the fortuitous passive beneficiary of pro-bird opinion ... it has actively stimulated, generated and cultivated this level of support" (2005: 144). However, very little research has been conducted on the retention practices by which this is achieved.⁹

⁹ It should also be noted that relevant research has been conducted in related fields, such as union organising (Twiddy, 2003), dues-paying members of political pressure groups (Jordan, Clarence and Maloney, 2005: 144), and underground cults (Shupe and Bromely, 1979).

What little exists tends to continue to adopt the individual newcomer's perspective, considering the group as a passive generator of commitment mechanisms, rather than an active agent of recruitment and retention (Nepstad, 2004), and failing to differentiate between the possible differences in practice between groups and individuals. Thus there is a dearth of conceptual tools in the social movement literature with which to understand why and how both individual activists and movement groups seek to involve newcomers, and what meanings such retention practices hold for movement participants. Activist texts provide a useful identification of the practices in use and point out the importance of interaction between newcomers and more experienced activists, but are primarily restricted to checklists of useful strategies. Organisational theory provides important insights in this area, in terms of highlighting the diverse ways in which both groups and individuals act upon newcomers and what each might be seeking in this interactive encounter, and pointing out that attitudes to retention may vary. However, organisational theory has empirical and theoretical limitations in its applicability to the social movement context as discussed above. The approaches discussed in this chapter, therefore, either do not offer a balanced perspective between the individual newcomer, the group, existing members and the interactions between them; or do not offer an in-depth examination of both the practices in use and the meanings they hold for participants. This thesis attempts to do so, through a synthesis of the different analytical advantages and issue foci offered by social movement studies, activist texts and organisational studies.

This thesis aims to extend the social movement literature on participation and retention in three key ways. First, this thesis answers calls for qualitative, ethnographic studies of movement processes such as differential participation (McAdam, 2003); for research that explores the dynamic, relational processes by which newcomers are integrated into activist groups (Corning and Myers, 2002); and for flesh to be put on the bones of the untheorised social ties at work in network theory (Mische, 2003). In doing so, I also draw on relevant insights from the field of organisational studies, acknowledging and keeping at arm's length its competitive, goal-rational theoretical underpinnings.

Second, rather than studying individuals (or groups) as isolated units, this thesis seeks to consider the relationships amongst them. Specifically, I do not foreground either the newcomer (as social movement research has tended to do) or the prospective group (as organisational studies have tended towards) but aim to hold

multiple perspectives simultaneously, and consider equally the experiences and understandings of newcomers, movement groups and individual activists. This thesis therefore considers questions such as: What happens in and how do both parties experience early interactions between newcomer and movement? How well do existing activists and newcomers understand one another, and what are they each seeking through the encounter?

Third, the thesis adopts a different temporal focus to the majority of social movement research on participation, asking not how individuals come to get involved (or stay over the long term), or how recruitment practices help to get them to that moment, but considering what follows initial points of contact. This temporal focus, in combination with the cultural approach's interest in the relational processes at work in social movements, means that the thesis emphasises not only newcomer's early experiences over differential participation, but also retention over recruitment practices.

2.4.1 Research questions and rationale in context

As outlined in Chapter 1, the over-arching research question for this thesis is: How does a radical social movement grow? Additionally, based on the research reviewed in this chapter, and the overview of studies on movement growth presented in Chapter 1, we can now identify three empirical gaps in the social movement literature, which are reflected in the sub-questions for this project:

1. How do newcomers experience, enter and make sense of the CDA movement, and what can this tell us about movement building and growth?
2. How and why do movement groups and individuals act upon newcomers, and how is this interaction experienced?
3. How are movement building and growth perceived, negotiated and experienced?

In these first two chapters, I have also been constructing an argument to suggest that there are empirical and theoretical shortfalls in both meso (group and movement) and micro (individual) level studies of movement growth, which I aim to address in this thesis. I additionally set out to investigate how our understanding of each can be extended by considering them in light of the others. Accordingly, these research questions are linked; for example, I propose that newcomers' experiences may be more fully understood in relation to movement building practices that are designed to

shape those experiences; or, that movement building practices may be more fully understood by considering attitudes to growth. Together, I ask whether, and if so how, answering these sub-questions can shed new light on the nature of growth as expansion, and of growth as change, in a radical social movement.

In answering the over-arching question and three sub-questions, this thesis aims to make a unique contribution in four ways. First, I take an experiential rather than a structural approach to investigation. This thesis is situated within the emerging cultural approach to social movement research. Accordingly, it adopts a contextualised and relational view of human agency, and seeks to avoid the flaws that continue to plague research emerging from resource mobilisation-based North American perspectives, whilst maintaining a close focus on the internal life of movements in particular contexts, which the European tradition has struggled to provide. Moreover, I contend that much of the social movement studies literature on participation, retention and growth suffers from a structural bias, and does not adequately address the views, experiences, actions and interactions of movement participants. In the search to theorise complex processes such as movement and organisational development, or trajectories of involvement, a structural approach masks the diversity and complexity of real-life experiences, and does not account for the agency of participants in shaping the movements of which they are a part. Whilst structural theorisations have helped to identify important dynamics, and to suggest ways in which they might work together, there is a need to investigate what happens in practice, and to understand and account for the tensions and contradictions we may find there.

Second, I explore old territory in a new way by asking questions together which have previously only been asked separately, which in turn raises new questions. I unite an investigation of movement and organisational growth processes with the movement building practices that seek to achieve this growth, and the experiences of newcomers whose arrival produces growth. In doing so, questions are raised such as: Do movement building practices produce growth, and if so how? To what extent and in what ways do these practices influence individual newcomers' experiences of participation? Moreover, I explore these questions by drawing together the perspectives of newcomers, groups and individual activists, rather than considering them as isolated units.

Third, these questions are pursued through an in-depth case study of a radical social movement. The CDA movement is radical in its politics and its tactics, and is characterised by a particularly high degree of ‘organisational ambiguity’. To date, theorisations of retention and growth, and to a lesser extent of participation, have been biased towards more formal, professional and reformist movements and organisations. This thesis investigates the extent to which the experience of being new, how movement building is conducted and how growth is negotiated, and what all of these processes mean to participants, are influenced by the CDA movement’s radicalism and its organisational ambiguity.

Fourth, these lines of inquiry are pursued with an insider, ethnographic methodology. The ethnographic approach facilitated both the experiential, in-depth investigation of a particular social movement, and the understanding of the multiple perspectives of newcomers, groups and individual activists, that this thesis argues for. My position as an insider to and long-term activist within these communities additionally allowed for both a broad and deep understanding of the CDA movement’s goals, claims, practices and composition, and unique access to a movement that has been historically resistant to academic research(ers). I will now turn to a full discussion of the methodological framework for this thesis.

Chapter 3: Researching CDA networks

In this chapter, I will outline the research design I employed to explore questions of involvement, growth and movement building, and suggest why the approach and methods I chose are both appropriate to my research questions. I begin by locating my approach to research within ethnographic, insider and action-based methodological traditions. I then offer a discussion of my two primary methodological tools, participant observation and in-depth interviews, and summarise the ways in which these methods fit together to form a productive research design. Next, I recount my ethnographic journey, from identifying the case study sites to recruiting and interviewing participants. I then discuss the collaborative nature of the research, outlining the ways in which I sought input from my participant community in developing the project, and the dissemination of research findings. Ethical dilemmas involved in insider, activist research are then discussed, including issues of security in studying direct action networks, and of transparency and ‘being critical’ in insider research. Finally, I chart the process I followed in analysing and writing up the resulting data.

3.1 Approaches to inquiry

The location of my theoretical framework within the cultural approach to social movement studies implies certain methodological choices, which will be discussed in the following section; but it also shapes my wider approach to knowledge, positionality and purpose in the research enterprise. In other words, insight on my research questions could have been gained in a very different manner, and it must be acknowledged that a research design is guided by politics and preferences as well as theory and practicalities. The cultural turn in the social sciences has had profound implications for the relationship between the researcher, the researched and the academy; for what is considered valid and valuable in academic research; and for what researchers can know and claim to know (Aull Davies, 1999; Crang, 2002). These shifts have opened up valuable and productive new avenues for research, and have paved the way for the qualitative, collaborative, insider inquiry undertaken in this project. I begin in this section by locating the research within a more long-standing, ethnographic tradition. I then move on to discuss the advantages

and disadvantages of a collaborative approach to research, and conclude the section by suggesting that my insider status allows for a unique perspective on the CDA movement.

3.1.1 Qualitative and ethnographic

This thesis aims to study the internal life of a particular social movement; the dynamic and relational processes through which newcomers (are encouraged and assisted to) become involved in new groups; and the agency of movement participants as the architects of movement and organisational dynamics. Moreover, it aims specifically to answer calls for ethnographic, qualitative studies of the dynamics that shape participation (McAdam, 2003). Given these aims, as well as the study's theoretical positioning within the cultural tradition and its grounded theory approach, a qualitative, ethnographic research framework is evidently called for. As Crang makes clear, qualitative methods are now mature, if not "the new orthodoxy" (2002, 2003, 2005), and justifications of the validity of an approach that values depth over breadth, and multiple and potentially conflicting understandings over representativeness are no longer required. Whilst my choice of a collaborative, insider approach and specific qualitative methods may call for some validation, the overall qualitative framework does not.

What is required is to set out my understanding of what an ethnographic approach seeks to achieve: an understanding of the community under investigation from the point of view of, and via extensive engagement with, its members (Cook and Crang, 1995). Further, such a qualitative approach implies an "intersubjective understanding of knowledge, in-depth approach, focus on positionality and power relations, [and] contextual and interpretative understanding" (Dwyer and Limb, 2001: 6). Thus qualitative ethnographers do not seek unimpeded access to the 'true' thoughts, feelings and actions of participants, but view the research encounter as a two-way co-construction of knowledge. More broadly, ethnographic inquiry does not seek to discover and communicate ultimate truth or reality, and research outputs are understood and valued as being fundamentally shaped by the interpretations of an active, rather than objective and detached, researcher (Atkinson and Coffey, 2003; Hobson, 2001).

3.1.2 Collaborative

Collaborative research methods, often grouped under the umbrella term ‘action research’, are broadly concerned with practical outcomes, new ways of understanding and new capacities to create knowledge (Reason and Bradbury, 2006b).

Action research:

- Engages with people in collaborative relationships.
- Responds to practical issues in the lives of people in communities.
- Draws on many ways of knowing in terms of methods and research outputs.
- Is value-oriented, seeking to address issues of significance.
- Is a living, emerging process which develops as those engaged deepen their understanding of the issues and develop their capacity as inquirers.
- Is inherently value laden, practised with the intent to create positive changes in the world (Reason and Bradbury, 2006a).

Readers will recognise close links in this definition to the feminist research tradition’s interest in abandoning value neutral inquiry in favour of working to improve the situation for the researched, who are considered active actors on an equal footing to the researcher (Roseneil, 1993). Action research is also closely associated with activist research, in which “activism [is] an explicit strategy and outcome of research and vice versa” (Pain, 2003: 652). There is a long tradition of ‘activist-academics’ who combine the two roles, occupying a “third space of critical engagement” (Routledge, 1996: 411) between activism and academia. Although this can be a challenging position to occupy, particularly given activism’s well-known limited tolerance for, and sometimes outright hostility towards, the academy (Halfacree, 2004), Routledge (1996) argues that it allows for a possibly more incoherent, but equally more insightful consideration of the actors who are studied.

An action research approach is particularly suited to my project’s emphasis on social practice in that it combines three key modes of inquiry *through* practice:

First-person research in the midst of practice involves widening our awareness to include possible incongruities among our intent, our strategy, our actual performance, and our effects. Second-person research in the midst of a conversation or team meeting involves speaking in ways that encourage mutual inquiry and mutual influence. Third-person research in the midst of organizational practice can entail revisioning the collective’s future, transforming strategies to meet the emerging area, or recrafting members’ practices and existing assessment procedures. (Torbert, 2006: 207)

In this understanding, action research offers several theoretical and empirical advantages for a project such as mine. First, it suggests a focus on practice,

performance, intent and effects, all of which are critical to my research interest in the practice and experience of retention processes on the part of experienced and novice activists respectively, and the extent to which each understands the other. Second, it suggests an aim to help immediate colleagues and one's wider community to study, learn from and if appropriate attempt to 'recraft' practices and strategies. Finally, it suggests that in action research one is free to study, learn from and improve one's own practices.

To the activist-academic researcher, action research also offers the appeal of bridging the divide between research and practice: since it involves theorising with and for rather than theorising on respondents (Roseneil, 1993), who often become partners in the research process and who have some stake in its outcomes, 'real-world' applicability is in some ways built in to the project (Reason and Bradbury, 2006a). Pain (2003) suggests that increased participation, improved data quality, and greater likelihood of uptake of research recommendations are bound up together in mutually reinforcing ways. Thus the more a project is guided and participated in by the group concerned, the better placed the research will be to feed into the participant community's actions and decision-making. As an activist seeking to create social change through collective action, I hope through this study to be able to contribute to building movement capacities, and I am aware that if I had conducted my research without the participation of fellow activists, the impact that the project could have in this regard would be much reduced.

A dilemma that remains within the field of action research is what level of participation is required for a project to be considered 'collaborative'. The term has been used to describe very different research projects, from one in which the research questions and methods were determined in advance of approaching the respondents and participation was mainly limited to a 'dissemination workshop' (Bradbury, 2006), to full co-research where the academic partner acts primarily as a facilitator, offering advice and skills and communicating results, and the role of 'researcher' is entirely shared between the academic and non-academic partners (Pain, 2003). Thus I would suggest that the term action research as it is variously used in the literature simply implies a level of collaboration between researcher and participants that goes beyond the co-construction of knowledge that occurs in a standard qualitative research encounter, and in which participants in some way, at some phase of the project, are involved in guiding the research process. This amorphous understanding suggests that

researchers must be careful to be explicit about the amount and quality of participation in action research (see section 3.4.1).

3.1.3 Insider

In order to understand any depth on the worldview of the movement, the meaning of its actions needs to be seen from the inside.

(Epstein in Duckett, 2005: 54)

Insider research can be defined as research in which “scholars conduct studies with populations and communities and identity groups of which they are also members” (Kanuha, 2000: 439). Put differently, insider research is about ‘being native’ to begin with rather than ‘going native’ over the course of the research project – a status which presents both advantages and challenges (DeLyser, 2001). Insider research is often combined with action research: when studying one’s own group, conducting research with, rather than on, one’s peers is a natural choice. Equally, insider researchers tend to conduct research for their group, adopting an avowedly partial stance. Drawing on feminist principles for justification, such researchers argue for the need to replace ‘objective’ inquiry with a conscious partiality, in which one’s personal and political sympathies are acknowledged throughout the research process (Plows, 2002) and in which the researcher is free to ‘take sides’ – but critically (Routledge, 2004). Insider research also takes seriously the recognition that movements “are what they say they are” (Castells, 1997: 70) and must be analysed on their own terms – which Deslandes and King (2006) have argued is particularly important in studying radical and autonomous movements.

Being an insider from the beginning of the research process presents significant advantages for the study of the internal life and processes of the radical climate activist community. First, insider status allows a level of ‘background knowledge’ from which relevant research questions and priorities can be formulated and identified, and key contacts can be sought out more precisely. In-depth knowledge of the population allows the researcher to achieve a more representative sample than might otherwise be possible without large-scale screening, which is difficult in the diffuse, overlapping networks of activist communities. Clearly, insider status facilitates easier and faster access to the researched, which is particularly important given the anti-academic sentiments and security concerns that exist within many activist circles. Possessing proven activist credentials signals that you are an

activist first, and will not use the information you gain to harm or undermine activists or activist causes. This level of pre-existing trust can also generate reduced inhibitions and fuller and more honest responses in interviews. Interviews are also improved through a shared vocabulary for discussion, in which the researcher knows the language and short-hand used by respondents. The insider researcher is also likely to have a better sense of what the relevant questions are and can probe with greater sensitivity and ‘cultural proximity’. Finally, during analysis, insider researchers are better able to evaluate their respondents’ stories within a familiar context and against their own experiences (DeLyser, 2001; Duckett, 2005; Plows, 2002; Roseneil, 1993).

Nonetheless, researching one’s own community does present challenges to the insider researcher. Most significantly, familiarity and long-standing participation in the research environment can cause insider researchers to overlook important insights that would be more immediately obvious to outsiders (DeLyser, 2001; Hockey, 1993). Thus insider researchers face the opposite challenge to the one usually experienced by the ethnographer: learning to make the familiar strange, and to sit back and observe rather than dive in and participate (Roseneil, 1993). Familiarity can also present challenges in interviews, in which participants assume full understanding on the part of the researcher and therefore provide vague or incomplete responses. Kanuha (2000) emphasises the need to pursue these responses vigorously, as these unspoken assumptions are often different from the researcher’s in theoretically fruitful ways.

In employing a qualitative, collaborative, insider approach to research strategy, the need to pay attention to questions of reflexivity is particularly acute. At its simplest, reflexivity can be understood as locating yourself within the research and putting yourself on the same ‘critical plane’ as the researched (Duckett, 2005; Maxey, 1999). This requires ongoing self-inspection during the research process, and transparency during the writing of the account. It includes acknowledging the researcher’s values and experiences, revealing how the research developed, and demonstrating the effects of fieldwork on the researcher and how the self-knowledge gained advances understanding of the topic (Aull Davies, 1999). As discussions of reflexivity have become ubiquitous in qualitative studies, the concept, once held up as the standard response to criticisms of bias, has begun to attract criticism in its own right. Reflexivity has been judged by Bourdieu as recreating “the myth of the exceptional researcher set apart from their respondents not now by the clarity of their knowledge, but by their level of introspection, doubt and anxiety” (in Crang, 2005:

226). Others argue that transparency as the key to reflexivity implies that you can fully know your positionalities and the entire set of social relations in which you are embedded, which can never be the case (Maxey, 1999). Although reflexivity is now acknowledged as no panacea (Cragg, 2003), it has certainly not been abandoned as a productive research strategy. Maxey (1999) rejects the notion that reflexivity implies navel-gazing and purely theoretical research, and suggests that good quality, reflexive action-oriented research is within reach.

3.2 Methods of inquiry

Within the framework of an ethnographic, collaborative, insider study, what are the most appropriate methodological tools to explore questions of movement building and involvement? This chapter will now examine participant observation and interviews in turn, discussing their theoretical advantages and suitability, as well as the particular approach that I adopted. I conclude the section by discussing the productive ways in which the two methods fit together to construct different understandings of involvement and movement building.

3.2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation seeks to produce understanding of a community from the inside, in the context of its members' daily lives and activities (Parr, 2001). Cook suggests that participant observation involves researchers

moving between participating in a community – by deliberately immersing themselves in its everyday rhythms and routines, developing relationships with people who can show and tell them what is ‘going on’ there, and writing accounts of how these relationships developed and what was learned from them – and observing a community – by sitting back and watching activities which unfold in front of their eyes, recording their impressions of these activities in field notes ... and other forms of material evidence (1997: 127-128).

Participant observation has proved invaluable in developing and framing pertinent, practicable research questions for this study, which I would not have arrived at through mere ‘background experience’. More importantly, however, my research interests in practice and interaction, and specifically the situated experiences of newcomers, and the relational processes by which activists seek to involve newcomers, require observation as they take place. This was made abundantly clear by the pilot interviews that I conducted with newcomers, in which they struggled to

recall the details of interaction and experience in their initial encounters. Participant observation is thus useful for accessing the routine practices and mundane details of apparently every day social encounters (Silverman, 2006). Moreover, the method allows for an understanding of how people actually do things in a particular context; it can access the taken-for-granted world that people might not talk about; and it can provide insight into an entire community (rather than merely studying individuals as isolated units), and the practices, routines and social relations within it (Valentine, 2001).

It is worth unpacking a bit further the ways in which (a particular type of) participant observation can provide insight into my interest in practice and interaction as well as talk and reflective understanding. As S. Smith (2001) and Crang (2003) both argue, text, language and vision – how people think, understand and see – have dominated qualitative research at the expense of performance, social relations and embodied practice. A shift in focus towards the study of performance and practice references the tradition of ethnomethodology, which “seeks to describe methods persons use in doing social life” (Sacks in Silverman, 2006: 100) and implies an appreciation for the micro-social and for face-to-face interaction (Silverman, 2006). It also resonates with institutional ethnography’s interest in the situated activity of everyday practice, and its attempt to “collect data that captures detailed accounts of those activities ... what actually happens to participants in a research setting and what triggers those particular actions or events” (Campbell and Gregnor, 2004: 70). This in turn requires participant observation, and more specifically the fuller engagement of observant participation, in which the researcher is an embodied performer interacting with the researched (S. Smith, 2001).

3.2.2 In-depth interviews

As qualitative methods have matured, the qualitative interview has played a key role in consolidating the ‘orthodoxy’ of these approaches (Crang, 2002). However, as confidence in these qualitative methods has grown, so too has an interest in probing the ‘staple’ semi-structured interview a little more deeply. Calls have emerged to be sensitive to the art and complexity of the interview, and to realise that it is not “enough simply to buy a tape recorder, invest in a suit and tie or a smart dress, write some letters, prepare a semistructured questionnaire and seek out some research subjects” (Cochrane in Crang, 2002: 649).

Quite soon after beginning active participant observation, it became clear that the ‘stuff’ of my research questions does not often arise naturally in either informal conversation or as topics for discussion in more formal meetings or gatherings (*cf.* Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). Most evidently, when discussing movement building, conversation rarely addressed the interactive dynamics of recruitment and retention, remaining instead in the more familiar territory of outreach, publicity, media, and so on. Equally, participants rarely spoke in detail about their initial experiences with activism, but told familiar ‘life history’ accounts that often stopped at the point of first contact. Thus it is the opportunity to actively pursue particular areas of interest that primarily shaped my decision to employ in-depth interviews. This resonates with Valentine’s (2001) summary of the three advantages of interviews: they cover a wide topical range, they can clarify certain points the interviewee raises and probe these more deeply, and they can generate, pick up and follow unanticipated themes. Later on, other important advantages of interviews became apparent: the interview as a ‘safe’ space in which participants could share ideas and opinions that they might not otherwise do in a group setting in which strong social norms are in operation; and the interview as a reflexive space, in which the extent of the personal knowledge, reflection and strategic thinking which shapes the movement but is rarely explicitly given air-time in formal meetings was revealed (FD, 92).¹⁰ The main criticisms usually faced by the interview method – self-reporting, inaccurate recounting and reconstruction – become points of interest rather than critiques if interviews are understood in their own right and analysed in terms of their own properties (Atkinson and Coffey, 2003). This point applies particularly to the more active or dialogic approach to interviewing.

The particular type of interview that I conducted is active, semi-structured, and in-depth. As researchers have moved away from positivist, short, survey-like forms of interviewing, the interview has come to be understood as a communicative, collaborative event, in which meaning is co-constructed by both of the conversational partners (Ellis and Berger, 2003). The interviewee is positioned as an equal partner in knowledge production, and the role of the interviewer is to activate the understandings

¹⁰ Primary empirical data in this thesis is referenced in one of two ways. If it is drawn from my field diary, it is referenced as FD and includes the field diary page number on which the reference is found, as follows: (FD, 1). If it was said by an interviewee, it is referenced by the interviewee’s anonymised name, as follows: (Amelie).

which frame interviewees' responses, rather than to merely extract information (Fontana, 2003). Since the interview is fundamentally relational, the conversation depends on how both partners feel about one another and is contextually constructed in terms of time, place, culture and experience (Valentine, 1997). Interview talk is also performative, in that both partners are demonstrating themselves to be certain kinds of people with respect to the topic and situation at hand (Silverman, 2006).

In active interviews, the roles of interviewer and interviewee become blurred, and it is accepted practice for researchers to share opinions and express emotions (Valentine, 1997). Roseneil (1993) suggests that in this type of dialogic interview, researchers should give full and honest responses to questions that are asked of them, and not be afraid of differences of opinion, which constitute points of interest in themselves. This level of honesty can also help to build trust and disclosure in the interview, and work towards shifting the balance of power away from the researcher. It follows that an active interview cannot be rigidly structured but should be open-ended, and in turn can be quite lengthy. McCracken (1988) counters arguments that this is potentially taxing for the interviewee, suggesting that in in-depth interviews, which meaningfully engage with participants' understandings and experiences rather than merely extracting information, participants relish the opportunity for self-reflection, and for conversation with an appreciative listener.

3.2.3 Multiple methods

Each method described above offered both a way of gaining insight that could not be provided by the other, and access to differing elements of my research questions. Interviews offered a reflective space in which to talk to participants about issues and experiences that either did not arise at all in natural conversation and/or group settings, or did so only in the broadest terms. Not only did interviews allow me to further explore issues of interest that had been brought to light through participant observation, they also allowed respondents to bring new issues of interest to my attention. Interviews were also the site in which I could draw all the different elements of my research questions together and discover the ways in which participants engage with these themes as a 'complete package'. Finally, interviews offered a diversity of opinion and experience that would have been difficult to gain from more intensive methods. However, interviews could not show me practice in action. Participant observation was essential to understand the interactive, communicative, post-

recruitment processes that shape participation. The method provided me with an overview of the workings of and relationships within my participant communities in the contexts of their everyday activities, at a depth that would have been impossible to achieve through any other means. Participant observation also facilitated access to the background stories and the texture behind the interview talk, and helped me to compare idealised understandings with real-world practice.

Both participant observation and in-depth interviews provide invaluable insight in their own right. Thus whilst the methods are triangulated in that they each complement and compensate for the limitations of the other (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990), I would not have chosen them if they did not provide important data that could stand alone. As Atkinson and Coffey (2003) argue, combining methods is not about triangulation in search of a perfect truth, but approaching and respecting the type of data that each generates on its own terms, and more importantly seeking to understand the social world in different ways. In summary, this research design aimed to capture both what people do and what people say in relation to their understandings, experiences, and negotiations surrounding the politics and practice of involvement and movement building. It also aimed to simultaneously understand the perspectives of newcomers, experienced activists and groups as entire communities, in the reflective space of interviews and the messy world of practice.

3.3 Recounting the investigation

Having provided a conceptual rationale for participation and movement building as a topic and the CDA movement as a case study, justified my approach to study, and outlined the methodological tools that I employed, I now describe the steps I took and choices that I negotiated in conducting the fieldwork for this project. I discuss these steps chronologically, beginning by outlining the initial decisions about ethnographic sites that I made following my upgrade workshop in January 2006, and concluding by discussing the conduct of the interviews, which were completed in October 2007. I also begin to address some of the ethical dilemmas faced by ethnographic researchers, which will be further explored in section 3.4.2 below.

3.3.1 Identifying ethnographic sites, declaring the project and gaining consent

Having decided to conduct an ethnographic investigation of movement building within CDA networks, my first step was to determine which sites within the

movement should form my case study. Given that the strength of my approach lies in depth rather than breadth, and in my insider status and access, a comparative approach was rejected in favour of an in-depth exploration of the two networks in which I was already embedded: the Camp for Climate Action (CCA) and Rising Tide. This was also largely a practical decision, in that at the time the fieldwork was conducted, and with the exception of the anti-aviation campaign group Plane Stupid, CCA and Rising Tide were the only non-hierarchical networks with a radical analysis taking direct action specifically on climate change. Rising Tide, Plane Stupid and CCA thus arguably at the time largely made up the CDA movement. The local Norwich and London Rising Tide groups, the national CCA meetings, and the CCA Networking and Media working group meetings formed the core sites from which participant observation data was drawn. Interviewees, however, were involved in all of the different elements of the two networks, and in their interviews they recounted their participation in national and local organising in Rising Tide, CCA and other activist networks.

Gaining access to a community of interest is often one of the most difficult parts of participant observation research (Cook, 1997). As an insider researcher already part of the community, access was not my problem. Rather, I faced the challenge of raising my research project with my fellow activists and seeking informed consent – described as ensuring that participants know about and understand the purpose of the research so that they may freely give their consent to participate (Norris, 1993). External researchers approaching a community and requesting permission for the study can make a prior decision about how they wish to present themselves and their research. In my case, as an activist whose research interest in the CDA movement arose after I had already been involved in its networks for several years, and as an ethnographer seeking to work within overlapping, decentralised, horizontal networks with unclear and permeable boundaries, this process was more complicated, since there was no definite moment at which I suddenly ‘became’ a researcher, and no designated gatekeepers from whom I could seek consent (see Deslandes and King, 2006 for a discussion of the ‘fraught’ nature of doing research within amorphous, horizontal autonomous networks). I will now outline how I negotiated ‘declaring’ my project to, and seeking permission to conduct participant observation from, my participant communities in Rising Tide and CCA.

I began the PhD in September 2005 without any intention of studying the movement I was already part of, and the decision to conduct participant observation in various CDA sites evolved organically over the following year and a half. I first brought up the subject of my evolving research project with the London Rising Tide (LRT) group in September 2006, when it became clear that it would in some form become an important site of study, and received the consent of those present to continue to use my participation in LRT in my research. In December 2006, I discussed my project and its implications for the LRT group in greater detail, including the meaning of participant observation and note-taking, and gained formal consent to use the LRT group as an ethnographic site. Declaring the research to the Norwich Rising Tide (NRT) group presented a slightly different challenge, in that I was one of two people who helped to set up the group, and thus I knew from the beginning that I hoped to use it as a site of study. After the public launch meeting, I let four meetings pass in an initial period of embedding and trust-building amongst members (including me), after which I requested and received consent to conduct participant observation within the group.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its size, complexity of organising structure and lack of defined boundaries, declaring the project to the national CCA process proved to be more drawn-out and difficult. Initially, because the people involved were so ever-changing, and because the national meetings were always so pressed for time, I felt that making use of precious agenda space to discuss my personal project would be an inappropriate imposition (Maxey, 1999) – a view that I discussed with several other collective members, all of whom agreed with my position. For some time, therefore, I relied on the implicit consent provided by informal conversations about my project with CCA participants in more appropriate settings such as smaller working groups and social time. I had innumerable such conversations over two years of fieldwork, and during this time all but one (who later reversed his position) were supportive of the research, and many more took the time to provide collaborative input or participate in an interview. I assume that many more people that I did not speak to directly also knew about the research through word of mouth. However, despite the reassurances provided by many authors as to the necessity and defensibility of such ‘blurry’ ethnography (see section 3.4.2), I was never entirely comfortable with the situation, and was relieved when an appropriate opportunity arose to formally declare the project in conjunction with the work of the CCA

Inclusivity group. At this point, as part of a wider discussion facilitated by other members of this group, I added a short presentation of my research, and requested permission to conduct participant observation within the national CCA organising process. Those present agreed, which by convention rendered the decision made by consensus at a national gathering ‘binding’ for the duration of the 2007 organising process, which covered the remainder of my fieldwork phase.

3.3.2 Observing and recording

Doing participant observation involved negotiating my own answers to three key questions: When should I observe? What should I be looking for? How should I balance participation and observation? Beginning with the first, over the course of the 19-month fieldwork phase, I observantly participated in 93 CDA-related events. These can be broadly divided into local group meetings; national gatherings; outreach events; actions and action preparation and debrief; strategy and training events; social events; the two Camps for Climate Action; and four workshops specifically about my research that I facilitated. Of these 93 events, the majority lasted several hours, although there were also 15 two-day meetings, 10 day-long meetings, two twenty-four hour action periods and the two 10-day long camps. As a rough approximation, I would suggest that in total I logged 620 hours of participant observation. This thus represents a discontinuous form of ethnography, as I travelled in and out of activist spaces and events, rather than the total immersion of a more traditional ethnography. Because of my initial focus on face-to-face interaction, I chose not to make systematic notes about my online participation, although as my areas of interest shifted, reflections about relevant email conversations did make their way into the field diary.

This raises the second question of what to look for, and how to establish some kind of boundaries on the potentially limitless field of observation. Following Strauss (1987), I had several generative questions that initially shaped my observations in the field, and for the first few months I noted anything and everything to do with newcomers, outreach and recruitment. Although I had duly noted a variety of suggestions ethnographers have made of ‘what to look for’ in doing participant observation (Cloeke *et al.*, 2004; Lofland, 2004; Silverman, 2006), I primarily concentrated on other people’s interactions, my own interactions with newcomers (Aull Davies, 1999; Torbert, 2006), and conversations relevant to participation and movement building. This early period formed a pilot phase of participant observation,

which generated a revised set of research questions, which were then proposed and settled upon at my upgrade workshop in January 2007. In particular, the pilot phase (in conjunction with requests for activist input; see section 3.4.1) led me to shift my emphasis from a life history account of participation to a close focus on the formative and interactive encounters of initial involvement; and to add a new question about the politics which underpin movement building practice. As these shifts occurred, my focus of observation progressed from (but did not abandon) attempts to record the minutiae of behaviour and social interaction, and to ‘test’ newcomers’ experiences against activist practice, to include a more holistic interest in how people spoke and argued about movement building ideas and practices. At the same time, and as I began to conduct the interviews, I became less “frantic” (FD, 96) about acquiring research material through participant observation, and began to take a greater interest in sharing my early insights and findings with fellow activists, as part of an initial dissemination exercise.

With respect to the third question, as a participant first and later an observer, I had to make the reverse journey to most ethnographers: from complete participant, to participant as observer, to observer as participant, to complete observer (Junker, 2004) – although in practice these roles are constantly shifting and overlapping and do not progress in such a linear form. My challenges were thus to make time to be an observer rather than a participant, and to learn to be “suspicious, then, of why you understand what you understand” (Cook, 1997: 140). As someone very actively involved in the groups that I was attempting to observe, I often found it difficult to prioritise the research role during the events themselves. In some cases, learning to observe rather than participate came with time as, for example, I realised I needed to stop chasing after every newcomer and trying to welcome them and sit back and watch other people’s practices. I also attempted to devise specific strategies to focus my attention on observation,¹¹ such as sitting in a different part of the room to my usual position, and taking five minute ‘time-outs’ from discussions that I was not required to contribute to in order to concentrate exclusively on observation. I found these strategies of only limited use, since in many cases I had essential information to contribute to or was required to facilitate the discussion. In most other cases, to have

¹¹ Thanks to Karen O’Reilly for these strategies, suggested whilst convening a one-day course on participant observation that I attended at Loughborough University in April 2007.

disengaged in order to focus on observation would have somewhat compromised my involved, trusted, insider status – which in turn was what was providing me with such extensive and unique access to the CDA community and a diversity of its events. As Hockey (1993) points out, there are costs to be borne in the case of a native ‘going stranger’.

The act of taking notes was the most important strategy in focusing my attention on my observation role, and in attempting to make the familiar strange (Hockey, 1993). I generally avoided making notes when in the presence of my participant community, but summarised ideas in rough form (‘head notes’) as soon as possible after the event, turning them into ‘scratch notes’ (Sanjek, 1990). This was both strategic (to avoid the researched feeling observed) and practical (I was usually fully participating in the task at hand and had no time or ‘head-space’ to make notes). Since turning these scratch notes into a field diary in my case could take place hours or even days (in the case of the camps, for example) after the event, this process was about “making a story of what you learned out of the fragments you have at the end of the day” (Cook, 1997: 141). Perhaps partly for this reason, I found the field diary to be most useful as a sensitising tool, shaping questions to ask of interviewees, of myself, and of the literature (see Appendix 2 for an extract from the field diary).

3.3.3 Identifying and recruiting interviewees

I followed a combination of illustrative/strategic and theoretical sampling strategies. Strategic sampling involves determining a range of characteristics, demographics, experiences, perspectives or functionalities (Valentine, 1997) that the researcher deems relevant to the research questions. Theoretical sampling, which grows out of and in turn generates theory, is a recursive process in which an initial sample is determined, early data is collected, the sample is revised with new or different categories, and data collection continues until saturation occurs when no further data can be gathered which productively adds to the categories (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

I conducted 26 in-depth interviews from June to November 2007, as well as three pilot interviews in October 2006. Participants were from Brighton, London, Oxford, Norwich, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol, and rural Cornwall. Seventeen were men and 12 were women, and participants ranged from 20 to 70 years of age (see Figure 3.1). The large majority of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30,

which is broadly representative of the UK direct action movement (Doherty, Plows and Wall, 2002). My strategic sampling framework initially sought to recruit a roughly equal number of newcomers and experienced activists, where possible drawn from the same group. The latter was important given my interest in group dynamics, and newcomers' and experienced activists' levels of mutual understanding. I also sought to draw interviewees roughly equally from local Rising Tide groups and the national CCA process, although I discovered that most Rising Tide participants were also active in the CCA process (although the reverse was not true).

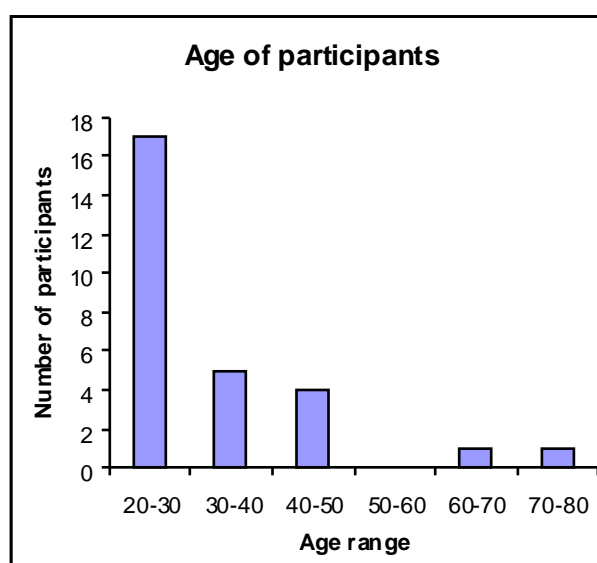


Figure 3.1 Age ranges of interviewees

I attempted to interview newcomers as soon as possible after their initial encounters with a CDA group, and/or as soon as they came or were brought to my attention as a potential interviewee. Initially, I sought to interview 'brand new' participants, who had little or no previous experience of activism. As I progressed, I refined my concept of what constitutes a 'newcomer' and grew interested in the experiences of and responses to different kinds of newcomer. This was also a practical consideration, as I realised that only a minority of apparent newcomers to CDA networks were experiencing collective political action for the first time. I then created, and sought to interview newcomers in, the categories of 'next-stepper' and 'second-time-around' activists. 'Next-steppers' have engaged in some form of campaigning before, perhaps as a member of a university society or NGO, but the tactics, mode of organising and/or political analysis of CDA networks are substantively different to their previous experience. 'Second-time-around' activists have previously been involved in very similar forms of activism but have returned to movement

participation after an extended time away. As I progressed, I also realised that I was only hearing one side of the newcomer story – those who joined and stayed – and I then made an effort to seek out newcomers who had participated for a short while, but then withdrawn. Given my interest in the politics of movement building, I also sought to strategically sample experienced activists with a diversity of attitudes towards movement building, specifically people who valued and made inclusivity work a priority, and people who were resistant to movement building practices. I defined ‘experience’ not by an arbitrary number of years, but by level of experience and intensity of involvement. The resulting break-down of participants is shown in Table 3.1, but in an idealised form: newcomers did not always fall neatly into the three categories, nor did experienced activists’ opinions about movement building. The categorisation into Rising Tide or CCA is based on the group about which interviewees spoke the most (see also Appendix 3 for a list of interviewees and their characteristics).

| | Experience level | Affiliation | | Subtotal | Withdrew |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | | RT | CCA | | |
| Newcomers | Brand new | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| | Next stepper | 5 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| | 2 nd time around | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | | 10 | 8 | 18 | 5 |
| Experienced | Involver | 2 | 4 | 6 | |
| | Sceptic | 0 | 2 | 2 | |
| | Mixed | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | | 3 | 8 | 11 | |
| Totals | | 13 | 16 | 29 | 5 |

Table 3.1 Affiliation and experience level of interviewees

Through my active participation in LRT, NRT and CCA national meetings, I was able to easily identify and recruit potential interviewees who fitted my strategic sampling framework. I asked most people initially for an interview in person and followed up by email, although a few were first contacted by email (Appendix 4). As others have argued, insider researchers have a significant advantage here in their ability to both determine the most relevant characteristics (Roseneil, 1993), and to seek out the people who most closely meet these characteristics (Plows, 2002). My participation was particularly important in terms of ‘spotting’ newcomers and asking

them for an interview as soon as possible after they got involved. Recruiting participants for the categories of ‘brand new’ and ‘sceptic’ proved to be the most challenging, and for these categories I additionally relied upon a snowballing strategy (Valentine, 1997), whereby I asked interviewees and other activist colleagues who knew about my research interests to recommend people that I should speak to; and I contacted respondents of the Inclusivity questionnaire who had indicated their interest in a follow-up interview (Appendix 4). I continued to recruit interviewees until I felt I had satisfied the requirements of my strategic sample, and I began to hear very similar tales over and over, and realised I had reached saturation (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

3.3.4 Preparing and conducting the interview

Semi-structured interviews can be conceptualised as improvisations around a structure (Schiellerup, 2005). In designing an interview guide, this implies something between a rigid questionnaire and a blank page. My interview guides (see Appendix 5) consisted of a series of open-ended questions, with a few ‘planned prompts’ (McCracken, 1988) under each. For newcomers, I focused on their experience of involvement, inclusivity efforts, and being new; whilst for experienced activists I discussed their understandings of newcomers and their experiences, experiences of inclusivity work, and attitudes towards movement building. The questions moved from warm-up or grand tour questions, which are not difficult to answer and help to set the interviewee at ease, towards more challenging or sensitive questions (Cook and Crang, 1995). At the end of the newcomers’ interviews, I showed participants six photos of meeting, action and social situations in an attempt to prompt different kinds of insight into their experiences of these encounters (see Appendix 6). It has been suggested that projective techniques such as photo prompts facilitate access to different ways of thinking and allow participants to develop ideas and attitudes that may not have previously been clearly formed (Morgan and Krueger, 1998). The photo prompts were very useful for some newcomers and less so for others, lending support to the claim that researchers need to provide opportunities for different ‘ways of knowing’ to be expressed (Reason and Bradbury, 2006c). During the interviews, I used the interview guide merely as a guide, particularly during the later interviews when I rarely glanced at it, and I used the material from the respondents’ own narratives to develop new lines of inquiry that related naturally to the flow of the conversation (Schiellerup, 2005). Thus I followed a recursive model of interviewing,

where what was said during the interview affected both later parts of the conversation and future interviews, and the questions I asked were modified and emphases shifted to accommodate emergent areas of interest and successful strategies for inquiry (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

Following Valentine (1997), I attempted to conduct the interviews, which were audio-recorded using a digital MP3 player, in neutral settings such as cafés or parks, or on the interviewee's 'turf' at their home or at another location of their choosing. Practical considerations dictated that a few were held in activist gathering spaces, and for these I made sure that we were well out of ear-shot of others. Finding a comfortable interviewing environment is the first step in establishing rapport with the interviewee, which I followed by attempting to harmonise with the respondent's current emotional state and their manner of speaking, sitting and gesturing. For many interviewees, however, a strong rapport was already in place, either as a result of a relationship that I already had with that person, or more generally, as a result of our shared 'cultural vocabulary' (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

Perhaps the most important and difficult interviewing skill is the ability to actively participate in the conversation whilst maintaining a critical inner dialogue that is keeping track of what the participant is saying, what is 'behind' their words, and what to ask next (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990). I attempted to do so through a combination of listening actively, asking open ended questions in a non-directive way using the interviewee's own categories and language, and sensitively using prompts (Valentine, 1997). These prompts were both 'floating' (using silence, facial expression and body language, unfinished questions, etc.) and planned in advance (McCracken, 1988). One challenge that has been reported by insider researchers is a sense that they are 'too close for comfort', and participants are reluctant to disclose information for fear of it finding its way back to someone they know (Mohammad, 2001). Whilst I did not encounter this particular difficulty, with a few newcomer interviewees I did get the sense that, aware of the extent of my involvement in the movement, they worried about offending me by being critical. I attempted to allay this concern in the preamble by telling interviewees that I wanted to hear all points of view, good and bad, and that I had my own criticisms of the movement. Although this could only have limited impact, all interviews are in some respects performative (Silverman, 2006), and these were simply more so than others.

Turning to issues of anonymity and consent, at the initial point of contact I assured potential interviewees that their participation would be anonymous, and did so again at the start of each interview. At its conclusion, I asked interviewees to sign a consent form, which gave them the option of approving their quotes before publication in the thesis, academic articles and/or activist texts such as websites and pamphlets (Appendix 7) – which I have done for those who requested it. The form also explained that although I would make every effort to protect interviewees’ anonymity by using pseudonyms and changing identifying details, as I have done in this thesis, in a small activist community complete anonymity could not be guaranteed, as there was the possibility that its members would recognise each other’s opinions and styles of speaking (Duckett, 2005).

3.4 Negotiating collaborative, insider, activist research

In the previous section, I began to address some of the dilemmas of transparency and positionality involved in conducting participant observation. In this section, I focus on the additional ethical dilemmas that are faced in collaborative, insider research in an activist community, and the steps I took to address them. First, however, I discuss how I set about ‘doing’ collaborative research, since one of the ethical responsibilities of action researchers is to be explicit about the nature and level of collaboration involved in the project, particularly if they seek to make claims about its usefulness and benefits to the research community.

3.4.1 Inputs and outcomes in collaborative research

There are two key factors that have shaped the level and nature of the collaboration in this project: the fact that it is part of a PhD, and the permeable, shifting networks and non-hierarchical organising that characterise my participant community. As other doctoral action researchers have done before me (Bradbury, 2006; Duckett, 2005), throughout the research process I have acknowledged that movement participation in and usefulness of the project, whilst vitally important to me, are not the only factors driving this research, but are tempered by the requirements of a PhD programme. Although other outputs are intended as well, the primary final output that I have been working towards is a PhD thesis. The fact that I initiated the project and remained its architect throughout means that the study does not fall at the maximum participation end of the action research spectrum, but more

towards the middle, and hopefully at an appropriate level which is both practical and ethical. As Duckett (2005) and Maxey (1999) argue, it is unethical to impose one's project on busy activists who may not have the time or the desire to participate. Therefore an ethical balance must be found between inviting participation in a relevant project and respecting the pressures of multiple other commitments and interests. As guidance for action research ethics, Routledge urges us to be sensitive to the contexts and relationships of particular research settings, and suggests that such ethics can only be achieved through evolving practice, a commitment to reciprocity, and "knowing others with whom we collaborate as well as we can...through relations of friendship, solidarity, and empathy" (2004: 86).

With respect to the character of the collaboration, I faced similar challenges in seeking input to the project as I did in seeking consent. I was not working in an organisational setting where I could draw a clear boundary around my community of interest and work towards maximum participation within that community. Nor was there a boss or leader who by agreeing to participate in the project effectively 'signed up' the rest of the organisation as well. In essence the mode of communication for this project could only be between me as an individual researcher, and a multitude of other individuals located within overlapping networks and affiliations. Thus, like Duckett (2005), my primary collaborative strategy involved maintaining two-way communication between myself and fellow activists, seeking as many opportunities as possible and practical to encourage other activists to provide input into my research questions and process, and ensuring that research outcomes be not only disseminated but integrated as much as possible into activist practice. I will now outline the steps I have taken and will take to achieve these aims, considering first how I sought input in shaping a project that participants thought would be interesting and useful, and second how I have attempted to ensure that the research process and outcomes have practical and positive benefits for my participant community.

Four years of participation in the CDA movement is perhaps the most important 'input' in making this project movement-relevant, as it provided me with an awareness that movement building is a critical and challenging issue of concern, which was one of the driving forces behind the development of my research questions. For the past three years, I have been having informal conversations with friends and fellow activists about my research, discussing and seeking advice on my research plans as they evolved. In October 2006, I sent a formal research summary to

10 activists, from different networks, in different roles and with diverse views on movement building, explaining that I was undertaking a collaborative research project, and asking for formal feedback as to my research questions and methods, and for suggestions of other people to get in touch with (Appendix 8). The suggestions that I received were of varying degrees of relevance and practicability, and the most useful and influential were those that exposed my own assumptions and interpretive frameworks. This early phase of input was instrumental in moving my research interests away from life history accounts of participation; prompting me to speak to newcomers who later withdrew; and causing me to think about the differences between quantitative and qualitative participation, and about what newcomers' experiences might be able to teach us about movement building, strategy and effectiveness.

I organised four workshops related to my project at different phases of the study, which both shaped the future research and provided me with opportunities to disseminate initial findings. The first, at the 2006 camp, was a pivotal moment in the research project, as it brought home to me the fact that movement building is political and contentious, and not merely a practice that can be improved upon. Together with a launch workshop that I held in early 2007, this also allowed me to share my knowledge of social movement theories about how and why individuals get involved in activism. The third and fourth workshops, held at the 2007 and 2008 camps respectively, shifted to dissemination opportunities, as I began to share my thoughts and initial findings about the experience of being a newcomer, effective inclusivity practices, sources of resistance to inclusivity, and the relationship between movement growth and strategy.

My participation in the CCA Inclusivity group was another source of both inputs to and outcomes of the research. The group was initiated by a CCA participant after the 2006 camp, and sought to gauge newcomers' experiences of CCA meetings with a view to making them more welcoming and inclusive. I contributed to but was not the architect of this group, which made it an excellent opportunity to understand activist research priorities in this area outside the terms of reference of my PhD. Over the course of a year, this group collectively conducted two questionnaires seeking insights into people's experiences of the camps (2006 and 2007) and the national meetings; met to analyse the responses and develop suggested changes to the organising process as a result; presented these findings and suggestions to the wider

camp process; and worked to implement some of these changes (see Appendix 9 for a copy of the 2007 questionnaire, and a set of inclusivity guidelines that were included in the handbook given out at the 2007 and 2008 camps). Whilst the most concrete outcome was a much improved welcome and orientation process at the camps, these activities also produced important and wide ranging insights into the inclusivity challenges faced by the camp process, and how these could begin to be addressed. Despite dissemination efforts, the extent to which these insights were appreciated and/or implemented beyond the spheres of influence of those in the Inclusivity group is debatable, and the difficulties faced in doing so prompted my interest in the role of ‘involver’ and the challenges that involvers face. The discussions I had in this group fundamentally shaped the questions I asked in the interviews, and the outcomes of its activities were important sources of ideas for my research. At the same time, because these conversations were held whilst I was thinking continuously about these matters from a research point of view, and because I was one of the key members of a small group (partially because I was able to make time for the project because I could consider it a research activity), my research also significantly shaped the Inclusivity group’s work. Thus I see my contributions to this group as a key output of my research.

Finally, in terms of outcomes, at the conclusion of the research, I will make every effort to avoid the irony of producing a piece of action research designed to be movement-relevant that never escapes the dusty covers of a PhD sitting on a library shelf. I intend to hold a dissemination workshop, and to condense and re-work my research findings into accessible formats such as short essays, leaflets and checklists, and distribute them via the internet and movement journals, and at gatherings such as the camp. I would suggest, however, that these formal efforts to disseminate my research will be less significant and less important than that which has occurred through the research process itself. For the past three years, I have existed in a “space of betweenness” (Katz in Aitken, 2001: 79) in which my participation in activism has shaped my academic work, of course, but the reverse has also been true, via the conversations and reflective space provided through the research process (Routledge, 2004). My research has flowed into CDA communities through my presence as a researcher, as, for example, a conversation about inclusivity is prompted when someone asks me what I do (FD, 26); through my revised practice, as I interact differently with newcomers, facilitate and participate in meetings in new ways (FD,

27); and most directly, as I make suggestions or propose ideas that have emerged as research findings. Perhaps more importantly, the interviews and workshops that I conducted as part of my research provided CDA participants with the time and space to step back from the fray of everyday practice and reflect on the movement and their participation within it, and many commented on how much they enjoyed and appreciated this rare opportunity (FD, 30; FD, 92).

3.4.2 Ethics in insider, activist research

In this section, I will outline three final ethical dilemmas I faced and the steps I took to address them: issues of security in studying direct action networks, and dilemmas of transparency and ‘being critical’ in insider research. Beginning with security, conducting fieldwork in a community in which some members engage in illegal activity presents unconventional ethical difficulties. However, researchers who have studied communities engaged in covert or illegal activity provide ample advice on ways of protecting both researcher and researched in this situation. This advice, all of which I have followed or shall follow, includes: protecting participants’ anonymity by using pseudonyms in field and research notes as well as transcripts and the finished thesis; destroying interview recordings at the conclusion of the project; storing notes and data outside the researcher’s home, which could be searched by the police; avoiding noting anything related to illegal activity in field notes; and requesting that interviewees avoid discussing details of illegal activity (Duckett, 2005; Fountain, 1993; Plows, 2002; Roseneil, 1993). In the finished thesis, my insider status allowed me to carefully judge what does and does not constitute a security risk if it is made public, and I also asked an activist colleague to read the thesis with this consideration in mind.

A second dilemma, which will be familiar to most ethnographers but is particularly acute with insider research, is the challenge of negotiating a balance between overt (fully explaining your role and project) and covert (concealing some part of this) research (Cook, 1997). ‘Blurry’ or ‘tactical’ ethnography is often what takes place in practice, in which the balance between overt and covert shifts depending on the context, who one is speaking to and the phase of the research process (Norris, 1993). With respect to the latter, in my case blurry ethnography was unintentional (realising that I was collecting data as research themes emerged and changed) rather than strategic (collecting data covertly before revealing one’s full

intentions) (Parr, 2001). At times I found blurry ethnography to be an uncomfortable practice (*cf.* Cook, 1997), and numerous researchers have reflected on the ethics of these choices. Some suggest that no form of participant observation can ever entirely escape a level of veiled intent (Pearson, 1993); in other words, the very method of concealing the research role behind participation is interactionally deceitful (Norris, 1993). Conversely, Bulmer argues that “complete concealment of the research ... may rarely if ever be justified, but the converse – that total openness is in all circumstances desirable or possible – does not follow” (in Fountain, 1993: 165). Meanwhile Fountain (1993) defends blurry ethnography in retrospective participant observation projects such as mine, in which the research question emerges after the researcher has become involved with the group. What researchers agree upon is the need to be flexible and practical, and as described above, I declared my research project to all three groups in my participant community as soon as I could articulate what I was asking of them (LRT), and as soon as an appropriate opportunity arose in which I would not be imposing on the group’s time (CCA) or undermining a trust-building process (NRT).

A related challenge of transparency is that of seeking consent as a long-time and ongoing insider within the participant community. As Plows (2003) recognises, even if the researcher is completely open about the research and makes regular reminders, members forget that they are being studied, and they tend not to relate to the researcher as a researcher but rather as a friend and fellow activist. Moreover, it is unrealistic to seek formal consent every time a relevant comment is made, or a newcomer enters the field, often only briefly (Duckett, 2005). Given that the membership of the three groups in which I conducted participant observation changed dramatically every time they met, such consent would have required a weekly conversation, which would have been impractical and an imposition on the group’s time. It appears then, as I discovered, that insider activist researchers must accept the inherent ‘blurriness’ of their enterprise, and the fact that “you can’t simply ‘go out and get’ informed consent” (Maxey, 1999: 204). This is balanced, however, by insiders’ knowledge of and commitments to their participants and the community of which they are a part, which prevents them from exploiting their role, undermining the community, or conducting ‘hit and run’ fieldwork (DeLyser, 2001).

This raises the final dilemma of how critical one can be, as an insider researcher, without undermining the groups or movements one is studying, or leading

to self-censorship or censorship by fellow activists. Routledge's (2004) advice for activist researchers, which I have endeavoured to follow, is to be constructively critical, and avoid helping the opponents of movement struggles. Constructive criticism is a difficult path to navigate, and Routledge goes on to suggest that there are no easy answers to these dilemmas, and they must be worked out, often unsatisfyingly, in the context of particular struggles and research projects. Norris (1993) describes this as situational ethics, in which the researcher must make ethical choices over the course of the project according to context. Insider researchers do so armed with their knowledge of the community and its ethics, objectives and politics; a constant commitment to and respect for that community; and an understanding that they must always be prepared to publicly defend their choices (Norris, 1993). As Routledge concludes, "we cannot let our ethical dilemmas immobilize us" or prevent us from conducting research that can make very real contributions to movement progress (2004: 88).

3.5 Analysis

Having outlined the process of conducting the fieldwork, in this final section I discuss grounded theory as the approach I took to analysis, and describe the methods I used to interpret and write up the data created during the fieldwork phase. Grounded theory can be defined as

A method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data ... This method is distinguished from others since it involves the researcher in data analysis while collecting data – we use this data analysis to inform and shape further data collection. Thus, the sharp distinction between data collection and analysis phases of traditional research is intentionally blurred in grounded theory studies. (Charmaz, 2006: 187-188)

Dwyer and Limb (2001) describe this approach as one in which theory is 'held lightly' in favour of an openness to new ideas, and in which theory emerges from and is driven by the data rather than the other way around (Eaves, 2001). The power and prominence of the grounded theory approach is arguably to be found in its blend of systematic rigour and creative interpretation, which can in turn be traced to the traditions in which its two original proponents, Barry Glaser and Anselm Strauss, were trained (Charmaz, 2006). In the years since the publication of Glaser and Strauss's seminal text in 1967, the concept of grounded theory has undergone

numerous revisions and moved in divergent directions, and has become accepted, as its first proponents proposed, as a strategy for researchers to use “flexibly in their own way”, and as “a set of principles and practices, not prescriptions or packages” (Charmaz, 2006: 9). In creating my own strategy, I have followed Charmaz’s more constructivist approach to grounded theory, in which it is assumed that “neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (2006: 10).

As the definition above suggests, grounded theory offers both an approach to study, and a set of guidelines with which to conduct analysis. This chapter has set out my approach to, methods of and journey through the research project, and the remainder will focus on the procedure I followed in formally analysing the resulting data. Before turning to this task, I want to highlight the extent to which analysis took place as I was gathering data. This is largely because I began analysing so early, which in turn is because, unlike many grounded theorists, I was in the field from the start. From the very beginnings of my PhD studies, as I was immersing myself in the literature and developing my research interests and questions, I would close my books and leave the department at the end of many days, and immerse myself in the activist world, where I could investigate early hunches and questions. By the time I began active participant observation, therefore, I had already gained many fundamental insights that have made their way into the finished thesis. The way in which I achieved these insights, and continued to do so throughout the fieldwork phase, was not through formal procedures of analysis, or at least I did not think so at the time. Looking back, however, through conversations and most importantly the field diary, I was creating initial memos, raising codes to tentative categories and then refining them, and using theoretical sampling to seek new data, amongst many other things (Charmaz, 2006). Despite all these early insights, it is important to note that it was only during the formal data collection phase that I determined the importance of the ‘politics of movement building’ as a key theme.

3.5.1 Analysing the text: transcribing, coding and memo-ing

When I had completed the interviews in November 2007, I imposed a data cut-off point, stopped taking field notes, and significantly curtailed my participation in

CDA networks.¹² This was a strategy to avoid being overwhelmed by an ongoing stream of data as I attempted to begin formal analysis (Plows, 2002), and to begin to facilitate both the ‘conceptual stepping back’ necessary to begin to ‘see’ theory in the data (Strauss, 1987), and, as an insider researcher, the gaining of some critical distance from my community (Kanuha, 2000). Also in an effort to develop critical distance, I decided to focus my formal analysis on the 29 interviews rather than the field diary which, whilst containing an excellent record of my developing ideas, and 100,000 words of rich descriptions of observed interactions, practices and situations, felt too replete with my own conceptual filters to be a good place to start. The remainder of this section, therefore, describes the procedures I followed to analyse the interviews.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim (see Appendix 10 for two extracts), and after each was completed I wrote a brief summary of the important themes that they appeared to contain, which included both direct quotes and initial brief theoretical memos (Charmaz, 2006). As I transcribed, I also kept a note of recurring themes, which formed a list of initial codes. I then set these initial collected ideas to one side, and moved into a formal coding process. Grounded theory data analysis revolves around coding, in which codes based on emerging ideas are iteratively grouped and regrouped to order and interrogate the data, allowing for increasingly higher levels of analysis (Eaves, 2001). Jackson describes the purpose of coding as follows:

Coding is intended to make the analysis more systematic and to build up interpretation through a series of stages, avoiding the temptation of jumping to premature conclusions. It also encourages a thorough analysis of the transcripts, avoiding the charge that qualitative researchers have simply selected a few unrepresentative quotes to support their initial prejudice (2001: 202).

I began by subjecting the six richest interviews to an intensive process of open coding, reading each transcript line by line, examining what is said literally, what it

¹² Although I mainly did not attend CCA meetings, I did attend the 2008 camp, and I remained sufficiently engaged on the Networking and Media-team email lists to be able to follow the main developments in the CCA process over the course of 2008, as is reported in Chapter 6. As these developments became more central to my analysis, I also took occasional field notes, and in the finished thesis, supplemented data drawn from interviews and field notes with organisational texts (such as emails and meeting minutes) and published texts (such as websites, blogs and comment pieces) – all of which were in the public domain. This is consistent with the ethnographic research tradition, in which ethnographers often make use of available archival and organisational texts to support their analysis of their primary data (Charmaz, 2006).

hints at and implies, and what is not said (McCracken, 1988). This line by line approach, which maintains a close proximity to the data, is the key to facilitating an openness to unexpected ideas, and forces the researcher to “pay attention to all of the discussion and not just my favourite bits” (Crang, 2001: 219). Reading through the transcript, I noted in the margins anything and everything that appeared to be of interest, as well as ideas that the transcript sparked. Often these appeared both important and too complicated to leave as a code in the margins, in which case I would stop reading and write a full theoretical memo about it. These memos helped to “increase the level of abstraction of your ideas ... Memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue” (Charmaz, 2006: 72). As I progressed, I also added to my initial code list, including both emic (in the respondent’s own words) and etic (based on my emerging ideas) codes (Strauss, 1987). This creative, time-consuming process was nonetheless exceptionally productive, and I would suggest that the large majority of insights that made their way into the finished thesis were generated during this phase. I then used the data analysis software package NVivo 7.0 (Bringer, Johnston and Brackenridge, 2006) to subject each of the six transcripts to a second phase of focused coding (Charmaz, 2006), which generated a total of 400 codes. At this point, relationships amongst the codes were beginning to develop, and saturation was becoming apparent, as were the seeds of potential higher-level categories (Eaves, 2001). Finally, I faced the daunting prospect of ‘putting it all together’.

3.5.2 Constructing empirical findings: sorting, mapping and writing

I began by grouping similar codes together, a process which Charmaz argues is not merely organisational but instead is a key step in theory building, since “it gives you a means of creating and refining theoretical links. Through sorting, you work on the theoretical integration of your categories. Thus, sorting prompts you to compare categories at an abstract level” (2006: 115). This has also been described as semiotic clustering, which is “a grand name for bringing together overlapping categories and trying to tease out if they [are] related to higher level ‘meta-categories’” (Crang, 2001: 226). Through this process of sorting and refining, meta-categories appeared amongst the codes, which cut across all of the transcripts, linked the most codes, and resonated most strongly with my experience as a participant observer. Using these meta-categories and the codes which they contained, I created three discursive maps

(Burgess, 1996) on the experience of involvement, inclusivity practices and movement building politics. In creating these maps, I also relied on the theoretical memos and the summaries I had written following transcription, both of which contained important higher-level insights that could provide purchase on the data which had been fractured through the coding process (Charmaz, 2006). The resulting discursive maps were hesitant and messy, and bear little resemblance to the chapters in this thesis of the same name. However, they formed the building blocks of three chapter outlines, the creation of which involved a further level of refining categories, developing new or altered links amongst them, and generating more abstract insights. I then went back to NVivo, and added all of the quotes associated with each code in the chapter outline, which provided the evidence base for the first draft of the empirical chapters. Writing the first draft was undoubtedly the most important integrative phase of the analysis, in which categories were collapsed and reconstructed, links were refined, many new ideas and insights gained, and the beginnings of my grounded theories created.

Because I knew the field diary and remaining interviews so well, I was able to use them frequently during the writing process, to check if I could make a particular argument, to use as comparative cases, or to select a better example or more well-spoken quote. Nonetheless, after finishing the first draft, I performed focused coding on the remaining interview transcripts, which resulted in a more complex and nuanced second draft of the chapters. Upon turning to the field diary with a view to a similar process of focused coding, however, I discovered that the material within it was already present on every page of the thesis. In the empirical chapters that follow, material that is not attributed to an interviewee is, of course, my own interpretation and theorising, and although rarely directly quoted, these come directly from my field notes.

3.5.3 Writing many voices and worlds: representation

The politics of authorship, or who speaks for whom and how representations of the researched are made, is often associated with the ‘crisis of representation’ sparked by post-colonial critiques of power dynamics in knowledge production (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). I have found the issue of authorship and fair representation a particularly complex one, not only because I am engaged in ongoing relationships with the members of my participant community (DeLyser, 2001), but because the

notion of any one individual being authorised to speak on behalf of their group (ie. the concept of a spokesperson), or indeed of a group to speak or act on behalf of members of a wider movement, is a contested one in autonomous politics (see Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). It is therefore important to point out that I do not claim to write on behalf of the movement which I have studied, nor do I wish this thesis to be read as some authoritative representation of it. A research report can only ever be a snapshot, a collection of individual voices at a particular time and place, not a representation of group opinion (Duckett, 2005). Every perspective or experience I describe in the following chapters is matched by uncountable others, many of which will be contradictory. I have tried to show this diversity of opinion, following Dwyer and Limb's (2001) suggestion to listen to and expose conflict in analysis and writing. Throughout the research process, I have made every effort to make fair representations of the communities I have studied and continue to participate in. These efforts include seeking collaborative input at all stages of the project; being reflexive and transparent in this account by demonstrating how the analysis proceeded and how I used my experiences to understand and interpret the data (Ellis and Berger, 2003); and giving interviewees who wished the opportunity to check the way in which I have used their words and for what purpose. Finally, I hope that my long-standing and ongoing participation in these communities has helped me to honestly and fairly interpret them.

There is of course an argument to be made that writing is not 'mere' representation – it is about the creation of new ideas that go beyond individual responses through both creative and systematic interpretation (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). The account I have created here is told through my personal, experiential and conceptual filters, and reflects my own pathway through activism and through the research process. That said, it is impossible to tell where my ideas and interpretations end and those of my fellow CDA participants begin, and it must be acknowledged that my activist colleagues are deeply knowledgeable, intellectual and reflexive. In many ways, my role has been to catalyse and facilitate, and my privileged contribution is one of having the time and interest to do this interpretive work, and to put these ideas and stories together in a certain way. And it is to these stories that we now turn.

Chapter 4: The experience of getting involved

In this chapter, I pick up where most studies of participation leave off, and explore the experience of getting involved in the CDA movement after initial contact is made. Specifically, this chapter asks: what is it like to become a CDA activist? What is the experience of becoming integrated into CDA networks? What factors shape the experience of involvement? This chapter does not seek to identify predictors of differential involvement, or who will stay and who will leave, or who will get involved to what level of intensity. Just as there is no single path that leads towards social movement activism, there is no archetypal experience of the early days of participation. Instead, this chapter seeks to describe, from a newcomer's perspective, what it feels like to be new, to both CDA as a political movement, and the social relations of CDA groups. Moreover, in taking newcomers as the objects and results of movement building seriously, this chapter also sets out to identify what is most important in shaping the experience of involvement.

The chapter begins by exploring newcomers' encounters with, responses to and critiques of the core political features of the CDA movement – its tactics, culture, mode of organising and politics. In this section, I discuss the experience of becoming a political activist, and the diverse ways in which different newcomers experience the core political features. The following section explores the experience of seeking membership in a CDA group, encountering and experiencing its social relations, its members and their behaviour, and the challenges and rewards of progressing further into involvement. Next, I discuss the diverse factors that shape the experience of involvement in the CDA movement, beginning by identifying factors relating to an individual newcomer's traits and circumstances, and suggesting that some newcomers require a closer 'fit' between their views and desires and those of the group than others. The chapter concludes by drawing together factors to do with the newcomer, the group, and the movement, which all shape their experience of involvement; and by suggesting that the movement's (radical) political features are the source of both the greatest challenges and rewards of involvement.

4.1 Experiencing the CDA movement

The heart of the answer to the question ‘what is it like to get involved in the CDA movement’ lies in the ways in which newcomers talk about their experiences of movement activities, processes and values. In this section, I explore the ways in which newcomers encounter, experience, react to and critique the movement’s action repertoire, culture, horizontal mode of organising, and politics. In doing so, I describe the experience of being new to the political features of the CDA movement, which is only the first half of the story of becoming a climate change activist. The discussion also identifies the rewards and challenges inherent in experiencing the defining features of the movement for the first time, the way in which these features may be both appealing and off-putting, and the way in which experiences differ according to the nature of the individual newcomer and the specific group they seek to join.

4.1.1 Direct action

Picture a particularly successful direct action: planned for months via secret meetings of trusted co-conspirators; involving a cat and mouse game with the police; heroes are made who climb to the top of the smokestack; and the whole episode finds its way into activist folklore told around the campfire. It is the stuff that thrillers are made of, and for newcomers, their first few direct actions may represent peak experiences vastly removed from their everyday lives. In this section, I explore newcomers’ experiences of **taking direct action** (and its aftermath), determining direct action’s **efficacy**, and risking **legal consequences**. Newcomers’ positive reactions to **taking direct action** primarily revolved around expressions of excitement and empowerment (see Figure 4.1), which relate the nerves that precede action and the adrenaline that fuels it; the fun and performance of a theatrical type of action; the social bonding that results from secret planning, physical hardship and oppositional action; the joy of rebellion and the freedom of non-conformity; the satisfaction of realising one’s ability to change people’s minds; and the pride of having taken a risk and stood “up against the um, quote unquote ‘moral authority’ of the police and the state” (Edward). However, the thrill of action is also linked to fears of physical pain or hardship, police violence, letting down other activists, or post-action consequences, and for some newcomers, may represent “the most frightening thing I’ve done” (Susan). Newcomers’ fear is heightened by their lack of ability to predict what will

happen next, unlike more experienced activists who can more accurately assess likely scenarios and consequences based on previous experience (*cf.* Scott and Myers, 2005).



Figure 4.1 Direct action: empowering and exciting
Photo credit: Amy Scaife

What happens to newcomers after the peak moment of direct action? If the action goes well and the experience is a positive one, newcomers now have a ‘war story’ to tell, which becomes a resource for further involvement, and reinforces positive feelings of membership and distinction, as Carl describes: “saying yeah I am going to run around the countryside with a radio and a map and, and feel very important ... you think oh I have a story to tell now”. However, when the post-action high wears off, and the camaraderie and support of fellow activists is gone, newcomers may experience varying levels of trauma and questioning of the experience and their own reactions, regardless of the outcome of the action. Participants may be haunted by images of violence, have a constant sense of being watched, or agonise over the possible consequences of the actions they took in the heat of the moment. Some newcomers expressed disappointment at the behaviour of some of their fellow protesters, whom they had previously held in high regard,

particularly in terms of their attitudes to and interactions with the police. Others questioned their own behaviour and reactions, and debated whether they wanted to repeat the experience, and whether the movement is the right place for them, as Jake describes:

That was horrible. Yeah, I really considered whether I wanted to continue at that point and [thought] perhaps maybe I should just go and get involved with somebody like Greenpeace and give a bit of time here and there. Um, yeah that didn't feel good.

Following an action, newcomers may also wonder about its **efficacy**. Many newcomers seek out direct action because they perceive it to be more effective than other strategies for achieving social change. 'Next steppers' in particular may have chosen the CDA movement as a result of either feeling the need to "raise the bar" (Jake) due to the seriousness of environmental problems, or out of frustration at the lack of successful outcomes of more conventional forms of lobbying and protest. Other newcomers, however, questioned the efficacy of direct action and the motivations of some activists (*cf.* Shaw, 1996). Most commonly expressed was confusion over how to measure the success of an action, and/or their own contribution to it: "I don't know if what we've done has been significant or if it's been successful but we're here ... I felt very proud, I don't know what I was proud of" (Adrian). Some felt the need for a clearer strategy for the purpose of direct action: "We want to do this so that their shareholders put pressure on them ... kind of a bit more of a clarity of the intended like, cause and effects" (Julie). Finally, some newcomers worried that the motivations of some activists were as much about rebellion and thrill-seeking as any particular outcome of action, and therefore wondered whether such an unreflexive commitment to direct action was likely to be effective in addressing climate change.

Newcomers' accounts of their early experiences of direct action are often inseparable from their reactions to the **legal consequences** of participation, with many newcomers encountering the police and the law for the first time through direct action. Many newcomers expressed shock and disillusionment about the policing of CDA activities, whether in regards to police violence at large demonstrations, rudeness and intimidation at smaller events, or broader issues surrounding the right to protest and surveillance tactics. Due to the rise in surveillance of many CDA planning meetings, with police officers photographing everyone who attends, and calling out the names of known activists as they arrive, newcomers must now worry about the

consequences of not only taking part in direct actions, legal or not, but of taking part in meetings as well (see Figure 4.2). The result is that newcomers are aware that from the moment they decide to attend a CDA meeting, they may be marked out by the police as a potential trouble-maker; as Amelie described it, “being photographed by the FIT team [Forward Intelligence Team of police officers], and then you very much feel like there’s no way out now, like it’s been done”.



Figure 4.2 FIT officers filming arrivals at a CCA meeting

Photo credit: Fitwatch

The intimidation caused by the FIT is not only about concrete legal consequences, but the sense that one’s privacy has been invaded, and one’s actions and choices are being discussed somewhere by strangers. The significance of the criminalisation of protest and fear of legal consequences as barriers to involvement in the CDA movement should not be underestimated. No matter how intellectually anti-authoritarian a newcomer may be, the prospect of a criminal record, and its impact on current and future employment, studies and freedom of movement, still carries significant weight, as do concerns expressed by friends and family about avoiding trouble with the law. The “complete and utter like unknown quantity” (Julie) of interacting with the police, the arrest procedure, spending time in a police station cell and dealing with the courts also create large amounts of fear and anxiety. Despite the fact that arrest is quite unlikely in many direct action situations, particularly if a non-

confrontational role such as handing out leaflets is chosen by the newcomer, the prospect of arrest, with all the possible consequences it carries, always hovers in the background, raising the stakes of and fear surrounding participation in a first action.

Whilst direct action does not make up the greatest portion of most groups' activity, it is the movement's defining and preferred tactic, and many newcomers perceived that taking part in direct action was the most important contribution that members made to the group. Moreover, many newcomers felt that to reach full and trusted membership in a CDA group, they had to be prepared to take "proper action" (Julie), which was largely conceived as illegal and 'arrestable' (requiring that arrest be risked). Unfortunately, given how much of a barrier it is to participation, newcomers' assessment of 'arrestability' as a condition of full membership is not entirely accurate: willingness to break the law is by no means demanded of participants, and "there are people in the movement who do no direct action at all and who play fantastically important roles" (Rowan). However, discussing one's war stories of 'proper action' is a common means by which activist credentials and trustworthiness are proven, and 'a brush with the law' can be treated as something of an initiation ritual: "afterwards when the police left they, they gave me a big hug and they were like kind of joking about it like, oh wow like you know, that was your introduction" (Amelie).

4.1.2 Movement culture

In this section, I explore newcomers' encounters with, perceptions of and reactions to three dimensions of movement culture: **activist spaces**, **alternative lifestyles** and an '**all-or-nothing**' culture. By **activist spaces**, I am referring primarily to the UK network of autonomous social centres, but also to the squats and housing co-ops that are the focal points of many activist communities. Many of these movement spaces actively seek to provide a temporary escape from and subversion of the norms and institutions of wider society (Anderson, 2004), and create their own "rules of engagement" (Chatterton, 2006: 277). Entering an activist space for the first time often represents a newcomer's first encounter with movement autonomous values, and the way in which these are lived out not only in overtly political ways, but through movement culture, in seemingly everyday practices, interactions and spaces. With respect to activist spaces, newcomers referred to the pleasure of finding a space to be oneself and to relax with like-minded others (see Figure 4.3), and the inspiration

of discovering a place where values of autonomy, sustainability, cooperation and the collective good were being lived out in practice:

Another world is possible, that phrase kind of makes a lot more sense when you see things happening, that are an anti-capitalist way of living. Um and it makes you feel like it can, we can achieve something because we're setting examples of something that is working (Amelie).



Figure 4.3 Relaxing at the 2008 Kingsnorth CCA

Photo credit: Mike Russell

Others, in their initial experiences with spaces where no one is in charge and rules are few and far between, found it difficult to get to grips with how things worked, who to ask questions of, or how they could get involved:

[I] expected to go to [the social centre] and just say hey, I want to help and then someone say, explain it to me, like, well you could do this, you could do that and, didn't really happen, sort of just hung around, sort of, wanting to talk to people but, didn't talk to people (Peter).

Phillip, meanwhile, felt more personally out of place: "I was probably about the most mainstream person that was there, and I can't imagine anyone [who] ... didn't happen to be hanging out with that um sort of alternative scene ... feeling comfortable with that location".

As Phillip suggests, there is an 'alternative scene' or set of **alternative lifestyles** that is associated with the CDA movement. The media stereotype of the

worthy, vegan, dreadlocked activist is alive and well, and whilst in some locations and groups, newcomers were pleasantly surprised to find their pre-conceptions unfounded, in others, they had their worst stereotypical fears confirmed. To varying extents, the lifestyles of many CDA activists pursue principles of sustainability, autonomy and prefigurativity, and reject conventional societal norms surrounding work, money, personal relationships and community. As Carl points out, “you come to a party or something, you do notice very quickly that ...a lot of the people anyway are quite mad when it comes ... to their lifestyle”. Many newcomers had the sense that CDA activists celebrate their difference, and a common reaction here was one of faint amusement at the desire to be seen as unconventional in every possible way: “People [were] like, so do you think we’re all weird and like, they wanted me to be like really shocked” (Susan). Amusement turns to criticism when it is felt that unreflexively “being proud of being different than the rest of society” (Kate) hinders the movement’s ability to achieve certain political or public persuasion objectives, and creates a distance between the activist and mainstream worlds that is so great that only a handful of people will ever be able to relate to the movement enough to get involved in it. This distance is reinforced by the close-knit social networks that may form within the CDA movement, in which activists may have only infrequent cause to interact with mainstream lifestyles, norms and opinions. In some locations, a group of activists not only meet, plan and carry out actions together, but share the rest of their lives as well: “we live together, we sleep together, we eat together, we work together. We are a knotted mass” (Rowan). In other locations and groups, a clearer separation is maintained between activism and socialising, in which individuals come together for the ‘work’ of campaigning, but do not see one another much outside the spaces of meetings and action.

However, the element of the CDA ‘activist lifestyle’ that was most commonly commented upon, and which newcomers found most problematic, relates to the judgements and contradictions surrounding a rigorously green lifestyle, which was perceived by some newcomers to be mandatory in order to be a climate change activist. Many newcomers perceived that CDA activists were uniformly ethically pure in their lifestyle, which meant that “a barrier [is] put up straight away of like, these people are better than me ... you know they don’t shop in Tesco’s like I do” (Susan). Newcomers compared their own lifestyle to those of other activists, were very aware of perceived differences, and feared that they would be judged for any failures to live

up to ethical standards. Although only a few CDA activists actually lead the rigorously ethical lifestyles newcomers appear to think they do, the resulting pressure to conform to these mythical standards leads to a cycle of perceived ethical purity, via a projection on the part of newcomers and experienced activists alike of an ethical, alternative lifestyle that does not necessarily match their own. Once newcomers discover that many or most activists are not in fact paragons of ethical purity, the fear of judgment lessens as newcomers realise that “when it actually comes to it they’re not thinking what you think they’re thinking” (Susan).

Another challenge that newcomers referred to surrounding green lifestyles was the pressure and desire to practice what the movement preaches. Guilt over their own complicity in the problem of climate change and an unwillingness to make the sacrifices that would be required in order to bring their lifestyle into line with movement goals were both at play here. Most commonly felt by newcomers, however, was a strong sense of hypocrisy in the fact that their own lifestyle was in various ways implicated in the very systems the movement sought to change, and therefore they – and in some cases other activists who also did not appear to live rigorously green lifestyles – did not have the right to tell others what to do. As part of getting involved, some activists develop coping strategies to manage the cognitive dissonance caused by the likely contradictions between their own lifestyle and an ideal climate-friendly lifestyle. These include recognising that one can only do so much, and constructing social change activism to create the conditions for a green future as one’s contribution instead of living as ethically as possible; and compartmentalisation, by separating activism from the rest of one’s life: “Your lifestyle, that’s like a separate thing, that’s something you do by yourself, and that’s something you figure out by yourself, that’s, that’s not what we’re about” (Brent). Such a decoupling of lifestyle and activism, however, sits uncomfortably with the movement’s prefigurative values. Whilst some newcomers are either not bothered by the pressure to live ethically, seeing it as something to respect and strive towards, and/or find ways of coping with it, others may find the attempt to reconcile their lifestyle with the demands of the climate change issue, and/or the ethical and cultural distance they perceive between their own and the lifestyles of other activists, to be unmanageable.

Finally, with respect to the movement’s **‘all or nothing’** culture, on “the continuum from those requiring only segmental involvement to those requiring total

absorption” (Turner and Killian in Lofland, 1996: 203), the CDA movement tends towards requiring total absorption. As Kate put it, the CDA movement demands “a life with particular activism-sized spaces in it”. Moreover, these spaces must be large: “you do realise very quick, quickly in your first meeting that if you commit to Climate Camp, you commit properly or not at all, you know you can’t, it’s really difficult to be a bit on the sidelines and still feel you are part of this movement” (Carl). Because “each week sort of, builds on what was said the previous week” (Bill), newcomers who could only attend irregularly often felt slightly lost in meetings, and found it difficult to find out about events and projects to get involved with. Moreover, having the time to be present at the majority of a group’s meetings and events is also important to becoming known, trusted and influential (see section 4.2). However, newcomers’ lives often do not yet revolve around activism in the way that experienced activists’ might, many of whom find creative ways to earn a living that allow activism to be their vocation.¹³ In finding it difficult to fit activist events in amongst the rest of their lives, some newcomers expressed frustration that they could not do more, whilst others wished that they could be involved without giving up the rest of their lives, and resented the pressure to ‘commit properly or not at all’. Some of these newcomers compared the CDA movement to other voluntary work they had been involved in, where provisions were made for people with limited time to contribute. By contrast, attending a single CDA meeting per week or month, without the capacity to participate in the wider ongoing process of email discussions, actions and side-meetings, may not feel like a productive use of cherished non-working time, as Julie describes:

I’d get to the end of the two hours and kind of nothing had really been decided ... I’d hung around at work so that I could go, it’s at like half seven, and so I’d get home at 11, and I’d be like well that’s a bit pointless. I’m, hadn’t done anything in that time, I’ve not changed anyone’s minds, I’ve not done anything practical (Julie).

Thus whilst some newcomers are happy with a supporter status, others may begrudge the fact that their lack of ability to contribute more time may prevent meaningful participation.

¹³ In this study, some experienced activists were self-employed, some worked in voluntary sector jobs with flexible hours, some lived in squats on very little money, some were students. Many worked part-time at ‘conventional’ jobs, choosing to earn less money and spend their extra time on activism. None were on income support.

Experiences of movement culture thus appeared to be slightly more polarised than the tactic of direct action. For example, on the one hand, Brent found the group that he tried to get involved in to be alien and insular, felt judged for his mainstream lifestyle, and worried that the group “was just so cut off from society, like, being in that bubble it’s like how, how [could] we actually relate to other people” and “raise this message to like the wider community”. On the other hand, newcomers such as Jake simply “feel pretty comfortable in that environment” and appreciate the values and aspirations that are expressed through movement culture. Experiences thus differ according to the group that the newcomer attempts to get involved with and the extent to which it ‘celebrates difference’, and the extent to which the newcomer is familiar with, and/or comfortable in alternative and ethical cultures and lifestyles.

4.1.3 Horizontal modes of organising

In this section, I explore newcomers’ experiences and assessments of the horizontal modes of organising by which the work of the CDA movement gets done. I begin by showing the extent to which newcomers find horizontality to be an **alien** experience. Next, I discuss the way in which newcomers exposed the gap between the ideal and the reality of **equal participation** in horizontal organising. As a brief reminder, horizontal forms of organising reject formal leadership, and instead, power and responsibility are both shared equally amongst all participants in a group. Consensus decision-making (CDM), a key tool in non-hierarchical organising, involves an iterative process of facilitated negotiation, in which decisions are only final once a solution has been reached that is acceptable to all involved, including minority opinions (Starr, 2005; The Seeds for Change Collective, 2007).

The level of responsibility and trust that is in theory conferred to relative newcomers in the CDA movement can be confusing, overwhelming and empowering, but always quite **alien**. In comparing her participation in CDA networks with other voluntary work she had done, Julie admitted that she wanted “somebody to say go here and chain yourself to that and here’s why”. Susan made a similar point: “tell me what you want me to do I’ll get it organised”. Susan’s and Julie’s desire for and willingness to follow someone else’s plan and instructions, which was echoed by many other newcomers, is entirely natural given that this is arguably the most prevalent form of social organisation in our society, whether it is a boss, coach, teacher, MP or volunteer coordinator telling us what to do. As Starhawk suggests:

“we are familiar with ladders [hierarchical structures]; we understand them even when we dislike them; they make us comfortable because we know what to expect. Circles are unfamiliar territory, new ground” (1988: 115). Horizontal organising suggests that participants should not wait for others to tell them what to do, but to Do It Yourself. This can feel extraordinarily alien, in that it often is not restricted to doing a task yourself, but deciding it needs doing, taking the initiative to make it happen, figuring out how to do it, finding people to show you how or help you to do it, doing it, and dealing with the consequences after you’ve done it (See Figure 4.4). As Rowan recognises, “we ask a fucking huge amount of some very young people”, who with very little experience may find themselves suddenly “running a fairly major part of a medium-sized organisation”.



Figure 4.4 DIY: working out how to build a solar powered shower
Photo credit: Amy Scaife

Newcomers may find it alien to be trusted to do it themselves in a positive, empowering way, as Susan did: “I actually straight away felt really relied upon, like they just gave me all this trust and I was like, you don’t know me ... [it was] a bit weird like, how they just automatically assumed that then, but that’s nice.” The ‘weirdness’ Susan is feeling here may stem from the fact that there is no one in a

formal position of authority to appoint her to or approve of her taking on this role, and no mechanism in place to determine whether she is appropriately skilled or experienced enough for this particular task. If a newcomer is not certain of their abilities or appropriateness for a role or task, the expectation that they can do it themselves may be alien in a more daunting way, as Amelie describes:

[It] was a little bit difficult because I felt people expected me to know more about what was going on than I did ... I was quite encouraged to jump straight in feet first and get involved um and take on responsibilities immediately, and that was, that was good as well. But then I wonder if I'd been less, um prepared to do that what the reaction would have been.

Moreover, having no one but themselves in a position to assess the appropriateness of the work they do can place an overwhelming burden of responsibility upon participants: “there’s such an infinite amount of work to be done ... literally just the work that you’re doing and the quality of that work and like, there’s no limits” (Kate).

Most newcomers fully appreciated the ideal of horizontal organising and **equal participation**: “I love the idea that there are no leaders ... if that works, then it’s the best way to be” (Adrian); and it can be “everything I’d, I’d hoped that humanity was capable of” (Phillip). Next-steppers in particular had often sought out a network in which they were “not just a number” (Jake), where their contribution could extend beyond “letter writing, giv[ing] them £10 a month” (Dylan), and where they were instead invited to be directly involved making the decisions that would affect the character of their participation and the actions they would take. These newcomers took pleasure in not simply being filled with information or told what to do, but invited to think, argue and contribute on an equal basis to all other group members. Others expressed how much they appreciated the effort made by experienced activists to equalise their participation with everyone present. Although often finding it initially confusing and frustratingly time-consuming, many newcomers were also very inspired by the way the CDM process successfully allowed all voices to be heard equally, and to arrive at the best decision possible: “the way it’s conducted is, it makes everybody get heard, so there are other ideas that come through that do sway your, mind and I think that’s amazing” (Adrian). These newcomers felt that despite their newness, they were invited to contribute as equals, and when they did speak up, people listened to their input. Others went further, describing how the hand signals

used in CDM allow everyone to feel included, and how impressed they were by the “ideology of respect” (Edward) in which discussions were conducted.

However, newcomers also pointed out flaws and failures of the horizontal organising in use within CDA networks, most of which can be traced to the gap between horizontality as an ideal to be aspired to, and the reality and complexities of what actually happens in practice. For example, newcomers found that the principle that everyone and anyone can get involved in all of the tasks that need doing didn’t always work in practice: “you’re constantly hearing people saying like, there’s loads of jobs you can get involved in and then it’s not like that when you get actually down to the nitty-gritty” (Susan). In some situations, it is experienced activists struggling to relinquish control over a role that undermines equal participation. Many newcomers spoke of how difficult they found it to try and help busy and overworked experienced activists, partly because they were so stressed out as to be unapproachable, partly because the newcomers were very aware of the fact that showing them how to do something might actually add to rather than reduce the experienced activist’s workload, and partly because newcomers were also aware that experienced activists may have invested a lot into the project and naturally want it to be completed successfully. Despite this high level of understanding, a situation in which newcomers are told that everyone can and should get involved, but then feel that they are actually not particularly wanted, can be very de-motivating, as Susan’s experience shows:

She told me what needed to be done ... and I was like, OK I can easily contact the [group] I live nearby, she was like, oh well I’ll do that ‘cause I’m doing [a related role] anyway, I was like OK, and then it was like oh we need to sort out the [equipment], I was like oh well I can do that ... she was like, oh like it’s, it’s closer to me I can do it ... and she told me to bring things that I brought and she’d brought as well, ‘cause she’d forgotten that she’d told me to bring them so ... I was, maybe a little bit frustrated.

Newcomers also pointed out that there are clearly people who, by dint of their experience and long-standing membership, hold more power than others within a given group: “I don’t think it exists by design, by intent, but ... I felt there were a group of people ... who’d driven the working groups really” (Ann). When this power is wielded through force of personality and conversational dominance in meetings, or by taking decisions outside of the consensus process, newcomers found this frustrating and disheartening. However, in terms of sharing knowledge and experience, many newcomers argued that it is appropriate for more involved activists

to take a lead in planning and discussions, as they are more likely to have something useful to say:

I know there's no leaders but there are, there are people that aren't me ... let's be honest, that's a good thing. 'Cause it has to be so everybody else can learn, um, I'm not saying people say, you do this, do that, it's just, you know there are more experienced people to listen to (Adrian).

Thus some newcomers argued that the idea that all group members are equal on all fronts is simply not the case, and moreover that the division that exists between more and less experienced participants is potentially useful, and should be acknowledged. For example, Richard felt the pursuit of horizontality perhaps prevented “quite a lot of, clever people with lots of knowledge and valid ideas” from fully sharing their wealth of experience, thereby potentially reducing the effectiveness of meetings and actions. It must be pointed out that it was primarily the ‘newest’ newcomers, who perhaps did not yet have the confidence or experience to contribute much, who were of this opinion. It is also interesting to note that pointing out the flaws in horizontality is something that newcomers, who have not yet invested of themselves in its pursuit and defence, appear to be more willing to do than experienced activists, for whom it is a core value that they feel they must protect. Those newcomers with longer involvement also appeared to be most willing to ‘suffer’ the frustrations of the CDM process in pursuit of the horizontal ideal, whilst some brand newcomers felt that modifications should be made in the name of efficiency.

As with responses to movement culture discussed above, newcomers’ experiences of horizontal organising varied greatly according to both their own personalities and preferences, and the nature of the groups and situations they encountered. Thus Julie “was completely blown away with impressed-ness” about the fact that the CCA had been organised so well in a non-hierarchical manner, whilst Jeff found the local group he encountered to be highly disorganised, which he blamed on the horizontal process:

I've sort of, put my name down to things haven't actually happened so.
[laughs] I've gone along to things and no, no one else has been there ... But you know, you know there's no one to blame because no one's in charge.

Similarly, Amelie had “a lot of patience for the time it takes to come to a decision” using the CDM process, whilst Jake quickly grew impatient: “You know people faff a lot I think, like the meetings, they could be cut down drastically”. Finally, whilst some

relished the responsibility they were given, others felt overwhelmed by it, or felt prevented from contributing in the first place, either by overly controlling activists, or through a lack of confidence and skills. Thus as Starhawk suggests, “the experiences we have within [circular structures] can be healing or heartbreaking, wonderful or extremely frustrating, intimate or alienating” (1988: 115).

4.1.4 Political views and values

To a large extent, the three preceding sections have already addressed the politics of the CDA movement, in that the prefigurative ways in which CDA participants take action, live their lives, and organise are inherently deeply political. Therefore, what remains to be addressed is the extent to which newcomers understand and agree with CDA networks’ articulations of why climate change is a problem, how it should be solved and by whom; newcomers’ views on the **achievability** of movement goals; and relatedly, how newcomers respond to the movement’s **prefigurative politics**.

The emphasis on diversity and open-endedness that circulates within the CDA movement means that a shared politics for CDA networks is difficult to identify. Thus whilst the Rising Tide network has a ‘political statement’ on its website which is loosely understood to be that which holds the network together, it does not necessarily reflect the views of those currently involved, and in turn actions taken by different groups in the network may or may not reflect its principles. The CCA’s politics are even less formalised, with the network’s primary public offering being a statement of the camp’s purpose: to weave together direct action, education, sustainable living and movement building. Although ‘key messages’ were agreed to guide publicity and media strategy, these are nowhere publicly cited and their application is inconsistent.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, given this absence of formal political platforms and the extent to which many participants within CDA networks celebrate diversity over unity of opinion (see section 6.2.1), references to politics and ideology were conspicuous by their absence in the interviews. Newcomers in this study were largely unable to articulate how they felt about the movement’s complicated politics, most often because they “don’t even know what they are” (Diana), either collectively or on an individual basis: “I don’t know really where people stand in terms of ... which branch of politics, ideology they subscribe to” (Cameron). Some newcomers did not mind this lack of clarity around political values, suggesting that groups should cohere

primarily around the core activity of taking action, and that “grand schemes” (Cameron) are an unnecessary distraction; or worrying that too much focus on ideology could risk fracturing the group (*cf.* Seel and Plows, 2000) – both of which reflect strong currents in autonomous politics generally, and in the CDA movement. However, although often expressed only indirectly in the interviews, other newcomers struggle with this lack of clarity. Much of this discomfort appears to result from not knowing whether their views and ideas fit with those held by the group or other group members. For example, concerns expressed by newcomers about sounding stupid when speaking up in meetings can be traced to a lack of understanding of the politics of that group. Perhaps more significantly, some newcomers had an uncomfortable sense that politics, whilst apparently absent from discussion, were in fact ‘hidden’ behind almost everything that groups do – which in a positive light, is in fact what prefigurativity means. However, if clarity is lacking about why things are done in the way they are, this “ideological baggage”, as Brent put it, can appear in ways that can be confusing or hurtful unless the politics behind them are understood. This resonates with Lichterman’s (1996) finding that newcomers who are only ‘let in’ on a group’s politics through wry looks and inconclusive answers, rather than being given a straightforward overview, may, unsurprisingly, feel left out and unable to participate. For these newcomers, it is not the content of the politics that is necessarily problematic, but the lack of transparency.

As a result of this ambiguity, many newcomers come to grasp the movement’s politics quite late in their involvement, and when they do, it may not be at all what they expected or were searching for. Broadly speaking, there are two possible ways that newcomers have arrived at the CDA movement as a means to tackle climate change. A ‘politics first’ perspective is held by those who have come to feel that there are fundamental problems with the ways in which governance, economies and social relations are structured, both domestically and globally. Some ‘politics-first’ newcomers were actively searching for autonomous anti-capitalist action networks to get involved with, and a certain CDA group happened to be the most accessible group: “[I] tried to sort of find the uh, the anarchists or whatever ... and they [RT] were quite the most visible sort of group, I think at the time” (Peter). For others, and particularly ‘next-steppers’, climate change is seen as both a symptom of and “the ultimate challenge to the legitimacy of the industrial order, modernity” (Phillip), and action on climate change may also be seen as a means to address wider

problems of inequality and unsustainability. It is the politics-first perspective that is held by a significant majority of experienced activists within CDA networks and, as described in the introduction, if the CDA movement does have a collective politics, it is that the pursuit of economic growth is the key root cause of climate change and a belief that neither government nor corporate led solutions to climate change can be successful.

More often than not, however, newcomers hold an ‘issue-first’ perspective, in that they have arrived at CDA networks as one means to address climate change, which is seen as “the most important issue of the day” (Jeff). Issue-first newcomers have a range of reactions to encountering the politics-first perspective which circulates within CDA networks. Some issue-first newcomers may be disillusioned with the failures of government-led approaches to tackling climate change and/or with conventional forms of lobbying and protest, and feel that the systemic approach to social change advocated by CDA networks is needed *to deal with climate change* – in other words, the issue remains the key driver. For other newcomers, CDA networks represent the most visible, empowering and exciting form of action on climate change, about which they are passionate, and the wider politics are acceptable but largely also beside the point:

For a lot of people ... their, motivation is the kind of, anti-capitalism, I don't have a problem with that ... I kind of can see the point and I think it's probably right... but it didn't make, that isn't the thing that makes me feel ... really passionate (Julie).

Other issue-first newcomers struggle with the overwhelming scope of the changes sought in a politics-first perspective: “I want to stop, I don't know, yeah, the amount of airplanes taking off or you know, I want to have an impact that way, and this is a much wider thing about, globalisation and, which is, you know... quite a lot to handle” (Brent). Newcomers also struggled with the positioning of (autonomous) grassroots movements as the key agents of change. Whilst it is one thing to agree that capitalism is the root cause of climate change, it is quite another to turn one's back on familiar forms of government as those who deal with issues of public concern, and place one's faith in – and the burden of responsibility on – oneself and one's own communities.

Partly as a result of the scope of changes sought, issue-first and politics-first newcomers alike struggled with the **achievability** of movement goals. As Jake

suggests, “some of the goals of Rising Tide are [laughs] you know, pretty out there ... the end of the oil industry this type of thing ... whether that’s ever going to happen is debatable”. Movement objectives are often seen as unobtainable, both because the goal of a zero-carbon, post-capitalist, autonomously-organised society is obviously enormous, but also because CDA networks do not often identify intermediate objectives in the pursuit of this far-off outcome. If lobbying is rejected as a form of campaigning, policy changes cannot be counted as victories; if sustainability is only seen as possible if the fossil fuel industry and indeed all forms of corporate power are abolished, neither can changes in the activities or investment of any one company or sector. Some newcomers wished that CDA groups would identify objectives for campaigns or individual actions, and wondered how the group or movement would know if it were to be successful. On a more personal level, for some the lack of clear or obtainable goals meant that they felt no sense of achievement: “you’re never sure ... what exactly is happening and what exactly you’re producing ... there’s no way of knowing what the work’s doing, no way of measuring it” (Kate). Newcomers often found themselves facing these debates when they compared their own post-action feelings to those of more experienced activists, who appeared to find something to celebrate in the perceived absence of any noticeable outcomes:

I found it, a bit disappointing really to be honest, and like, everyone seemed to be really happy that it was all going really well but ... I don’t know, I couldn’t work out if we had done something really good or not ... it didn’t really feel like it was worth, loads of people being bashed over the head for, I was just, it was all quite confusing (Susan).

A few hours after the moment she describes above, Susan found herself with a group of experienced activists, celebrating the fact that “we did what we said we were going to do”. Measuring the success of a campaign or action on its own terms and on the movement’s terms, rather than against any conventional measures of political success, is something that activists must do to make meaning out of their action, and reflects the prefigurative principle that the character of the action is as important as the outcome.

The pervasiveness of **prefigurative politics** in the CDA movement cannot be over-emphasised, in that, in theory, the principle affects everything about the way in which CDA groups and individual activists operate. For the same reason, much of what newcomers struggle with in getting involved can be traced to the pursuit of

prefigurativity. From one point of view – that of experienced activists, mainly – the fact that prefigurativity allows one to see the way in which far off goals are pursued as equally or more important than the achievement of those outcomes is entirely reassuring, and gives everything one does meaning (Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.5 Banner bearing a prefigurative message at the 2007 Heathrow CCA
Photo credit: Indymedia

Newcomers, however, may see the manifestations of prefigurative politics in quite a different light – as un-strategic, uncomfortable and overwhelming. For example, both Susan and Adrian felt that the decision to hold a messy, divisive consensus meeting in front of the world’s media at the Heathrow CCA to be embarrassing and ill-advised, whilst experienced activists celebrated it as an example of transparency and commitment to a fundamental principle. More fundamentally, not only is the CDA movement’s politics not just about climate change, or just about incomprehensibly vast social and economic change, if followed to its logical conclusion, prefigurative politics exhorts movement participants to live their lives in the here and now as close as possible to the ideal future society, which can be entirely overwhelming. As Susan suggests, “Being new, that’s just like the scariest thing ... everything thing that you like live by being questioned”. Although this questioning is primarily focused on the ways in which movements organise and take political action, it does not end there, which newcomers such as Brent struggle with:

If I ... went to demonstration I don't know against, I don't know, detention centres for asylum seekers or something, I wouldn't be expecting everyone there, I don't know, to challenge racism every day in their lifestyle, in their every day life.

However, prefigurative politics *does* suggest that its adherents challenge racism in every day life. Therefore a prefigurative movement pursuing post-capitalist, autonomous, climate-friendly ways of organising society suggests that its participants constantly challenge everything that is wrong with the current society in their every day lives. Rather than being reassuring, some newcomers feel that the principle of 'the means are the ends in the making' places a massive weight of responsibility on their shoulders: "So we're at the camp, and we're having our tea, so are you having your tea, or are you having your tea within the context of, a sustainable community of building a movement and taking direct action on climate change" (Annabelle).

4.1.5 Conclusion

This section has described newcomers' diverse experiences with and assessments of direct action, movement culture, horizontal modes of organising and politics. Elements of these core movement features may be both off-putting and appealing, sometimes at the same time. For example, a newcomer may find taking direct action to be both frightening and thrilling in the same moment. Sometimes it is different elements of the same feature that are experienced both positively and negatively. For example, the same newcomer might find taking action empowering and rewarding, but be intimidated by police behaviour, or worried about the legal consequences of arrest (Figure 4.6). Elements of these features may also be experienced and assessed very differently by different newcomers, with, for example, some feeling that direct action is more effective than lobbying or other more conventional forms of protest, and others worrying about the lack of clear objectives set out for actions and the campaigns of which they are a part. Some of the potential challenges and rewards of these core movement features, and the elements on which participants made complex and diverse assessments, are summarised in Table 4.1 below.



Figure 4.6 Direct action: exciting and intimidating
 Photo credits, top to bottom: Mike Russell, Kristian Buus

| | Rewards | Challenges | Uncertainties |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| Action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exciting • Distinction • Rebellion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scary/traumatic • Concern over legal consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficacy |
| Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living out values • Like-minded others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure of ethical lifestyle • All or nothing culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration of difference |
| Horizontality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering to be trusted • Inspired by the ideal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing • Daunting • Frustrating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of participation |
| Politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared beliefs about problems, solutions and strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unachievable goals • Overwhelming scope of change and responsibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity about politics |

Table 4.1 Diverse experiences with and assessments of CDA core political features

These different experiences and assessments can in part be attributed to the diverse ways in which different groups within the CDA movement put strategies and politics into practice, and the extent of their ethical and alternative culture. For example, how clear is a group about its politics and objectives, and to what extent does it pursue autonomous principles such as prefigurativity, horizontality and open-endedness? How frequently are arrestable actions carried out, and what is the group's attitude towards arrestability? To what extent is the group 'a knotted mass' of work, live and play, and to what extent do the social networks in a particular area overlap with the CDA group? Different experiences can also be attributed to the individual newcomer's personality, preferences and expectations, which will be further discussed in section 4.3.1. Thus, as the following opposing reactions to the same photograph of an activist meeting illustrate, different newcomers may have fundamentally different reactions to the same process in the same situation:

Trying to find common ground and feeling ... really chuffed that everybody was giving time to, that same aim um and knowing that people want to hear what you have to say and why you feel that way, and to come to some kind of middle ground and then be, appreciate each other's views (Amelie).

Not much is going to get achieved, I don't know, non-professional I guess, um, probably enjoy myself in a social way, um ... lots of time spent on, and talking, but not a great deal being achieved maybe (Phillip).

4.2 Being new to a CDA group

Having explored newcomers' encounters with and assessments of the key political features of the CDA movement, I will now discuss their perspectives on the experience of involvement itself, and what it feels like to become integrated into CDA networks. I discuss the experience of being a newcomer to a CDA group, encountering its social relations, its members and their behaviour, and experiencing the challenges and rewards of seeking membership in the group. I focus the discussion on newcomers' experiences of seeking to feel comfortable and welcome, to gain knowledge and skills, to contribute meaningfully, and to feel a sense of association with the group and its members. I do not seek to identify predictors of ongoing participation, but to describe how and why newcomers may feel welcome, competent, needed and included, and/or uncomfortable, ignorant, inadequate and excluded. I also show how, in general, the more newcomers feel welcome, knowledgeable and able to

contribute, the more involvement progresses (and vice versa), from passive and basic to full and active membership. The emotions and traits involved at either pole on the continuum of these elements of group involvement, and the progression that may occur, are shown in Figure 4.7 below. Although emotions and traits are located near the element that they are most often associated with, these are not exclusive or one-way links, as, for example, efficacy may both result from and facilitate membership and contribution. I have also deliberately not shown 'time' on the X-axis, nor have I labelled the left side 'newcomer' and the right side 'experienced activist', since these emotions and traits may be experienced or held by people of all types of involvement; however, as the discussion below will demonstrate, newcomers are more likely to face the more challenging aspects shown on the left side of the figure.

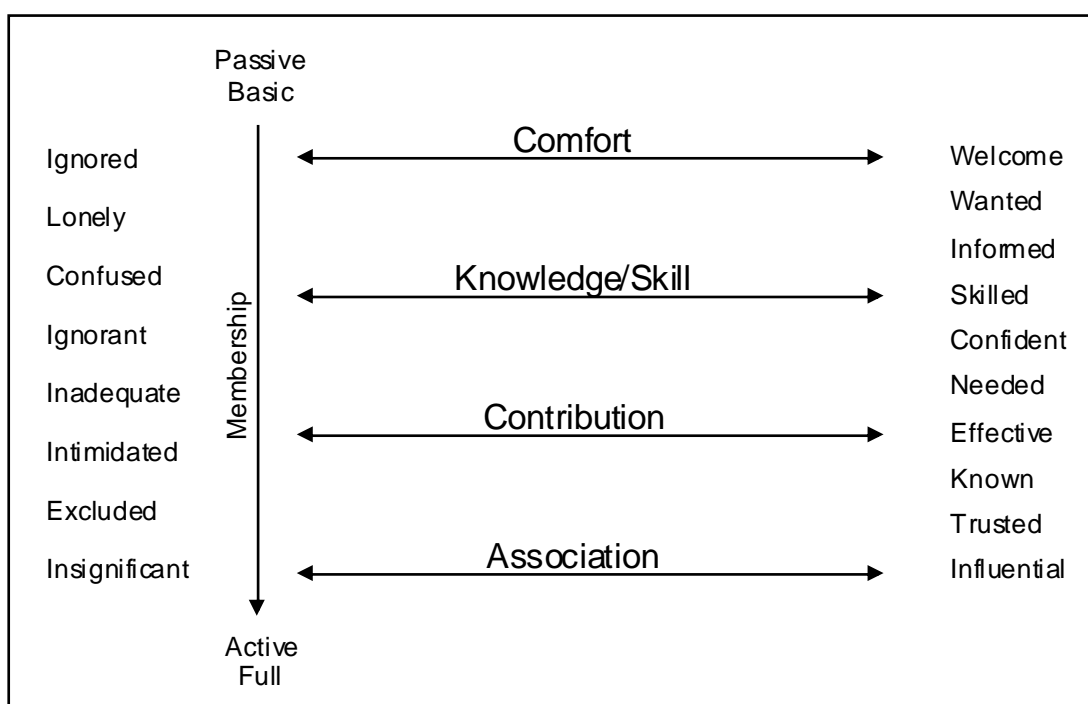


Figure 4.7 An experiential model of membership-seeking in a CDA group

4.2.1 Comfort: feeling welcome

Whilst experienced activists may constantly feel rushed off their feet at CDA events, in the same situations newcomers very commonly feel at loose ends. Over and over, newcomers talked of fiddling around, wandering aimlessly, hanging about, or killing time; and of how uncomfortable they found not having something to do or someone to talk to. This was particularly the case in the unstructured social time which often follows meetings, when activists may feel that the job is done and they can relax with their friends, but newcomers face the loneliness of having no one to

talk to, or having to make conversation with strangers. Most newcomers, many of whom see themselves as relatively socially confident people, at some point mentioned the challenges of trying to negotiate this unstructured time and take part in the conversations of pre-existing social groups: “I mean sometimes I’ll join conversations ... but not, not necessarily with the same sort of relationship with the people having it that they have with each other” (Ann). It is worth noting that this loneliness and discomfort is not always restricted to newcomers, with several long-time activists telling me that they still found these social times challenging. Since even worse than feeling lonely and uncomfortable is letting others know how awkward one feels, many newcomers made efforts to busy themselves so as to appear relaxed: “Like, oh I think I might go to the loo again, for the fifth time this hour! ... oh I might go and eat another bit of bread” (Susan). Strategies such as these appeared to be linked to a wish to avoid being marked out as ‘new’, with ‘newness’ being an undesirable state to be ‘outgrown’ as quickly as possible. As with many social situations, therefore, food and information tables become important focal points, and newcomers are grateful for initiatives that provide them with tasks to do or structured ways to meet others.

Many newcomers also expressed their gratitude for small kindnesses on the part of existing activists, whom newcomers often found to be friendly and welcoming: “[He] made a massive effort um, and chatted to me straight after the meeting and on the way to the pub and ... I was bought a drink as well which was really nice” (Amelie). These newcomers, who were usually quite aware of how well the people in the group they were joining knew each other, were often pleasantly surprised by the absence of cliques, and by the extent to which they found the group “a very easy family to step into” (Dylan). If a cliquey atmosphere was encountered, a surprising number of newcomers were quite understanding of and patient with this dynamic, and often excused the difficulties they may have faced as a natural feature of human groups, rather than one specific to activism or the CDA movement: “you don’t expect in other social circles to kind of turn, I never expected to turn up in a meeting and be totally included and feel totally relaxed the first time” (Kate). Others, however, were less understanding of cliquey behaviour, and were unimpressed by the way in which the activists they met showed little interest in making newcomers feel welcome:

three people around the fire, and they were sort of talking about, between them about all this different things they’d done and different people they knew, and I made three attempts to sort of, interject into the conversation and get

involved and every time they sort of just went, yeah, and then just like carried on talking between them ... that was the tone for the whole weekend (Peter).

This “stand-offish” attitude, as Peter described it, may either be felt as an active “cold shoulder” (Jeff) from existing group members, or just a general “atmosphere that made, if you weren’t really involved, you just felt really left out” (Julie). Particularly for those who had “expected [the group] to maybe, have a bit more interest in newcomers” (Jeff), a stand-offish attitude may leave newcomers feeling “a bit out on a limb” (Phillip), and that their participation is neither wanted nor needed.

4.2.2 Knowledge and skill: gaining competence

This element of membership-seeking is about the extent to which newcomers are able to access the knowledge and skills they need to be able to participate at a relatively basic level. As Edward put it, getting involved in the CDA movement involves “a very fast learning curve”. A hallmark of being new is a lack of information about the process, the subject, the history of the group or a particular decision, or the people involved. It is easy for experienced activists to forget how much must be learned before one even understands what is going on, let alone feels the ability and confidence to begin taking part, either in the work or the discussions of the group. Language and jargon, for example, can cause great confusion, as Adrian experienced:

I really thought affinity groups,¹⁴ were the people, the hard core ones that go in to break the [police] lines, I didn’t know what an affinity group was, so people were asking me to join and I was like, no, no it’s fine, I’ll just be, walking, I don’t want to join an affinity group, I didn’t know what it meant.

Newcomers thus often prefer to observe, listen, learn and develop their ideas for a time, as they build up their knowledge and confidence to speak up in a meeting (Figure 4.8). Some newcomers specifically identified a lack of knowledge about what has already been discussed, agreed, or rejected as a barrier to contributing in meetings: “when something’s already, on in a process you’re not sure whether that’s actually already been covered or discussed or like, if I say that will it be like, no we did that two years, two months ago like or don’t be stupid, that never works (Susan)”.

¹⁴ A small group of trusted people who organise and take action together. On a large demonstration, affinity groups may form at the last minute, and simply involve a group of people who agree to stick together throughout the event.

As Susan's quote suggests, newcomers also worry about the reaction their contributions will generate from the others in the room.



Figure 4.8 Speaking up in a large meeting

Photo credit: Amy Scaife

Thus lack of knowledge extends beyond confusion over points of information or history, to a lack of awareness of the attitudes others might have towards the issues being discussed. This second type of lack of knowledge is far more debilitating, as it leads newcomers to worry that they will be negatively judged for their politics or the quality of their ideas. These fears are compounded if newcomers either experience this judgment first-hand, or observe others being put down for their ideas. ‘Sniping’ or ‘rounding-on’ amongst participants is a common feature of a fraught meeting, and observing experienced activists, with their higher levels of practical and cultural knowledge, have their contributions attacked makes newcomers less likely to speak up (*cf.* Plows, 2002). Several newcomers, who identified themselves as normally quite confident, found CDA meetings particularly difficult to speak up in, as Susan observes:

Should I say that, or, maybe that would sound stupid or, ‘cause I’m not really like that normally, I don’t normally worry about, sounding stupid, but I would in that kind of situation, everyone turn round and go like, what’s she on about.

Newcomers may also lack the necessary skills to contribute to the work of the group; or they might technically have or be able to acquire the required skills, but lack

the confidence to do so, or worry that they might “take something on and then do it badly and let people down because I’d been too enthusiastic” (Amelie). Newcomers were often extremely sensitive to how busy activists are, and were anxious that their lack of knowledge and skills should not become a burden to others, either by taking up group discussion time with questions they are aware that most people will already know the answer to, or by asking for help from individual activists outside of meeting time. Without accessing needed explanations and information, newcomers’ progression into active participation is more daunting than it need be, as they must find other ways to build up their knowledge base:

a lot of stuff that I’ve gathered from reading emails a lot, like it’s taken an awful lot of emails for me to come to an understanding of something, whereas if someone had sat down for two hours ...you [would] kind of have a good overview of where, where you’ve come in, rather than feeling like, you’ve come in at a random point (Amelie).

Most often, however, with time newcomers’ skills and knowledge do increase, which both makes it easier for newcomers to interact with other group members, thereby making them feel more comfortable, and increases their ability to contribute more actively, fully and meaningfully.

4.2.3 Contribution: meaningful work

Increased knowledge and skills is important in helping newcomers to move beyond a passive role and to begin to contribute to group life in ways that are both meaningful to the newcomer, and useful to the group. Newcomers often begin by seeking out tasks that relate to their areas of expertise in other walks of life, which allows them to put their existing skills to good use, and contribute with greater confidence: “I could do that, and actually, that’s quite nice because, I know how to do that ...and [that] kind of gave me a role” (Susan). Seeking out or being given an opportunity to contribute not only makes newcomers feel needed, relied upon and therefore more involved, but it also gives a greater sense of purpose to their participation, in that they are doing meaningful work, and that they are contributing effectively to the group (where previously they may have been doing make-work, and feeling like a burden rather than a boon to the group). Moreover, carrying out the work successfully allows newcomers to demonstrate their skills and show initiative, and is an opportunity to get to know other activists: “You volunteer for work, you do stuff, you get your face known, you meet people in the course of doing what you do.

If you're reliable and you've got your shit together people like you, and then you build a social framework around that" (Rowan). This in turn builds newcomers' knowledge and confidence and increases the trust the group is willing to place in them, and therefore helps to make future events more comfortable, and increases newcomers' association with the group.

Conversely, volunteering for a job but feeling that one is not trusted to do it can generate some of the strongest feelings of exclusion and inadequacy, as Ann describes in relation to a national CCA working group:

I think I'll get involved in the [group], because [it] is what, I'm OK with. Um, and I went up to Nick, and said that I was interested in the [group], and he then said well it was all sorted. He and somebody were doing it, so it was a complete cut-off, no. Now presumably because he didn't know who the hell I was maybe.

Ann was able to identify possible reasons why she might have been discouraged from participating and, like many newcomers, she was quite understanding of why heavily involved activists might behave this way. However, incidents like these can't help but make newcomers feel inadequate and untrustworthy, and that their participation is not particularly useful. This is compounded by the fact that heavily involved activists often express how busy and stressed out they are and put out impassioned calls for help, and it can be very frustrating to offer this help and then have it turned down or undermined. In a different vein, some newcomers felt that experienced activists expected them to contribute to discussion and take on responsibilities straight away. Whilst some found such expectations of competence empowering, others felt pressured into accepting tasks that they saw as carrying too much responsibility or risk, and then felt guilty when they said 'no'. Others, in their eagerness to help out, "end up taking on jobs that are far too big for them, and then panicking" (Kate) when they are left on their own to complete them without needed support from more experienced activists.

4.2.4 Association: being known

Finally, as we progress towards fuller membership, there is association, or the extent to which newcomers are, or feel, that they are known, influential and trusted. Feeling a sense of association largely revolves around the extent to which newcomers feel that they are known by, and know others. As Susan describes, an absence of this mutual knowing is a defining feature of being new: "Do I feel like a newcomer? Yeah

probably if I were to go to a meeting now ... because I wouldn't have a group of friends who'd be like, hi, how are you since camp". Making contacts and friends in the social networks that are so vital to CDA organising is therefore crucial in feeling a sense of association with the group and its members:

It's people that make you feel that you're part of it, and people ... who begin to talk to you as a familiar person rather than an outsider. And then you kind of, when you start being comfortable talking to people and you let your guard down that's, that's when you start to feel properly included I think (Amelie).

Being known is also important because it is required in order to have influence, in order for one's suggestions to carry weight. Several newcomers mentioned their frustration at attempting to call a meeting or initiate an idea and failing. This frustration, I would suggest, is enhanced given the fact that newcomers are aware that in theory, everyone in a non-hierarchical group should have equal influence, and watching more involved (known, influential) activists succeed where they have failed brings the gap between principle and reality into sharp relief. Being known may also, although not always, increase a newcomer's trustworthiness, whether it is to competently perform a role or to be included in a covert action. Being invited to join an action is an important step towards full membership, because it indicates to the newcomer that s/he has been identified "as somebody who's trustworthy and is going to be a good person to work with" (Naomi). Such an invitation may also dramatically increase a newcomer's feeling of distinction, purpose and belonging: "I ... got into an affinity group, with quite a few experienced people, um, was kind of sat under some tables at the back of [a] tent like phwoar, I'm going to do something!" (Susan). However, action situations were also the source of some of the most painful feelings of exclusion, as Annabelle describes:

I'd just had a couple of really horrible experiences around the day of action and just before where suddenly, people that I thought were starting to become my friends, I couldn't speak to because they wanted to go off and do secret stuff and, I kind of, it was really difficult ... it was like suddenly god, I don't know any of these people actually.

Other challenging experiences of this nature include newcomers having a sense that plans are being discussed in corners and at break times while they are out of the room; finding out after the fact that their group has carried out an action to which they were not invited; and feeling that their motives for participation are under suspicion.

4.2.5 Conclusion

This section has shown that comfort, knowledge, contribution and association are the key dimensions along which newcomers may feel both included and excluded, and that, as with their reactions to movement tactics, culture, politics and modes of organising, newcomers respond very differently to the experience of seeking membership in a CDA group. Again, this varies according to both the group and the individual, with some groups appearing to be easier to gain membership in, and some newcomers finding the process far more difficult than others. This section has also suggested that the relationship amongst the four elements of membership-seeking can be seen to represent increasing levels of involvement and group membership: from feeling comfortable in a passive role; to having the knowledge and confidence to be able to contribute at a basic level, in terms of speaking up in meetings and taking on relatively easy tasks; to finding roles and areas of work that allow one to contribute meaningfully and to be relied upon; to feeling a sense of association with the group and its members. Reaching and feeling full membership is primarily experienced by newcomers as a shift in position, which involves making contacts and friends in order to belong and feel comfortable, and a shift in role, which involves acquiring the skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to contribute in a way that is both personally meaningful and useful to the group. Although the progression is not necessarily linear (ie., newcomers may have the necessary knowledge and skills and still feel uncomfortable), nor is it guaranteed (ie., some long-term activists may not feel that they fit within the group, and may not be seen as trustworthy by other activists), the experiences newcomers have in one state of being generally help them to progress to the next. Here, it is important to note that not all newcomers desire full membership, and may prefer instead to maintain a peripheral supporting role, without the level of responsibility and commitment that accompanies full membership. Finally, this section has begun to show that the experience of getting involved in the CDA movement cannot be fully understood from solely the newcomer's perspective; involvement is shaped not only by newcomers' experiences of the movement's core features, and their own personal traits and capacities, as will be discussed next, but by the social relations of CDA groups, and by their members' attitudes and behaviour.

4.3 Conclusion: getting involved

This chapter has explored what it is like, emotionally and experientially, to get involved in the CDA movement. It has examined newcomers' diverse responses to the movement's tactics, cultures, modes of organising and politics, and shown that different newcomers experience the same processes and situations in very different ways. Moreover, aspects of these core movement features may be both off-putting and appealing, even to the same newcomer, as, for example, direct action can be both thrilling and frightening, and the 'Do It Yourself' ethos can be both intimidating and empowering. I have also shown that getting involved is not only about becoming a political activist, but is also about seeking membership in one or more groups. Comfort, knowledge, contribution and association were shown to be both the key dimensions along which newcomers may feel both included and excluded, and to represent a progression from passive and basic to active and full membership. Experiencing this progression presents its own set of challenges and rewards, and is influenced by the social relations of the group and the attitudes and behaviour of its members, and by the newcomer's traits and circumstances. This concluding section will begin by identifying and discussing these traits and circumstances, and the ways in which, together with newcomers' encounters with movement core features and experiences of membership-seeking, they shape the experience of involvement. Next, I suggest that some newcomers require a closer match between the group's strategies, culture and politics and their own needs and views than others; and that newcomers differ in the extent to which they are willing and able to make an effort to get involved. I conclude the chapter by drawing together the factors that influence newcomers' diverse experiences of involvement, and suggesting that the CDA movement's political features are the source of the greatest challenges and rewards of involvement.

4.3.1 Shaping the experience of involvement

Just as there is no single explanation for differential participation, there is also no perfect formula to explain different experiences of involvement, and the influencing factors are as complex as those which shape the long journey into activism. I have already discussed differences which relate to newcomers' experiences of movement defining features and group social relations. In this section, I discuss newcomers' personal traits and circumstances which influence their experiences of

movement features and group social relations, including their **motivations** for joining, **personality**, **life circumstances**, and **self-socialisation strategies**; the extent to which newcomers easily or already **fit within the movement and the group**; and whether or not this ‘close match’ is important to them.

Newcomers come into contact with the CDA movement for a wide range of reasons and with diverse **motivations**, not all of which are related to the defining features of the CDA movement, or even to social change activism in general. With respect to ‘brand new’ newcomers, it is the issue of climate change that is usually the most important factor, with the rapid rise of climate change up public, media and political agendas playing a significant role. ‘Next steppers’, with their greater knowledge of the social movement field and its many actors, may be more attracted by CDA networks’ political analyses or participatory modes of organising. Direct action as the preferred tactic is appealing to a wide range of newcomers, who may perceive it as a more effective form of political action than others they may have encountered, or who may be drawn by the pleasure of rebellion and non-conformity. However, many of the reasons newcomers cited for making contact with the CDA movement had little to do with politics or direct action, and much more to do with the basic human needs of belonging, self-actualisation and self-expression discussed in Chapter 2. Newcomers spoke of their desire to make friends or to find a new community upon moving to a new city; to learn and develop their ideas and positions on issues through discussion and argument; and to find an outlet for mounting concerns for the future and frustrations over apparent inaction. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role of circumstance and luck, either in making contact at all (Jeff, for example, was looking for an inexpensive holiday and the CCA happened to fit his schedule); or in influencing which type of group is joined. For quite a few newcomers in this study, a CDA group was the first environmental group they heard about upon moving to a new city, and there they remained. Thus newcomers’ motivations for involvement are only partly, and for some not at all, about the CDA movement’s particular culture, politics, mode of organising and tactics, and many newcomers are ‘trying out’ a CDA group as part of a wider exploration into activism or environmentalism.

Two factors related to **personality** appear to be influential in shaping the experience of participation: approach to involvement and commitment, and confidence. Some newcomers actively search for a particular kind of group to get

involved in, and once they find it, they appear to make a commitment within themselves to get involved before even arriving at their first event. This type of newcomer is quite determined to be involved right from the start and may be generally of the attitude that decisions made ought to be followed through. As Gordon describes it:

I wasn't really going to let anything like that affect me, I knew that I wanted to help, and I knew that I had some skills that could go into the mix and, and probably could help ... I was absolutely sure that this is exactly what I wanted to be doing with, with my time. So I just needed to find someone that said yeah, and then they were going to have me, that was it.

Such newcomers have developed a strong, inner-oriented drive to be involved, and may be quite indifferent to the circumstances of their involvement, and what and who they may find once they get there. This inner drive can make them quite perseverant, willing to make strong efforts to overcome some of the barriers discussed in previous sections, such as social isolation or police intimidation. Compare this, obviously idealised, type of newcomer to one who has drifted into a group via a loose social network or at the invitation of a colleague, or who likes to try out new things. Bill, for example, explained his participation as “just, something that catches my fancy” and Diana’s approach was to “have a look and see what happens”. Such newcomers are more likely to try various types of action and different groups, possibly moving from one to another or being slightly involved in many, or deciding that the CDA movement is not for them altogether. This is not to say that this type of newcomer will not commit at all to one group or to the CDA movement, but that their participation is more elastic.

Confidence also stands out as making the experience of involvement less difficult. To walk through the door of an unfamiliar building intending to spend time with a group of unknown people requires confidence no matter what the situation. When that situation potentially involves illegal activity, a mode of organising that relies on the ability to speak up, argue and persuade, and often tightly knit social groups that must be penetrated to reach full membership, the need for confidence rises even further. Most newcomers identified themselves as relatively confident people, and worried that shyer people might not manage to get involved: “You have to be fairly confident I think to do it. I mean I’m, fairly confident I suppose, I mean I’m not frightened of walking into a room and not knowing anyone ... but it, yeah, there are

lots of people that I don't think could do that" (Ann). As Naomi suggests, confidence is required not only to deal with an unfamiliar situation, but to be seen, heard and known within the group: "I put a lot of energy to get them to know me, to get them to notice me, 'cause I'm a show-off, and I've got a lot of confidence".

Naomi's quote points to another factor which may ease the experience of involvement, which is the extent to which a newcomer identifies and is capable of practicing strategies of '**self-socialisation**' (Levine and Moreland, 1999). Practicing these strategies requires the ability to work out in a given situation what is required to access information, knowledge and social contacts, and thereby become known, trusted, and able to contribute. As Kate suggests:

How people get involved, people's experiences, are, not necessarily in relation to activism but in relation to human relationships and human dynamics and human social skills, and of course ... in any kind of social group some people are going to be more capable at that and some people aren't.

Naomi described self-socialisation as a process of "trying to include myself ... there was lots of people involved ... who I didn't know, who I wanted to know me. And so my main focus was on, those people, and getting myself known by those people, and respected by them". Strategies practiced by newcomers in this study included actively admitting to and seeking help on the basis of being new, with Amelie finding that "if I admitted I was new people were more inclined to be nice to me than if I kind of just kept quiet and didn't say anything"; and putting energy into being liked by experienced activists: "I was really really enthusiastic, really really impressed, I did all the right things! [laughter] That you probably should do to make it easy for them" (Kate). Finally, some newcomers recognised the difficulties inherent in joining a new group on their own, and invited a friend along to the first few meetings to act as a confidant and a 'social buffer' against the unknown quantity of the first event. Coming as a pair allows the newcomers to automatically have someone to talk to, to share the strangeness of the new experience with, to provide mutual reassurance, and to facilitate the taking on of projects and tasks outside of the meeting secure in the knowledge that they can work on it together.

A newcomer's **life circumstances**, including the pressure of non-CDA commitments, and the support and/or criticism that their participation receives from friends and family outside the movement, will also influence their experience of involvement. The importance of this support differed greatly amongst participants;

some declared that they were ‘their own person’ and didn’t mind what others thought, whilst others said that their friends’ scepticism led them to question aspects of the movement and their participation within it. Conversely, some found that their involvement brought them a new-found respect and admiration within some of their social circles. This appeared to be the exception rather than the rule, however, with many having to defend their participation in the face of parents worried about legal consequences and disappointed at their choices, and friends sceptical of the movement’s efficacy and gleeful at the opportunity to poke fun at movement cultures and lifestyles. In an extreme case, Gordon describes how his involvement has caused him to lose most of his previous friends:

My friends ... from you know over the last few years, just find it really tricky, they don’t, I can’t really be Gordon without the environment at the moment ... I go to a social and I take something of this with me, and they can’t be bothered with it; they want to fly, they’ve got big cars ... I can’t really not say anything.

The extent to which newcomers face pressure to spend time with their families or friends and their work or study commitments also greatly influences the amount of time that is left to spend on CDA activism. Depending on the extent of a group’s ‘all or nothing culture’, the amount of time a newcomer is able to spend participating in the group’s activities may greatly influence his or her experience of involvement, and the extent to which s/he is able to feel association and full membership.

Finally, there is the extent to which newcomers feel that they easily or already **‘fit’ within the movement** and the specific group they attempt to join, and their ‘submersibility’, or the extent to which such a close match is important or necessary to them. Upon their first encounter with the CDA movement, newcomers may already be sympathetic to the movement’s politics and tactical and organisational strategies; and may be practicing an environmentally friendly lifestyle and/or seeking an alternative cultural ‘scene’. This, however, is only likely to be applicable to a very small minority of newcomers, usually next steppers or second time around newcomers, and is very unlikely to apply to brand newcomers. There is therefore likely to be a gap between the newcomer’s existing views and lifestyle and those of the movement, which is likely to be greater the more alternative is the group’s culture, the more militant its tactics, and the more radical its politics and commitment to horizontality. The extent of this radicalism differs greatly across groups in the CDA

movement, with some having not “really much to be shocked about” (Susan) and others being “like going to China” (FD, 30). It is this gap between the newcomer and the group which is the source of many of the difficult and painful experiences newcomers face upon getting involved, particularly when this sense of difference is combined with a fear of or actual judgement or rejection from existing group members. However, it appears that some newcomers are more ‘submersible’ than others. In other words, some newcomers require involvement on their own terms, and a group, culture and politics that matches very closely with their own needs and views; whereas others can participate comfortably regardless of how closely (at least some) of these factors are matched. Jeff, for example, comfortably participated in a group whose politics he often disagreed with, whose culture of arrestability he could not engage in, and in which the disorganisation of the CDM process frustrated him greatly.

Similarly, although newcomers may already have a degree of relevant knowledge, skills and experience, or social contacts within the movement, the likelihood is that they will still need to make some effort to feel welcome and known, and become competent and needed. Some newcomers have both the willingness and the traits and skills (such as confidence and self-socialisation strategies) to do so, whilst others seek a group “that’s easy to get involved in” (Julie). Finally, some newcomers are more sensitive to the social and interactive challenges of seeking group membership than others, in that, for example, volunteering for and then being prevented from doing a task by a stressed-out activist might be felt very keenly by some newcomers, and not at all by others. However, it is important to point out that, no matter how ‘submersible’ a newcomer, if there is a vast chasm between newcomer and group on all of the fronts discussed above, the experience of involvement is likely to be a very difficult and possibly unsuccessful one.

4.3.2 Getting involved: between newcomer, group and movement

There is no shortage in the literature of models that describe the involvement process, whether they use the language of identity construction (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993), frame transformation (Snow, 2004), or socialisation (Levine and Moreland, 1994). In this chapter, I have sought to describe, from a newcomer’s point of view, the ways in which these processes are experienced, and what it feels like to begin to invest of the self in movement goals, and begin to be seen and treated as an

activist; to begin to understand, grapple with and develop one's own position with respect to the movement's political and strategic repertoires, and to encounter the differences of movement culture; and to seek membership in a CDA group by making social contacts, acquiring competence, and contributing meaningfully. In doing so, I have suggested that the processes at work in getting involved are not linear, guaranteed or universal. Newcomers experience and react to core movement features differently, and make their way into CDA groups in different ways and to different levels and intensities. I have also suggested that these different experiences are not only shaped by differences to do with the individual, but by features of the groups they join, such as their radicalism and the attitudes and behaviour of their members. Thus the experience of involvement after the point of first contact is shaped by a balancing act of many synergistic factors relating to the individual, the group and the wider movement, which are just as complex as the set of factors that shape initial participation. As Lofland suggests, involvement is an "ever-new production dependent upon many supportive factors for its continued reproduction" (1996: 239). Newcomers' responses to the core features of the movement, the way in which they enter the social relations of and seek membership in a CDA group, the nature of that group, individual traits and circumstances, and the fit between the group and the newcomer all shape the experience of involvement, as shown in Figure 4.9.

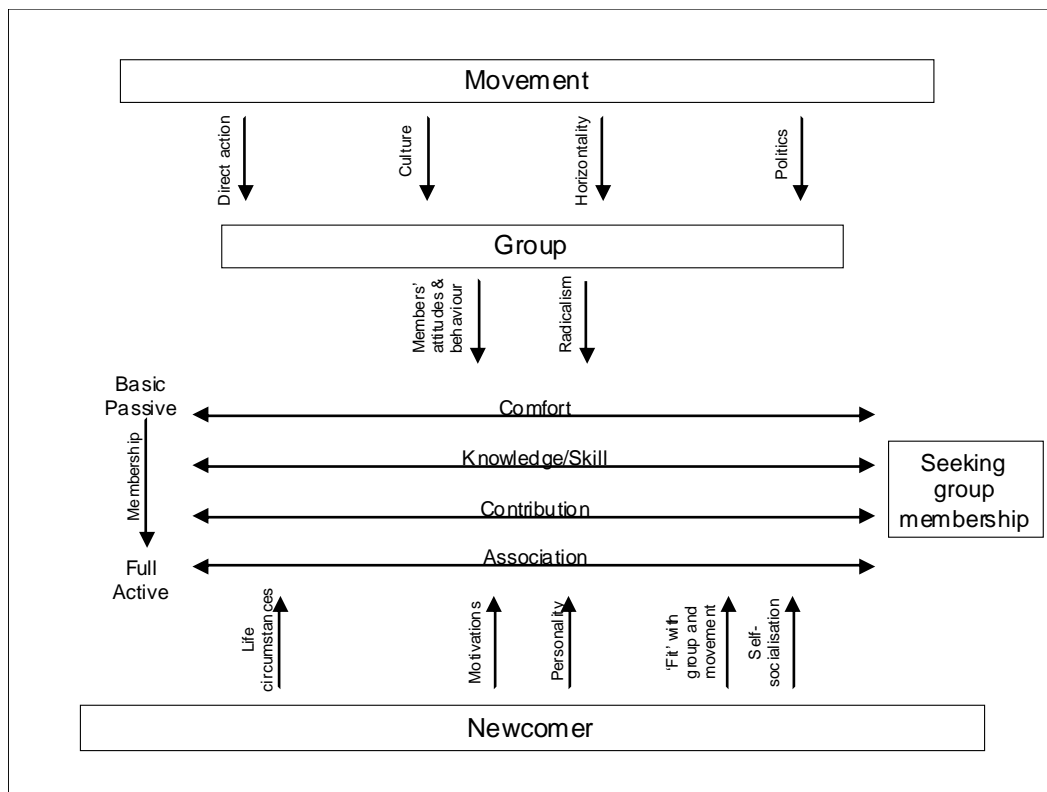


Figure 4.9 An experiential model of getting involved in the CDA movement

For a very few newcomers, this 'fit' will be ideal, and the experience will be an easy one. For most, however, the experience of involvement entails challenges and effort on the part of the newcomer. Some of these challenges relate to the attempt to penetrate and seek membership in a new social group, which can be a very difficult experience in both movement and non-movement situations. Some are able to rely on their own traits and efforts to gain membership, whilst for others the experience is shaped and success is determined to a greater extent by the attitudes and behaviour of other members, and support from the group. However, most newcomers, most of the time, are able to access some degree of comfort, knowledge, contribution and association in order to get involved, at least enough to be an active participant, if not a full member, which not all newcomers desire. Thus I would suggest that when newcomers cite extreme challenges in seeking group membership, it is due to the fact that this membership is being sought in a radical political group, and that it is the core features of this social movement that makes membership-seeking so difficult.¹⁵

¹⁵ Given that penetrating the social networks of CDA activist groups, and the extent to which newcomers felt different to, and judged by, existing activists who practiced radically alternative and ethical lifestyles were cited by newcomers as some of their most difficult experiences of involvement, it is important to remember that these are part of movement culture, which is included in the movement's core features.

Unless a newcomer is seeking a network with radical autonomous politics and strategies and very alternative cultures, which few newcomers in this study were, it is this radicalism that makes involvement difficult. As Fraser suggests, “recruiting and maintaining an active social base for transformative projects that tend towards a ruthless criticism of everything existing” requires that radical movements “wean people from their attachment to current cultural constructions of their interests and identities” and think very differently about the world and their place in it (in Carroll and Ratner, 2001: 607). Thus I would suggest that it is the CDA movement’s (radical) political features that are most influential in shaping newcomers’ experiences of involvement, and, as the following quotes show, of the greatest challenges and rewards of involvement:

That’s a lot more scary than walking into a room of people who aren’t very welcoming ... everything that you like live by being questioned ... at the camp and stuff, that I found like reasons why I couldn’t sleep weren’t because no one had asked me if I wanted to go for a drink, [laughter] it was just because I was just like, oh fuck, oh, this is really depressing (Susan).

Being part of something that really could be part of history, and like, I think that goes way above and beyond the ability of people to have manners ... and that you could be active agents of change because so much of your life is ... there’s just so many things that are inevitable, and when things stop becoming inevitable, the sense of empowerment that gives you (Kate).

Given the diversity of involvement experiences discussed in this chapter, and the extent to which the movement’s radicalism shapes this process, the challenge for inclusivity and movement building, to be discussed in the following chapters, is to determine how to make a diverse range of people feel supported, welcomed and included, whether this is possible and/or desirable, and what if anything is available for compromise in the search to meet newcomers’ needs and desires.

Chapter 5: The practice of involving

In the previous chapter, I explored the experience of involvement, focusing particularly on newcomers' encounters with the CDA movement's action repertoires, culture, politics and modes of organising; and their experiences of being new to, and seeking membership in, CDA groups. I suggested that, given the role of group social relations, and the attitudes and behaviour of group members, in shaping newcomers' experiences, the process of involvement could not be solely understood from the newcomer's point of view. Therefore, in this chapter, I consider the other side of the 'involvement equation' that is much neglected in the literature on participation, by considering the attitudes and behaviours of existing activists towards newcomers. This chapter identifies the various ways that CDA groups and individual activists understand, interact with and work on newcomers; assesses the ways in which these 'inclusivity' practices and processes are experienced by newcomers and shape their trajectories of involvement; and explores the diverse meanings of, attitudes towards, intentions behind and tensions surrounding the practices, processes and interactions that relate to 'inclusivity'. In doing so, I also begin to open up questions about how movement building is viewed as a strategy, and how growth is negotiated and prioritised.

Given the need to study experiences and processes past the point of first contact, this chapter is not about recruitment efforts that are intended to attract newcomers to a meeting or protest, but those which attempt to foster continued involvement and help to integrate newcomers into CDA networks. I refer to these as 'inclusivity' practices, a term that includes but goes beyond the notion of retention as it is understood in the social movement literature. The word 'inclusivity' as it is used within the CDA movement was coined by a small group of Camp for Climate Action (CCA) activists in an effort to investigate and promote practices "to help people who are interested in organising the camp to get involved, understand the process, feel welcome, and have an equal input in decision making" (CCA Inclusivity questionnaire, see Appendix 9). This understanding of inclusivity is quite a broad one, and it is important to emphasise that there is no agreed definition of the term, or the set of practices it might represent, within the CDA community or even within

individual groups. For the moment, I shall use the term to mean practices by which experienced activists (EAs)¹⁶ attempt to help newcomers get involved.

The chapter begins by exploring varying rationales for practicing inclusivity, and by identifying and describing elements of both group and individual inclusivity practice. Next, EAs' attitudes towards and understandings of newcomers and their experiences of involvement, and the relative importance of inclusivity in facilitating involvement, are assessed. I then explore preferential, practical, political and protectionist reasons that can help to explain why inclusivity might be resisted. In the concluding sections, I suggest that whilst inclusivity practices can help newcomers in seeking group membership, the strategies identified in the chapter are used inconsistently across CDA groups and over time, partially due to the wide range of attitudes to inclusivity and its importance in the CDA movement. Finally, I argue that debates about inclusivity can be understood as debates about movement building and growth. It is important to emphasise at the outset that this chapter is not solely about how inclusivity affects newcomers; it is also intended to provide, from the perspective of EAs, an ethnography of what takes place in the name of trying to help newcomers get involved, and how different people feel about these practices.

5.1 Practicing inclusivity

This section will identify and explore practices, both individual and group-based, that currently exist within CDA networks to help newcomers get involved, as well as some of the broader reasons why inclusivity is seen to be important. It is important to emphasise that a practice need only have been described or observed once in one place to be included here. Because, as we shall see, these initiatives are not mandated by the group and are often not viewed as core activities, they are never practiced all together, nor are they practiced consistently across the movement, over time within groups, or between individuals. Therefore the following section should be read as examples of best practice and what could be done rather than a representation of what is done. Nonetheless, also as we shall see, both the group and individual initiatives to be discussed do reflect a very good understanding of many of the challenges newcomers face in getting involved, and what is required to help them

¹⁶ This chapter involves comparisons between the perspectives of experienced activist and newcomer interviewees. For brevity, I use 'EA' to describe experienced activist interviewees only; 'activists' or 'experienced activists' refer to CDA participants who are not necessarily part of the interview sample.

overcome these barriers. I begin by considering why inclusivity is seen to be important. Next, I identify and discuss group and individual practices, followed by an exploration of the role of involver and the kind of person who adopts this position. The section concludes by discussing some of the barriers to doing inclusivity work.

5.1.1 Why practice inclusivity?

There are three reasons why inclusivity as a practice and an idea is considered to be important (as opposed to why particular individuals might be motivated to do inclusivity work, which will be considered in section 5.3): to **retain** newcomers in the movement, to **help** newcomers realise their desires and to facilitate **diversity**. At its most straightforward, inclusivity can be seen as a movement building strategy, in that whilst recruitment is obviously essential, so is **retaining** newcomers past the point of first contact. Frustration at the lack of successful retention is thus a key motivation for practicing inclusivity, in terms of understanding why “hundreds of people are attracted to our meetings, or our events, or our rhetoric, and then, very few of them are still involved, sort of six months later” (Jason). Here, inclusivity is seen as a process that can help to retain newcomers through their early experiences in the CDA movement, as they are making up their minds as to whether they will continue their participation. Jason describes such retention-oriented inclusivity as

Stuff that we could as a movement do better and create a more, um, welcoming environment to nurture those people ... while these people are still, could go either way ... there's things that are within our control that we could use to, to grow our movement (Jason).

There is a sense here of a window of opportunity, as newcomers are deciding how they feel about the core features of the movement – its tactics, politics, culture and mode of organising – in which inclusivity can help to “avoid losing people for silly reasons early on” (Rowan). If inclusivity can help people to feel welcome and comfortable for long enough, the hope is that they will have come to support the core features of the movement, which may take time to appreciate. Moreover, as Rowan went on to say, “the longer you keep people the more chance you’ve got of them becoming ... useful”. Thus in its retention guise, inclusivity is pursued quite strategically, as a set of practices designed to support newcomers through the initial period in which disengagement remains a high risk, until they hopefully come to agree with and support the movement’s core principles, and become skilled and useful

participants. Lofland describes such retention-oriented inclusivity quite cynically, as a set of practices that are designed to “keep the prospect on the line with almost ‘whatever it takes’, playing against the day of her or his intellectual enlightenment and/or emotional engagement” (1996: 248).

The second core reason for practicing inclusivity is non-instrumental, and is instead about **helping** other people because it is the right thing to do. Activists are highly aware of and concerned about the difficulties involved in penetrating CDA networks, and about the gap that often exists between inviting newcomers to get involved, and actually allowing and helping them to do so: “even though you’re open, are, are you actually being open” (Lisa)? In this context, inclusivity is about “easing people in gently instead of saying anyone want to jump in the deep end” (Jason), recognising that a newcomer may want to get involved but find it difficult, and about searching for ways to help another human being get to where they want to go. Although here inclusivity is often a personal, empathic response to the challenges of involvement, it is also linked to the political values of CDA networks. Since prefigurative politics suggests that contemporary ways of being and organising should attempt to reflect the future worlds being sought, it also suggests that the relationships within the movement as a community, including the ways in which CDA participants treat one another and potential newcomers, should attempt to be as fair, respectful and kind as possible: “it does help other people to come in, but it’s also an example of the kind of, life that we want to make” (Edward). Whilst as we shall see, inclusivity as retention may be controversial, depending on the priority and desirability placed upon movement growth, qualitative inclusivity as helping another human being realise their desires by minimising the challenges of involvement emerges from one of the fundamental principles of the CDA movement. Jonathan captures the distinction well:

[When some people] approach this sort of thing they would probably come from a kind of much more pragmatic, how to keep people, kind of thing. Whereas to me it’s like, it’s a much more amorphous ... sense of kind of connectedness with other people, and, ‘cause in one sense we’re meant to be very connected to other people in the world, ‘cause that’s why we’re out there trying to make it better.

A third reason that is often given for practicing inclusivity revolves around a desire to facilitate the involvement of a more diverse range of people than currently characterises the CDA movement. This may refer to **diversity** in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, class and ethnicity, or to a desire to make

room for more ‘normal’ or ‘mainstream’ people, in terms of lifestyle, politics and attitudes towards risky direct action. Examples of diversity-oriented inclusivity strategies include organising early morning demonstrations so people can get to work on time, or deciding not to hold meetings in pubs so as not to exclude those with children or those who may not otherwise feel comfortable in such an environment. The extent to which the CDA movement, or elements or individuals within it, actually want diverse participation will be explored in depth in Chapter 6. Here I will only say that as often as people talk about the need for diversity, there is an acknowledgement of the fact that it is very difficult to reach out to and attract communities that are very different to CDA networks, and a recognition that the movement might struggle if it were to be successful in doing so. As Carl very honestly suggests:

If we want ethnic, cultural, social diversity it will challenge our, working patterns, our, you know our ways of behaviour so much that we wouldn’t like it I think ... we will have much more social conflict as is normal in society.

5.1.2 Group-based inclusivity strategies

In a few groups, and most notably in the CCA national organising process, participants have had discussions about how they can collectively make it easier for newcomers to get involved, and have agreed to implement certain processes to this end. More often, however, these processes are implemented in a much more ad-hoc fashion, as the received wisdom of good meeting practice rather than being explicitly intended to help newcomers get involved. These processes relate to **information** and **explanation; socialising** and **social time; meeting structure; debriefs;** and training and **skill-sharing**. Each of these will be discussed in turn, as well as some of the challenges faced in their implementation.

Beginning with **information** and **explanation**, one of the most common efforts made for newcomers stems from a recognition that many of the terms used in discussion may be unfamiliar to them. Many groups make an agreement to attempt to avoid jargon, and to stop the meeting and briefly explain unusual terms if a newcomer is present. As George (2004) suggests, using jargon makes the assumption that others share one’s concepts and analysis, potentially reinforcing an outsider status and feelings of foolishness or inferiority. In some cases, this may extend to avoiding entire topics if activists feel these may be too complicated or too off-putting for newcomers, which some find frustrating: “having to sort of be careful which words you use because you might uh upset them or whatever” (Carl). Another very common practice

is to explain, at the beginning of a meeting where newcomers are present, how consensus decision-making works, and particularly what the different hand signals used in the process mean. Having watched and done this introduction myself many times in various contexts, I can attest to how brief and rapid it usually is, and, importantly, to the fact that the philosophy behind the consensus process is almost never discussed. In other words, reference is rarely made to why consensus is a preferred method of decision-making, and moreover, the introduction to consensus is often used as a substitute for mentioning that the group works horizontally and explaining what this means and why it does so. As Edward suggests, there is perhaps a need to move beyond an explanation of the “technical” manifestations of consensus and horizontality, to explain “why true participatory democracy is important, um ... and perhaps also why it’s difficult”.

In some groups, strong efforts may be made to provide a full range of information and explanation at various points during the meeting, with initiatives including a staffed welcome desk at the entrance, printed information handed out to new arrivals or posted on walls, a slot at the beginning of the meeting to outline the history of the group and/or campaign and re-cap what has happened recently, and an individual designated as someone newcomers can ask questions of. Although CCA national meetings attempted to implement most of these processes, it is important to note that often these were more aspirational than actual. For example, the welcome desk might have only been sporadically staffed over the course of the weekend and the designated ‘newcomer’s person’ was often too busy doing other important roles to be available to or seen as approachable by newcomers. As well, because different local groups organised each monthly meeting and they all had different views on how important inclusivity processes were, these were implemented very inconsistently from month to month.

Many groups feel that **socialising** after a meeting is an important way for participants to bond, and for newcomers to get to know the group and ask questions in an informal setting. These occasions are also important since they are in some ways ‘official’ social times, to which everyone including newcomers is invited, as opposed to the unofficial socialising which often takes place amongst those group members who know each other well and are friends as well as activist colleagues. However, despite the best intentions, as we saw in the previous chapter, the unstructured nature of this social time may be difficult for newcomers. EAs do often recognise this

challenge, as Jonathan describes in relation to the most frequent post-meeting social activity, adjourning to a nearby pub:

Are you coming to the pub; who do you, if you do go to the pub and you get a drink who do you, go and sit with ... the trouble is I could be speaking to people ... and I can't actually find a point to break off and go, but here's this person who's come here, that means the dynamic has changed.

The challenge of unstructured social time increases when the meeting lasts for an entire weekend, and attendees must fill an entire evening's worth of social time. Some CCA gatherings attempted to overcome this difficulty by setting up structured events in the evening. These events, such as pub quizzes, mean that "everyone is on the same level" (Carl), with "everyone in teams, social time with a purpose, and no one feeling left out" (FD, 24).

Attempts may also be made to organise and **structure meetings** in such a way as to facilitate newcomers' involvement. Some of these efforts involve standard facilitation techniques, such as ice-breakers and small-group sessions, that are designed to put participants at ease and encourage everyone to have a chance to speak, but which are acknowledged to be particularly important for newcomers. More newcomer-specific strategies might include holding occasional 'new people's nights', in which nuts-and-bolts organising is set aside in favour of a more enjoyable evening of films, discussions and socialising. This initiative is pursued in equal measures as a recruitment device, in that newcomers are assumed to be more likely to attend a film showing than a meeting, and as an inclusivity strategy, recognising that newcomers are more comfortable when there are other newcomers present. Similarly, the London Rising Tide group decided to hold 'admin-only' meetings to avoid boring newcomers with the minutiae of administrative matters. This, of course, may falsely assume that newcomers are more interested in action than in other areas of campaigning, and may also set up a two-tiered group in which the 'admin' meeting is brushed off as dull and unimportant, but is actually where many key decisions are made and therefore where much of the power lies.

Finally, we have group-based inclusivity processes such as **debriefs** and **skill-sharing** sessions. These in particular may be viewed by the group not in terms of inclusivity, but as practical strategies to improve campaign strategy and air any group dynamic issues that may have emerged on an action; share out work more evenly amongst all participants; and work towards horizontality. In my experience, however,

debriefs are almost entirely held after actions, or occasionally after public events, with almost no opportunities available to discuss internal group dynamics and day-to-day organising processes. Skill-sharing may be slightly more oriented towards newcomers, recognising that building confidence in specific tasks may help newcomers to progress from a spectator to a more active participant, as Lisa describes in regards to meeting facilitation:

For new people like, for people who haven't facilitated before they're much more likely to do it if they know that they can, kind of prepare and think about it ... When Louise was first facilitating, Ryan met with her like half an hour before, and ... thought about the meeting beforehand.

5.1.3 Individual inclusivity strategies

In most situations, however, there is no formal group process in place for inclusivity, and the task of helping newcomers to get involved usually falls to individual activists within a group: "I think I've just taken individual responsibility to do that with, like, certain people, um, I don't think it's been like a collective like we're going to share round that responsibility" (Lisa). This task is almost always taken on without a mandate from the group, but on an individual's own initiative, emerging from their own set of motivations and interests in inclusivity, and depending on whether they have the time and energy for it at a given moment. Some, who I have termed 'involvers', may practice inclusivity strategies quite consciously and consistently, whilst others may only do so when they happen to have some spare time, are drawn to a certain newcomer, or feel that s/he has something in particular to contribute. Nonetheless, in every group that I observed, one or more individuals took on this role of 'involver' to some degree, and it is important to emphasise that these individual initiatives happen much more frequently than the group processes described above. I will now discuss individual inclusivity initiatives (practiced by both involvers and other participants) relating to **hospitality**, **explanation**, **introductions** and **identifying roles** for and potential needs of newcomers, and conclude with an exploration of the **mentor** role.

Hospitality, the first and most common area of individual inclusivity practice, involves trying to make a newcomer feel welcome, as a host would do in many other social situations. As Jonathan put it, "[I] just think like, what would the vicar say"? Hospitality might include making sure newcomers are in the right room for the right meeting; offering them a cup of tea; giving them a tour of the building and pointing

out where the toilets are; introducing yourself and others immediately nearby; and engaging in conversation, with the intention of making the newcomer feel welcome, comfortable, appreciated and ready to participate:

You listen to people, and in the first sentence of your reply you give them the answer that they want. And you speak, clearly, with a smile and with eye contact ... you display a genuine interest in, why they've come, what they're hoping to get out of it, um, you don't talk for too long and you say, what are your questions (Jason)?

Involvers in particular were aware that people are put at ease in different ways, and some, like Jonathan, attempted to 'read' newcomers during these initial interactions in an effort to respond appropriately: "what is their kind of body language? And what is their um, demeanour and ... 'cause not everybody wants to be dragged into the centre of a situation and thrown in". Finally, whether facilitating or simply participating in a meeting, many individuals make a special effort for newcomers, in terms of positive body language, listening to irrelevant points where they would normally be cut off, reining in dominant personalities in order to make sure the newcomer can speak, and so on, as Kate experienced: "I remember being in a meeting and people deliberately you know being quite like, when I wanted to say something, them being very conscious of the fact that I wasn't speaking very loudly and listening to me".

Moving on to the provision of information and **explanation**, this form of inclusivity may begin before newcomers even arrive at their first event, for example by dispelling concerns about the level of commitment required, or fears about an unfamiliar experience such as attending the camp. As Julie describes, a simple phone conversation with an experienced activist helped her to "feel much more comfortable about the fact that I was going to this weird, potentially illegal thing in a field somewhere". In terms of the more common first encounter – the meeting – activists may seek out newcomers at break times and before and after the meeting or event, to offer companionship, to ward off any loneliness newcomers may feel, and to answer questions they are likely to have. This may also involve stopping conversation to ask if there are any questions, or sitting next to a newcomer and whispering brief explanations during a meeting. Similarly, involvers may consciously use break and social times to **introduce** newcomers to other activists and group members, which is both an act of hospitality, and confers a certain level of trust and 'being known'. As Susan said to me, "if I was to be introduced by you to some people, they, because

you're talking to me they'd, like already have their guard down ... they wouldn't be like, new person". Progressing to higher-level inclusivity initiatives, involvers may also make attempts to **identify roles** and tasks that they think specific newcomers might enjoy and/or be good at. Jobs are usually shared out by announcing the task that needs to be done and asking for volunteers to do it, which newcomers may not feel confident to do. Involvers may wait until after the meeting to approach a newcomer and ask him/her what s/he might like to do, or identify an appropriate, manageable task and invite the newcomer to do it. Such 'job-matching' may also be done via email, as involvers seek to find stand-alone tasks that people who cannot attend meetings can do. This type of practice shows that some involvers are aware that having a role and contributing to the work of the group are crucial in helping newcomers to get involved.

Whilst a newcomer may experience some or many of the practices just described from a range of different individuals over time, these initiatives appear to be most powerful and effective when they are part of a one-on-one **mentoring** relationship. Mentoring a newcomer may simply involve hospitality, information and job-matching as described above, but as provided by one activist to one newcomer. In a more fully developed mentoring relationship, the mentor may invite the newcomer to social events, national meetings and, crucially, covert affinity group actions that s/he would not otherwise know about or be able to participate in. Mentor and newcomer may also spend some time together outside formal meeting or action settings, allowing the newcomer to get to know an activist on a personal and social level, as a friend rather than a colleague; to have someone to call upon in difficult times; and to have someone to ask questions of and develop their ideas with in a more relaxed setting, as Lisa describes: "having like that one-to-one contact with someone who's very much more politically aware was, was really crucial". Given that CDA activists are uncomfortable with the idea of mentoring (see section 5.3.3), it is important to emphasise that all the relationships I observed emerged from a natural affinity between two people, and that the mentoring role was not formal or assigned but assumed purely out of choice. Nonetheless, examples of this kind of natural mentoring relationship abound in CDA networks, and as Amelie describes, this can be a very powerful way for a newcomer to feel comfortable and involved:

Straight away those two were really friendly, really, really friendly, completely took me under their wing, um and have done ever since, I'm still quite a lot in touch with both of them, and that's really nice.

5.1.4 Understanding involvers

The above individual initiatives may be practiced to varying degrees and at different times by many people within a given group. However, some people feel that helping newcomers should be a key priority, for one reason or another, and practicing inclusivity is therefore one of their core activities as activists. In this section, I explore who these involvers are: what motivates them, what kinds of personal traits and skills the role calls for, and how involvers negotiate their position within and responsibility to the wider group and its inclusivity efforts. In response to my question about their motivations for doing inclusivity work, many involvers recalled their own very negative experience of getting involved, and expressed a determination to ameliorate the situation for contemporary newcomers. Others appeared to take pleasure in their success at 'bringing in' a newcomer, although I would suggest that this may be as much about having a concrete indication of progress and achievement as it is about helping a newcomer to have a positive experience (see section 6.1.3). More broadly, involvers appeared to be particularly interested in and practised at considering the group and its activities from a newcomer's (and/or outsider's) perspective: "what do we look like? ... Do we appear to be something interesting, cool, exciting, up for it, friendly etc." (Jonathan)?

There is therefore a particular kind of person who appears to be suited to inclusivity work. Many had a high level of empathy for others, in that their motivation for helping newcomers was not about making sure they got and stayed involved in the CDA movement, but "a piece of common humanity" (Jonathan) that they would extend in any situation. In a similar vein, involvers are often fundamentally social creatures: "I like meeting people, I like new people, I like people I haven't met before, so although I'm doing it for lots of reasons, definitely, also I'm partly just doing it because that's what I'd do anyway" (Annabelle). Such a sociable and talkative role also requires a great deal of personal energy; and it is shyness and a lack of such sociability that is one of the main reasons why people who support the idea of inclusivity in principle do not take initiative themselves in this regard, as Rachel, a self-described "anti-social grumpy git", suggests: "I'm just not good at talking to

strangers, that's that basically, and I'm not good at having to say the same thing a dozen times over in the course of a morning, um, I start to feel like a stuck record".

Moving from the welcoming to involving aspects of the role, Kate suggests that good involvers have 'management' or 'people' skills:

They're all such management-y skills aren't they, like if you get a proper manager, hears someone's name and they remember it, and they use the name to make someone feel comfortable ... there's lots of little knacks aren't there, and tricks.

The involver role therefore calls for empathy, sociality, energy and good people skills, making it a role that some people will be good at and enjoy, and others simply won't, as Tia recognises: "there's some people who are really good at drawing people in, and making them feel comfortable and I think there's other people who are just like, less good at that". These traits are obviously assets in many other areas of campaigning and group working, and involvers are also likely to be heavily involved in many other aspects of the group's activities. Thus in many contexts, inclusivity ends up being "the responsibility of sort of like the dominant people in the group" (Lisa), who are usually also the most busy and over-stretched. Carl insightfully identifies potential pros and cons of this situation for newcomers:

That often works very well um, because you get the information very quickly, very succinctly, very effectively and um, they can make you feel, like very, very good and everything. However on the other hand I sometimes wonder whether, sort of the opposite person wouldn't be better, someone who is not quite sure what the, how the process is; who doesn't know everyone ... the newcomer [wouldn't] feel quite as much a newcomer.

Because inclusivity is rarely mandated by the group or seen as a key priority, and because involvers often believe that they are one of only a few people concerned with it,¹⁷ many struggle with the feeling that the group's inclusivity – and by extension newcomers' initial experiences with and perceptions of the movement – rests largely on their shoulders. Sometimes, as Lisa recognises, this sense of being essential to a newcomer's involvement may be misplaced: "I guess in a way I kind of felt like I had to be there to try and make sure that there was a space for him, but maybe that's a bit patronising and he's quite capable of doing that, himself". Nonetheless, if an involver is not physically present, it is likely that certain inclusivity

¹⁷ It is important to remind readers here that I am talking about involvement past the point of first contact, as opposed to recruitment to the movement, which many people are explicitly concerned with.

initiatives that they feel are important will not happen. The sense of sole responsibility that results can lead to burn-out and a desire to move on to a different role, in that an involver may feel that inclusivity work is still very important, but that s/he does not personally have the capacity to do that work (alone) any longer.

5.1.5 Barriers to practicing inclusivity

Whilst the next section will explore why inclusivity as an idea and a group-prioritised strategy might be resisted, here I want to look briefly at challenges involvers face in practicing inclusivity. Much of what involvers struggle with is a lack of time and energy and the challenge of managing competing priorities. Because many involvers have a central position within the group, often they are aware of and drawn to a newcomer who needs help, but are unable to provide it:

Often there's like a million and one things that you're trying to [do] ... so in the meeting you said let's talk about this after the meeting ... so then you're wanting to catch them, and ... you can't like commit to just talking to, new people (Lisa).

As Lisa suggests, much inclusivity work is naturally done after a meeting breaks up, when involvers often feel drained and lack the required energy. This is especially the case at weekend-long meetings, when even the most inclusivity-minded people feel that they deserve a break and some “off-duty” time to relax (FD, 34) – which usually coincides with the unstructured social times that newcomers find most difficult. This situation is compounded by the sense that as well as being serious work, activism is also “supposed to be fun” (Carl), and involvers sometimes resented the pressure to choose newcomers over their friends: “I might be having a fantastic conversation, in which case I partly might be a little bit annoyed that I've got to stop having this interesting one-to-one conversation with somebody who's my mate, to make space for a brand new face” (Jonathan).

A second source of difficulty for involvers is the lack of a “clear distinction ... between who's a newcomer and who isn't” (Rachel). Without the presence of formal membership criteria or visible determinants of experience, involvers worried about accidentally treating someone as new when they were not. Jonathan struggled with determining “what the words are to say, ‘Are you here to be, in, in our meeting’ and not to make it sound, rude”, whilst Lisa worried about asking questions about who the person is and where they've come from, suggesting that “they don't seem quite

natural to ask”, and worrying about the “stigma attached” to them. These questions are extremely normal, the stuff of small talk everywhere, making the source of these concerns particularly interesting. They could be due to the fluidity of group membership; to a desire to avoid the mutual embarrassment that might result from making the wrong assumption about a ‘newcomer’s’ level of experience; to a rejection of the very idea of small talk as being ‘too mainstream’ (see section 5.3.3); or to the ‘stigma of newness’ previously discussed. However, what emerged repeatedly in the EAs’ interviews was a fear of seeming and/or being patronising towards newcomers, a concern that appears to be much greater than might be found in other social contexts. I would suggest that this concern is linked to the movement’s ‘Do-It-Yourself’ ethos, which suggests that individuals take the initiative themselves rather than waiting to be told what to do, with the sense that offering help before it is asked for is somehow patronising. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, being left to find one’s own way and feeling confident enough to ask for help can be difficult, and many newcomers preferred that their obvious newness be acknowledged and supported rather than ignored in an attempt to avoid being patronising.

Finally, as we move towards ‘higher-level’ inclusivity initiatives relating to identifying jobs for newcomers, there are barriers to do with sharing tasks with newcomers, which are neatly summarised by Naomi: “they don’t know me, they don’t know that I’m interested, uh, they don’t know what I would be good at doing, and they’ve got loads on”. The first of these challenges relates to involvers’ lack of knowledge of the newcomer, in terms of whether s/he has the skills to do the task competently, and whether s/he can be relied upon to actually do the job s/he has volunteered for. Whilst the first may be surmountable by talking to the newcomer and identifying any gaps in their skills, the second is far more difficult to determine, and many activists have built up a distrust of over-enthusiastic newcomers who take on tasks at a first meeting only to never return, or to forget, or to do the task poorly. The caution of sharing tasks with newcomers that may result from this distrust may be compounded in situations where a few particularly involved activists become so used to asking for help and it not being offered that they stop asking for volunteers, new or not:

And I was like wow, I nearly like dropped down with surprise almost that anyone actually was like yeah, ‘cause you just often say that and then you end up stop saying it ‘cause you think no one’s ever going to say yes (Lisa).

Finally, there is the reality that overworked, busy activists are very likely to find it “so much easier to organise stuff with just the people you trust to do a good job” (Naomi) or to simply do a task themselves than to prepare it for and explain it to a newcomer, then provide input and/or check up progress as the newcomer works on the task. Together, these challenges can easily create “a clique of who’s reliable” (Jason), leading to a problematic cycle of stressed-out activists gaining ever more expertise and power, and newcomers finding it ever more difficult to approach activists and get involved in these areas. Whilst many groups are aware of the threat to inclusivity that this cycle poses, and may implement strategies such as skill sharing and small working groups to overcome it, finding ways to share work with newcomers remains a significant challenge. Moreover, because sharing work in many ways means sharing power, overcoming this challenge lies at the heart of a fully developed inclusivity. Nonetheless, although involvers admit to struggling with all of the above challenges, they are also very aware that these obstacles must be overcome if newcomers are to both feel fully included and become productive members of the group.

5.2 Understanding newcomers, facilitating involvement?

Having outlined why inclusivity is pursued, how it is practiced and by whom, and what practical challenges are faced in doing so, I now consider newcomers as the objects of inclusivity practice, both in terms of how experienced activists feel about newcomers, and the extent to which inclusivity practice helps newcomers to get involved. In doing so, I begin the tasks of problematising straightforward assumptions about the desire to grow the movement and retain newcomers through strategies such as inclusivity, and assessing what newcomers’ experiences of involvement can tell us about movement building. I begin by considering EAs’ attitudes towards, understandings of, encounters with and treatment of newcomers, asking questions such as: who ‘counts’ as a newcomer? How well do EAs understand newcomers’ backgrounds and motivations? What differing attitudes are held towards newcomers and ‘newness’? Next, I explore the relative importance of inclusivity in comparison to other factors in shaping newcomers’ experiences of involvement, and suggest that different newcomers require different levels of inclusivity support and for different reasons.

5.2.1 Attitudes to newness and newcomers

The notion of encouraging newcomers to get involved in climate action is frequently discussed, but conversation rarely turns to consider what is meant by the term ‘newcomer’. Interviewees offered a range of differing answers to the question of who, exactly, counts as a newcomer to the CDA movement. Annabelle provided the most simple but all-encompassing definition: “in any situation [a newcomer] is someone who hasn’t been in that particular situation before”. By extension, newcomers can be new to different elements of the CDA movement: to a particular group, to the issue, to the politics, to the tactics, to the culture, or to several or all of the above. Some EA interviewees quickly problematised the very category of ‘newcomer’, suggesting that ‘newness’ is only a matter of perception, in terms of how new a newcomer feels, or how s/he is made to feel by others. Newcomer interviewees corroborated this, speaking of the pleasure of being able to explain things to someone even newer than them; here ‘newness’ is shown to be relative, and the more experienced of the two is able to position him/herself as an activist in the eyes of the newer arrival, even if only temporarily. Moreover, the progression out of ‘newness’ is not automatic and does not occur at the same rate for everyone, as Lisa suggests:

It kind of does and then kind of doesn’t exist, this like distinction ... for example Leah who’s been involved for like a year but she really is developing her like, political thinking and her skills to, to organise and ... she’s still like figuring out how much she can cope with, what she [pause] like to start thinking about like new people, I think she would still feel of herself as a new person.

Kate went so far as to suggest that “anyone who could do more [is] potentially a newcomer ... anyone who isn’t already saturated with doing things, could potentially be, be persuaded to do more”. In Kate’s analysis, progression and involvement is measured in terms of work, and how much time one is willing to commit. However, the majority of interviewees had a much simpler definition of a newcomer, as being someone they did not personally recognise. I would suggest that it is this understanding which is most commonly held in tightly knit, personal relationship-based CDA networks: someone is a newcomer if s/he is not personally known by most people in the room, and/or does not personally know most people.

Attitudes to newcomers vary greatly amongst CDA activists, and individual interviewees often raised both positive and negative points. Addressing the latter first, within the context of a newcomer arriving at a CDA group, several interviewees

spoke of the fact that newcomers very often entailed “hard work” (Carl). For example, the flow of a meeting may be interrupted to explain things, pre-agreed principles and plans may be subjected to re-examination and critique by the newcomer, and energy that could be spent on political activity may be diverted to looking after the newcomer. These concerns are linked to the fact that newcomers may be seen as not yet trustworthy or useful, in that time and energy must be invested in the newcomer. Some EAs appeared to feel that newcomers needed to prove their worth and work for their membership, perhaps in the same way the EA feels that s/he once did: “I’m in the position I’m in because I worked for it to some degree” (Rowan). There was also a sense that ‘being new’ carries with it a certain stigma, and is an unfortunate state to be in, as evidenced by some EAs’ dislike of the term ‘newcomer’, or the avoidance of practices which might make people, who clearly are new, feel new. This may partly stem from a wider cultural stigma attached to the ‘newbie’ in many social situations, a figure who is often bullied, ridiculed, forced to carry out unpleasant initiation rituals or complete the least favourite tasks. As Levine, Moreland and Choi (2001) suggest, partial membership is an unstable and uncomfortable status that seeks resolution, on the part of the group and the newcomer.

Conversely, newcomers are also seen in a positive light, as a sign of success and a source of hope. In a small local group meeting with a stable membership, the arrival of a newcomer may often create quite a stir, with EAs getting very excited at the presence and prospects of a fresh face: “They could be interesting, they could be cute! [laughter] They could be, um, someone who, could take on a job that needs doing ... They’ve just come along, you know, you’re part of a project, you want the movement to expand, it’s exciting” (Kate). I would again suggest that this sense of excitement is due partly to the fact that attracting newcomers to the movement is one of the few indicators of progress or success that CDA activists have. The ‘thrill of the newcomer’ is also partly a result of hoping that this new person may be willing to take on some of the workload involved in running the group and organising action, as Carl describes: “it’s the hope at the beginning, isn’t it? It’s like please let this person be really cool and really on it [laughs] and take it all off our shoulders.” There is therefore a moment of ‘sizing-up’ that often takes place in initial encounters with newcomers, as activists attempt to determine newcomers’ motivations and experience, and what they may be able to contribute to the group: “You don’t come out and say it but you get, try and get a sense [of] what can you bring to the table, what do you have

to offer” (Jason). As Annabelle recognises, this may also, and more problematically, involve “being checked out for how much you knew or how much you’d done”.

Thus there are certain qualities that a newcomer may or may not have that will influence whether s/he is seen as likely to be ‘hard work’, as described above, or an immediately obvious asset to the group. These qualities affect what attitude is likely to be held towards a newcomer, and how easily s/he is able to get involved. These traits, which were repeatedly identified by most EA interviewees (often in the context of qualities which they hoped to find in a newcomer), and which correspond closely to the factors identified by Levine, Moreland and Choi (2001) that increase a group’s willingness to spend time socialising a given newcomer, include cultural and ideological proximity (the extent to which the newcomer is similar to, and agrees with, existing group members); skills and competence (how much relevant knowledge and experience the newcomer has); confidence and initiative; availability of time and energy; and, mentioned by a few honest interviewees, charisma and physical attractiveness.

5.2.2 Understanding newcomers and their experiences?

Most EAs had a good grasp of the range of backgrounds newcomers were likely to be from. Although obviously they did not speak in these terms, most identified newcomers as being ‘brand new’, ‘next stepper’, or ‘second time around’ (see section 3.3.3), as Jason describes:

Chronologically, tends to be your, 18-22 year olds. And you can argue as well that people who’ve finally got fed up with, you know, Friends of the Earth, just, boringness and reformism, I suppose they count as newcomers to direct action ... I suppose you can occasionally get people who did stuff 20 years previously and are now available again.

Many EAs were also aware that CDA networks were less likely to attract ‘brand new’ newcomers than next steppers or second-time around activists.

However, EAs appeared to have a less accurate understanding of why newcomers had chosen the CDA movement and/or a particular CDA group to get involved with. When asked why they thought newcomers had arrived at the CDA movement, EAs mentioned factors such as CDA networks’ politics, tactics and mode of organising; newcomers’ desire for a group and a social network to belong to; and a perception that newcomers found activists to be “different” and “cool” (Carl). In other words, EAs appear to believe that it is the features of CDA networks that distinguish

them from other environmental or climate change campaign groups that most attract newcomers. What is notably absent from the above list of factors identified by EAs is concern about climate change and related environmental and social issues, which is, as we saw in the previous chapter, the most common reason that newcomers get involved in CDA networks. This gap in EAs' understanding of newcomers may lead to a problematic underlying assumption that everyone in the room, including newcomers, agrees with a certain political analysis and mode of organising. Having made firm commitments to a very particular form of climate activism, EAs also appear to underestimate the role of chance and the "first in first served" (Jenny) element to newcomers' finding their way to the CDA movement. Rather than choosing a CDA group for its distinguishing features after having surveyed all the other available options, CDA networks are often simply the first, most visible or most exciting form of environmental campaigning newcomers come across.

Past the point of first contact, to what extent do EAs understand what it is like for a newcomer to get involved in CDA networks? Many instances can be identified in which there is a gap between newcomers' experience and EAs' perception of that experience. One example is EAs' misinterpretation of newcomers' silence in early meetings as an indication that they are somehow struggling with the process, as Lisa recognises: "I measure how they're feeling by how much they contribute, which perhaps isn't at all right". Another example was provided by Jonathan, who described his concerns about quite normal social questions being interpreted by newcomers as an interrogation: "You do want to find out a bit more about somebody, but you've got to be really careful because you don't want to make it seem like you're interrogating them, 'cause there's all this paranoia that people might perceive". To newcomers who may be largely unaware of the security concerns that circulate in activist networks, this well-intentioned reticence may be entirely unnecessary and, moreover, seem unwelcoming.

However, the gap between experience and perception that emerged the most significantly in the interviews was EAs' assessment of the overall difficulty of getting involved in the CDA movement. Over and over again, in interviews, conversations, emails and essays, activists re-affirm how difficult they feel it is for newcomers to get involved in CDA activism, usually by telling 'horror stories' about bad experiences newcomers have had, such as the following:

They were so appalled and upset by the way they felt everything happened... one of them yeah, left halfway through, and didn't feel that she could talk to anyone ... she didn't feel if you raised in a morning meeting, an evening meeting, that anyone would take her seriously, she thinks she would be scowled at, and that people weren't in any way open to it because they knew what they were (Kate).

The agreed stereotype is that newcomers find the movement to be cliquey, mistrusting, dysfunctional and full of strange people and cultural practices; and the only newcomers who actually do manage to get involved are extraordinarily persistent, determined and assertive. Many EAs struggled to find anything to say in answer to my interview question about what newcomers might find appealing or attractive about the CDA movement. The degree to which activists believe that their movement is incredibly difficult to penetrate cannot be over-emphasised. However, as I interviewed more and more newcomers, who, as we saw above, told complex, often enthusiastic and never entirely negative stories of their involvement, I began to wonder whether EAs might have an overly negative view of the experience of involvement. This is not to say that some newcomers do not find getting involved very difficult, or indeed that most face some challenges along the way, many of which are identified by EAs in the negative stereotypes listed above. But there are many positives to this experience as well, and, somehow, newcomers of all kinds, not only the most confident and resourceful, do manage to find their way in. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 4, a newcomer's relationship to the core distinguishing features of the movement is as or more important than the factors activists tend to worry about – friendliness or lack thereof, cliques, access to tasks, and so on – which relate more to the process of seeking group membership. In short, I am suggesting that getting involved might not be quite as universally difficult as activists think it is, and that the greatest challenges to involvement are under-considered by activists, or are only rarely considered in relation to inclusivity.

Here, it is useful to consider why EAs might have inaccurate views of the experience of getting involved, and particularly why they might think the process is more difficult than it is. Some, like Carl, are aware of this gap in their understanding of newcomers' behaviour: "Surprisingly there is a few people now who come to, regularly to meetings who are not friends with anyone, and I ... my ideas don't explain it ... I can't explain why they're coming back". I propose that the challenges EAs face in relating to newcomers stem in part from the distance they have travelled

from being a newcomer themselves. As Peter recognises, “it’s quite difficult to think about that now isn’t it, ‘cause it’s all so normal”. EAs may thus forget what it is like to be new, to feel nervous in action situations, to lack the skills or knowledge to do what now seems a very straight-forward task, and perhaps most significantly, that they have come a long way in their political beliefs, and that they too were once uncomfortable with movement politics and ways of doing things. Assuming that the movement is difficult to get involved in may also help to reaffirm some activists’ own sense of distinction, in that the more different and difficult the movement is, the more some activists may feel able to celebrate and take pride in their own participation.

EAs’ understandings of newcomers’ motivations and needs, and the inclusivity strategies they see as most effective, often appeared to be rooted in their own experiences of involvement and their current attitudes towards the movement (*cf.* Szerszynski and Tomalin, 2004). EAs often cited their own very difficult, even traumatic experiences of involvement as a motivation for practicing inclusivity. More broadly, when offering their views on contemporary newcomers’ experiences, interviewees consistently slipped into a discussion of their own past experiences. Given that most of the EAs I interviewed had initially got involved in previous cycles of direct action, in particular the anti-roads and Reclaim the Streets movements of the 1990s and the alter-globalisation movements of the early 2000s, and that contemporary newcomers seem to be slightly less negative about their experiences of involvement, it could be argued that the direct action movement has become more inclusive. Finally, I would suggest that many activists, having come to identify a range of flaws in the CDA movement, and being often quite cynical about its purpose, possibilities for success and ways of doing things, allow this cynicism to colour their understanding of newcomers’ experiences of getting involved, and may in fact use issues surrounding inclusivity and movement growth (or the lack thereof) to express much wider critiques and concerns. Similarly, a long-time activist who is struggling with one element of his or her own participation, such as legal consequences or feelings of social exclusion, may assume that this challenge affects everyone, and may worry about how off-putting this element must be to newcomers, without considering the specific circumstances, needs and concerns of the newcomers in question.

5.2.3 Relative importance in facilitating involvement

Given the claim that some of the greatest challenges to involvement appear to be under-considered by activists, to what extent do inclusivity practices help newcomers to get involved, and how important are they in comparison to other factors? I have argued that in shaping the experience of involvement, a newcomer's relationship to the CDA movement's action repertoires, culture, politics and modes of organising is as or more important than the extent to which, for example, they feel welcome or informed – in other words, than those factors that inclusivity appears to directly address. However, I suggest that for some newcomers, inclusivity work is fundamentally important in shaping the way in which this relationship with the movement's core features is developed; for example, having a friendly, open-minded activist to discuss the movement's political analysis with could help a sceptical newcomer to come to appreciate rather than unreflexively reject it. From a quantitative or retention perspective, inclusivity practices can thus remove or mitigate some of the challenges that might cause newcomers to withdraw before they are politically persuaded, and/or come to identify with the movement's strategies and culture, and/or are socially embedded in a CDA group, after which these barriers either no longer exist, or matter much less. From a qualitative or helping perspective, experiencing inclusivity can also generate in newcomers a generally positive attitude towards the group, regardless of whether they personally encounter any challenges which inclusivity might mitigate. Moreover, inclusivity may, at its best and rarest, help newcomers to move from passive and basic to active and full membership more quickly.

Crucially, however, newcomers require different levels of inclusivity support to overcome the challenges of participation, ranging from none to a great deal, based on their personal circumstances and traits, the extent to which they already fit neatly into the group, and the extent to which they need such a close match. For example, a shy person who already agrees with the group's political values or a confident person who wants to take action on climate change but has not encountered autonomous politics before might both benefit greatly from inclusivity. Conversely, no amount of support is likely to facilitate the involvement of someone for whom, fundamentally and in several areas, the group and/or movement is “not for me, at this moment in time” (Brent), or for whom personal circumstances militate entirely against it. As

Jenny explained, her withdrawal was a result of “bad timing, like I had some stuff I had to work out on a personal level ... there’s lots of things that I didn’t do in [that time] ... it’s just, it’s completely independent”. Since people make contact with the CDA movement for a wide range of reasons and with diverse motivations, many of whom are ‘trying it out’ as part of a wider exploration into activism or environmentalism, it must be expected that many newcomers who turn up at a meeting or event will never come back. Thus it is vital for CDA participants to acknowledge that inclusivity cannot guarantee retention, and Naomi is right to recognise that in many cases “we can’t just assume that the reason why people didn’t stay or get involved is because there’s something defective about our process”. It is also important to remember that disengagement from a CDA group may not mean that the individual has withdrawn from climate or environmental activism altogether – they may have simply moved to a group that is more well suited to their beliefs and life circumstances, and better provides opportunities for them to contribute in a way that is meaningful to them. In other cases, however, the availability of inclusivity support could make all the difference between continued involvement and withdrawal, and can greatly affect the quality and nature of participation, as Amelie describes.

They’ve been really wonderful to me, really, really wonderful. Um, and I’m really grateful to have met them because it might have been a lot harder for me to feel involved if I hadn’t, and they’ve kept me included the whole time like, with emails and phone calls and stuff ... They’ve been kind of encouraging me to get more involved rather than me being, it just up to me because if, if it was left all up to me I’d probably, not have got involved so quickly and been more tentative.

5.3 Resistance to inclusivity

Thus far, this chapter has shown that although attitudes to newcomers vary and EAs’ understandings of newcomers’ experiences are not always entirely accurate, a range of group-based and individual inclusivity strategies are practiced with the aim of helping newcomers to get involved, and there are individual activists present in most groups with the skills and willingness to take on the involver role. Given that one of the stated aims of both CCA and Rising Tide is to build the CDA movement, and that inclusivity practices appear to be effective in helping at least some newcomers to get involved, this section explores why inclusivity is not implemented more widely and consistently, and why it is usually not mandated at the group level. I consider four reasons why inclusivity as an idea might be resisted, which broadly

speaking move from more superficial to more deep-seated challenges: preference, in that the ‘softer’ nature of inclusivity is not to some people’s taste; practicalities, and particularly the concern that no single inclusivity approach can work for all newcomers; political and cultural, in which inclusivity practices are seen to require mainstream, formalised and false or manipulative behaviour that moreover detract from ‘effective’ political action; and protectionist, whereby inclusivity work is perceived to suggest changes that threaten the group and its collective identity. Two caveats are required before progressing. First, a single individual is unlikely to express all of these concerns, and thus taken together they appear a much stronger indictment of inclusivity than is actually the case. Second, although this section is framed in terms of helping people get involved past the point of first contact, as will become clear, many interviewees do not make a distinction between inclusivity and recruitment. Thus many of the challenges discussed below stem from concerns about movement growth, and will be discussed in a different light in Chapter 6.

5.3.1 Preference: ‘soft, touchy-feely, new-agey’

As Annabelle suggests, this is a “low-level kind of resistance”, in which, whilst perhaps not actively opposing the idea of inclusivity, for one reason or another, individuals do not personally like this area of work. Rowan is an example of one such individual: “I have no interest in that whatsoever, I think it’s a good thing, but um [pause] maybe I can’t manufacture it or something, I don’t know, maybe I’m just lazy”. Some worry that the tone of inclusivity work, particularly in its retention guise, risks being perceived as “you know, a cult, and a cult, a perception of desperation, um, which is a real turnoff” (Jonathan). However, the most common objection to inclusivity in this category is that “people think of it as a bit, soft, a bit touchy-feely, a bit new-agey” (Jonathan). Or, as Jason had heard inclusivity referred to, “we’re not doing that, that’s too wanky ... we’re not navel-gazing self-support, you know.” There is thus a tension between a preference for ‘intellectual’ ways of being and ‘harder’ activities oriented towards politics, theory and direct action, and ‘emotional’ ways of being and ‘softer’, people and process oriented work. This tension may exist within a single individual: “cause we want to have that feeling of being a tribe and being quite cool, and being sort of sexy and charismatic and, outlaws and all that crap. But we’ve also got to be touch, you know lovely sort of soft, gentle, low-key, warm, vulnerable” (Jonathan).

Clearly, however, this debate moves quite quickly from one about preference to a much more fundamental one about what kind of skills and work are valued within CDA networks. Involvers often expressed frustration that the inclusivity work they did was seen as less important than other activities (*cf.* Reger, 2002).¹⁸ Involvers may also feel personally patronised and under-valued:

That kind of, ‘Oh, well, well, bless her, oh she’s really kind, and a bit of a hippy isn’t she and, you know, let her go off and do it’ that kind of thing which, I personally don’t mind anymore ... But it really matters ‘cause it implies that people think it’s not as important, and it’s not as central (Annabelle).

Some also felt that at times inclusivity work did not always progress as far as it might because of who was doing the work, with the more central and well-liked people involved in ‘harder’ activities, and the inclusivity-related suggestions of more peripheral activists struggling to be taken up. The conclusion that some involvers came to is that within CDA networks, “the intellectual [is] winning over the emotional. And I think that’s a problem” (Jonathan). This can be contrasted with the claims that the movement is “much more friendly and more open than it was” (Gordon) and has greatly improved its collective “emotional literacy” (Jonathan) since the “macho eco-warrior posturing” (Jason) days of the anti-roads movement. Perhaps more fairly, it can be suggested that whilst progress has been made (Plows, 2002), work remains to be done in valuing ‘softer’, more people and process oriented contributions to movement activities.

5.3.2 Practicalities: ‘someone’s better is someone else’s worse’

There are a number of practical concerns that can be raised about inclusivity. The first of these is the dilemma of how to evaluate and develop inclusivity practice when, given that most groups are open to newcomers at any point, someone relatively new is always likely to be present. The concern here is that newcomers may be embarrassed by being put “on the spot” (Lisa) and asked to describe their experiences

¹⁸ It should be noted that this frustration could easily also be expressed by people involved in other people and process oriented roles, such as meeting facilitation or the ‘wellbeing’ space that was created for the Camp for Climate Action. The situation is also by no means unique to the CDA movement. For example, in her study of the US-based National Women’s Organization, Reger (2002) noted a similar distinction between the ‘hard’ work of political lobbying, and the ‘soft’ work of consciousness raising (CR). One of her interviewees felt that members of the CR group were perceived by others in the organisation as “touchy-feely people who didn’t really understand what the issues were and that you really had to do all this marching or organizing or whatever. They didn’t have a legislative analysis. They, the CR group, weren’t doing real work” (2002: 175).

and, if anything negative emerges, critique the actions and behaviour of those (more involved, more powerful) people present. The assumptions that newcomers are likely to have negative experiences and to be embarrassed might often be unfounded, and inviting this kind of reflection might also be inclusive and empowering, if possibly yielding less than entirely honest responses. However, this concern does point to the lack of appropriate forums for reflecting upon practices such as inclusivity (see section 7.5.2), and to the challenges of developing such processes within groups of very mixed levels of experience, interest and commitment.

Another practical concern, often raised by those who have been involved for some time, is the risk involved in putting processes in place which are likely to be abandoned, or practiced only inconsistently. Acknowledging that this is problematic may reflect an understanding that promising what cannot be delivered is often less acceptable to newcomers than not promising it in the first place. Longer-term EAs also raised the point that well-intentioned initiatives can be undermined by evidence of repeated failures in the past in similar areas. In some groups, “trying to invite people, and making them feel welcome, and making them feel part of the group has failed so dramatically” (Carl) that some activists have become fatalistic about the possibility of inclusivity being successfully practiced, and therefore question its value and the extent to which it should be prioritised. In other words, as Levine, Moreland and Choi (2001) argue, failed socialisation efforts result in ‘oldtimers’ making less effort for newcomers in the future. Evidence of past failure is also linked to a more theoretical recognition that attempting to improve upon inclusivity “assumes that there’s one better and one worse. I mean it’s multi-dimensional, so I mean it’s not, someone’s better is someone else’s worse, for a start, so how do you make it better” (Jenny)?

This fundamental challenge to inclusivity is expressed via several other concerns. First, as discussed in Chapter 4, individual features of the CDA movement can be both attractive and off-putting to newcomers, which many EAs recognise: “probably all the negatives said, things that we said are probably also positive things” (Carl). Thus an individual newcomer may find direct action both frightening and exciting, or movement social networks both intimidating and appealing. Second, different newcomers have very different responses to the same movement processes, in that some find consensus empowering, others frustrating. Therefore, altering such processes in the name of inclusivity for some might result in decreasing the

movement's appeal for others. Finally, as Carl describes, inclusivity processes such as providing information about consensus decision-making which might be appreciated by some newcomers may make the process less attractive to non-CDA activists who are currently involved in other campaigns – a type of newcomer who is culturally, politically and tactically close to the movement and therefore highly valued and sought after:

We asked, you know our [activist] friends to come along to Climate Camp meetings, or other meetings and said, 'This is really cool and very exciting.' And they would come back and say to us, 'We didn't like that, you know we thought these meetings were, didn't work, it, it wasn't interesting, it was patronising' or whatever.

Together, these concerns leave some people with the sense that, given that no single set of inclusivity strategies will work for everyone, inclusivity is not worth the time and energy it takes, both of which are resources that must be drawn from other movement activities. As Dylan argues, "either, they're happy with how it's set up ... so that's when they keep coming back, or they'll feel well it's not really for me". From this perspective, why not continue as normal, since changing or re-prioritising movement activities will only serve to alienate one type of newcomer or another, and since existing group members and their fellow radical activists are happy the way things are? I propose that at least some of these concerns stem from inaccurate understandings of newcomers' experience, particularly surrounding critiques that inclusivity is patronising or oppressive. In fact, most newcomers are likely to greatly appreciate a special effort being made on their behalf, and to find it friendly and welcoming: as newcomer Jeff put it, "I don't think that's fake, that's, people want that, people want someone to sit down, give them some time, chat to them". I would suggest that these kinds of critiques often emerge from activists' own dislikes rather than being based on responses they have had from newcomers.

5.3.3 Politics and culture: 'we have a job to do' and 'we're not like that'

As we began to see in the previous two sections, there is a sense in the CDA movement that inclusivity both detracts from, and is fundamentally not, the 'real work' (FD, 42). In this framing, inclusivity draws attention and energy away from other movement activities, which is particularly problematic given that involvers are also often deeply embroiled in other key areas of work. In some cases, people have expressed annoyance that involvers "were going out of a process that they were quite

integral to, um, you know there might be a discussion where they had specific knowledge but that they were busy talking to the newbies” (Jason). However, a much more fundamental critique is expressed by Rowan: “we have a job to do and that’s why it’s difficult, and if you can’t handle it then you’re best off not trying to be part of it”. Or, as Naomi puts it, “I think that people kind of constantly criticising ourselves, over the size of the movement, the diversity of the movement, the inclusivity of the movement, it hampers people getting on with stuff.” The implication here is that the ‘job to do’ is not to make life easier for newcomers, but to ‘get on with’ the politics, the campaigning and the action. Moreover, as Naomi goes on to argue, “I don’t think that we should prioritise getting new people involved above being effective, because we’re not going to be effective, and we’re not going to get new people involved”. In other words, if inclusivity work is allowed to draw energy away from the politics and the action, the movement will not only be less politically effective, it will also lose one of its key attractors. The fundamental debate here appears to be whether it “has to, be one or the other” (Lisa), which in Lisa’s group appeared to be the case, in that the effort required to run an open and newcomer-friendly group had prevented more covert direct action from taking place. However, in all of these debates, nowhere is ‘being effective’ defined; the implication is that action is effective, but this (or how it might be so) is never explicitly stated, and moreover, attracting newcomers is also hinted at as one form of ‘being effective’.

Moving on to cultural factors, inclusivity is also resisted because, for one reason or another, it is seen as too mainstream. So, for example, inclusivity is seen as too mainstream, and therefore inherently wrong, because large NGOs often place a strong emphasis on it (*cf.* Wall, 1999):

Is it actually healthy to get too much in to that [inclusivity]? Because you then interrupt the, you interrupt the dynamic of this. We’re not Friends of the Earth, we’re not Greenpeace, we do not pay a sub and get a newsletter, we actually do stuff (Rowan).

It is quite a leap to make from rejecting the politics, tactics and membership structures of mainstream NGOs to resisting the notion of inclusivity simply because NGOs do it, and one that Albert (2002) argues is an unfortunate mistake made by many radical movements; a rejection of a part must not necessarily lead to an unreflexive rejection of the whole. The hospitality element of inclusivity is particularly branded as overly mainstream, perhaps too close to what a hostess at a corporate event might do:

“What’s all this, friendly bollocks, you know we’re, we’re not like that” (Jonathan). This resistance appears to primarily result from a belief that interpersonal relationships should develop naturally out of a mutual connection, and that hospitality and mentoring run the risk of “interfering with a natural process” (Rowan), of being manufactured rather than genuine. Many EAs argued that hospitality should never be an assigned task and instead should only be practiced on an individual basis, out of a genuine affinity for the newcomer, which is seen to be not only politically preferable but also more effective in helping newcomers to get involved. Others took issue with such critiques, suggesting that welcoming behaviour, whether manufactured or genuine, is simply “basic manners” (Kate) and should not be made political.

Finally, there is the worry that inclusivity either demands or leads towards formalising movement processes, and/or aping mainstream recruitment and retention structures used in other contexts. Here formalisation is seen both as not possible, based on previous experiences of trying and failing to put systems in place – “I just don’t necessarily think it’s like a big formal, process can be put in place” (Lisa) – and most certainly not desirable, in that the movement works because it “is instinctive... you can’t bottle things in this movement really” (Jonathan). Thus formalisation is seen to undermine the fluidity that many theorists agree is one of the direct action movement’s key strengths (Mudu, 2004; Plows, 2002). So, for example, meeting only in office spaces at agreed times may help to include everyone equally, but weakens the ‘competitive advantage’ friendship-based groups have in that they can organise quickly, in homes and pubs, change plans suddenly, and so on. However, those who resist inclusivity on such grounds are perhaps too quick to assume that inclusivity demands formalisation, without paying attention to the potential that individual initiatives have, nor to the fact that the majority of inclusivity work currently happens on an individual rather than a group basis.

5.3.4 Protectionism: ‘one person’s ghetto is another person’s community’

Finally, we arrive at the most powerful challenge to inclusivity: the fact that it is perceived as a possible threat to the most fundamental unit of the CDA movement, the group, and to its collective identity and ways of being and doing. From this protectionist point of view, “it’s inevitable it’s going to be hard to get into that, we shouldn’t make it easy, because if we make it easy then we weaken it” (Rowan). In other words, being un-inclusive in some ways is perhaps essential to the way in which

many groups work and survive, in terms of both flexibility and solidarity. As Rachel explains with respect to flexibility and efficiency, trust and personal knowledge of other activists allows groups to work in “a kind of short hand”:

The way we work relies so much on knowing people and trusting people, almost entirely in fact. Which is the main reason we fail so miserably on being inclusive. But it's also the reason that we can do without so many things that the mainstream considers essential.

With respect to the second element, solidarity, “one person's ghetto is another person's community” (Naomi), in that it is the exclusive characteristics of the ‘activist ghetto’, or ‘neo-tribe’ (Hetherington, 1998), that help to build the strong collective and oppositional identity that supports and sustains its members (Wall, 1999). In a demanding, risky and all-volunteer network, fun and friendship are key supports and rewards, and must be safeguarded. By contrast, inclusivity is seen to “basically mean breaking up these friendships groups to some extent” (Carl), involving a loss of

our strength that comes through knowing each other and working very closely together. So automatically when you open up your group or want new people to join, you lose something that has worked very well before (Carl).

Many of these tensions come to a head as a group is making the transition from a closed, friendship-based affinity group to a more open and public network. In this study, two of the most conflict-ridden groups were currently making this transition (one of which was also the site of the most difficult newcomer's experience I have observed). ‘Going public’ might be seen as requiring more work, breaking up friendship groups, and being less relaxed than was previously the case, when people felt that they could “come along to the meeting and, can just be themselves. And ... don't have to think about how they ... can actually support other people” (Lisa); and it is also easy to see why newcomers and the inclusivity efforts directed towards them might be blamed. However, one might also consider whether there are any rewards of going public that might help to offset the negatives, and if not, why the transition was made in the first place, regardless of whether it was sought out or happened organically.

Whatever the status or origins of the group, change and the fear of the unknown appear to be strongly at play in this area of resistance, particularly when inclusivity becomes elided with growth: “if you double the size of the Climate Camp or if you double the size of a ... Rising Tide meeting, where do you find the vibe”

(Jonathan)? Finally, the challenges to group dynamics and changes to individual behaviour that inclusivity processes may demand are also sources of protectionist resistance: “we would need to challenge each other’s behaviour ... and things that get done and said, and not done and not said. And that requires an intellectual integrity and emotional courage that [we] very rarely have” (Jason). Revealing issues of group dynamics and emotional struggle can be both painful and risky, particularly since groups may not have the capacity to deal with them once they are revealed, as one discovered:

We did open it up and it was like, a lot of darkness suddenly tumbled out and then it’s like we’ve got all this work to do ... but actually we’ve opened this kind of Pandora’s box ... of, pain and, struggle, and then we kind of didn’t know what to do with it (Jonathan).

As Melucci (1996) argues, solidarity and collective identity are essential to the functioning and survival of new social movement groups, which develop a range of strategies to protect this identity at all costs – and in some cases, inclusivity may be one of these costs.

5.3.5 Reflections on resistance

In this section, I have outlined different types of resistance to inclusivity, which together appear to raise questions about its possibility, importance and desirability. On an individual level, inclusivity is simply not to some people’s taste, and they prefer to concentrate on different areas of work. However, far more fundamental questions were raised: Is an inclusivity that is ‘inclusive’ of a diverse range of newcomers possible in practical terms? To what extent does inclusivity practice draw time and energy away from other areas of work, and to what extent does it suggest compromising on modes of organising and action? If inclusivity does detract from other forms of work, how much priority should it be given, and how should this be determined? And finally, even if time and energy were unlimited, does inclusivity pose a level of threat to movement values and group identities such that it is not desirable at all? Throughout the section, whilst attempting to explain these resistances largely from a ‘resistor’s’ point of view, I have also pointed out instances in which these critiques appear to be overstated or unjustified. I argued that a prevailing preference for ‘intellectual’ over ‘emotional’ ways of being should not be allowed to translate to a de-valuing of ‘softer’ and more people and process oriented

areas of work such as inclusivity. I suggested that the concern that some newcomers might find the hospitality and information-provision elements to inclusivity patronising was largely unfounded. Finally, I questioned the assumptions that inclusivity must lead to formalisation and that it must detract from other areas of work; rather, I propose that inclusivity is at its most powerful at the individual, chosen level, and that it can be integrated into other areas of work rather than detracting from them. Most importantly, there is choice in all of these matters, and inclusivity does not in itself have to lead anywhere that movement participants do not want it to go.

Despite the wide variety of reasons for resistance to inclusivity given in this section, I would suggest that at their core most of the concerns that were raised are related to critiques of inclusivity as a movement building strategy and by extension, of group and movement expansion. In conversation, inclusivity is constantly conflated with quantitative recruitment; for example, “we need inclusivity, we need to bring more people in” (Carl). Particularly when it is being criticised, inclusivity is portrayed in its quantitative, retention mode rather than its qualitative, helping and involving mode. In doing so, critics neglect a very significant amount of the inclusivity work that happens, particularly at the individual level, which is critical to acknowledge and recognise. More importantly, to see inclusivity as only about quantitative retention is to sideline some of the most fundamental intentions behind its practice. Inclusivity is also about making sure that, whether as a result of overwork, neglect or accident, the challenges of involvement do not prevent people who very much want to get involved and who have something to offer, from doing so. Inclusivity is also about helping newcomers to be able to shape and contribute equally to the movement, not only about keeping them involved in order to build the movement’s power through numbers, or to be told what to think or do. Moreover, whilst of course inclusivity is also about retention, it does not have to take on the “desperate and um, and manipulative” (Jonathan) qualities which many feel characterise certain types of recruitment and retention. However, as we saw above, the related concerns about growth which very often underpin those about inclusivity, retention and recruitment do present very real dilemmas, which will be considered in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, what the frequent conflation of inclusivity and quantitative recruitment and retention throughout the interviews and indeed much activist discourse suggests, however, is the need take the time to clarify the differences between these practices; and,

moreover, to think carefully about why they are practiced and how different situations might call for different practices.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored activists' attitudes to and understandings of newcomers, newness and inclusivity. It has identified and described a range of individual and group practices that are currently carried out within the CDA movement, and has discussed how these strategies are experienced by newcomers, and the extent to which inclusivity helps newcomers to get involved. It has explored the nature of involving work, the motivations of those who do it and the challenges they encounter. Finally, this chapter has begun to open up a debate about why inclusivity as an idea is both pursued and resisted. In this concluding section, I want to assess the current 'state of play' of inclusivity within CDA networks: to what extent are different strategies in the range I have identified practiced? What are the impacts of simultaneously pursuing and resisting inclusivity? I begin by suggesting that the inclusivity strategies that have been identified in this chapter are not all used in the same way, and that a fuller inclusivity depends not only on newcomers and involvers, but other movement participants as well. Next, I summarise the range of attitudes to inclusivity and its importance, and explore how and why the occurrence of inclusivity strategies varies across groups in the CDA movement. Finally, I argue that debates about inclusivity can be understood as debates about movement building and growth, and that addressing tensions about inclusivity and its priority requires wider discussions about the role of growth in the CDA movement.

5.4.1 Occurrence and extent of inclusivity practice

The inclusivity strategies identified in this chapter address the challenges newcomers face in seeking group membership by helping newcomers to feel welcome (eg., hospitality and social events), to gain the knowledge and skills needed to be able to participate at a basic level (eg., information and explanation), to be able to contribute meaningfully (eg., identifying roles, skill-sharing and training), and to associate with group members and become more full and active participants (eg., introductions, mentoring and debriefs). However, in identifying these strategies, I was careful to point out that they represented best practice rather than reality, and were implemented highly inconsistently across groups and over time. To what extent,

therefore, are newcomers likely to experience and benefit from these strategies? The bulk of the inclusivity practices that newcomers are likely to encounter fall into the first two categories. Inclusivity can be very effective at helping newcomers to feel welcome, particularly the more it expands towards mentorship and friendship. Inclusivity can also quite successfully provide newcomers with the information, knowledge and sometimes the skills needed to be able to participate in discussions and campaigning. If a newcomer is lucky, they may also encounter some practices that can facilitate meaningful contribution, for example by meeting an activist who is particularly skilled at assessing what kind of role or job the newcomer might enjoy and be good at, or a process like the CCA's 'Job Shop' where those at loose ends can be matched up with jobs that need doing. For most groups and individuals, I would suggest that this is where inclusivity ends, and if any practices do happen that are relevant to the final category, association and full membership, they are more intended to improve the process for everyone involved than they are intended to help newcomers. Since some of the greatest challenges to involvement cited by newcomers related to not feeling needed, known or trusted, there is room for improvement in the categories of facilitating meaningful contribution, association and full membership. However, it must also be acknowledged that whilst certain barriers can be removed and certain practices encouraged, inclusivity work can only go so far in facilitating full membership, which also requires work, time, luck and certain traits on the part of the newcomer. It is also important to remember that not all newcomers desire full membership, and instead would rather assume a peripheral and supportive role.

Thus the definition of inclusivity adopted by the Camp for Climate Action presented at the beginning of this chapter represents a fuller inclusivity than is currently practiced, and an aspiration rather than a reality: "to help people who are interested in organising the camp to get involved, understand the process, feel welcome, and have an equal input in decision making" (CCA Inclusivity questionnaire; see Appendix 9). Moreover, a 'full inclusivity' such as this, which does work towards facilitating full membership, affects and requires action on the part of not just newcomers and individual inclusivity practitioners, but all participants: inclusivity means helping newcomers to feel welcome (which requires that participants be welcoming and non-judgmental); encouraging them to be active participants (which requires sharing knowledge, skills and work with newcomers) and facilitating an equality of participation (which requires sharing power with

newcomers). In other words, at its fullest, the pursuit of inclusivity *includes* the pursuit of horizontality. Such an understanding recognises inclusivity as being “part of everything” (Jonathan), extending what it means to ‘do inclusivity’ well beyond the practices identified in this chapter, and likely also raising a new set of critiques and resistances.

5.4.2 Attitudes, priorities and tensions

This chapter has shown that there is a very wide range of understandings of inclusivity, both in terms of why it is practiced and how important it is seen to be, amongst individual activists within CDA networks. The intentions behind inclusivity can range from quantitative and strategic to qualitative and supportive, from very movement-centred to very newcomer-centred, from “what do we need to do to you in order to turn you into one of us [to] what can we get from you that will make us stronger” (Rachel) to how can we help you get to where you want to go. Different intentions may be active at different times or in different situations, and most inclusivity practice is motivated by a complex combination of the above aims. The range of attitudes that activists hold towards the importance of inclusivity is equally broad: from seeing inclusivity, usually as part of a wider movement building effort, as a key goal of the CDA movement and a significant area of their own work, with some feeling deeply frustrated that it is not prioritised more; to finding inclusivity to be a worthwhile activity but preferring not to engage in it themselves; to, whilst not objecting to inclusivity work, feeling that it should not be a key priority because it is movement fundamentals such as action, politics and effectiveness, however they are defined, that are more important in attracting and retaining newcomers; to raising practical, cultural, political or protectionist concerns about inclusivity. It is worth noting, however, that in conversation with those who raised the concerns discussed above, although they may have viewed inclusivity as a lower priority than other activities, not one fundamentally rejected the idea of inclusivity, but rather had specific concerns that could be allayed: “a lot of it is just about different perceptions of how we should go around it, rather than just a resistance” (Kate). So sceptics turned into cautious or even full supporters if, for example, only those who enjoy and are skilled at doing involving work are asked to do so, and only out of a natural affinity for a particular newcomer; if inclusivity is not practiced haphazardly but after a

reasoned debate in which the group decides it is strategically useful; and/or if inclusivity is separated from quantitative recruitment and retention.

This broad range of individual views about inclusivity significantly influences the likelihood of group level inclusivity processes being implemented, and helps to account for the differences in inclusivity levels between and within groups in the CDA movement. As with other elements of horizontal group working, the importance placed on inclusivity at the group level is largely determined by the presence of individuals within that group who think it is a priority, and whether or not those individuals choose to try to make it a matter of concern to the whole group rather than simply adopting it as an individual task. So, for example, an individual group member may decide to raise inclusivity as an agenda item for discussion, call a specific meeting to address it, distribute resources or discussion documents about it, and so on. The extent to which this attempt to make inclusivity a group level priority is successful will in turn depend on the inclusivity advocate's position within the group; the presence or absence of others with opposing opinions, and their position; and the group's overall culture and views about movement building. Attempts to implement inclusivity at a group level may therefore be received quite differently in different groups. For example in the national CCA process, an inclusivity advocate felt that "this process is open to this stuff" (FD, 43), but in one local Rising Tide group, an advocate was told "that's not what we do, this kind of stuff gives me hives" (FD, xiii).

Thus very often, groups disagree amongst themselves about how much of a priority inclusivity should be, which can lead to tension:

Making them feel welcome, and making them feel part of the group has failed so dramatically that um it was very stressful, especially for certain people, in the neighbourhood who thought that was one of the main aims of it ... a lot of people have sort of, well not fallen out with each other, but you know, have put a lot of strain onto the group (Carl).

This strain may be increased by the fact that even if groups do decide to make inclusivity a priority, they are often not sure about what elements of inclusivity will be the most effective:

We had loads of discussions of whether that is structures, you need to put the structures in place or, or whether it's just on a personal level and you need to maybe shut some people up who talk too much in meetings and talk to newcomers a bit (Carl).

In most cases, however, the tension caused by these disagreements is not acknowledged, but remains beneath the surface, or is only expressed between individuals, as Annabelle experienced: “someone said look, I really don’t think what you’re doing is important at all, I think what’s important is that we make the camp happen”. Although groups disagree amongst themselves about many things, I would suggest that inclusivity and movement building are under-acknowledged sources of strain, which emerge from wider tensions about goals, strategy and values. Moreover, as newcomers’ experiences of involvement show, and as Carl suggests below, addressing these inclusivity-related tensions, and beginning to determine what priority such practices should have, may require a debate that extends beyond worries about friendliness or lack thereof, messy group dynamics, dominant personalities and other factors that can be intuitively linked to inclusivity:

But I think the shift is maybe more fundamental than to say, we need welcome desks at gatherings and we need to, I don’t know, put a poster up about what Climate Camp is in, in each neighbourhood. You know I think that, the change has to be more fundamental (Carl).

To truly consider what it takes to successfully involve newcomers requires a consideration of the CDA movement’s defining political, tactical, cultural and organisational features – and determining whether these are open to discussion in the name of inclusivity requires a debate about the movement’s goals, and the extent to which growth via inclusivity helps the movement work towards these goals.

5.4.3 Summary

This chapter has shown that, although they are not necessarily the most important factors in shaping newcomers’ *experiences* of involvement, which depend more on newcomers’ responses to the political features of the CDA movement, inclusivity strategies practiced by groups and individuals in the CDA movement can effectively facilitate *ongoing involvement* by helping newcomers seek membership in CDA groups. For some newcomers, inclusivity is essential to overcoming the challenges of involvement, and/or to developing a positive relationship with movement core values; thus in some cases inclusivity is necessary to achieve retention. Qualitatively, inclusivity practice also helps people get to where they want to be, makes the experience more pleasant and positive even for those who don’t need such support, and works towards group goals of horizontality and equality. This

chapter has also shown that in many cases there are activists available with the desire and skills to do involving work, and many activists are also quite aware of how inclusivity could be done better. As Rachel put it, inclusivity is about “stuff that we, we kind of already knew but we just haven’t done very well at”. However, not all inclusivity strategies are practiced to the same extent: whilst newcomers are quite likely to encounter welcoming and information-provision inclusivity strategies, the facilitation of meaningful contribution and full membership is rare. A more comprehensive inclusivity practice requires the engagement of not only newcomers and involvers, but all group participants. This chapter has also identified a range of attitudes held by CDA movement activists towards inclusivity and its purpose and priority. Resistances to inclusivity were discussed, including a preference for hard over soft skills and ways of working, and much more fundamental cultural, political and protectionist concerns about inclusivity. It appears that in the CDA movement, inclusivity is being pursued and resisted simultaneously, resulting in inclusivity being practiced inconsistently within and between CDA groups, and in tensions and inefficient expenditures of energy. The diverse attitudes towards newcomers and inclusivity held by CDA activists can be understood as proxies for their attitudes towards growth, and the concerns raised about inclusivity can only be fully understood by considering how movement building and growth are negotiated in the CDA movement.

Chapter 6: The politics of movement building

In the previous two chapters, I have built up a picture of the experience of getting involved in CDA networks, and of the practices, experiences and debates surrounding inclusivity. I have suggested that to successfully facilitate newcomers' involvement requires a consideration of the CDA movement's defining political features, and a debate about whether these are open to change in the name of movement growth; and that to understand the tensions surrounding inclusivity practice, it must be understood as a movement building strategy, and a debate must be had about the movement's goals and the extent to which movement building leads towards these goals. This chapter, therefore, explores the negotiation of movement growth via movement building strategies, including but going beyond inclusivity. In taking a serious look at what exactly the aim of 'building a mass direct action movement against the root causes of climate change' means in the Rising Tide and CCA networks, I ask questions such as: what is understood by the concepts of movement building and growth? What is it like to bring about and to be involved in a growing movement? What different views exist within the CDA movement about movement building and growth? What are the struggles involved in doing movement building?

Fusing the experienced activist and newcomer perspectives and adopting a more interrogative and less descriptive voice, the first half of this chapter will explore ambivalences about the desirability of movement growth, particularly concerns surrounding unacceptable compromises that are seen to be required to attract more diverse participants; tensions surrounding the consequences of successful growth, using the changes that occurred within the CCA process between 2006 and 2008 as an example; and ambiguities about different understandings and aims of movement growth. Whilst these tensions are fundamental to the social movement experience (Deslandes and King, 2006), they appear to be particularly acute within the CDA movement, a situation which the second half of the chapter sets out to understand. In these sections, I explore autonomous values of prefigurativity, open-endedness and diversity, and fluid understandings of movement boundaries and membership, and suggest that together these create a fuzzy political identity for the CDA movement,

which in turn helps to explain the tensions surrounding the purpose, priority and practice of movement building and growth.

6.1 *Negotiating growth*

In this section, I pick up and unpack some of the debates about movement growth that were raised by and that underpin the last chapter's discussion on resistance to inclusivity. I begin by emphasising that despite all the caveats and resistances that have and will continue to be raised, movement building is a core movement activity, and that, individually and collectively, CDA participants position movement growth as a stated aim and desire. To understand the centrality of movement growth as a goal, one need look no further than one of the fundamental shared elements of CDA networks' politics, which is that tackling climate change cannot be left up to state and corporate sectors, but must instead be led by 'people', the 'grassroots', 'communities', or 'us'. It is therefore a core tenet of both Rising Tide and the Camp for Climate Action that a mass movement of people is required to address the root causes of climate change, with preferably as many people as possible within that movement taking direct action. In order to realise the scope of the changes that are desired – to stop and reverse the threats to the climate and to build equitable solutions that not only tackle emissions but also help to 'build a better world' – many more people are needed than are currently involved.

The extent to which the aim of movement building is publicly acknowledged differs between groups and networks. The CCA project was initiated in early 2006 with the core aim of sparking a large, ongoing, direct action movement on climate change. Although this was always an unspoken goal, it only became formalised at the beginning of the 2007 process, when movement building was added as a key aim of the camp, alongside direct action, education and sustainable living; at the same time, the Inclusivity group was formed. This aim has only continued to build in importance, and it is now widely and publicly acknowledged that encouraging more people to get involved in direct action on climate change – in other words, growing the CDA movement – is a key aim of CCA (Figure 6.1).

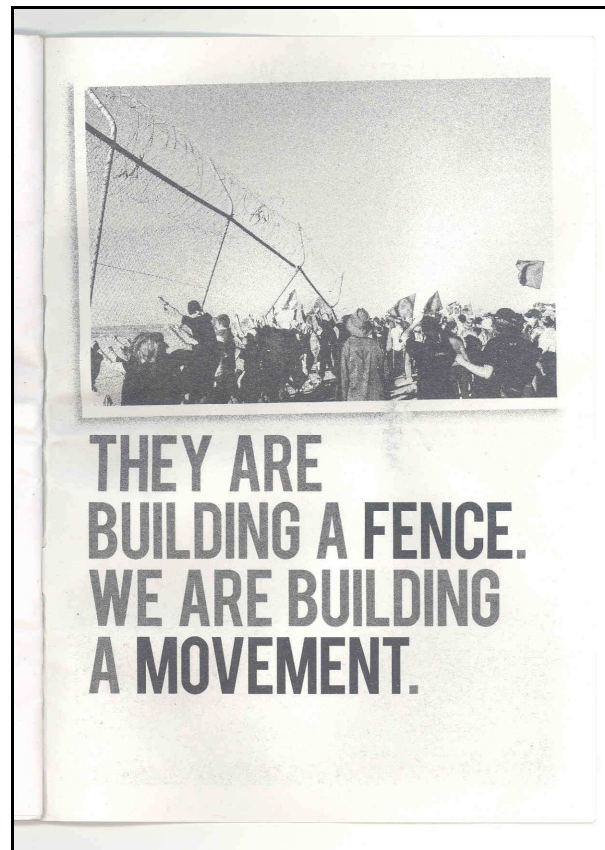


Figure 6.1 Movement building as a key aim of the CCA
(Source: 2008 CCA Handbook)

In the Rising Tide network, the aim of movement building is less publicly visible, and at the local group level where capacity is often limited, organising and taking action may take precedence over outreach activities such as stalls, public events and media work. Nonetheless, these outreach activities do form a large portion of the network's activity, and moreover, the objective of the direct actions are very often as much about raising public awareness – both of the issue at hand and of the Rising Tide network as something to get involved in – as they are about affecting the particular target of the action. Finding ways to expand local groups is a frequent agenda item at the local level, as is attracting and supporting new local groups during national meetings. In summary, and as other researchers have found about direct action networks (Hetherington, 1998; Robinson, 2001; Wall, 1999), regardless of how publicly acknowledged it is or is not as a priority, growing the movement (whatever that entails) is indeed both a core activity and objective within the CDA networks in this study. However, there are in fact deep ambivalences towards movement growth that circulate just beneath the surface, and which often stand in stark contrast to the aims stated by individuals, groups and the wider movement. As Jason put it, “you will

not find anyone who will come and say to you, ‘actually Alex I’m perfectly happy with the movement being this big.’ Everyone says it but...”. This section explores the ‘but’ at the end of Jason’s sentence, and examines the tensions that exist between the rhetoric of the need for a mass movement that circulates within CDA networks, and the ambivalence towards growth of those who are to build this movement.

I begin by identifying concerns about movement building as a strategy, specifically the way in which some participants view recruitment as contradicting key movement values about qualitative rather than quantitative participation, and about honest and transparent rather than strategic self-presentations. Next, I discuss the fundamental concern that growth requires unacceptable compromises. I show that although these concerns appear to be justified by the changes that occurred in the CCA process over its short history, in fact changes occurred not in an attempt to grow, but as a result of growth. Finally, I discuss the way in which movement building is practiced for internal as well as political reasons, but suggest that CDA participants are often unclear about how movement growth relates to political objectives.

6.1.1 Movement building as a strategy: how growth is sought

The first set of tensions that complicates the CDA movement’s stated aim to build a mass movement relates to movement building as a strategy, and concerns about the way in which growth is sought. I first build on the concept of qualitative versus quantitative inclusivity discussed in the previous chapter with respect to wider movement building practices; and second, I discuss the tension between the desire for honesty in outward-facing presentations of the movement, and the potential efficacy of more strategic or ‘toned-down’ presentations in appealing to diverse newcomers. Beginning with the former, there is a current within the CDA movement that believes that, in keeping with prefigurativity, the way in which growth is sought should reflect movement values and aims. However, some feel that quantitative movement building strategies involve strategic, calculating practices designed to bend a passive newcomer to the will of the ‘powerful’ recruiter:

The word implies that the person involved doesn’t have as much power as the person recruiting. It’s kind of like, um, a passivity on the side of the person that’s being welcomed in, you know, so, which I think is completely at odds with what we’re trying to do (Tia).

There is a sense that recruitment aimed solely at growth is manipulative, and instead movement building should reflect an “ethos that you kind of have to find your way to the politics, you don’t want to thrust it down people’s throats, you don’t want to force people to think the same way” (Tia). Perhaps most importantly, recruitment as a strategy aimed solely at increasing numbers of participants is associated with party-building in the style of old Left movements, and is fundamentally rejected by many within the CDA movement:

We’re worried about quality, not quantity ... we might like to be bigger in some vague sense, but we don’t keep count because we know it doesn’t matter, really ... we don’t recruit, because we don’t believe in it, and that’s part of our politics (Rowan).

For people such as Rowan, then, recruitment should involve no more than letting people know about the movement’s existence, and if newcomers try it and like it, just as it is, so much the better, but if not, “we’re not going to ring you up [laughs] and hassle you to come to a meeting, because we actually don’t care really, if you don’t want to be here that’s fine” (Rowan). This perspective on movement building, which seeks “participation which respects individual differences and needs” (Melucci, 1996: 331), exists in a fundamental tension with the stated aim to build a mass movement.

The second tension with regards to movement building as a strategy exists between the desire for and efficacy of, respectively, honest versus strategic self-presentation. Many participants feel that movement building should not cast a strategic veil over what are perceived to be the more unpalatable elements of the movement in an attempt to draw in newcomers, but instead, “we should be honest about who we are, and people will either be attracted to it or they won’t but then at least you’re not, pretending to be something different um, from what you are” (Tia). This reflects the prefigurative preference for openness, transparency and honesty in many areas of the movement’s cultural life, from allowing personal emotions to be expressed rather than suppressed in meetings, to a willingness to expose the consensus process with all its flaws to the scrutiny of the mainstream media and the police at the CCA. These examples emerge from a desire to be real rather than phony, and to avoid the false pretences that permeate so much social interaction in late modern, competitive, capitalist society.

However, the principle of honesty and transparency in movement building frequently runs up against pragmatic understandings of efficacy in appealing to

newcomers. So, for example, there were debates within the CCA media team about whether or not to put up someone with dreadlocks for a TV interview, who is skilled at media work and does in fact represent much of the movement's internal demographic, but whose arguments may be more easily dismissed as a result of his or her appearance. There are also frequent debates about the language used in publicity materials, with concerns raised about whether words like 'direct action' and 'anti-capitalist' and/or their connotations are overly off-putting. Often, language is chosen that is perceived to have a broader appeal, with the intention of avoiding 'scaring off' people who might jump to conclusions about what those terms mean. In other words, some participants recognise that some of the most fundamental principles of the CDA movement may also be those that are unpalatable to a more mainstream audience, and these are in fact often packaged strategically in order to attract more and more diverse participants. There is a sense here of a 'sales pitch' that activists make in an attempt to appeal to as many people as possible:

Did feel like a few people wanted to know, right are you an anarchist direct action group? Wasn't clear until we answered those questions, or maybe not even then, since I deliberately answered those questions vaguely and openly, trying to leave room – for this first meeting at least – for everyone to want to come back (FD, 28).

Whilst this strategic self-presentation does not necessarily mean that these fundamental principles are compromised in individual activists' beliefs or actions, it does happen, it does run counter to the ideal of honesty and transparency discussed above, and it does receive critiques from those who resist this form of movement building. For example, an activist writing in the movement journal *Shift* worries that

When journalists accused Anarchists of 'infiltrating the camp', we may have missed the chance of a lifetime, to say to the whole world, yes, the camp has been formed on the anarchist principles of horizontal organization, cooperation and self-determination (Charsley, 2007: no page).

Nonetheless, a strategic outreach strategy may successfully appeal to a wide range of newcomers, who might otherwise have been put off by a more accurate portrayal of the group or event, but once present, come to appreciate and agree with movement ways of being and doing. Thus, such an outreach strategy may, as intended, successfully attract a diverse set of participants – the consequences of which will be explored in the following section. However, it is worth noting that strategic self-presentation may also attract people who, upon getting involved, decide that the

movement simply is not right for them and choose not to continue participating; and may also cause some newcomers' early experiences to be more difficult than they might otherwise have been because they were unprepared for the realities of the movement.

6.1.2 Growth as change: the mainstreaming of the CCA

A second and more fundamental set of tensions that exists alongside the stated aim of building a mass movement relates to the compromises that are seen by some to be required in order to achieve growth. This is obviously linked to the heated and long-standing debate about 'mainstreaming' that runs, using a range of different terms and concepts, throughout the history of social movement scholarship and practice (Coy and Hedeon, 2005; Epstein, 2003; Starr, 2005; Tilly, 2004; Turbulence Collective, 2007; Wall, 1999; Zald and Ash Garner, 1987 [1966]). It is also a debate that is recognised by CDA movement participants: "How do we make sure the radical politics that make the Climate Camp different don't get lost as our movement grows bigger" (CCA Announcements email list, 20.10.08)?¹⁹ In this section, I add to this ongoing debate by discussing concerns about **compromises** made in the name of growth, the way in which these concerns have materialised in the mainstreaming of the CCA's **core political features** that occurred via its growth, and **reactions** to these changes.

The argument that interviewees made, suggesting that growth must involve **compromise**, can be summarised as follows. In order to attract more people, and thereby build a mass movement, CDA networks must reach a more diverse population than is currently involved, and beyond those who already sympathise with the CDA movement's politics and tactics. Crucially, there is an understanding of the gulf between movement ways of being and doing, and those of the more diverse publics the movement is seeking to attract, and an assumption that the CDA movement's tactics and politics in particular are seen by most people as unpalatable: "You water things down or make things less scary to attract new people, because you're, you think that what we're offering is scary" (Tia). Therefore, in order to bridge this gulf and attract more people, compromises in politics, tactics, culture or modes of

¹⁹ In this chapter, I draw on emails, meeting minutes, and other organisational texts relating to the CCA (see section 3.5.1). If possible, these are referenced to websites where they can be found. If not, they are referenced according to the date on which the email was received.

organising, or all of the above, must be made. And, fundamentally, these compromises are unacceptable:

We haven't got to stop doing the radical stuff because we think they'll be alienated by it. It's really difficult. I really disagree with anyone who says ... that we should modify our message or our actions to what most people are going to understand, or what's going to appeal to most people (Naomi).

The compromises that are seen to be necessary in order to grow are rejected due to a number of unacceptable potential risks and losses. For example, some worry about losing the radicalism that is seen to be crucial in attracting and inspiring people: “the more you try and open the group up, the more diluted that, that gets, and you can end up joining a group and, not being inspired” (Brent). However, as we saw in Chapter 4, this view is not accurate for all newcomers, and many, particularly those ‘issue-first’ newcomers who got involved with the aim of addressing climate change, do struggle with the radicalism of the movement’s core political features. Others worry about shifts in motivation, and activists’ passionate drive being replaced by strategic ‘work’. However, the strongest fear surrounding change due to compromise appears to relate to dilution of the movement’s politics. There are concerns that the movement will shy away from an unflinching pursuit of the scope of changes that are required, and move towards demands that are seen to be more achievable and therefore more palatable; that the movement will lose its systemic critique in favour of more easily understandable and winnable single issue campaigns; and that, as the urgency of the climate crisis intensifies, market- and state-led solutions will begin to be engaged with in order to seem ‘realistic’. Taken together with many of the resistances to inclusivity discussed in the previous chapter, the extent of concern over the changes that are, might or must be made in the name of growth cannot be overemphasised. However, I would like to suggest that this concern is largely misplaced, and rather than worrying about compromises made *in the attempt to grow*, fears are much more justified over changes that occur *as a result of growth*. As Dylan puts it, “If you go out and ... ask people to come along and come to this ... the group would slowly convert to something that it’s not”.

Consider the CCA, which at the start of the 2007 organising process made movement building one of its key aims. I would argue that in the run-up to the August 2007 Heathrow camp, compromises were not made in the attempt to grow the movement. Efforts were certainly made to make the pre-camp organising process

more inclusive, and to make the camp and the day of action as easy as possible to attend for as wide a range of people as possible. However, these represented more of an attitude of bearing newcomers in mind – yes, decisions were made differently than if the camp had simply been intended for experienced activists – than of compromising on fundamental movement ways of being and doing. And whilst there was also a good deal of the strategic self-presentation discussed above present in the intensive and highly prioritised outreach effort, this did not appear to result in internal changes in culture, values, organisational strategies or proposed tactics. However, this strategic outreach effort, in combination with the high profile of Heathrow as a target and its location in London, and with an injunction brought against the CCA that garnered significant media attention immediately before the start of the camp, did result in a far more numerous (2,000 compared to 700 in 2006) and diverse attendance than the previous year, with anecdotal evidence from the camp's Welcome team suggesting that many new arrivals had never participated in anything of a similar nature before. The intense media coverage throughout the camp also inspired many more who could not attend to get involved in the organising of the next event, and in the local action groups which were established and expanded from 2007 onwards. Following the 2007 camp, as a much more diverse range of people became involved in the organising process and therefore as a *result of growth*, concerns about dilution and compromise became more well-founded.

I will now explore changes in the movement's **core political features** that occurred around the time of the 2007 camp, which make the post-Heathrow CCA process quite different to its earlier incarnations – before movement building became such an acknowledged priority, when the camp had a lower profile, and when both the national organising process and the supporting local groups were made up of more homogenous groups of activists. Perhaps the most obvious of these changes, and certainly those that were most often remarked upon, in interviews, in meetings and over email lists, relate to the camp's politics – its messages about the scope and nature of the change being sought, and how and by whom these changes should be brought about. Of the politics, it is perhaps the role of the state in dealing with climate change, and the extent to which the camp should attempt to influence government agendas, that is the most controversial and that has changed the most. For example, whilst the decision to target the Drax power station in 2006 was largely because of its exceptionally high level of emissions, the decision to target Kingsnorth in 2008 was

heavily influenced by the fact that the government was currently deciding whether or not to allow the construction at Kingsnorth of the first new coal-fired power station in the UK in 30 years. Whilst some supported the decision to target Kingsnorth in hopes that the presence and activities of the camp could influence this government decision, others worried that the camp's political messages would either actually become, or be interpreted as, demands being made of government, which they felt contradicted the core value of grassroots-led rather than government-led solutions to climate change. Similarly, these participants worried that the camp's primary tactic could become a form of militant lobbying rather than prefigurative direct action.

These opposing opinions appeared to be debated between those who want to stop climate change, largely by whatever means necessary, and including government-led solutions (an 'issue-first' perspective); and those for whom the climate crisis requires and is an opportunity to change global political, economic and social systems (a 'politics-first' perspective). As a highly simplified ideal-type distinction, the former tend to be that sought-for 'more diverse' and more recent cadre of CCA participants who got involved around the time of the 2007 camp, many of whom are either drawn from more traditional NGO campaigning backgrounds, or are relatively young people for whom the CCA is an early foray into politics; and the latter tend to be longer-term activists, many of whom have been involved with previous anti-capitalist and alter-globalisation movement cycles.

The following email exchange about the concept for a leaflet usefully illustrates these two positions:

Stop the war (groan) didn't get 2 million people to meet their bitter disappointment in London by using clever cutting edge flyers ... People came because they understood it and knew it was important. It didn't force them to align with any political ideology or interpretation of the world, only to want to stop the war (CCA Networking email list, 14.04.08).

[Reply]: Going as far as people are comfortable with is, as far I understand who we are, not what we do. We are actually trying to push beyond that comfort zone ... The "stop the war" organisers did not mean to have people do much more than come to a certain place, on a certain day, walk from A to B and go home. That's what they achieve. We saw the results (CCA Networking email list, 15.04.08).

The outcome of these fundamental disagreements is often not diluted political messages, which many 'politics-first' participants refuse to accept, but the absence of politics from public-facing communications. So, for example, whilst the 2007 website

had several pages on the camp's broader political views, the re-launched 2008 website contained much less political content, and what was present focused on the individual issue of coal, rather than a broader systemic critique. Interestingly, however, the stark urgency of climate change appears to be influencing the views of 'politics-first' participants as well, with some privately admitting that much as they loathe the idea, far-reaching government legislation may be necessary to rapidly reduce emissions. Aware of this current even within the most radical end of the activist spectrum, and of the much stronger current within the newer 'issue-first' entrants to the CCA movement, some worry that it will deeply undermine the movement's radical potential:

With a renewed sense of urgency over climate change, many climate campers seemed to be erring towards the side of 'there is no time to have anarchist ideals, we must succumb to the system which is slowly destroying us' (Charsley, 2007: no page).

Whilst both interviewees and internal CCA debates were largely preoccupied with politics, a set of more subtle changes also appeared to take place in the areas of culture and modes of organising. In terms of the latter, there was a gradual relaxing of strict commitment to some autonomous organising practices and of the rejection of all things mainstream, and a rise of a more pragmatic organising ethos. For example, members of the media team who had previously fought against being named as 'spokespeople' by the media, on the grounds that this inaccurately cast them as figureheads, began to accept this label. The overall attitude to the mainstream media changed significantly from 2006 to 2008, with many camp participants supporting far greater engagement and access. A similar pattern can be found in the camp's relationship to mainstream NGOs, which in the first year was wary, with no formal ties made; in 2007 the camp sought out endorsements from a range of NGOs, developed relationships with several anti-aviation organisations, and gained support in kind from some NGOs, partly as a result of some NGO employees being involved in camp organising; and in 2008, the idea of NGOs having a presence on site was accepted, having been rejected in previous years. Finally, there appeared to be a growing acceptance for individuals to coordinate or oversee working groups or specific projects: "I know we have no leaders, yeah, but it is very helpful to have someone keeping an eye on what is going on overall and prodding people" (CCA Networking email list, 13.02.08). Whilst it could be argued that this may simply be

acknowledging a previously invisible process, to have it easily accepted without debate marked a departure from earlier attitudes. It is important to emphasise that I am not suggesting that the CCA has relaxed its commitment to the principle of horizontal organising; rather, that it has become less concerned about the implications of adopting some of the trappings of more formal, more mainstream organisational practices. Some of these changing elements of the CCA organising process could certainly be attributed to a network that is maturing and learning from previous experience. However, I would suggest that the rise of pragmatism within the CCA can also be attributed to a shift in the type of participants, from “ideological anarchists” to “people [who] are quite new to it all and not necessarily, you know have this culture of anti-authoritarian working, or non-hierarchical working” (Carl).

This second type of participants, or “new breed” as Jonathan referred to them, brought with them not only a relaxation of autonomous principles, but also shifts in activist culture. Many amongst this new breed have conventional day jobs and maintain friendships and housing arrangements outside of the movement, and perhaps partly as a result, eschew many of the stereotypes associated with ‘lifestyle activism’: the dress sense, the dreadlocks, the strict vegan diet, the squat party scene, and the general image of crusty anarchists and/or eco-hippies. The ethos of this new breed is well captured by the following statement on the website of one of the projects created by the CCA London group following the Heathrow camp, which is one of the groups in which the shift in composition from “older guard” (Jonathan) to ‘new breed’ has been particularly evident: “We are people just like you ... We aren’t long-haired neo-luddites dreaming of a return to some grubby medieval society. We have jobs, in London, that we like”.²⁰ As this quote suggests, this new breed is particularly interested in normalising the movement, and making it more accessible to a wider range of people; which, by mingling with the long-standing activist culture of celebrating difference, as discussed in Chapter 4, appeared in some cases to be achieving its goal: “The [Rising Tide] group had its own identity, and, the national thing [CCA], it was more, more spread out, lots of different people, there’d be people there that I could, sort of, get on with ... relate to I guess a bit more” (Brent).

²⁰ www.ev-eon.com/about

There was little formal or visible **reaction** to these changes²¹ until the 2008 camp and its aftermath, at which point, it appears, ‘politics-first’ participants (who often, although not always, coincide with the ‘old guard’), began to raise serious concerns about the direction the CCA was taking. These concerns became visibly apparent when an ‘open letter to the Climate Camp neighbourhoods’ was distributed during the 2008 camp, written by “a large group of anti-authoritarian participants in the climate camp. Many of us have put a great deal of time and energy into preparing and setting up the camp this year”.²² This letter was primarily concerned with the dilution of the camp’s politics, and specifically that the CCA was “risk[ing] loosing[sic] contact with its anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian roots and appearing as a gathering that lends its support to top-down, state-centred responses to the crisis”. Several critiques of a similar nature were made or explored in published commentary following the camp (Anarchist Federation, 2008; Ford, 2008; Jasiewicz, 2008). Crucially, at the Earth First! summer gathering which followed the camp, it was debated whether ‘radicals’ should remain engaged in the CCA process and attempt to re-invigorate its radical roots, or move on to new projects (FD, 104). In the meetings which followed the 2008 camp, there was also a marked ‘changing of the guard’ in terms of participants, with key ‘politics-first’ figures from previous years being notably absent. The camp process responded to these dissatisfactions from within and without by a period of “‘soul searching’ in terms of the aims, principles and politics of the ‘camp’ ” (CCA Media-team email list, 11.11.08). In conjunction with a decision to work on several projects (including one to stop Kingsnorth’s construction from being approved), rather than one camp in 2009, the CCA process therefore entered a transitional phase following the 2008 camp, as it “trie[d] to work out who and what it is” (CCA Media-team email list, 12.11.08).

The changes that have occurred within the CCA process thus exemplify what many interviewees worried about in principle in relation to growth and compromise, and which later, when some of these concerns visibly materialised, were expressed

²¹ Noticeably absent from the above list of changes are references to direct action as a tactic. Whilst a few posts on Indymedia (an independent news website by and for activists; see <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2008/11/413862.html?c=on#c208570>) lamented a drop in ‘proper’ direct actions following the 2008 camp and a rise in more outreach-oriented actions, I would suggest that direct action has been preserved within the CCA process as a key and preferred tactic. What has changed is the intent of that direct action, with actions designed to pressure governments joining the previous symbolic and corporate-oriented actions.

²² <http://climateactioncafe.wordpress.com/2008/09/10/an-open-letter-to-the-climate-camp-neighbourhoods/>

directly by the anti-authoritarian authors of the open letter to CCA neighbourhoods. The concerns expressed by interviewees and in the months since the 2008 camp complicate the CDA movement's stated aim of movement growth. The diverse attitudes explored in this section – with individuals often holding contradictory views within themselves – both suggest that, and can help to explain why, movement building is pursued and resisted simultaneously. The changes discussed above also indicate that between 2006 and 2008, the CCA process was in the early stages of – intentionally or not – travelling down a 'mainstreaming' path. I have suggested that the dilution of the movement's core features that occurred was not an intentional bid to attract more participants, but happened largely due to the presence of a greater number of 'new breed', 'issue-first' participants within the process. Thus my contention is that these changes in the CCA process occurred primarily as a result of movement building efforts which successfully attracted more numerous and more diverse participants – ie., they are consequences of growth. It is important to emphasise that this 'mainstreaming' drive has not always emerged from the more recently involved cohort of participants; nor, crucially, has it been strategic or intentional. Whether or not this apparent mainstreaming is problematic depends on what it is hoped will be achieved by growing, and the goals of the CCA and wider CDA movement.

6.1.3 What kind of growth, for what purpose?

In this section I explore **different meanings** of growth as a concept, and of the **internal** and **political** goals of growth – or what it is hoped will be achieved through contested movement building efforts. In the interviews, it became clear that 'growth' can have quite **different meanings**. Broadly speaking, these can be categorised into persuasion, or changing people's minds and gaining broad support for the movement; and participation, or getting more people actively taking collective action against the root causes of climate change (*cf.* Lofland, 1996; Wall, 1999). Persuasion is an exceptionally broad goal, with the target audience being potentially everyone, and the overall aim being to change people's perspectives on the world. As Carl suggests, the aim of outreach is "getting people to agree with us"; so, for example, outreach is hoped to change the terms of debate about climate change, its root causes and acceptable solutions; legitimise direct action as a proportionate response to the scale of the problem; win support for autonomous modes of organising; and even dispel

negative stereotypes about activist culture. In other words, this outreach element of movement building is not only about convincing people of the merits of the movement's political position, but also, although to a much lesser extent, of its culture and mode of organising. However, outreach is often considered to be of secondary importance to the aim of encouraging people to actively participate in the movement, as Tia suggests: "Changing people's consciousness is probably equally important, as getting them to join in and do the action themselves ... the more people who take action the better ... the more powerful we can be". Participation, in turn, has several possible levels, each of which could be considered more valuable than the last. Thus movement building hopes to encourage people to take collective action against the root causes of climate change; better yet to take collective direct action; better still, to take direct action with a specific group, network or event; and best of all, get involved with the work of a group or network that is in addition to action. Active participation is also seen as the most effective form of persuasion; taking part in a group or event such as CCA is the most likely means by which people become 'radicalised', not only in terms of their politics, but also their willingness to take direct action, and their attitudes to movement cultures and modes of organising. Thus movement building is practiced to "get them in" (Carl), whatever their current stance, in hopes that, one way or another, participation results in persuasion, not only of active participants but, via them, of wider publics.

The interviews also suggested that movement building is practiced for a host of reasons that are not immediately linked to the achievement of the movement's political goals, but are more about meeting **internal movement needs**. First, there is the need for newcomers to replace activists who have burned out or otherwise chosen to withdraw from active participation and movement organising; as Tia suggests, "if we don't slowly grow, we'll slowly disappear". Second, there is the hope that having more people involved will spread the load of organising work amongst a greater number of activists, thereby reducing stress and the potential of burn-out. Third, movement growth appears to be seen as one of the few possible measures of movement success, and as such is an important source of personal meaning-making for participants. Given that the CDA movement has very few winnable goals, increasing the size and diversity of the movement may come to be seen as a rare and precious sign of progress, legitimising the work and participation of existing activists. As Corning and Myers have found, attracting newcomers to a movement is "as central

to activist identity as are more dramatic acts of civil disobedience” (2002: 705), and may be of equal or greater importance than the achievement of external political objectives (Hetherington, 1998; Robinson, 2001). Moreover, in the absence of concrete visions for the future (see section 6.2.1), the possibility of a mass movement becomes a much needed source of hope, and something to believe in: “in five years time it [CCA] will, I sincerely believe that will be ten thousand people ... I know this, I’ve seen enough, I know that that is, it is that or nothing ... that will grow” (Phillip).

In considering the above internal needs, it is possible to identify ways in which meeting these needs might help to achieve external **political goals**. However, despite the intensity of feeling about growth, both positive and negative, how the stated aim of movement growth might relate to the achievement of political goals is rarely discussed, and the extent to which interviewees struggled to answer this question cannot be over-emphasised. For some, this was largely because movement building was so taken for granted as one of, if not *the* key purpose of movement activity: “yeah we do want to expand, we do want more people to be involved in this, um, ‘cause I don’t see what the point is without that” (Annabelle). Others appeared to treat growth as an objective in its own right, with Jake, for example, describing outreach as “the only way, is to actually get out there and, and get face-to-face with people ... one at a time because that’s the only way you can do it”. The question here is, do what?

A broad answer to this question could be that, in order to realise the scope of the changes that are desired by the movement – to stop and reverse the threats to the climate and to build equitable solutions that not only tackle emissions but also help to build a better world – many more people are needed than are currently involved, as Tia suggests: “Small groups of us, as much as we try and do, are never going to, be powerful enough to change the system enough, to change it how we want to see it”. Thus the most common answer that was provided was “more people just doing stuff” (Lisa), more people resisting, delaying, confronting the causes of climate change through direct action; more people developing and modelling alternatives; more people doing the work of running campaign groups; and “more manpower to get the message out” (Jeff), ie. more people engaging in public persuasion. A very few interviewees such as Carl provided interesting insight into how, specifically, having ‘more people’ involved could help the movement to achieve its radical political aims:

Maybe in ten years what you would have is a constant rush of direct action against massive industry ... it sort of, creates a crisis in society that where

industry is just not reliable anymore ... it just will be impossible to rely on these sort of all capitalist things, and you will, and in the mainstream there will be a certain image of, capitalism doesn't deliver anymore.

Conversely, Peter questioned whether activists really “believe that one day there will be so many direct actions going on one day that we've won”. What I am suggesting here is that activists as individuals, let alone collectively, are only rarely able to articulate, let alone agree upon, why or how growth helps to achieve political aims. Although a shared over-arching understanding of the purpose of movement growth may exist – crudely put, more people to create social change – there is a gap that exists between ‘more people’ and ‘social change’. I contend that this gap is a problematic one, both for the efficacy of movement building, and for the achievement of other political goals.

First, this gap results in a lack of clarity about which kind of movement growth is being sought when, and with what priority. Is the objective to persuade publics, encourage more people to take collective direct action, seek participation in a particular group or event or all of the above? The answer usually appears to be, all of the above. For example, the national CCA organising meetings are always advertised widely as public events, and although a core of activists are consistently present, newcomers, who have not been at all involved up to that point, are likely to turn up at each meeting. Naomi captures some of the challenges inherent in a process that is unclear as to whether it is seeking more people to share in a large workload, or persuasion through attendance:

With the camp organising process, it is, a shout out for new people to get involved, but more than that it's an organising process for something that's very difficult to put on as an open mass group of people. Um, so, I, hope that they [newcomers] find something that's useful for them in the meeting. But I don't think the meeting's necessarily designed to do that because, it has that dual purpose.

At the local group level, Carl felt that too much time was spent “trying to recruit new people to do it [participate in the organising group], um we'd rather do it ourselves and don't get people into an organisational role but just get them to come [to the camp]”. These comments suggest that when the objectives are unclear, none of them are achieved effectively, with newcomers struggling to get up to speed and involved, and the campaigning work being less efficient and effective than it could otherwise be. Simultaneously pursuing such overlapping and unclear objectives thus creates

challenges both to internal organising and to the effectiveness of movement building as a strategy to grow the movement.

The second, and perhaps more fundamental problem resulting from the gap between ‘more people’ and ‘social change’ is exposed by the potential consequences of movement growth discussed above. For those within the movement who are working towards transformative political goals, the mainstreaming that may occur as a result of growth raises the question: will the involvement of ‘more people’ in fact bring about these radical goals? Given the urgency of climate change, will they do so in the most rapid and effective manner? If there is no clarity about how growth helps along the way towards achieving political goals, and if growth begins to be seen as an end in itself, it may, intentionally or not, overshadow other, more fundamental goals. From this perspective, perhaps small, nimble affinity groups of radicals who work well together may achieve more disruptive direct action that leads more quickly towards ‘a crisis in society’; “maybe our organisational group doesn’t have to grow” (Carl) in order to be effective; and perhaps the goal of growth is given too high a priority amongst other movement goals.

6.1.4 Conclusion

This section has explored what ‘growth’ means to participants in the CDA movement, what it is like to be part of and to bring about an expanding movement, and the ways in which the stated aim of movement growth via movement building is complicated and contested in both principle and practice. I began by suggesting that movement building as a strategy may be seen to conflict with key movement values about quality rather than quantity of participation, and about honesty and transparency in prefigurative social relations and self-presentations. More fundamentally, some participants worry that because aspects of the movement’s core features may be seen as unpalatable by non-participants, unacceptable compromises must be made in order to attract more numerous and more diverse participants. These concerns were borne out by the changes that occurred in the CCA process between 2006 and 2008, although I suggested that these occurred not in an attempt to grow, but as a result of growth, via the presence of more and more diverse participants, who brought with them different cultures and views about politics and strategy. These differences came into conflict with the views and values held by an earlier and largely more radical cadre of participants, some of whom critiqued, questioned and/or withdrew from the

process. Thus, although the CDA movement apparently has a public-facing aim of movement growth, beneath the surface participants have concerns about both method and consequences, which results in movement growth being both pursued and resisted simultaneously, and the changes that occur as a result of growth being unintended rather than strategic. These tensions, I would suggest, both emerge from and produce a lack of clarity about the different types of growth that are pursued and for what purpose. Although movement building may be practiced for a number of internal reasons, participants are largely unable to articulate how movement growth helps to achieve political goals. Finally, I would suggest that tensions between the stated aim of movement growth and actual practices, and the differences of opinion about the desirability and purpose of movement growth, have problematic consequences for both the efficacy of movement building and for the achievement of political goals.

6.2 Movement building, growth and autonomous politics

This section sets out to understand why CDA participants are often not clear about how growth relates to the achievement of political goals. More broadly, and recognising the need to understand the CDA movement on its own terms and with respect to its own values, this section seeks to understand why tensions about movement growth and the messiness of movement building practice appear to be particularly acute within CDA networks. I locate the source of many of these tensions in the CDA movement's autonomous politics, and particularly in values of prefigurativity, diversity and open-endedness, and the way in which these relate to an (intentional but contested) fuzzy political identity. As Kate argues, "if you're very sure about what you are, what your purposes are, what your group does, then you can have discussions, really, it's really easy to have discussions about how people get involved, because it means A, B, or C". I will suggest that it is so difficult to have discussions about movement building, involvement and growth in the CDA movement precisely because it is not sure of, nor does it agree about, its purpose and identity.

Before progressing, a brief discussion about my choice to use the word 'autonomous' to describe the values of prefigurativity, open-endedness and diversity is warranted, largely because of their equally close association with anarchist political discourse. Throughout this thesis, I have used the term 'autonomous', because the CDA movement has a complex and problematic relationship with the label

‘anarchist’. Activists who may well be sympathetic to anarchist politics often prefer to describe themselves as anti-authoritarian, autonomous or horizontal to avoid using the ‘A-word’ (Gordon, 2008). This may partly be explained by the fact that in general, those who reject ideology and formal belief systems do not enjoy adopting the label of any particular ‘ism’, however relevant it may be (Gordon, 2008). There are also concerns about the negative associations often made between ‘anarchism’ and violence or militancy in the media and in popular public understandings: “that word anarchy and anarchist they try and pin that on people, and, you know it’s unfortunately got sort of dirty connotations I think in the public, general public” (Jake). Similarly, some worry that anarchism is deeply misunderstood as a system in which chaos rules because “everyone’s actually allowed to do what the hell they like” (Susan). Importantly, these concerns are raised by a wide range of CDA participants, including those who self-identify as anarchists. Thus whilst some CDA participants embrace anarchism, and indeed, as discussed above, feel that the decline of overtly ‘anti-authoritarian’ (read: ‘anarchist’) participants and principles in the CCA process has been a key indicator of its problematic mainstreaming, others misunderstand anarchism; or reject it because others might and instead use labels that mean something quite similar; or, as we shall see, fundamentally contest some of its core principles. Thus I have chosen the term ‘autonomous’ to reflect the terminology that is used in the CDA movement, and because I suggest it is the understandings and manifestations of the principles of diversity, prefigurativity and open-endedness that matter rather than the term used to describe them. However, like Gordon (2008), I suggest that there is little that distinguishes the ‘political culture’ of contemporary anarchism from that of movements which prefer to use the label ‘autonomous’, and thus the discussion below also provides insight into debates about the extent to which anarchist/autonomous politics do or should influence the CDA movement’s ways of being and doing.

6.2.1 Autonomous values: open-endedness, prefigurativity and diversity

To understand whether and how expansion is seen to help the movement achieve its goals, a difficult discussion must be had about what the CDA movement is trying to achieve. In this section, I explore the lack of clarity that exists about the CDA movement’s **political goals**, and the pervasive but contested autonomous principles of **open-endedness, prefigurativity** and **diversity** to help explain this

ambiguity; and suggest that despite this ambiguity, there is in fact an appetite for greater clarity about movement objectives and **strategies**. Just as interviewees struggled to answer questions about the purpose of movement growth, they equally struggled to articulate matters concerning the movement's **political goals** and strategies for achieving them. Over and over, my questions in this section of the interview were met with responses such as “if I really think about that which I never have done before” (Annabelle), or “that’s a good question, I haven’t thought about that before” (Carl), or, most eloquently put, “gosh, I don’t think I dream very much. [Laughter] It’s not dreaming! It’s good dreaming ... I don’t know if I know the answer. I don’t know what I feel about [it]” (Lisa). It is important to emphasise from the start that this struggle to articulate movement aims is not merely due to an absence of personal attention to the matter. Thus I would suggest that just as there is a lack of clarity about how, specifically, ‘more people’ help to achieve ‘social change’, there is a similar gap between the movement’s current activities and purpose and a distant vision of social change. Whilst, broadly speaking, the movement has a shared vision of a future ecologically sustainable, socially equitable, post-capitalist, participatory society, very few interim objectives are set in the effort to move from the present situation to this future vision, which in turn is sketched in terms of broad values rather than fleshed out in detail. In other words, what this future might look like, how to get from here to there, the CDA movement’s role in doing so, and therefore the role of movement growth are all poorly articulated, both individually and collectively.

When the CDA movement does describe a role for itself, it tends to focus on present activities rather than interim objectives. Thus the CCA’s four key ‘aims’, as it describes them internally and on its website, are taking direct action, demonstrating sustainable living, educating, and building a movement. Similarly, the following description of the CDA movement’s role is very much set in the present tense:

- Spell out unpalatable facts of life about the dangers we face due to climate change.
- Offer a root and branch critique of business as usual (ie. capitalism and consumerism).
- Present a vision of a radically different way of living and of organising society.

- Use methods and tactics which are challenging – confronting the causes of climate change through direct action. (Minutes from ‘Strategising for Climate Action’ meeting, 09.12.07).²³

Interviewees recognised both the lack of detail in the future vision and the inability to articulate interim objectives. For example, in trying to describe what could be achieved in the medium rather than in the present or over the long term, Lisa acknowledged the vagueness of her vision: “in five years ... we’re, building, much stronger much more vibrant um ... I don’t even know what that means, they’re just fucking words that you say isn’t it”. Peter, meanwhile, critiqued more experienced activists who, after years of campaigning, he felt still “don’t have any appreciation about what it is you’re sort of trying to build, build towards”.

However, this absence of a detailed future vision and interim objectives is not primarily due to a lack of individual attention to or reflexivity about the matter. Instead, it stems from three core values of autonomous politics – open-endedness, prefigurativity and diversity – all of which exert a powerful guiding force over movement ways of being and doing. Unlike autonomous principles of direct action and horizontality, these principles circulate within the movement largely unnamed and unacknowledged. Open-endedness refers to an unwillingness to outline what the movement is ‘for’ or a prescriptive programme of how goals are to be reached; and prefigurativity, or the ‘everyday revolution’, celebrates the way in which resistance is done, and the building of the better world in the here and now over and above the attainment of that better world. Gordon describes these values in relation to anarchist principles as follows:

Anarchist discourse lacks both the expectation of eventual revolutionary closure and the interest in utopian blueprints ...[a] self-discovering attitude, based on prefigurative politics and iconoclasm, sees the imperfect, present-tense practices of the revolutionary movement itself as the primary site for realising anarchy (Gordon, 2008: 40).

With the former, **open-endedness**, some within the CDA movement explicitly reject the notion of prescriptive politics: “we don’t have is a fundamental set belief system, we are a network, we are ... um, a way of working towards progressive social change rather than a blueprint, and is that what makes us so different” (Kate). Witness members of the media team openly stating that the CCA does not know the answers,

²³ <http://climatecamp.org.uk/themes/ccamptheme/actionstrategy7-12.pdf>

prescribe solutions or make demands, but rather brings diverse people together to debate the steps that could be taken towards an equitable, sustainable world, and does so in a democratic fashion. However, not everyone is comfortable with being unable to offer a concrete vision for the future or for how to get there, with Carl expressing ambivalence about the fact that “we have given up ideology”, and expressing regret that the “issues of revolutionary theory and how can you do it” are so little discussed.

With the latter, **prefigurativity**, many are of the view that it is ‘how we do it’ in the here and now that matters most. In other words, perhaps partially due to the (intentional but contested) absence of a concrete future vision, in many ways the autonomous CDA movement has made ‘what it is for’ into ‘how it works’. Many participants do not believe in tomorrow’s revolution or idealised future society; they believe in today’s direct action, and horizontal organising. The movement is defined by its tactics and mode of organising as much or more as by its overtly political politics: “There was consensus that the movement is defined by its commitment to taking direct action to challenge ‘business as usual’ ” (Minutes from ‘Strategising for Climate Action’ meeting, 09.12.07).²⁴ Or, perhaps more accurately, the movement’s politics *are* its tactics and modes of organising. As Graeber argues of autonomous movements: “This is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about inventing new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization *are* its ideology” (2004: 212, emphasis in original). Thus taking direct action, whether disruptive ‘no’ actions that resist, or creative ‘yes’ actions that demonstrate alternatives, is seen by some as an end in and of itself. Similarly, with respect to modes of organising, for some “the development of non-hierarchical structures in which domination is constantly challenged is ... an end in itself” (Gordon, 2008: 35). As Annabelle puts it, “we should definitely worry about how we’re working, and how we’re working together and, where we’re going, but we shouldn’t worry quite as much about where we’re going”.

However, as with open-endedness, prefigurativity does not go uncontested. Several interviewees raised the issue of the fetishisation of direct action. Susan, for example, wondered why, simply because it was direct, it was appropriate action for the circumstances, critiquing the attitude expressed by someone in a meeting about the mass action: “oh I don’t want to go and mark out the third runway because uh, I want

²⁴ <http://climatecamp.org.uk/themes/ccamptheme/actionstrategy7-12.pdf>

to do something more direct”. Carl, meanwhile, worried that the fetishisation of direct action has overshadowed the need for strategy: “What we’re doing is ‘activism’ ... We now have a new ideology which is primarily based on the main thing is to act, to do things, don’t think.” Other interviewees were troubled by what they felt was an unreflexive pursuit of modes of organising:

You get the straw man of, well you just want to set up a hierarchy and I’m going, no, it’s possible to have accountability without hierarchy ... But people, as soon as you push them towards thinking about stuff which is a can of worms ... there are some red lines, and they may not know those red lines are there, but fuck yeah they are (Jason).

As Jason’s quote shows, attacks on modes of organising can be taken as seriously as those against its more overtly political politics, and the ferocity with which these ‘red lines’ are defended is an indication of the extent to which how the movement organises and acts has become what many of its participants believe in.

However, despite the importance and pervasive influence of autonomous principles of prefigurativity and open-endedness, they are also deeply contested. Such contestation is in some ways built in to a third autonomous value, **diversity**. As Gordon suggests, an autonomous movement typically “disemphasises unity of analysis and vision in favour of multiplicity and experimentation” (2008: 42). According to this principle, in theory, CDA participants do not need to agree in order to work together – and, as we have seen throughout this thesis, there is much disagreement in the CDA movement. However, this disagreement extends beyond publicly stated political and strategic principles to include these largely invisible autonomous values, including the principle of diversity itself. For example, some within the CCA media team advocated a unity of message, whilst others felt that each speaker could and should present their own view, regardless of differences of opinion. Thus, there is no consensus on these autonomous principles: if given a safe space away from a group setting, such as an interview, most people are quite reflexive about the contradictions and challenges inherent within these values. Moreover, both politics-first and issue-first participants admit to feeling ambivalent about these autonomous principles, or to feeling uncertain as to what they mean or why they are subscribed to. However, in a group setting, these principles appear to form part of the movement’s collective identity. Thus despite fundamental disagreements about, and contestations of, these autonomous principles, they tend to form the movement’s “un-

written or un-spoken rules” (Jonathan), or the “ideological baggage” which Brent struggled with as a newcomer. In other words, the CDA movement appears to be playing by a set of rules – which in turn influence participants’ individual understandings of, and collective strategies for, growth, as well as newcomers’ experiences of involvement – that are both invisible and contested.

I would like to suggest, therefore, that many participants in the CDA movement in fact have a strong appetite for the development of **strategy**, from the short-term objectives of a particular direct action, to the creation of interim goals and a long-term vision for the movement. In 2007, for example, a four-day strategy session affiliated with the CCA was organised as “an opportunity to take a step back, get an overview and look for ‘leverage’ - the points where a small (but growing) climate change direct action movement might best direct its energies in order to achieve maximum effect” (CCA Announcements email list, 02.04.07). The session covered topics such as the threats and opportunities posed by climate change, what a sustainable future might look like, and ‘how to win’ in light of lessons learned from past movement cycles. These topics suggest that this contestation of prefigurativity and open-endedness goes far beyond a desire for greater ‘strategic planning’ as it is conventionally understood. It also suggests a desire to win – to not only look inward, at how organising is done and action is taken, and if done well to see that as enough, but to achieve concrete and evident changes in the wider world. Part of this may of course stem from a personal need to see the efficacy of one’s efforts.

However, I would suggest that the contestation of prefigurativity, open-endedness and diversity – which emerges as much from old-guard/politics-first participants as from new-breed/issue-first participants – may represent the maturing of contemporary autonomous politics, and a response to the urgency of climate change. Gordon suggests that in contemporary anarchist movements, “preoccupations with the purity of process... are giving way to a certain calm determination. There are new questions for anarchists to face now – questions about winning” (2008: 164). This is even more true for the CDA movement, in which long-time ‘ideological anarchists’ are running up against overwhelming evidence of the need for rapid, absolute emissions reductions. As Müller suggests, the urgency of climate change makes CDA activism qualitatively different to that of previous anti-capitalist/alter-globalisation movement cycles: “anticapitalist politics in the global North exist in a sort of timelessness because we either can’t or don’t dare to think [about] their effects in the

future ... Against the usual timelessness of anticapitalist politics, climate change poses the issue of urgency” (2008: no page). In turn, this raises urgent questions about strategy, what can be achieved in the near term, and what the CDA movement’s role is in doing so (*cf.* Turbulence Collective, 2007).

In this section, I have suggested that CDA participants’ lack of clarity about how growth helps to achieve political aims is matched by a broader lack of clarity about aims and how they can be achieved. This, I contend, is a key explanation for many of the tensions that surround movement building and growth in the CDA movement, and particularly for the fact that the consequences of the CCA’s expansion and diversification appeared to be unintentional rather than strategic. However, this lack of clarity does not emerge from an absence of individual reflexivity, but from the autonomous principles of prefigurativity, diversity and open-endedness. Despite exerting a strong influence on the CDA movement, however, CDA networks do not formally acknowledge their commitment to these principles, and in fact they are contested by many participants, including those of a politics-first perspective. The extent of this contestation of prefigurativity, diversity and open-endedness, in conjunction with the urgency posed by climate change, raises thorny questions of strategy that include but go beyond the role for movement growth, to the heart of the CDA movement’s politics and its participants’ beliefs.

6.2.2 Identity: what is ‘the movement’ being built?

A second key way in which the tensions surrounding movement growth can be explained is the lack of clarity and the differences of opinion about who and what comprises the CDA movement, and therefore about what the entity is that is being built. Melucci (1996) argues that an ideological platform is the most important way in which a movement articulates its distinct identity, and therefore its boundaries. By opposing formal ideology and embracing diversity and open-endedness, the CDA movement makes it difficult to answer questions of identity, membership and boundaries. As Annabelle put it, “in saying, we want to build a mass movement, there’s a ‘we’, and who’s the ‘we’ ”? In other words, it is very difficult to talk about how important growth is to ‘our’ movement or about where ‘we’ are going if ‘we’ don’t know or agree who ‘we’ are or encompass. Just as there are different understandings of growth within the CDA movement, there are ambiguities about boundaries and membership, and therefore about what it means to be part of the

movement. As Annabelle suggests below, one of the key distinctions is between membership as participation, and membership as political sympathy:

‘Cause to me a movement is quite an intangible thing, it, maybe it’s more about attitudes ... My mum is unlikely, in the near future, to take what might be defined in this context as direct action on climate change ... but she completely agrees with the aims of what we’re doing, so to me, she’s a part of that movement ... it depends how you define being part of something, is it someone’s active or is it someone that’s thinking about it, ‘cause to me it’s the people that are thinking about it as well.

For Rowan, however, membership in the autonomous CDA movement can only be conferred through active participation: “we’re not a membership organisation, we, we’re not, we don’t belong to Earth First, we’re in Earth First because we do stuff”. This picture is further complicated by the fact that publicly stated ‘conditions’ of ‘membership’ are often not reflective of the realities of being involved (*cf.* Lofland, 1996). So, for example, the Rising Tide website states: “We do not have a formal membership structure - anyone who supports the political statement on our website can become a part of the network”.²⁵ This would suggest that ‘membership’ is based primarily on political sympathy, but in practice, to feel and to be considered part of the Rising Tide network, active participation is essential. So, to determine what it means to be ‘in’ ‘the movement’ (and therefore what it means to successfully achieve growth), “first of all you have to start well what’s ‘us’?” (Kate), but given diverse opinions about membership, and given that the CDA movement consists of overlapping networks with permeable boundaries that overtly resist ideological categorisation, ‘us’ is an undefined and contested category. This in turn makes it difficult to answer questions about movement building, growth, what priority these should have, and the way in which these relate to wider political goals.

If what it means to be involved is contested and undefined, when activists talk about movement building, what exactly is the entity that is being built? As Lofland (1996) points out, there is a difference between joining – or building – a group or network and the wider movement in which these entities may be embedded. So, just as there is a lack of clarity about which movement building goals are being pursued, there is a similar lack of clarity about what entity these efforts are (or should be) directed towards; is it a particular local group, a network, or the wider movement?

²⁵ <http://risingtide.org.uk/about>

The answer is again likely to be a combination thereof, and often, one movement building effort may be directed towards the expansion of all three entities, practiced with multiple understandings of what such expansion means (ie. persuasion or active participation), and with multiple goals (both internal and political). Moreover, attitudes towards the extent to which group versus movement building should be prioritised varies greatly across individuals and groups. Some activists identify strongly with a particular group or network and strive to make it grow, sometimes to the point of developing a sense of competition with other networks for membership. This may seem obvious from a resource mobilisation point of view, and is a widely noted feature of the social movement sector (Crossley, 2002a; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). However, in a movement that is largely uncomfortable with the idea of branding and prefers to see itself as an overlapping and mutually supportive ‘network of networks’, other activists equally firmly reject the idea of expanding particular groups or networks: “If you’re talking about building like Rising Tide, building ... specifically Rising Tide, I really don’t see that as a priority” (Lisa). For these activists, the priority is instead encouraging people to take collective direct action, non-hierarchically organised, regardless of their affiliation:

We’re talking about making, people come to Climate Camp and, what we should be doing ... is thinking, how do we introduce people to non-violent direct action, and how do we get them to do it again and again, and to go up that learning curve, all across the fucking country (Jason).

Jason went on to describe this as “the difference between movement building and capacity building”, suggesting that he would “be so much happier if our methods spread, rather than our movement grew”. Activists with opposing views on this matter are very likely to coexist within the same local group. Thus there is a tension between those, such as Annabelle, for whom persuasion or political sympathy ‘counts’ as participation and those, such as Rowan, for whom active participation is required. Within this second category, there is a further tension between the ideal of generalised, unaligned, ‘qualitative’ movement building – encouraging more direct action against climate change from a radical perspective, whatever the affiliation – and the reality engendered by personal investment in particular groups, which is often the desire for a particular network, with its particular politics, tactics and modes of organising, to be the entity that grows.

6.2.3 Conclusion

Together, the above sections discussed why the ambiguities about, unintended consequences of, and complexity of practices surrounding movement building and growth are so particularly thorny in the CDA movement. The autonomous values of prefigurativity, open-endedness and diversity, which are pervasive and important to the movement's collective identity, but are also invisible and contested, were identified as a core source of these tensions. Together, these contested values help to explain why there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of movement growth and why growth has unintended consequences that may be resisted, and add to our understanding of what newcomers struggle with in getting involved. These values also problematise the CDA movement's identity by blurring its boundaries, and therefore what it means to be part of the movement. In combination with diverse opinions on what should constitute membership, this results in a lack of clarity about what entity movement building efforts attempt to expand. As a participant at one of the post-Kingsnorth gatherings fretted, "instead of thinking where do we want to go and how do we propose to do it, we're having an identity crisis" (Minutes from the CCA national gathering, 08-09.11.08).²⁶ Although this participant was referring to the period of visible soul-searching that followed the 2008 camp, I would suggest that autonomous values of prefigurativity, diversity and open-endedness subject the CDA movement to an ongoing series of invisible identity crises (*cf.* Pickard, 2006). This fuzzy political identity, manifested through a (deliberate but also contested) lack of clear interim objectives, strategies and identities, in turn renders the purpose, priority and practice of movement building and growth subject to an ongoing process of negotiation.

6.3 Conclusion: *building a mass CDA movement?*

This chapter set out to explore the tensions that exist between the rhetoric of 'building a mass movement' that circulates within CDA networks and the ambivalences towards growth held by its participants; and to understand why these tensions appear to be so acute within the CDA movement. In short, I have suggested that these tensions relate to concerns about both the methods used to seek, and the consequences of, growth; and that they result in movement growth being both pursued

²⁶ <http://climatecamp.org.uk/themes/ccamptheme/files/bradfordmins.pdf>

and resisted simultaneously, and the changes that occur as a result of growth being unintended rather than strategic. These tensions are particularly acute because the autonomous values that circulate within the CDA movement subject the purpose, priority and practice of movement building and growth to an ongoing process of negotiation. Along the way, I have explored what it is like to be part of and to bring about an expanding movement, and the complex and diverse meanings that 'growth' has for CDA participants; and I have raised broader issues to do with mainstreaming and the CDA movement's politics. By way of conclusion, I will now expand upon each of these topics by 'talking across' the two main sections of the chapter.

Beginning with the diverse meanings that growth holds for participants, I have shown, first, that growth is both taken for granted as a desirable aim, and is utterly contested, often within the same individual. The key explanation for this contradiction is that, on the one hand, participants realise that the CDA movement's core political features may be seen as unpalatable to a diverse audience and therefore require modification in order to grow. On the other hand, these core features form the movement's 'red lines', which distinguish it from other forms of collective action, and in which participants invest much of themselves. Growth is therefore understood through a prism of tensions: between growth and compromise, progress and loss, transformation and control, pursuit and resistance. Thus perhaps the most honest response about aims for growth is that the movement expands without compromise, becomes mass but stays the same: "it would probably look in terms of people and organising the same as it does now, but just bigger" (Annabelle). Second, I have shown that movement building is not only practiced for political objectives, but fulfils internal movement needs as well. The most important of these is that an expanding group or movement offers a visible sign of progress in the absence of political victories, and therefore acts as an important source of personal meaning-making for participants. This can perhaps help to explain why, in the face of well-understood and fundamental concerns about compromise and consequences, movement building continues to be positioned as a core objective and activity.

Regarding the CDA movement's politics, and the relationship they have to movement growth, I have argued that the CDA movement is shaped by a layered and contested politics. I would suggest that three layers can be identified, which progress from a greater to a lesser degree of visibility and agreement, but do not decrease in influence or importance. The first includes a scepticism of government- and business-

led solutions to climate change, and the pursuit of climate justice, both via direct action; the second includes horizontality, decentralisation and a rejection of state-centred solutions; and the third includes autonomous values of prefigurativity, openness, diversity, and fluid membership and boundary processes. Despite the extent to which particularly the third layer of these politics is contested and invisible, these principles form the unspoken rules of the game that fundamentally shape the CDA movement. In some cases, movement building strategies come into direct conflict with these key values. More importantly, this third layer of politics also means that participants, individually and collectively, struggle to formulate strategies and aims, including articulating how movement growth might be a strategy to achieve political goals.

Finally, with respect to mainstreaming, I have argued that the shifts that took place in the CCA process occurred as a consequence of, rather than via efforts to, achieve growth. These shifts can therefore be understood as unintentional rather than strategic, with a key unintended consequence being the departure of key ‘politics-first’ participants, many of whom had helped to initiate the project in the first place. This apparently unintended mainstreaming shows that there are problematic consequences to the lack of understanding of the relationship between movement growth and movement political objectives, and raises important strategic debates for movement activists, such as: is attracting more and more diverse people the best way to achieve radical political goals? Should efforts be directed towards growing a particular network such as the CCA, or towards the promotion of more direct action from a radical perspective, whatever the affiliation? Should movement building and growth be seen as goals in their own right, or are they more usefully understood as strategies to help achieve political goals? I will return to these questions in the following chapter, which will draw together the findings of the three empirical chapters, raise further debates for movement activists, and consider the nature of growth as expansion, and growth as change, in the CDA movement.

Chapter 7: Radical growth: a fragile paradox

I have argued for the need for ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) in order to understand the dynamics of movement building, growth and participation in a radical social movement, and thus in some ways the richest contributions of this research have already been made. What remains to be accomplished, therefore, is to draw links between the findings presented in the three empirical chapters, and to highlight the contributions this thesis makes to theory and practice. Before turning to this task, a brief review of the theoretical critiques and empirical gaps that this thesis has addressed will be provided, which also represents a summary of the findings of this ethnography.

This thesis is positioned within the cultural approach to the study of social movements, which seeks to explore the internal life of movements in particular contexts, whilst avoiding structural and goal-rational perspectives. The conceptual framework for this thesis centres on the critique that much of the social movement studies literature on participation, retention and growth suffers from a structural bias, and therefore does not sufficiently address the experiences, desires, practices and interactions of movement participants. Moreover, there are empirical and theoretical shortfalls in social movement studies research in the areas of growth as expansion and development, and of individual participation and recruitment; and this thesis proposed that our understanding of each might be expanded by considering them in relation to the others. The use of an ethnographic methodology facilitated such an approach to inquiry, by allowing me to understand the community as a whole; adopt the perspectives of newcomers, experienced activists and social movement groups simultaneously rather than focusing on one or the other; and study how they understand and act upon one another. This in turn was facilitated by my position as an insider to and long-term activist within these communities, which allowed for both a broad and deep understanding of the CDA movement’s goals, claims, practices and composition, and for unique access to a movement that has been historically resistant to academic research(ers).

These theoretical and methodological approaches allowed this research to address three key empirical gaps in the literature, relating to the experience, practice and negotiation of movement building and growth, which will now be considered in

turn. First, whilst recruitment up to the point of first contact and long-term commitment versus withdrawal have been well-studied, the early days of involvement have been under-investigated. Moreover, those studies which do consider this phase do so with the aim of predicting ongoing participation or modelling the stages of progression, rather than considering the experience of being new. This thesis, therefore, explored both the ways in which newcomers encounter, make sense of and assess the core political features of the CDA movement (its tactics, cultures, modes of organising and politics), and the experience of being a newcomer to, and seeking membership in, CDA groups. I found that newcomers experience and react to core movement features differently and make their way into CDA groups in diverse ways, and that this variation is influenced by factors relating to the individual newcomer, the particular group s/he joins, and the attitudes and behaviour of its members. Thus involvement after the point of first contact is not linear, guaranteed or universal, and is shaped by a range of synergistic factors which are just as complex as those that influence initial participation. However, I suggest that it is the CDA movement's political features that are most influential in shaping newcomers' experiences of involvement, and that are the source of the greatest challenges and rewards of involvement.

Second, the social movement literature has neglected the way in which involvement is actively sought and shaped by existing movement participants, a gap which is particularly acute with respect to retention practices, the meanings that they have for movement participants, and the way in which they are experienced by newcomers. This thesis therefore identified and described a range of 'inclusivity' strategies in use within the CDA movement, which are practiced by groups and individuals as both a quantitative retention strategy and as qualitative helping behaviour. Inclusivity may assist newcomers to feel welcome, to gain the knowledge and skills needed to be able to participate at a basic level, to be able to contribute meaningfully, and to become more full and active participants. However, diverse newcomers require different levels of inclusivity support, and the presence of inclusivity processes cannot guarantee retention. Moreover, experienced activists do not always fully understand newcomers' experiences, and may think that involvement is more difficult than it is, or that the experience of membership-seeking – which inclusivity practices address – is a greater challenge than encountering the movement's core political features for the first time. Finally, a wide range of attitudes

towards inclusivity and its appropriate priority were found to exist within the CDA movement, and a range of practical barriers and substantive resistances to inclusivity were identified. Together, these result in inclusivity being practiced inconsistently across groups and within the same group over time, and to inclusivity being pursued and resisted simultaneously.

Third, studies of social movement growth have not yet provided an adequate understanding of the experience and negotiation of movement growth. Researchers have neglected a consideration of the agency of movement participants in bringing about growth, and of the experience of this growth when it occurs. Moreover, scholars have primarily adopted large-scale, external, structural perspectives, and have based their theorisations on formal social movement organisations, which may not necessarily apply to informal, radical networks. This thesis, therefore, explored the diverse meanings that movement building and growth have for CDA participants, focusing particularly on the tensions that exist between the stated aim of movement growth, and the ambivalences participants hold toward the principle and the outcomes of growth. I suggested that these tensions relate to concerns about both the methods used to seek, and the consequences of growth, and that they result in changes that are unintended rather than strategic. Whilst these tensions are not unique to the CDA movement, they are heightened by the movement's autonomous politics, which render the purpose, priority and practice of movement building and growth subject to an ongoing process of negotiation.

Having summarised the key empirical contributions of this thesis, the remainder of this concluding chapter will now offer some reflections on the research process; an integrative analysis of participation, retention and growth as expansion; an assessment of the experience and consequences of growth as a form of change in light of the CDA movement's radicalism; an assessment of the potential of a flexibly adopted cultural approach to social movement studies, and suggestions for further research in this vein; and a discussion of some lessons and points of debate for movement activists.

7.1 Reflections on grounded, activist-academic research

The over-arching benefits, challenges, rewards and dilemmas of an activist-academic positionality have been considered at length by others and were discussed in Chapter 3, and will not be repeated here. In this section, I use Tawney's decree "to

follow the argument where it leads” (in Burgess, 2005: 273) as a point of departure, and reflect upon three elements of my grounded theoretical, activist-academic research journey: the extent to which the deconstruction involved in the analytical process has muted the joys and rewards of activism; the way in which the evolution of my research questions has influenced the collaborative nature of the project; and the way in which these evolving interests both shaped and reflected my own changing views on the CDA movement.

At the outset of this project, I wanted to understand why, despite widespread awareness and concern about environmental problems, only certain people transformed this concern into action. Specifically, I wanted to understand those who ‘did differently’ by acting within social movement groups, and what motivated and allowed them to get and stay involved. In other words, I set out with quite a celebratory notion of participation, and ended up writing a thesis which does the very opposite of romanticising activism. The reader could be forgiven for finishing Chapter 4 and wondering why, indeed, people do manage to stay involved. Finish Chapter 6, and the question becomes how radical movements survive at all. And yet they do; participants get and stay involved and develop passionate commitments, and radical movements flourish and contribute to – some would say drive – social change. Given my own commitment to the CDA movement, what is it, therefore, about the way in which I have ‘followed the argument’ that has led to such a portrayal? I suggest that at least part of the answer lies in the process of deconstruction that takes place through asking and answering questions in an academic research project.

At the most basic level, when I asked interviewees what they found rewarding or appealing about the CDA movement, I generally received short answers. When I asked them what they found difficult or off-putting, they generally had more to say – even if, overall, they felt passionate about the movement and positive about their participation in it. I would suggest this reflects a broader analytical process: whether talking about our own experiences or analysing those of others, critique flows more naturally than praise. More broadly, what is there to ask questions of, and therefore what is there to write about, if all is as it should be? In asking questions and constructing the arguments for this thesis, in telling the one story, I winnowed out many of the short comments and the ephemeral experiences that are what fundamentally explain individual commitment. Yet I know that these are present, because I have experienced them. The rewards and the joys of activism are, for me,

fleeting but potent. One of these moments makes hundreds of hours of work and countless small frustrations all worth it, and these moments count amongst the most exhilarating and empowering experiences of my life. The euphoria of the first Camp for Climate Action did not translate well when I gabbled it to my supervisor the day after I returned; it travels even less well over several years, through coding, under an analytic microscope. The joys of participation are, perhaps, better communicated through the photos included in this thesis, or through film, novels and poetry, reports of actions written from the streets, and personal accounts collected in movement anthologies. A similar deconstructive process occurred in relation to the reflexivity and viability of radical movements: in building a coherent argument about the lack of clarity of purpose for movement growth and its relationship to autonomous values, innumerable tiny qualifications – each one representing a fragment that could together tell a very different tale – had to be lost along the way.

The progression from my celebratory early intentions to the unvarnished account I produced resulted from ‘following the argument where it leads’ in a second sense as well – that of picking up and running with unanticipated research questions. I set out with very clear intentions, legitimised by a long tradition of action research, to contribute to not only academic research agendas, but to what I perceived at the time to be CDA networks’ (and my own) straightforward goal of building a mass climate action movement. In discovering that this goal was not in fact so straightforward, I made an intellectually-motivated decision to pursue this strand of analysis, partly, perhaps, at the expense of more immediate movement usefulness – but not of movement relevance. Although pursuing this strand of analysis moved the project away from its collaborative roots and intentions, in that my fellow activists did not tell me that this was an important strand to investigate, I would argue that exploring the gap between the rhetoric and reality of movement growth as a goal raised matters of vital consequence to the CDA movement.

Finally, ‘following the argument where it leads’ both resulted from, and influenced, my evolving views about and activities within the CDA movement. The deconstructive analysis that I carried out on my own movement, and therefore on my own beliefs, actions and interactions, hastened a trajectory that many long-term activists experience, but for me has been compressed into my four-year history of participation: from inspired, passionate and empowered, to more contemplative and sceptical, and more interested in being certain that my efforts are productive, rather

than enjoying my participation in its own right. Moreover, these deconstructions have forced me to interrogate one of my major reasons for participating – to build a social movement – and one of my major areas of activity – networking and outreach. Over the course of this thesis, the areas I have prioritised within my activism have shifted, in a pattern that loosely follows the empirical chapters of this thesis: from a drive to get as many people involved as fast as possible, to a greater concern with identifying and improving problems with movement processes such as inclusivity, to an increasing interest in skill sharing, capacity building and long term strategy. At times, therefore, this deconstruction has been a difficult process; but it is also one that has allowed me to become a more reflective and strategic activist. Moreover, it has allowed me to step back from day to day organising, and see the CDA movement in a wider context and as part of a longer history of struggle; thereby, for example, both confronting the limitations of a day of direct action, and realising and helping to communicate that something relatively small that a few of us created in 2006 has in fact sparked a new global movement.

7.2 Growth as expansion: between participation and movement building

What insights can be gained from asking questions about growth and participation together, and from synthesising findings about the experience of involvement, the practice of involving and the negotiation of growth? I would suggest that such a cross-cutting analysis allows for new light to be shed on the nature of growth as expansion, and specifically on what it means to grow a radical social movement via retaining newcomers. For the purposes of this section, I background concerns about growth and position it as a desirable goal, and ask what it takes to retain a newcomer within the heightened ‘organisational ambiguity’ of the CDA movement (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). Using Levine and Moreland’s (1994) theory of socialisation as a point of departure, I consider the ways in which factors relating to the newcomer, the experienced activist, the group and the movement come together to shape movement growth.

As discussed in Chapter 2, socialisation occurs following initial entry to a group, and is a process of mutual sense-making and adjustment, in which the group and the newcomer attempt to change one another in order to maximise their own goals and needs, respectively. Acceptance and full membership is only reached if and when

the newcomer and the group both reach their respective ‘acceptance criteria’, which must ‘match’ in order for acceptance to occur (Levine and Moreland, 1994). Accordingly, in the following section I explore what influences the progression between initial entry and the point at which a newcomer and a group (consisting, as we shall see, of experienced activists with divergent attitudes and interests, and embedded in the wider CDA movement) reach a mutual acceptance point. I do not attempt to construct a formula for acceptance out of this nexus of factors, of the “social networks + POS + resources + collective identity = mobilisation!” (Plows, 2002: 107) variety that structuralists have been over-fond of, but to tease out what these factors are, suggest some ways in which they inter-relate, and demonstrate just what a fragile production ‘mutual acceptance’ and therefore growth is in the CDA movement.

7.2.1 Newcomers and involvement trajectories

What influences a newcomer’s journey into involvement, and the level at which his or her acceptance criteria is ‘set’? Influencing factors include but go beyond those discussed in Chapter 4. Thus a newcomer’s motivations for joining, personality, self-socialisation skills and life circumstances all influence the likelihood of ongoing involvement. The extent to which newcomers feel that they ‘fit’ within the group (and need to feel a ‘close fit’) is also important, and is influenced by factors such as the group’s radicalism, but also by the extent to which newcomers possess certain traits that make them desirable to the group. These include the extent to which the newcomer is similar to, and agrees with, existing group members; has relevant skills, experience and knowledge; has time and energy; and has initiative, confidence and personal charisma. The more a newcomer possesses these traits, the more likely it is that experienced activists will attempt to involve the newcomer and that s/he will be able to contribute and feel full membership, and therefore the smoother the process of membership-seeking will be. The presence of group and individual inclusivity strategies also influences newcomers’ trajectories of involvement, primarily in regards to the ease of membership-seeking. It is the extent to which newcomers either already support, or are able to come to support, the movement’s core political features (tactics, cultures, modes of organising and politics), *and* its autonomous values, that most fundamentally influences the involvement trajectory.

Taken together, I would suggest that a newcomer's acceptance criteria are 'set' at the level at which s/he feels a sense of both personal and group efficacy. Newcomers feel personally effective to the extent that, if they desire full membership, they are able to gain the social contacts and competence to be accepted as full members; or, if they prefer or have only time for partial involvement, the group still finds a way to offer meaningful opportunities to contribute. Newcomers feel that the group is effective either *because of* or *in spite of* its core political features and autonomous values, or more likely some complex combination thereof. For example, a newcomer might feel that direct action is an effective method for achieving social change, but that the CDA movement's impact is hampered by its reluctance to lobby governments. This example is strategically chosen, for I would suggest that it is the CDA movement's anti-state tendencies, its contested current of autonomous values, and the alien culture of some of its constitutive groups that represent the greatest barriers to involvement, whilst the preferred tactic of direct action and the emphasis on democratic modes of organising are more easily acceptable to a wider range of newcomers. The trajectory of the CCA illustrates this point well: whilst the culture became less alien, the political goals more familiar, and the autonomous values waned in visibility, direct action as a tactic and democratic modes of organising were (largely) preserved, yet people still found it easier to get involved than in previous years. Thus it is arguably what makes a movement most radical – in this case autonomous, anti-state politics and dramatically alternative cultures – that puts it beyond the reach of many people's acceptance criteria.

7.2.2 'The group' and attitudes to movement building, growth and newcomers

Whether or not the newcomer wants or is able to get involved, however, is only half the story. A key argument of this thesis has been that participation must be understood as not only an individual achievement, but also as the product of movement activity. I suggest that the unified 'group' in Moreland and Levine's model must be unpacked, and understood as a **collection of individuals** embedded in groups and a wider movement. In this section, I explore what influences the likelihood that experienced activists will want and be able to keep a particular newcomer, thereby expanding their group and movement. A summary of activists' diverse understandings of **movement building** and **growth and newcomers** is required before this question can be answered, as is a consideration of if and how these attitudes affect **behaviour**

towards newcomers. I begin by discussing attitudes to movement building, and suggest that these can be understood as existing somewhere between the poles of two ideal-type opposing perspectives on movement building as a strategy.

On the one hand, *quantitative movement building* may be seen as a strategic practice designed to increase the size of a particular group or network. Quantitative movement building includes recruitment that is intended to increase active participation in a group or network, and inclusivity that is intended to retain participants in and foster a sense of membership in that group or network. This type of strategic movement building, which is practiced for the benefit of the group, the network or the movement, can effectively achieve recruitment and retention. For the same reasons, however, quantitative movement building is criticised for being manipulative, phony and dishonest. Moreover, quantitative movement building comes into conflict with core values about power and prefigurative social relations, and may also be seen as distasteful due to its association with the party-building practices of the old Left, whose strategies for and goal of revolutionary closure are fundamentally rejected. On the other hand, *qualitative* movement building is practiced not only for the benefit of the group or movement, but also or entirely for the prospective newcomer, who is positioned as a fellow human being trying to achieve one of his or her desires. In this framing, inclusivity is a helping practice designed to assist newcomers in overcoming the challenges of participation, and authentic rather than phony or manipulative interactions take place amongst equals out of choice and a natural affinity for one another. More broadly, movement building is positioned as outreach as well as recruitment, in that political sympathy is a goal as well as active participation. Within the category of active participation, it is movement capacity-building and participation rather than group-building and membership that is sought, in that increased direct action from a radical perspective, whatever the affiliation, is the goal, rather than attraction and retention to a particular named group or network.

In practice, CDA participants usually hold complex combinations of the above attitudes towards movement building. Thus whilst activists might hope or even intend to pursue qualitative movement building, their investment in a particular group may also lead to more quantitative practices, and a given interaction between newcomer and experienced activist is likely to be imbued with these multiple motivations. Similarly, whilst a network may claim to be uninterested in network-building, practices on the ground often tell a different story. Thus individual activists may hold

opposing views within themselves, diverse views may be held within a given group, and views may differ across groups in a network and a wider movement. Growth via movement building is therefore pursued in contradictory and not always strategic ways, often with many movement building goals being sought simultaneously. More broadly, growth may be resisted not because of its outcomes, but because of assumptions about the quantitative way in which it is sought, which is not always the case in practice.

Progressing to discuss activists' complex hopes for and resistances to **newcomers and growth**, I suggest that these can be understood in light of what they mean for the movement, politically; for the group, organisationally; and for the activist, personally. Politically, the CDA movement, with its commitment to grassroots- and movement-led rather than state-based social change, has a collective sense that growth is required in order to bring about the vast changes that are hoped for. More people actively participating in the CDA movement are necessary to resist, delay and confront the root causes of climate change through direct action; to model and promote sustainable alternatives; and to engage in public persuasion and the re-framing of the terms of the climate debate. The arrival of newcomers is therefore a critical political achievement. However, newcomers may also disagree with movement ways of being and doing; they may critique, and potentially change, long-standing practices and cherished values. The apparent desirability of growth – as the aggregated arrival of newcomers – is therefore highly contested, and participants may have profound concerns about the compromises that may be made to achieve expansion, particularly in relation to politics and tactics, or the changes that may occur as a result of growth.

Organisationally, a minimum of growth is necessary for organisational and movement maintenance and survival. Regardless of whether activists seek to build their own networks or the wider movement, new participants are required to replace those who burn out or move on to other projects. If the group is taken as the unit of analysis, newcomers may replace the functions of those who leave, or, if a group grows at greater than replacement level, the arrival of newcomers may lessen the burden of organisational tasks. Moreover, newcomers may also bring skills, contacts, ideas, energy and other resources that were previously unavailable to the group or the wider movement. However, the management of newcomers may also require scarce resources of time and energy: to stop the meeting and explain matters of fact or

history, to teach a new skill, to argue a political case. Newcomers also bring risks, such as the risk that the time invested in them will be ill spent if they do not keep participating; or the risk that they will do a task poorly or unreliably. More broadly, unless newcomers are exceptionally similar to those already present in the group, the diversity brought by expansion may make it harder for a group to agree, to make decisions quickly, and to work in friendship groups using informal short-hand. There is therefore a fear of the unknown quantity that growth brings, which is a legitimate concern given that diversification has the potential to undermine the collective identity and solidarity that are such key rewards in (particularly) high risk social movement activism.

Personally, in the absence of other achievable political goals, growth may come to be positioned as a rare and precious sign of progress, the achievement of which is not only important to the group as a collective, but to the individual activist's sense of efficacy and purpose. The arrival of newcomers is also something to be excited about, not only because of what they might offer the group, but what they might offer to the individual. A newcomer might be a newfound friend, someone who shares a minority opinion, or wants to help start a new project. At the same time, however, a newcomer might make claims on the individual activist that s/he resents. For example, a newcomer may require time that cannot be spent with other friends, or may disrupt the dynamic of a close friendship group, thereby making participation less enjoyable for the experienced activist. Or, the skills or traits that the newcomer possesses may threaten an activist's status within the group. More fundamentally, therefore, growth and diversification may lead to an individual's loss of influence over the group, and may undermine principles and practices in which experienced activists have invested much of themselves. In some ways, therefore, just as growth represents a threat to a group's collective identity, it can also represent a threat to an individual activist's self-identity.

The three levels of hopes for and resistances to growth and newcomers are summarised in Table 7.1 below.

| | | Political | Organisational | Personal |
|------------------|--------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| Growth | <i>Hopes</i> | More people to change the world | Maintenance and survival | Makes participation meaningful |
| | <i>Resistances</i> | Compromise or change in core features | Threat to collective identity | Threat to individual self-identity |
| Newcomers | <i>Hopes</i> | Sense of collective achievement | Bring resources; lessen burden of work | Excitement of new potential |
| | <i>Resistances</i> | Disrupt existing ways of doing and being | Bring risks; require resources to manage | Reduce enjoyment of participation |

Table 7.1 Summary of attitudes to newcomers and growth

What this table and the discussion above shows is a fundamental paradox at the heart of attitudes to newcomers and the growth that they either represent or bring: on the one hand, growth is seen to be required to achieve social change, and is necessary for organisational survival and personal meaning-making; but on the other hand, growth threatens personal and group identities, and has the potential to undermine what makes the movement what it is. This tension must be negotiated and managed within individuals, some of whom recognise its existence and the challenges it brings, and between individuals within groups and the wider movement.

Two further factors must be addressed before a discussion about the production of mutual acceptance between ‘the group’ and the newcomer can be had: the extent to which the diverse attitudes outlined so far influence experienced activists’ behaviour towards newcomers, and the way in which ‘the group’ and ‘the movement’ must be understood as a collection of individual experienced activists’ attitudes and behaviour. Beginning with the link between attitudes and **behaviour**, I would suggest that the complex and often problematic feelings that experienced activists may have towards both newcomers and growth do not often ‘spill over’ into direct interactions with newcomers. Recall that the vast majority of activists say and believe that growth is a desirable aim, and that the concerns raised in this thesis often only arise upon reflection. Even the ‘growth sceptics’ interviewed for this research are unlikely to ‘take out’ their scepticism on a newcomer *because of* his or her newcomer status (for example, because the newcomer is taking time away from other activities). More likely, if a newcomer experiences insensitive, rude or exclusive behaviour at the hands of an experienced activist, sceptic or not, this is due to factors unrelated to the newcomer, or at least only indirectly. The difference between involvers and sceptics is

that involvers are likely to mask their irritation, whatever the cause, for the sake of inclusivity; whilst sceptics may either be unaware of the impact their behaviour is likely to have on others, newcomers or not, or feel that altering their behaviour for the sake of a newcomer runs counter to personal or perceived movement values of honesty in social relations. Finally, and given the additional fact that there are very few overt ‘growth sceptics’ in the CDA movement, I would suggest that the difficult interactional experiences that newcomers face in getting involved are not usually due to a direct link between experienced activists’ attitudes to growth and their behaviour towards newcomers. Rather, these difficulties are due to the way in which the diverse and contradictory individual attitudes towards growth and movement building permeate and shape group and movement culture, values, priorities, strategies and practices, as have been discussed throughout this thesis.

Thus there can be no acceptance criteria for ‘the group’, nor a single ‘level’ at which these criteria are set. The ‘CDA movement’ is, in some ways, no more than a useful descriptor for the **collection of individuals** who identify with it and act more or less collectively in its name. The same is true of the Rising Tide and CCA networks and the local groups which constitute them. Whilst this situation could arguably apply to most social movements (Crossley, 2002b; Della Porta and Diani, 2006), it is especially the case given the decentralised, informal, autonomous and networked nature of the CDA movement. Given that this movement and its constitutive groups are defined primarily by the negotiations of their participants acting collectively rather than by agreed upon and/or codified policies and practices, there can be no collective acceptance criterion for ‘the group’, with respect to a newcomer in particular, or growth in general. Instead, there can only be the diverse and contradictory attitudes of individuals, coming together in ever changing flows of conflict and agreement, constantly in negotiation, subject to the ongoing negotiations of a multitude of other practices, values and strategies. Of course experienced activists’ attitudes are in turn fundamentally influenced by ‘the movement’s’ values, but these ‘movement’ values can only be understood as a fleeting aggregation of individual perspectives rather than a unified whole.

7.2.3 The fragile achievement of growth in the CDA movement

Having discussed the many and complex factors that shape a newcomer’s experience of involvement and an experienced activist’s understandings of

newcomers, growth and movement building, and the problems inherent in attempting to do so for 'the group', I now draw these factors together to suggest that the 'matching up' of newcomer and 'group' acceptance criteria is a delicate balancing act.

By way of a very brief summary, the factors that influence a newcomer's progression into involvement include personal motivations, traits, capacities and circumstances; desire and ability to gain full membership; need for and receipt of inclusivity support; radicalism of the primary group they join, in regards to political features and autonomous values; attitudes and behaviours of the experienced activists they meet; ease of 'fit' with the group and the extent to which they need such a 'close fit'; and, most fundamentally, experiences of and reactions to the movement's core political, cultural, tactical and organisational features and autonomous values. The factors at play on the 'group' side are even more complicated, as they do not revolve around a single individual and his or her traits, needs and experiences, but those of many people coming together to form groups and the movement. These factors thus include experienced activists' diverse attitudes towards newcomers, growth and movement building; the combination of these attitudes that exists in a particular group (which is the important factor because collective agreement and/or arrangements in regards to movement building processes are rare and inconsistently implemented); and a core tension between hopes for and fears about growth that manifests at individual, group and movement levels.

Thus identified, it should be clear what a fragile production 'mutual acceptance' and therefore growth is in the CDA movement. All of these contradictory and mutually contingent factors must come together for mutual acceptance to occur, in a complicated and unlikely combination of the newcomer wanting to get involved, the experienced activists who constitute the group wanting to have that newcomer, and all parties involved being willing and able to make the efforts that are required for involvement to be produced and maintained. 'Wanting', 'willing' and 'able' are all equally complex and contradictory notions; for example, an experienced activist may feel that s/he wants a newcomer to be able to get involved and is willing to take steps accordingly, but may unintentionally act in ways that militate against such involvement. Or, a newcomer may want to get involved, but s/he may not have the ability to self-socialise in a group that is not willing to make special efforts for newcomers. Or, all the experienced activists in a group may want the group to grow, but only if growth is produced through the arrival of a certain kind of newcomer.

Most fundamentally, everyone involved – the newcomer, all the experienced activists in a group and the majority of participants in a movement – may want that newcomer to get and stay involved, and may all be willing and sometimes able to take steps to make that happen, but the core tensions about growth that manifest in movement, group and individual cultures, practices, and values may get in the way.

The foregoing discussion raises questions about the usefulness of Moreland and Levine's (1994) model of socialisation in a radical social movement context. Whilst the model provides an essential recognition that the experience of involvement is shaped by the group and its members, and that those members act strategically on newcomers, this thesis has highlighted some underlying assumptions of the model that do not appear to apply consistently in the CDA context. These primarily relate to the positioning of 'the group' as a cohesive, strategic, rational actor. Although Levine and Moreland acknowledge that the 'group' is not a unified actor but consists of individual members who may not always agree, they say little about the extent to which this disagreement influences the experiences of the newcomer or the actions of the group and its members. This thesis has shown that the diverse and contradictory attitudes of experienced activists permeate group and movement culture, values and practices, and thereby also fundamentally shape newcomers' experiences. The model also assumes that, at least to begin with, 'the group' 'wants' the newcomer, and moreover knows what it wants from him or her. In particular, there is an underlying assumption that the group has a shared and agreed-upon goal, and is aware of how newcomers might facilitate the reaching of that goal. Finally, this thesis has suggested that group members do not always act to maximise the group's goal or their own needs, but may practice non-instrumental qualitative movement building with the intention of helping another human being.

More broadly, three insights can be gained from the above integration of findings relating to participation, retention and growth. First, growth as expansion is a difficult achievement in the CDA movement, as represented by the complex balancing act required for newcomers and the experienced activists who constitute the group and the movement to reach a mutual acceptance point. Second, participation and retention do not occur in a vacuum, but take place within a complex, contradictory and living social movement; and in the case of the CDA movement, the experience of participation and the practice of retention can only be made sense of in conjunction with an understanding of activist, group and movement negotiations of movement

building and growth. There is indeed great value, therefore, in asking questions about participation, retention and growth together, and in answering these questions from the multiple perspectives of all of the parties engaged in the involvement process. Third, the question of how radical movements grow is inextricably linked to questions about how divergent views about growth collide, and about *if* such movements want to grow.

7.3 Growth as change: radicals and mainstreaming

The tensions surrounding growth identified in this thesis are not unique to the CDA movement, nor are debates about mainstreaming new in social movement studies. Such tensions - between efficiency of organisation and authenticity of experience, quantity and quality of participation, reform and radicalism, growth and exclusivity, “pragmatism and purity, reaching out and turning in” (Mansbridge, 2003 [1986]: 152) – are core features of social movements, and “living with these tensions is recognized as a fundamental aspect of political activism” (Deslandes and King, 2006: 311). However, these tensions are more acute within radical movements, and even more so within movements influenced by autonomous politics, in which these tensions are definitional, and creating prescriptions for their resolution is explicitly avoided (Deslandes and King, 2006). Focusing on the key tension of growth, this thesis has shown that it is that which makes the CDA movement most radical and most different, and therefore that which arguably makes it most important – as a bold social, political and cultural challenger, and “an anticoagulant in the body politic” (Bouchier in Fitzgerald and Rodgers, 2000: 588) – that also makes growth so difficult. This is true both for newcomers seeking to get involved, and for movement participants and collectives in seeking to negotiate the practice, purpose, priority and consequences of growth. Thus for movements that define themselves by their radicalism, the question of ‘how do we grow’ is particularly difficult, and is underpinned by more fundamental questions about ‘if we should grow’, and ‘what might this growth mean for our radicalism’. In this section, I bring the CDA movement’s radicalism to the fore, and explore the experience and consequences of growth as a form of change for radical participants. In doing so, I return to the example of the mainstreaming of the CCA, and argue that the extent to which this trajectory is a problematic one can only be evaluated in light of the CCA’s position within a wider movement with a longer history.

Radical or politics-first participants who have been involved with the CCA since its inception have had two primary reactions to the mainstreaming dynamic that has occurred, both of which, I contend, are productive. Some have attempted to remain engaged with and critique the growing, mainstreaming movement, “on the fringes of it, criticising it, trying to pull it in our direction” (Rachel). Whilst this may be a challenging and uncomfortable role, this engagement, even if it fails to ‘pull’ the entire process to the activist’s desired position, may plant important seeds. These may be seeds of ideas that shape future processes or practices, or seeds of persuasion that change the minds of other participants with unknown reverberations throughout their personal, work and social networks (Fitzgerald and Rodgers, 2000). The very conflict that may arise from such ongoing engagement can be productive, for “it is precisely at the intersection of these different sorts of political and organizational logics, and in the context of the associated conflicts and debates, that new kinds of sustainable hybrid networked institutions will emerge” (Juris, 2008a: no page), or new alliances formed, or new tactics or strategies developed.

Other activists, who may have come to perceive an insurmountable contradiction between growth and diversification and their commitment to politically radical action, have decided to move on and launch other, more radical projects, a response which is no less productive. With their clearer political identity and affinity-group based organising structure, these projects can maintain an essential unflinching critique, unwillingness to compromise, purity of process and utopian vision. Some who have disengaged from the CCA have lost the energy to continue the battle, whilst others appear to realise that continued attempts to maintain a radical stamp on the CCA process may prevent it from transforming into a new entity, one that is perhaps productive in a different way:

This Plane Stupid analysis²⁷ has gripped Climate Camp and everyone is very enthusiastic about it, which is great but which is also problematic if, you know it’s sort of a little bit disempowering, you feel a little bit like, oh yeah, now I’ve lost control of it. But that’s exactly the exciting thing as well, you know when, when you realise it’s not about me anymore if, if I leave they will go forwards and you know, or if ten of us leave they will be probably even faster towards achieving their aims than if we sort of hold them back (Carl).

²⁷ Carl earlier referred to the politics of the anti-aviation group Plane Stupid as “a campaign against airport expansion, um but not a campaign against, you know against other capitalist induced, ecological crises”.

As Carl's quote suggests, so far, the CCA process has escaped the 'founder's trap', in which, due to long-standing and heavy personal investment, founding organisational members 'hold the group back' from moving on to a new stage (Riger, 1994) – which, of course, can be a painful process:

To a certain extent, change means dying. It means abandoning the comfort zone, giving up part of yourself, abandoning habits and certainties. And in a wider sense, movements need to flirt with their own death, with the possibility that they need to cease to be so that something else can be born (Turbulence Collective, 2007: no page).

The above matter-of-fact description of radicals' reactions to the mainstreaming of the CCA masks important intensities of feeling – of frustration, regret, disillusionment and failure. These emotions, whilst legitimate and understandable, are shaped by the moment at which the CCA finds itself in the history of climate debates (*cf.* Moyer, 1990): "The victory in the battle to raise awareness of climate change has had strange consequences. When you've been banging your head against a brick wall, it's hard to know what to do when the wall gives way" (The Free Association, 2008: no page). The CCA has played an important role in sensitising publics to the climate crisis in general, and in particular to the issues of coal and aviation. For both, however, wider coalitions of support have followed swiftly behind, and radicals have moved equally swiftly to re-define new issues of contention and to develop new critiques. To participants this may feel as if, rather than pressing forward with a radical agenda, they are 'issue-hopping' – doing the same things over and over again but on new issues, with each new issue getting captured into mainstream debates – which can feel very ineffective and disempowering. However, positioning the CCA as part of a wider movement with a longer history allows for a different story to be told.

The notion that the CCA movement has failed because it has become (more) mainstream mistakenly conflates organisational and movement 'failure' (*cf.* Gamson, 2003 [1975]). From a radical perspective, there may well have been unacceptable changes within the national CCA organising process. But that process spawned local, autonomous groups around the country; and helped to launch a global climate action movement. The radicalism of the activity within those new local and global networks cannot yet be assessed, nor can their political or cultural impacts, however radical they may be. The CCA also helped to reinvigorate pre-existing UK networks. For

example, the revival of Earth First!, one of the networks out of which the CCA was born, has been greatly facilitated by the rise of the CCA and its associated actions, and has represented a ‘home’ to which some of the radicals of the CCA have returned. Rising Tide has also grown alongside the rise in climate activism across the UK but, like Earth First!, has not undergone a mainstreaming process. Networks such as these thus represent an important source of continuity for the radical direct action movement in the UK. This adds weight to the argument that the many issues that the environmental direct action movement has addressed over the past 25 years are linked by the life histories of activists and their more and less formal networks, which together have pursued an ongoing radical social change agenda (Plows, 2008). Moreover, these networks appear to ‘birth’ new projects that may well go on to become mainstream, with the CCA perhaps being the most dramatic example, but remain radical themselves, ready to launch the next movement cycle. However, this thesis suggests that the requirements of ‘staying radical’ – of maintaining radical politics, tactics, culture and modes of organising – sets a limit on the size such networks can reach (*cf.* Pickard, 2006).

Just as growth appears to be positioned as an end in its own right rather than as a means to achieve political goals, viewing the CCA’s mainstreaming as a ‘failure’ positions the CCA process as an end in itself rather than as a method of achieving social change (*cf.* Riger, 1994). Conflating organisational and movement success is of course not new in the history of social movements, nor is it surprising given how much of themselves activists have invested in the CCA. However, both of these understandings sit uneasily alongside autonomous values, which would suggest that radicals, more than most, should work to see both growth and movement networks not as ends in themselves, but as part of an ongoing struggle for social change.

7.4 Structure, culture and future research

How do radical movements grow? They grow in spite of their radicalism, in spite of uncertainties about the purpose of growth, and in spite of profound concerns about losing what makes them radical, different and important. Movement growth, and newcomers’ experiences, are fundamentally shaped by participants’ diverse and contradictory views and practices related to growth and wider movement ways of being and doing. In drawing conclusions such as these, I suggest that a cultural approach can yield important understandings that lie in the blind spots of a

structuralist, rationalist view of social movement dynamics. Thus, this research suggests that neither participation nor growth can be fully understood through the development of stage models or the deployment of large-scale questionnaires. The experience of involvement is unique to each individual, according to his or her unique traits and circumstances, and those of the group and movement, at a particular time and place. In turn, growth is not something that ‘just happens’ to a movement. It is not unproblematically achieved as part of a natural or given developmental trajectory with definable stages. Movement actors shape these trajectories, but in messy, contradictory, and not always strategic ways, with consequences that may be unintended and difficult to manage.

Despite the fact that this thesis contributes to an ongoing delineation of the limits of a structural perspective on social movements, I also suggest that the emerging cultural perspective would do itself a disservice by rejecting out of hand useful empirical concepts that have emerged from structuralist research due to their theoretical provenance. As Hobson suggests, this research can offer “focused, coherent, and often empirically driven concepts, that can be used to fill some cognitive/emotional gaps in social science knowledges” (2001: 212). The empirical chapters of this thesis have been informed throughout by concepts emerging from a structural tradition of research on participation and intra-organisational dynamics. These include theories of identity construction during involvement (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993); the varying membership requirements or levels of absorption required by social movement groups (Lofland, 1996); and dynamics of diversification and factionalism (Zald and Ash Garner, 1987 [1966]). This thesis has also been informed by theories of socialisation emerging from rationalist small group research and organisational behaviour, such as the interplay between the strategies, characteristics and needs of newcomers and existing group members (Levine and Moreland, 1994). I arrived at many of these concepts partway through the research, and found that they spoke to the experiences and processes that I had been making sense of through grounded theoretical analysis from a cultural perspective. I hope and believe, therefore, that this thesis has demonstrated what the cultural approach to social movement research can achieve, by combining a rich theorisation of agency with a fine-grained, experiential focus on the internal life of a specific movement, and by paying attention to concepts from a structural tradition without falling prey to its reductive, competitive, goal-rational tendencies.

With this in mind, I now suggest three ways in which the areas of inquiry pursued in this thesis might be extended by following such an approach, before concluding with some suggestions as to directions that research on the emerging climate action movement might productively take. First, theories of group socialisation drawn from organisational studies have proved useful in this research, suggesting that the emerging cross-fertilisation between organisational theory and social movement studies (Davis and Zald, 2005) is a productive one. Until recently, the nature of this inter-disciplinarity had been somewhat one-sided, with social movement scholars importing organisational theories into their research, which has mainly taken place within a resource mobilisation paradigm (McAdam and Scott, 2005). Fruitful work might be conducted, therefore, by continuing this agenda from a cultural perspective, and by reversing the direction and considering what insights from social movements might offer to studies of other forms of organisation and social grouping. For example, this thesis has highlighted the presence of an empathic, helping dimension to the socialisation practices of existing group members; might this also be found in more regulated, formal processes such as work-based orientation programmes? This research has also suggested the possibility of a cooperative rather than entirely competitive relationship between newcomers and ‘the group’; is this related to a shared struggle towards wider goals of social change, or might this too be a feature of other groups?

Second, this thesis has answered calls for qualitative, ethnographic studies of the relational dynamics at work in social movements, and particularly of participation and retention (Corning and Myers, 2002; McAdam, 2003). The cultural approach adopted in this thesis provided unique insights into the involvement process, and I would suggest that similarly productive research might be conducted into the nature of disengagement. I only recognised the potential value of the perspective of those who had disengaged from the CDA movement partway through the research process, and whilst the interviews I did conduct provided useful insights into the experience of participation, I did not feel I had enough evidence to theorise the nature of disengagement. An experiential study, taking into account the perspectives of both the group and the individual disengaging participant, could investigate questions such as: are there patterns in the points at which or factors which prompt participants to withdraw? How does the group respond to potential and actual disengagement, and can strategies of retention be identified at this stage as well as at initial involvement?

Here again, there is relevant research in the field of organisational studies that might be selectively drawn upon (Levine and Moreland, 1994).

Third, although it is my depth of engagement with the CDA movement that has allowed for the “nuanced view of reality” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 223) presented and argued for in this thesis, more than a single case study is obviously required to more fully develop our understanding of the nature of radical social movement growth. Many of the themes developed in this thesis, therefore, would benefit from further study in different contexts. For example, what lessons could be learned by conducting research simultaneously in a CDA group and a more reformist entity such as a local Friends of the Earth group, with the latter in theory benefiting from the knowledge and capacity-building structures (some of which focus specifically on recruitment and retention; see Appendix 1) of a large and well-established organisation, and potentially avoiding some of the barriers to participation associated with the CDA movement’s radicalism? From a different angle, what could be learned from studying an equally radical, autonomous group, which campaigns on a different issue, such as migration or animal rights? To what extent are the dynamics of participation and growth explored in this thesis unique to climate change as an issue? Dimensions for comparative analysis could also be geographical, cultural and political, in that studies could consider participation and growth in the radical climate action groups that are emerging around the world.

Finally, this thesis has represented the first major study of the emerging UK climate direct action movement, which I and others have suggested represents a pivotal moment in the history of radical activism in the UK and around the world (Halpin and Summer, 2008; Juris, 2008a; Müller, 2008). This alone makes the CDA movement an important ongoing site of study, and questions for investigation should range well beyond growth and participation. Focusing on questions brought to light in this research, however, yields several fruitful lines of inquiry. From 2006 when I began this research to late 2007 when I concluded the interviews, the UK CDA movement was quite homogenous, with a relatively small number of people overlapping across the key constituent networks of Rising Tide and CCA. By the end of 2008, however, the composition of the movement had changed dramatically, as this thesis has partially documented in relation to the CCA. A range of new networks, such as Plane Stupid, Biofuelwatch and the Coal Action Network, as well as a host of independent local groups and groups acting under the umbrella of the CCA, have

emerged over this time, and many interesting questions could be asked in relation to these groups. To what extent do their dynamics resonate with those described in this thesis in relation to Rising Tide and the national CCA process, and to what extent does a shared ‘CDA’ identity exist? A second cluster of questions relates to the extent to which the CDA movement differs from previous cycles of direct action in the UK. Evidence from this thesis suggests that there has been a maturing of radical activism in the UK, with, for example, long-time participants pointing to an improved emotional literacy and increased engagement with ‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’ skills, and a greater willingness to consider pragmatism on a par with purity of process. Is this the case? If so, does this maturing characterise radical activism more broadly, or is it in some way a product of a movement facing up to the urgency of climate change?

7.5 Contributions to movement practice

I hope that CDA movement participants will find much of interest and of use throughout this thesis. Whether or not all participants agree with my interpretations – which, in a movement full of self-reflexive and opinionated individuals, I very much doubt they all will – if this thesis serves as something for individuals to push off against in forming their own views, and as a starting point for debate, it will have served an important movement-relevant purpose. The following is therefore not a summary of relevant findings, which has already been accomplished in this concluding chapter, nor is it a substitute for the accessible text tailored for CDA activists that I have committed to producing. Instead, it forms the conclusions, written in an academic voice, for the ‘action’ component of this action research project. The discussion is in two parts, with the first focused on movement building, and the second relating to the wider debates about strategy and values raised by this research

7.5.1 Lessons for movement building

Despite the many contestations of and complexities inherent in growth, movement building remains a core activity and priority for many within the CDA movement. In this section I explore what lessons this thesis has to offer for more effective movement building, and specifically for inclusivity practice and a better understanding of newcomers. Inclusivity is a vital movement practice, for a host of reasons that include but go well beyond retention and quantitative movement building. However, if growth of the group or the movement is desired, maximising the

chances that those who need inclusivity support get it suggests that inclusivity be practised as much as possible – recognising that no one who feels uncomfortable about it should have to engage in its practice. On a qualitative level, inclusivity grows out of a core movement value of improving social relations in the here and now, and can help another human being to realise his or her desires. Moreover, inclusivity makes the experience more pleasant and positive even for those who don't need such support, can improve the working environment for the wider group, and can help to work towards group goals of horizontality. Even raising inclusivity as an issue for discussion can spark important conversations about group dynamics and about how and why things are done as they are. This thesis, therefore, can perhaps help to improve the 'reputation' of inclusivity by revealing some misconceptions about its practice: its purpose is empathic as well as strategic, and it should not be resisted out of misguided associations with manipulative party-building methods; it does not necessarily demand formalisation or mainstreaming of group processes; and newcomers do not find it patronising, but friendly and helpful. Moreover, for some newcomers, inclusivity can make the difference between ongoing involvement and withdrawal, and at its best, it can facilitate a greater equality and quality of participation.

The gap between experienced activists' understandings of newcomers' motivations for and experiences of getting involved in the CDA movement highlighted in this thesis can also offer lessons for more effective movement building. Many experienced activists appear to think that newcomers have deliberately chosen the CDA movement for its particular politics and strategies, when in fact, many newcomers are primarily motivated by a desire to stop climate change, and their involvement may be part of a wider project of 'trying out' environmental activism, and a CDA group is the first thing they come across. It is therefore important for activists to recognise that no amount of inclusivity can guarantee retention for some newcomers; that some newcomers are likely to disagree with the core political features of the group; and that newcomers may move on to a group that is more well suited to their beliefs and life circumstances. This should not necessarily be interpreted as a movement building failure or reflect negatively on the group's politics or processes, nor is it necessarily strategic for great efforts to be made on behalf of these kind of newcomers. Nonetheless, if one aim of movement building is political persuasion, the time these newcomers do spend in the group is an opportunity not to

be wasted; having already ‘walked through the door’ into the group, such newcomers are likely to be much more receptive than the passers-by or festival-goers that CDA groups often spend great resources attempting to persuade. Even if that newcomer is not converted to radical direct action, seeds of ideas may be planted with unknowable impacts.

A second gap in understanding relates to experienced activists’ assumptions about what newcomers find appealing and off-putting about their participation. At a basic level, for example, experienced activists may assume that mundane tasks such as writing a press release are less enjoyable than direct action, when in fact many newcomers may find the former to be more rewarding and less frightening. More fundamentally, experienced activists may think that it is the process of membership-seeking that newcomers find most difficult, when in reality it is their experiences with the movement’s core political features. As a result, I would suggest that movement building efforts may be over-focused on inclusivity, which primarily deals with the challenges of membership-seeking. Inclusivity is important and productive, and there are likely to be reasons for this bias in effort, in that barriers to membership-seeking may be less contentious to address, and inclusivity initiatives easier to implement, than that which would be required to address newcomers’ relationship with movement core features. However, if growth were to be an understood, prioritised and agreed upon goal, additional effort might be required at the level of this relationship with movement core features.

7.5.2 Values and strategy: starting points for debate

As part of gaining an understanding of the complexity of growth in the CDA movement, this thesis has also raised and explored wider questions about the movement’s values, goals and strategies. I therefore conclude this thesis with three related proposals that I present to the movement as starting points for debate. These are the need to make invisible values explicit; the need to harness the power of the movement’s capacity for self-reflexivity in collective forums; and the need to develop goals and strategies.

I have argued that the CDA movement is fundamentally shaped by a politics which is both invisible and contested. Although this politics could potentially include anti-statism and elements of horizontality, because these are at least largely acknowledged as issues for debate, I want to focus this discussion on the more

invisible autonomous values of prefigurativity, diversity and open-endedness. These values do not usually form part of the movement's acknowledged politics, and individual participants are very unlikely to use these terms to describe them. They are difficult to discuss, and interviewees often either had contradictory views within themselves about them, or admitted to not knowing why they subscribed to these values, but that they 'just did'. Given time to discuss these values away from a group setting, participants debated these values very reflexively, and many – regardless of the extent to which they could be described as 'radical', 'old guard' or 'politics first' – expressed concerns and critiques. As an aside, I would also suggest that it is the invisibility and not just the content of autonomous values that is one of the major barriers to involvement. However, these autonomous values also form a core element of the movement's collective identity, and are protected and maintained by strong social norms. There is therefore a key contradiction here: values about which there is no consensus, and which are contested by a wide range of participants, nonetheless strongly influence movement ways of being and doing. They do so because to question them would involve challenging the fundamentals of what movement participants believe that the rest of the movement believes in. To put it provocatively, rather than interrogating autonomous values to discover both their vitality and their flaws, CDA participants collectively pursue them as an article of faith. I contend that there is therefore a need to bring these invisible values to the surface, and to acknowledge the disagreements that exist about them. This is no doubt both risky and difficult, as is any process of self-examination and critique, and is particularly so given the importance of collective identity to both the group and the individual in social movements. But if a movement is courageous enough to challenge 'everything existing' (Fraser in Carroll and Ratner, 2001), should it not also be courageous enough to examine its own ways of being and doing?²⁸

One of the reasons for the ongoing invisibility of such important values is the lack of collective forums to discuss movement ways of being and doing. Many have argued that autonomous movements have a very high level of self-reflexivity (Juris, 2008a; Polletta, 2002; Starr, 2005), and the same can be said of the CDA movement. In online journals and blogs, email discussions and side-conversations at countless

²⁸ With thanks to the participant who included the following in a proposal on accountability made to a CCA meeting: "We are wildly ambitious to change the mainstream culture, but curiously scared to change our own" (CCA Process email list, 05.03.07).

activist meetings, the ‘what, how and why’ (Plows, 2002) of the CDA movement, including future goals and autonomous values, is discussed with very high levels of evaluative, strategic and creative insight. However, these conversations occur primarily around the campfire, in corners, between friends, over dinner, under the radar, and only rarely ‘in public’ – largely because there are exceptionally few collective forums in which to do so. Some groups and networks choose to have ‘away-day’ type meetings where politics and longer-term strategy are discussed, and there are also opportunities for reflection at the camp itself, or at other events such as the annual Earth First! summer gathering (*cf.* Plows, 2002). However, these are usually focused on issues such as campaign targets, outreach and action evaluation, rather than acting as spaces to reflect on values, and ‘why things are done the way they are’. Moreover, with the occasional sessions at such events that do discuss topics such as long-term goals or the reasons for and challenges of organising horizontally, these discussions have no mandate for implementation, because they do not take place within the formal consensus process of a group or network. Many interviewees expressed regret at the lack of such opportunities, and I suggest that more time needs to be carved out, within settings such as CCA and RT national gatherings that do have a decision-making mandate, for discussions about values, goals, strategy and the relationship between them.

In light of the CDA movement’s immense potential as an agent of change, and in light of the urgency of the climate crisis, the CDA movement cannot afford to neglect matters of goals and strategy, whether about the priority and purpose of growth, or any number of other unanswered strategic questions. As the Trapeze Collective put it: “There is a lot at stake, and many obstacles along the way but being both ambitious and clear about where we want to go is the first, most important step. And this is the least we owe to ourselves” (Trapeze, 2008: 40-41). Of course, setting out a clear vision of ‘where we want to go’ and developing proposals for how to get there takes time and effort, which must be drawn from somewhere else, and I can already hear the cry of ‘less talk, more action’. Given the profound absence of proportionate action on so many fronts, the urge “to act, to do things, don’t think” (Carl) is a strong one. However, as Brown and Halley ask, “what action to take is so urgent that the basis for the action cannot be examined” (in Chaloupka, 2008: 252)? Just as radicals refuse reforms that might make short-term emissions reductions at the expense of long-term freedoms and equalities, a space “must persist in a thoughtful

political culture, aware of urgency but also committed to critique” (Chaloupka, 2008: 252) – and this critique must be directed not only externally, but internally as well. The tension between time for strategy and time for action is a core tension, alongside so many others that have been raised in this thesis. What autonomous movements teach us is that these tensions must be lived with, and that they require ongoing protection rather than resolution if autonomous values and practices are to flourish. But, as Deslandes and King (2006) argue, these tensions are only productive, are only worth protecting, if they are acknowledged. There may well be vitality in the tensions between action and strategy, between autonomous values and concrete goals, between growth and mainstreaming – but conversations about these tensions and the invisible choices that are made about them must be had. In light of the urgency of climate change as the movement’s issue focus, and of the investment, commitment and passions of its participants, it is indeed ‘the least we owe ourselves’.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Retention checklists

Friends of the Earth

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/recruit_members.pdf

Pulling Power - attracting and holding on to your most vital asset. People.

A) Introduction

This sheet outlines some tools which could help you to identify:

- who you want in your group
- where you might find them
- how you can reach them
- how you can welcome them
- how you can get them involved in your group.

You will probably find that, for your group, some parts of this approach will seem more relevant than others and that you'll want to focus on those parts; use it as you see fit but try to **think a bit about all of the elements**.

Provocation: groups are often a model of unsustainable practice... A tree without the roots

To maintain a core of active people you need to have a recruitment strategy that keeps bringing people in and maintains the capacity of your group. This is rarely the case for groups...

Recruitment requires time to look at the challenge and actually do something about it. Recruitment is a very valid use of your group's time so don't feel guilty about spending it on something which is not direct campaigning.

A sustainable group needs nurturing and care to maintain. Here's a way you could approach this...

B) The Stages of Recruitment

Three stages (not necessarily in sequence and may overlap):

Stage 1: Awareness Building • • Stage 2: Encourage • • Stage 3: Welcome / engage

Stage 1: Awareness Building

There is a sequence which can help us identify what we have to try and do. This is the awareness chain:

I know the group exists • I know what the group does • I think they're great! • I want to help

To get to the righthand side of the chain may require **targeted communication**.

Targeting means making information available and accessible to specific audiences. Targeting allows you to use the resources you have to the most effective ends. It can help you to avoid wasting time and effort trying to communicate with groups which are less likely to respond to you.

Here are some of the audiences, identified in the workshops, as possible targets for your group:

Students (particularly environment courses); ethnic minorities; sympathetic organisations; retired; unemployed; young parents; white middle classes; single issue campaign groups; past members of other local Friends of the Earth groups; teachers; eccentrics; consumer groups; professions (to fulfil particular skill-based roles): council officers / councillors, health profession, engineers / consultants, solicitors, IT specialists.

Here are some of the places, identified in the workshops, for reaching these targets:

Street stalls; actions; events (schools, cycling, walks); local media; voluntary sector mailings (CSV and CVS); libraries; doctors' surgeries; churches; shops; religious institutions; railway stations; bus stops; colleges / schools / student unions; careers offices / jobcentres; community centres; cycle shops; pubs / bars / cafes; workplaces – local govt offices.

Here are some of the ways and styles, identified in workshops, for communicating with these targets:

| Forms of Communication | Style of Communication |
|--|---|
| Newsletters / newsheets | Friendly / informal Balanced with professionalism: accurate, honest, concise, respectful, clean image. Keep it short and simple (unless they ask otherwise) Positive Plain English Use mix of visual and auditory: pictures, film, speech, music etc. |
| Conferences / exhibitions | |
| Newspapers | |
| Posters / displays | |
| Free local papers | |
| Local cable TV channels | |
| Talks to other local groups | |
| Website | |
| Powerpoint (e.g. the Introduction to Friends of the Earth, available on Community) | |
| Email | |

Once newcomers are aware of you and interested, your group may still need to encourage their approach...

Stage 2: Encourage

Re-visiting your own motivations for joining a group

To get you thinking about why newcomers might be motivated to find you and get involved, it might help you to look through some of these motivations, raised by you and others in similar workshops. These are the sorts of things driving newcomers to your door, so keep them in mind.

Wanting to DO something; to work together; more than just giving money; a specific campaign interest/concern; circumstances change (more time, looking for new friends in new area etc); general interest in the environment; desire to meet like-minded people; desire to learn more about issues; felt inspired by a Friends of the Earth campaign; more autonomous than some other local networks; personal development.

Question: What do your prospective newcomers need to have found out in order to make the decision to come and find out more? How do you provoke their curiosity whilst also allaying their fears? The answer to this question will obviously depend on their motivation, which as illustrated by the brainstorm could be almost anything, so be open minded.

Here are some reasons that you and others came up with for why you might be put off from contacting a group, together with some ways that would encourage you to turn up.

| What would put you off? | What would encourage you? |
|--|--|
| Venue too far away | Does your group cover a catchment of more than 10 mile radius? If so, may need to alternate meetings in different locations. |
| Poor accessibility to venue / Private venue / Unknown venue / no disabled facilities | Central, accessible, comfortable, clean, quiet, well known public venue. |
| No one to go with / Shy / Fear of not 'fitting in' Unclear expectations | Buddying system, newcomers welcomer, friendly tone with phone enquiries. Social events & public debates. |
| Inconvenient time of day / week | Rotate meeting days. Re run meetings (if very big group). |
| Afraid of going out at night | Organise to collect new members |

| | |
|---|--|
| Fear of getting over-involved / Daunted by scale of issues / I don't know enough, action isn't my sort of thing | Keep initial communications clear and simple, introduce members gradually to issues. Provide a range of ways for people to get involved |
| Sounds boring | Make communication as light and simple as possible - do not get into detail on publicity material, or over phone, unless requested. |
| Couldn't find out enough information / don't know what they do | Make generic info on group widely available in different forms (membership form, newsletter, website, posters, meeting invitation card, phone and email contacts). |

Once your prospective newcomers feel welcome enough to come and find you, you'll now need to try to understand them and find something for them to do...

Stage 3: Welcome and engage

You may feel that getting people to meetings is not the problem, it's just that they never actually do anything! You may want to refer again here to the Why did You Join? Brainstorm as it is as relevant to welcoming and engaging members as it is to encouraging them to turn up in the first place.

First impressions count. Meetings are likely to leave a big impression on your newcomers. A handout is available on how to run good meetings.

Here are some key actions to take for newcomers although, as with the main stages of recruitment, you won't necessarily want to treat these as isolated stages in a sequence.

Welcome and Pace

Make sure a member of the group actually meets and greets all newcomers, perhaps a designated 'newcomers' person in the group does this. A good meeting room and meeting structure can be very important for people to relax and settle – worrying about a long complicated agenda whilst sitting in a cold echoey hall is not likely to make a good impression! Refreshments at the beginning or at some point also adds to the welcome. Although you need to welcome them, try to strike a balance here – don't overwhelm them with too much information or immediate requests on their time unless they specifically ask.

Register

Get a contact for them so that you can stay in touch / mail them a newsletter. This way, even if they don't come to the next meeting, they can still stay in touch with you. One good way of doing this is to have a book especially for this with clear columns for name, address, email, phone number etc; it's very important though to make it clear that this information will be kept secure and confidential.

Sign up

One good way of giving newcomers a starting point is to have a membership leaflet available with some basic information on it and a subscription form. Even if they don't wish to join immediately, at least they then have the choice and it is clear you would value their support.

To find out more about the standard membership template see the details at the end of this worksheet.

Understand and utilise

As with all of the above, how to do this will depend on the type of person but a good starting point is to make sure you have some idea of their motivation for being there (see again the brainstorm Why did you join?) – what do they want out of being here? This may then lead on to their interests, aptitudes and capacities although it's important not to assume that just because they have skills and resources, they necessarily want to use them in this context – they may want a break! You could find out this sort of information through a combination of your newcomer talking with them and / or going through a short questionnaire designed to gather this sort of information.

One of the most common reasons for members not staying with a group is because they are not offered a way in which they are comfortable to contribute. Friends of the Earth is presently doing a lot of work on this but in the meantime you may also want to think for yourselves about how to offer a range of different ways for people to contribute to your group ranging from actions, to fundraising, to researching, to strategising, to public speaking, to design work, to letter writing, to just paying a monthly subscription; and don't forget they may want to do something outside of your monthly meetings.

If the group has a good structure and organisation it will be a lot easier to make a good impression. One thing which can help this is work planning, some tools for this are described in depth in *How to win: a guide to*

successful community campaigning and a summary sheet *How to campaign strategise*. Both documents are available on the Community site. <http://community.foe.co.uk/resource/> and as hard copies from Claudia Sartori on 020 7490 1555. You may find that the best way to ease a newcomer into the group is through having a designated 'newcomers person' in your group to guide them through this process and help them feel welcome, valued and paced with the group's work. In addition, to help you further, Friends of the Earth has designed a welcome pack for newcomers that provides some of these things in a paper form.

C) Conclusions

These are just tools for approaching the problem in an organised way. They are not a magic, universal solution: some may work for some groups, others may work for other groups. You may already have been able to identify a particular stage of the process that is letting you down more than the others, if not have a think about it – this might be a useful diagnostic tool.

The most important thing to realise is that, if you want to get an influx of newcomers, you will almost definitely need to **spend time** and **energy** looking at how you can do it, and then doing it. This is an excellent example of **sustainability**: by taking time and resources **now** to recruit continually to your group, you are investing in your group to make sure that others can enjoy campaigning in a healthy active group in the **future**.

Questions:

Here are a few questions you can use both as prompts in tackling your recruitment strategy and also as indicators of success in the months ahead. If you have other questions regarding recruitment please contact Claudia Sartori: lgresources@foe.co.uk, 020 7490 1555

How many new enquiries have you had to the group in the last year?

How many newcomers have you had in the last year?

How many newcomers have stayed in the last year?

How many of you think the main problem for your group is in stage 1, 2 or 3 (3 separate questions)

How many of you have meetings in public?

What sort of numbers do you have at your meeting: more than 3, more than 7, more than 10?

How long are your meetings: 1.5hrs, 2hrs?

Do you know about the Local Publicity Group materials? (website on this below)

What is the age range of your group (roughly)?

What sort of backgrounds do your active members have?

Is that profile intentional?

Useful materials for recruitment:

The materials referred to in this worksheet such as the membership leaflets, starter pack and posters are available through the Friends of the Earth Community website at the following internet address:

http://community.foe.co.uk/local_groups/running_your_own/resource/

Seeds for Change

<http://seedsforchange.org.uk/free/checklist.pdf>

Checklist for Encouraging People (to Be (and Stay) Involved in Your Group)

New people at your meetings?

- ✓ If you see someone new arrive, welcome them, talk to them - just don't ignore them.
- ✓ Bring a friend or neighbour to the group. Word of mouth and encouragement are the most effective ways of involving new people.
- ✓ Act as a mentor, or buddy, for a new member, explain things if necessary, such as references to previous work done by the group. Generally check they're comfortable.

What to do with new people?

- ✓ Share out tasks among members. If you are working on something, try and include at least one person who has never done that particular sort of work before.
- ✓ Get small working groups to do particular jobs, reporting back to the main meeting for support, to answer any questions and to check it's OK to continue. These smaller groups should try and have someone new involved and not be made up exclusively of regulars or the most experienced.

Can new people get involved in your group?

- ✓ Regularly consider the practicalities of your meetings - how accessible, or easy to find, are your meeting spaces? When do you hold your meetings? Try different meeting times and days, and ask people when is better for them. Consider young people, parents and carers.
- ✓ Recognise the value of people's different life experience.
- ✓ Take account of people's different abilities to commit time and energy.
- ✓ Now and again plan activities that encourage wider involvement. Make sure that all the usual suspects get involved, and talk with new people. What might seem like a "simple" piece of work to you may be really exciting to a potential new member.
- ✓ Where do you publicise the group and its meetings, if at all? If you want to do something about a gender imbalance, or want to work with more black and minority ethnic groups, does your publicity/word of mouth go to where these people will see or hear about it? Does it welcome them explicitly to your group? Does it encourage them to get involved?

Keeping People

- ✓ Publicise and celebrate your achievements. Make your own posters or newsletters, to let people know you're successful.
- ✓ Don't forget to thank people when they do something. When things are going well say so.
- ✓ Pass around an agenda at the beginning of each meeting so that people can add their points to it.
- ✓ During meetings, do you challenge put-downs or discriminatory remarks? Does your group have an understanding of equality of opportunity and what this means practically? Do you set aside time in any meeting to consider these issues and how they affect your group?
- ✓ Agree basic rules for the running of your group (such as how decisions are made, what the structure is, how meetings are run) together with everyone involved. Write them up and make sure everyone has a copy of these. This makes it more transparent and easier for people to be involved.

For more briefings on grassroots activism, and to find out about training workshops look at our website: www.seedsforchange.org.uk

Appendix 2: Field diary extracts

CCA national gathering

Got there in plenty of time the next morning, saying hello to people. About 60 there, and I'm getting to the point where I recognize all of them, and know the names of most. I'm confident that the people I don't recognize haven't been to gatherings before – I reckon about 10 were activists from [the city] helping out, 4-ish activists from [the region] coming because it's close, and 3 new people, all of whom I met. L and T from [the city] did the welcome, which wasn't great. Didn't cover some of the essentials and the story so far was too short and lacked detail. K did a good workshop on process and facilitation – a new-ish person commented that it was a great way to start a meeting, so much more welcoming and inclusive (used those words) than diving right into something stressful and contentious. Which we did immediately after with a big argument about the budget. Some classic examples of sniping between D and J – both loud, 'alpha male' personalities. D can be pretty disruptive, breaking in, showing disapproval or disagreement or frustration – both when facilitating or not. Anyway, a tense, bad feeling session. Next thing I remember was also tension and discomfort, when a local, older Greenpeace guy tried to feed in something totally irrelevant in a neighbourhood discussion – just misunderstood (possibly deliberately) and started talking about local issues – facilitator cut off quite harshly, the guy said something like 'you're saying no, I can't say this now, I'll shut up'. If he did just misunderstand, it's pretty sad – just a case of lack of info about what we meant by neighbourhood system. But possible too that he was there to push his own agenda and saw a way in.

Had a quite intense one hour networking meeting in the evening, a few people who hadn't been before sitting in on our meeting, was really aware of how we came across – a few core busy people doing stuff and how to break in? At the very end as we were breaking up I noticed a quite young girl, J, perching on the corner, and I'd had no idea she was there, we'd made no effort to include her. Turns out J is the same girl who was asking people earlier, confusedly, why the police were taking photos, and the same girl who somehow found A to talk to about it all. A told me that J had said she'd found it hard in networking, everything seemed to be in hand, she didn't know what she could do. Next morning J was the only person to use the welcome table, taking all the bits of paper, felt like she was quite tense, arming herself with information. In afternoon networking meeting saw her drifting off to sleep at times and concentrating fiercely at others. Was aware of her and trying a few times to make sure she could chip in, or used her name (J thinks this, will do this) (tried to do the same in the minutes). Saw J later at the train station, she sort of apologised, said, 'the networking thing, I was trying to find my niche but haven't found it yet, think it's a good thing for me to do because I'm doing media at uni and I don't know if I'll actually be able to come to the camp itself, so it seems right.'

After dinner, R left and asked me to 'take care of C, he's great, has so much enthusiasm but doesn't know many people here, don't want him to feel lonely'. Me: 'are you asking me to be a recruitment/ networking tart'? Her: yes... it was a light-hearted exchange but the idea behind it is critical. And it only worked because R is who she is (both interested in making people feel part of it; and well-connected and

knows who to ask to take care of someone) and I am who I am – ie. I made an effort that night to introduce him to as many people as possible... he drifted by a silly conversation I was having with K and N and G, and I literally and verbally pulled him in, almost to the extent of them thinking it might have been a bit weird. Same the next day – he had enough experience and confidence to make a real contribution to the conversations, both in big meetings and networking, and for me to feel like someone I can now rely on in networking, unlike some of the other new people.

Next day ... the NGO discussion was, as predicted, painful. Didn't really expose the political divisions it might have, mostly because there wasn't time or small groups really to get into it. Pity because it would have been interesting to hear. In my small group it was just a real gut feeling – no to NGO neighbourhoods, without much explanation why. The one group that was a strong yes said so because it was such a good way of pulling people in.

Rising Tide meeting

On the way there S finds me, says I'm so so sorry about what happened last time, 'I've had a lot going on'. While I'm at the bar I see her talking to M out of the corner of my eye, found out later she'd been really really apologetic about not doing what she'd said she'd do and for not coming last time. Also said she'd been in touch with B and he had a new job and was away on training but had said to pass on that he'd be here next week. S was much quieter this time, not as confident and chatty and friendly and jumping in, sat back and listened, asked a few questions when didn't understand something e.g. what's the date of something, she looked really tired, saw her eyes closing and drifting off to sleep a few times. She say she wanted to make banners though (she did turn up to do it, and only two others did out of the 6 who said they would) and at the end she got everyone together to agree a date.

As we started it felt tense, low energy in the room, I started writing the agenda, everyone sat in silence as it went round. First up was G8. M took over a bit, sense of it's his thing, he's been pulling it together and knows where things stand, J happy to let him do it I suppose. She did make fun of him a bit in terms of, what, you don't want to get arrested between now and the camp, that's ages away, which he said later he felt a bit lame but also worried about what it looked like to newer people – not only have I already been arrested and clearly willing to do so again, some people think it should be sooner than August!

After the meeting, only me, J and G still there. Me making noises about leaving, really tired, but M sending me the eye, we can't leave J on her own here waiting for her friend. J made noises about no, you don't have to wait, but we did, and at the end she said she was glad as her friend did turn up and she wouldn't have waited otherwise. So there's an example of just general social convention/niceness, although I don't know if it would have happened if we weren't both so focused on group dynamics and keeping people happy, especially someone who's a really good experienced person to have. Talking about the camp and who's coming, I overheard this exchange: M to J: 'by the time of the climate camp there might be a few more people from here willing to do that kind of stuff, you know, we'll draw C in slowly, and.' J cuts in: 'into your cult!' I cut in at this point because they were both laughing and I knew it was interesting and so I said 'what?' (ie what are you laughing about, what did you say?) Jess: 'his cult!' Didn't quite get what this was about, mainly a joke, but there are all kinds of possibilities underlying this joke: we overdo it in terms of being obviously nice to new people with the clear purpose of making sure they stick around in our group, we're too focused on RT rather than activism in general, etc. etc. Anyway, moved on to J saying that climate camp has really got loads of people who would never go to an EF gathering, they went to that and now maybe 10% are coming to groups like this – that's really the point of it, not the day of action. G then moved on to say, 'we should have some discussions, I'm being very judgmental here, but someone like S probably wants to know about the issues, about solutions etc.' (ie. meaning we should have more in-depth ideological discussions for these people's benefit). G continued, 'again, being judgmental, not just S but [other local group] people, them and their council stuff.' He said 'being judgmental' at least 3 times, each as a pre-emptive strike. I was thinking this at the time, said really, it's not 'these people want to know' but we feel the need to educate them. Laughter and agreement.

Appendix 3: Interviewee list

| Name | Interview date | Experience level | Primary affiliation (RT/CCA) | Withdrew (Yes/No) | Age range | Gender |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Adrian | 24.09.07 | Brand new | CCA | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Amelie | 22.10.07 | Next step | CCA | No | 20-25 | Female |
| Ann | 23.09.07 | 2 nd time | RT | No | 60-70 | Female |
| Annabelle | 07.07.07 | Involver | CCA | No | 30-40 | Female |
| Bill | 02.07.07 | Brand new | RT | No | 20-25 | Male |
| Brent | 11.10.07 | Next step | RT | Yes | 25-30 | Male |
| Cameron | 11.06.07 | Next step | RT | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Carl | 21.07.07 | Sceptic | CCA | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Diana | 07.10.07 | Next step | RT | Yes | 30-40 | Female |
| Dylan | 05.10.07 | Brand new | RT | Yes | 25-30 | Male |
| Edward | 22.10.07 | 2 nd time | CCA | No | 70-80 | Male |
| Gordon | 19.10.07 | 2 nd time | CCA | No | 40-50 | Male |
| Jake | 29.09.06 | Next step | RT | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Jason | 15.06.07 | Involver | CCA | No | 40-50 | Male |
| Jeff | 24.10.06 | Brand new | RT | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Jenny | 23.10.07 | 2 nd time | RT | Yes | 30-40 | Female |
| Jonathan | 21.10.07 | Involver | RT | No | 40-50 | Male |
| Julie | 16.11.07 | Next step | CCA | Yes | 25-30 | Female |
| Kate | 07.07.07 | Involver | CCA | No | 20-25 | Female |
| Lisa | 12.10.07 | Involver | RT | No | 20-25 | Female |
| Naomi | 06.07.07 | Involver | CCA | No | 25-30 | Female |
| Patrick | 26.09.07 | Next step | RT | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Peter | 28.10.07 | Mixed | CCA | No | 20-25 | Male |
| Phillip | 29.10.07 | Next step | CCA | No | 40-50 | Male |
| Rachel | 01.06.07 | Mixed | CCA | No | 30-40 | Female |
| Richard | 21.10.07 | Brand new | CCA | No | 25-30 | Male |
| Rowan | 21.07.07 | Sceptic | CCA | No | 30-40 | Male |
| Susan | 24.09.07 | Next step | CCA | No | 20-25 | Female |
| Tia | 23.10.06 | Mixed | RT | No | 25-30 | Female |

Key

RT = Rising Tide

CCA = Camp for Climate Action

(Please note that this only refers to an interviewee's primary affiliation, and in quotes interviewees may be referring to local RT or CCA groups, the national CCA process, or other groups where identified.)

Brand new = Newcomer, brand new

Next step = Newcomer, next stepper

2nd time = Newcomer, 2nd time around

Involver = Experienced activist, involver

Sceptic = Experienced activist, sceptic

Mixed = Experienced activist, neither sceptic nor involver

Appendix 4: Recruitment emails

First request by email

Hello XX,

How are things with you? Busy as ever, I'm sure.

I am writing to see if you would be interested in meeting up with me to have a conversation about your experiences of getting involved in the climate camp process. I am doing a research project as part of my PhD about what it is like to get involved in climate change activism, how 'our movement' includes and welcomes newcomers, and how we can do this better to build a mass movement! It's similar to the Inclusivity work that we've been doing in the climate camp.

It would be an informal conversation, somewhere convenient for you, and would take about an hour. I will be in [your city] next Friday 15th June all day (before the gathering), so if you are interested in doing this, perhaps we could meet then? If not, we could find another day that suits you.

I know we are all very busy, but it would be wonderful if you could find an hour some time for a coffee and a chat!

Thanks and hope to see you soon,
Alexandra

Follow up by email

Hi XX,

How's things? Busy as usual I'm sure.

I'm just following up on our conversation at the last gathering about you doing an interview for my PhD ... If you're still up for this, I wondered if we could try and sort out a date for me to come to [your city] to do the interview. How about I suggest a few dates, we'll see if any of them work for you, and we can go from there?

Dates that would suit me are on either end of the CCA London gathering or strategy gathering:

18 May
22 May
25 May
29 May

Any of these work for you? I'm flexible about times (it would take about an hour/hour and a half), and it could be in London or [your city] (or anywhere else you might be for that matter!)

Thanks!
Take care,
Alexandra

Follow up from Inclusivity questionnaire

Hello XX,

My name's Alexandra, and I'm involved in the Camp for Climate Action Inclusivity group. We sent round a questionnaire a few months ago that you filled in.

I'm writing to see if you would be willing to meet up with me to talk further about your opinions on and experiences of the climate camp process. I am doing a research project as part of my PhD about what it's like to get involved in climate change activism, how well the climate camp 'movement' welcomes and involves people, what the challenges are, and how we can do a better job of this. My research is directly linked to the work of the Inclusivity group, and will hopefully help to make future projects like the camp more inclusive.

It would be an informal conversation, about an hour long, completely confidential, and could be arranged for a time and place that suits you.

I am trying to speak to as many people as possible, from a wide range of backgrounds and with different levels of contact with the camp process. I think you could offer a really interesting perspective on this, and I'd be very grateful if you could find an hour to meet up for a chat!

Please let me know whether you think this is something you might be up for!

Many thanks and I hope to speak to you soon,
Cheers,
Alexandra

Appendix 5: Interview guides

Newcomers

Preamble

- basic outline of research – about people’s early experiences of activism, and exploring how climate action groups go about involving newcomers. And I mainly just want to hear your experiences, your thoughts and feelings, about how getting involved in activism has been for you. Collaborative and useful outputs.
- anonymity and confidentiality
- Because this is totally confidential, please feel free to be as open, and critical if you want, about RT/CCA. I’m not here as a CCA networking person, I’m here as someone interested in this process.
- this isn’t Q&A survey style interview where I ask questions and you answer. It’s much more of an open conversation between you and me.
- all OK?

Questions and prompts

1. Tell me how you came to get involved with Rising Tide/Climate Camp and climate action.
2. Tell me about the first event that you went to – meeting, demo, gig, whatever it was.
 - Were you nervous?
 - Did you go with anyone?
 - Did you meet anyone? What were your impressions of them? What kind of interactions did you have with the experienced people there?
 - Where was it? What was the place like?
 - What did you like about the whole experience? Dislike? Did anything surprise you? Was it what you’d expected?
 - Did you describe it to your friends/flatmates/family later on? What did they think about it? How did you feel talking about it?
3. What happened next?
 - What was the next event you went to? What drew you back?
 - Have you been part of an action? Tell me about the first one. How did you get involved with it? What did you do? How did you feel?
4. Why do you think it was RT/CCA that you got involved with?
 - What do you think of RT/CCA? The people? The process? The politics? The group dynamics? The ‘scene’? How is it different to other groups?
 - Have you witnessed any contentious discussions/arguments/tensions? What did you make of it?
5. Did you feel like there were any specific efforts made to help you get involved? What did you make of them?

- When do you feel most included? Tell me about a time when you felt really part of things.
 - Are there any particular people who helped or made you feel welcome? How did they do that?
 - Has it been easy enough to contribute to meetings? Projects? Actions?
6. Tell me what it feels like to be a newcomer to your group/to activism.
- What's been amazing? Tell me about a time when you felt really inspired.
 - What's been difficult? Tell me about a time when you felt frustrated or intimidated.
7. What does 'activist' mean to you?
- Do you feel like an activist?
 - What does 'newcomer' mean? Are you a newcomer?
8. It can be a big change, getting involved in this activist world. Has it been for you?
- How are activist spaces different to the places we spend the rest of our lives? What else is different?
 - Are there any milestones or markers you can think of along the way, in terms of becoming an activist?
 - Do you feel part of a wider movement? What makes you feel part of it?
9. So what does it take to get involved?
- What advice would you give to people just starting to get involved – to newcomers?
10. How do you think RT/CCA could do better at involving new people?
- Meetings?
 - Actions?
 - Specific welcome/inclusivity processes?

PHOTO PROMPTS

- Talk me through your reaction – situations it reminds you of, what it makes you think about
- Or if you can imagine yourself as one of the people in the scene in the photos, how would you be feeling

Experienced Activists

Preamble

-basic outline of research – Interviewing newcomers about their early experiences of activism, and you as more experienced folks about your experiences of involving newcomers, group expansion, and how our movement approaches movement building. Collaborative and useful outputs.

-confidentiality and anonymity.

-Because this is totally confidential, please feel free to be as open, and critical if you want, about RT/CCA. I'm not here as a CCA/RT person, I'm here as someone interested in this process.

-this isn't Q&A style interview where I ask questions and you answer. It's much more of an open conversation between you and me.

Questions and prompts

1. Tell me how you came to get involved with activism.
 - What are the milestones or markers along the way, in terms of becoming an activist?
 - How/why did you get involved with RT/CCA?
 - Do you feel like you have a 'home' group, one main group that you 'belong' to? Can I just ask, when you're talking about your experiences in a group, can you tell me which one you're referring to?
 - Why do you do it? Why do you put so much time into your group, this movement?
2. This conversation is mainly about involving newcomers. Who are 'newcomers'?
 - Who 'counts' as a newcomer?
 - What do you expect of a newcomer
3. What kinds of experiences have you had with expanding your group and involving newcomers? Try to think of a specific occasion or discussion.
 - How did you feel about it?
4. What would you say your role is with newcomers who turn up to your group?
 - Can you tell me about an interaction you had with a new-ish person when you consciously tried to make sure they got involved/came back?
 - What did you do?
 - Where and when did it take place?
 - How do you think it went?
5. What would you say are the important personal characteristics, skills and behaviour that make a good 'involver/welcomer'? Try to think of someone you know who's really good at this. (it can be you)
 - How does this person fit within the group?
 - What do you think about them when they're in 'involving/welcoming mode'
- 5a. [If this person identifies themselves as an 'involver/welcomer']

- What do you try and do when you're 'being an 'involver/welcomer'?
- Why do you think you've taken on this 'involving role? How do others in the group feel about it?/How do they perceive this role?
- What are the challenges and frustrations?

6. Can you tell me about something (a process, strategy, activity) you've been involved in that's designed to help involve, include, welcome newcomers? (If can't think of one – ok, that you've seen or heard about, if not involved in directly – eg. CCA Inclusivity work)

- How did it come about?
- How did it go?
- Who was involved?
- What worked? What didn't? What was frustrating? What could have been better?

7. What characteristics and ways of doing things in your group do you think make it easy for new people to get involved? What makes it hard?

- Group dynamics
- Meetings
- Decision-making processes

8. What do you think are the ingredients of a good 'involving' strategy – a process that helps new people to get involved? (Meetings, facilitation, decision-making, action planning, roles, individual behaviour?)

- Do these things happen in practice? In your group or others that you know of? Why or why not?

9. How much of a priority is group expansion and movement building in general for you? For your group?

- Has your group ever had a discussion about expanding your group, building the movement, inclusivity?
- Tell me about it. How/when/where/why did it come up? What was the gist of the discussion and outcomes? What's happened over time since?
- If not, why do you think it hasn't come up?

10. Do you think your group's politics and principles influence how it goes about doing group expansion and movement building?

- What are those underlying politics/principles?
- Do you think these things influence newcomers' experience of getting involved?

11. When we talk about 'building the movement', what does success mean? To you personally? For your group? For the movement?

- What is the desired outcome of 'good' movement building? For your group? For the movement?
- What do you think about the commonly heard rhetoric in CCA and RT about building a mass movement? Do you think it's matched by actions and behaviour?
- How well are we doing within RT/CCA in helping to build a mass movement?

12. Have you witnessed, or been on the receiving end, of 'isms'? Eg. Ageism, anti-NGOism?

- Why do you think this exists in our movement? Where does it come from?

13. Do you think some groups and individuals resist movement building structures and processes intended to actively draw newcomers? Why is this, where does it come from?

14. Do you think movement building and involving newcomers could or should be a stronger priority in our movement? Why or why not?

- If yes, what do we need to do to make this happen?
- What is needed to get suggestions to be taken on board and implemented?

15. What do you think still needs exploring, what conversations need to be had, what questions need to be answered for movement building to be done better?

- Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Appendix 6: Photo prompts



1. Local group meeting



2. Climate Camp meeting



3. Party



4. Demo



5. Direct action



6. Police at the CCA

Appendix 7: Consent form

Participation agreement

Project: Movement building and initial experiences of activism

Name: _____

Date of Interview: _____

I understand that Alexandra will:

- Make every effort to protect my anonymity. I understand what these efforts entail, and that in a small activist community, complete anonymity can never be guaranteed.
- Guarantee confidentiality. She will never let anyone else (any third party) see or use my interview transcripts, recordings or quotes, and will never discuss what is said in my interviews with any third party.
- Abide by our agreement on when and how interview quotes can be used.

I grant permission for my responses to be quoted in (please choose one):

| | Yes | Yes, if I can first check my quotes |
|---|-----|-------------------------------------|
| The PhD | | |
| Academic publications | | |
| Activist texts (eg. website, handbook, resource sheet, workshop) | | |

Agreed: _____ (Participant)

Agreed: _____ (Alexandra)

Appendix 8: Soliciting activist feedback

Email

Hi XX and XX

Having spoken to you both quite briefly about my PHD, and having spent a year talking to others equally quickly (or avoiding talking about it altogether!), I'm finally putting it out there properly and asking for some advice. My question tries to balance out the standard 'how and why do people get involved' by including 'how and why do we as activists try and get new people involved'. I've attached a short summary of what I'm working on, which hopefully should give you some idea of where I'm heading. The point is, I want it to be useful to our movement, and luckily my supervisor is open to an action research project is in part guided by fellow activists.

Sooo ... What do you think? Is it interesting? If you had 3 years and a grant, would you spend your time on this? What would you do differently? I really want an honest opinion, so treat it just like a vitally important leaflet and give me some good criticism. ;) I'm especially looking for bits/questions/interesting areas that I'm missing out. I know it seems a bit silly that I'm doing this by email just after I've left London, but that's how the timing worked! If you'd find it easier to talk about this on the phone, just give me a ring.

I'm just at the end of my first year, so I've got time to change things around ... so hopefully this project can become something that can actually help build this movement! I'm putting this to a few other people as well, and if you can think of anyone who would be interested, let me know and I'll send it on to them.

Thank you - really! - for looking at this.
Talk to you soon, about this and many other things I'm sure,
Alexandra

Research summary

Pushing and pulling into activism: the experience of getting involved and the practice of involving in UK climate action networks

This research aims to add two new dimensions to standard attempts to answer the familiar question of how and why people get involved in social movement activism. First, it backgrounds (but does not ignore) the long and complicated process by which a person comes to the point that they are ready to take radical collective action, and instead adopts a close focus on the processes at work in the comparatively short but critical window of time as concern with the issues is transformed into initial steps into activism. Second, its emphasis is not only on the experiences of this emerging activist, but on the more and less strategic ways that social movement groups and individual activists draw newcomers into their networks. This research aims to simultaneously adopt the perspective of both emerging and more experienced activists, in this way attempting to understand what the activist or group is *doing*, movement building-wise, and why; how this is experienced by the newcomer; whether and how these experiences ‘match up’ (ie. Are newcomers experiencing what existing activists think they’re experiencing?); and how this might relate to a network’s and a movement’s ability to grow.

This project aims to make both an intellectual and a practical intervention. Intellectually, or academically, this research aims to address some gaps and advance debates in the field of social movement research that deals with individual participation in activism by a) using ethnography to examine, up close and in detail, the interactive dynamics that can help to explore and explain the standard predictors of individual participation in activism; b) providing an observational account of the ways in which activism might fulfil needs surrounding belonging, personal development and self-expression; and c) adding to the field’s standard exclusive adoption of the perspective of the emerging activist with a movement-based understanding of strategic and less explicit strategies and processes carried out by activists to draw newcomers into their networks.

Practically, or movement-wise, this research aims to a) explore the UK radical environmental movement’s outlook on movement building – its diversities and divisions, and the political and ideological contexts from which it emerges and in which it operates; b) explore the differences and tensions between recruitment to a group and to a wider movement; c) discover successful and less successful strategies for building groups and movements; d) identify and highlight some of the less visible but critical aspects of recruitment and movement building, particularly in the areas of personal communication and group dynamics; e) facilitate a ‘space’ for activists to reflect on and share their knowledge on these issues. To this end, I intend to pursue an insider action research strategy, in which my fellow movement activists feed in to the development of the research programme, and outcomes are in part designed to help build movement capacities.

Appendix 9: Inclusivity group documents

Inclusivity questionnaire

(sent before and after the 2007 camp)

Camp for Climate Action Inclusivity Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to understand people's experiences of getting involved in the Camp for Climate Action process, with the goal of producing practical suggestions to make this year's process and camp more inclusive.

By inclusive we mean finding ways to help people who are interested in organising the camp to get involved, understand the process, feel welcome, and have an equal input in decision making.

Please answer this questionnaire in as much depth as you can, no matter what your involvement in the camp process has been. We want to hear from everybody! Feel free to skip questions if they don't seem relevant and spend more time on those you have strong feelings on. Your thoughts on ways to improve the process are especially welcome. Your responses will be kept anonymous, and will only be used by the inclusivity group to propose improvements to this year's process.

A. Background and first contact with the Climate Camp

1. Had you been involved with activism/campaigning/community organising/etc. before you got involved with the Climate Camp?
2. If yes, tell us a bit about it. For example: how long have you been involved? In what kind of role? Have you been involved with any processes or projects similar to the Climate Camp?
3. What was your first point of face to face contact with the Climate Camp? (eg local meeting, national meeting, workshop, talk, stall, festival, gig, etc. - or the camp). What were your first impressions?
4. Did you already know people who were involved in the Climate Camp?

B. Meetings - local meetings and national gatherings

5. Tell us how you felt about your first meeting.
 - 5a. How easy was it to get a sense of what the camp process was all about and how the meeting worked? How could this have been made clearer?
 - 5b. Did you feel welcomed? When did you feel most/least welcomed and why?

5c. Did you feel able to contribute to the process? When did you feel most/least able to contribute and why? (eg. large group sessions, small group sessions, working group time, other...)

5d. What were your impressions of the people you met who were already involved in the process? (eg. people in working groups, facilitators, etc.) Were they inclusive? How could they have been more inclusive?

6. How do you think meetings could be improved in terms of including new people and different kinds of people? (eg. things like the location, agenda, facilitation, social/break/evening time, other...)

C. At the camp

7. If you wanted to, were you able to get involved in the last minute organising of the camp (ie. not during meetings) that took place in the days leading up to the camp? Why or why not?

8. Did you come to the camp alone or with friends? Do you think this affected your experience? Why?

9. Which of the following did you make use of when you arrived? (Circle all that apply) Info stall at Selby train station / Minibus to the camp / Welcome tent

9a. How successful were the above at helping you:

-understand how the camp worked?

-know how to get involved?

-feel part of the camp?

9b. How could this process have been better?

10. Did you feel part of your neighbourhood? Why or why not? How could your neighbourhood have been more inclusive?

11. Did you feel able to contribute to decisions about the running of the camp (eg. quiet time, police on site, etc.)? When did you feel most/least able to contribute and why?

12. Did you get involved with doing practical things around the site (eg. gate rota, plumbing, etc.)? Why or why not?

13. What were your impressions of the people you met who were already involved in the process? (eg. people in neighbourhoods, working groups, facilitators, etc.) Were they inclusive? How could they have been more inclusive?

14. How do you think this year's camp could be improved in terms of including new people and different kinds of people?

Thank you for your feedback! You can email your response to questionnaire@climatecamp.org.uk, bring it to the gathering in Leeds on Feb 17/18 where it will be collected, or post it to Camp for Climate Action Inclusivity Questionnaire, c/o The Common Place, 23-25 Wharf St., Leeds, LS2 7EQ.

We would also like to talk to some people face to face about their experience of the camp process. If you would be interested in talking more about your experiences, please provide an email address or phone number where you can be contacted here:

Sample Inclusivity group output
(From the 2008 CCA Handbook)

IDEAS FOR US ALL MAKING THE CAMP WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE

New to all this? Getting involved

Everyone has a say in how the Camp is run, and we are all crew. There are no bosses, and no one is in charge of 'running each department'. However, some people will probably be really busy, and it might seem hard to get involved. Start at the Job Shop in the Welcome/Infopoint area. You might need to be a bit assertive – if you want to help, say so, and ask what help is needed. Do It Yourself culture may seem a bit weird, but give it a go. Yes, you can take the initiative and decide that a sign is needed to point to a cable running across a path. No one needs to give you permission – find the tools and make the sign, and get help if you need to. This is really different from lots of situations we find ourselves in but once you're used to it you'll never turn back! The Camp is a **social community** like any other – it's a chance to make amazing new friends but it may take a bit of effort from old hands to make new arrivals feel welcome, and from new people to understand old friendships. The best way to get to know people is to muck in and help,

with anything from washing up to building compost toilets.

Not new to all this? Personal capacity and sharing the load

Ask for help if you need it. Have a friend who tells you if you're taking on too much and not letting go. Try to make sure you're not the only person who knows how to do something.

Others CAN help share your load.

Sharing and gaining skills is a big part of what the Camp is about. We need to involve everyone in this, not just those people who are already confident. Everyone has an amazing contribution to make if given the opportunity to do so. Equally, many newcomers want to start by just listening and learning.

Remember how you felt the first time you did something like this/when you first arrived? Think about how it could have been made easier and do that for someone else, even if it's just making the effort to sit down next to someone you don't know and say hello.

PHONE-A-FRIEND!

We're not stuck for answers and we haven't got a million pounds to give away but the more people that join us, the more likely we are to hit the jackpot. So call your mates, your family and get them to join us for a few days and especially on Saturday 9th.

There'll be plenty of places to sleep the night before, so they don't even need a tent. Or they could even arrive early on Saturday. All transport details are at www.climatecamp.org.uk/massaction

Our social movement grows just like that – socially – built from networks of friends of friends creating lasting communities of resistance to move to a sustainable and just low-carbon society.



Appendix 10: Interview transcript extracts

Peter

A: How was that, like just generally, how did you feel about it?

P: Uh... dunno, I don't remember particularly strong feelings about the day of action, um... it was a good laugh though running through the fields. I didn't take it that particularly serious to be honest, like, I sort of... could see, I could see why people were doing it but I couldn't, I didn't see how it was that particularly effective, you know, where was, what, what, [chuckles] where you, stated, you know, it seemed, it sort of felt a bit like a bit of a... it was a stand-off you know, we said that we'd do this and the cops said no you won't and then we sort of tried to, it was a bit of a, a, a willy-waving competition to see who could, who, who was you know going to do who or whatever and sort of, you know, trying, we shut them down and they try and stop us and stuff like that. And so it sort, it, it was slightly deflating 'cause you knew that you know there was so many cops there wasn't any chance of us doing, uh, getting in there and stuff like that. And whatever chance there was it was always going to be a bit tokenistic so. But I had a good laugh though like running through the fields and stuff, that was fun. But uh, yeah I don't remember –

A: Were you involved in the kind of, the second ... mission afterwards?

P: No. I was pretty, I was pretty new to it and so I didn't really uh fancy doing, doing that to be honest.

A: Why was that at the time?

P: Uh... well I, I just wasn't really sure but like, I was, I didn't mind getting arrested but, it seemed quite a like, a heavy arrest, and I hadn't been arrested, and so, and I wasn't entirely sure about people's motives, uh, behind, uh, attempting to shut down Drax, so I was a bit sceptical about why it was being done, so I didn't really, really want to do it on that, on that level. If I sort of... if it was, if it had been, if it had been, slightly, if it had been more, like now for example when I had a better idea about the people who were doing it and why they were doing it, then I might have felt more confident about it but at the time I was uncertain about a lot, a lot of things and so I was sort no I'll leave that. And so I took a support role instead.

Amelie

A: What about any particularly inspirational moments where you really, felt part of things or?

Am: ... I don't, it's, I don't know, I can't remember moments as such, it's just, it's people that make you feel that you're part of it, and people who ... who begin to talk to you as a familiar person rather than an outsider. And then you kind of, when you start being comfortable talking to people and you let your guard down that's, that's when you start to feel properly included I think. Um... yeah all the people who did The Department of Transport, they've been really wonderful to me, really, really wonderful. Um, and I'm really grateful to have met them because it might have been a lot harder for me to feel involved if I hadn't, and they've kept me included the whole time like, with emails and phone calls and stuff, but um ... Yeah they've, they've been kind of encouraging me to get more involved rather than me being, it just up to me because if, if it was left all up to me I'd probably, not have got involved so quickly and been more tentative um, yeah. Yeah I think for me it's more the people than, than particular moments.

A: Is there anything you can think about, about how they did it that was so, positive?

Am: Just talking to me so that at camp I didn't have to sit on my own, because there were moments like, like when I got back from my interview and they weren't there because they were [on an action], they were in prison, um that was a really difficult day, I suddenly felt like really out of place, I didn't have people to go and sit and have breakfast and lunch with and, um. And then [my uni friends] turned up and that was really good, because there were people there again that, that I was happy talking to um. And also um I think a similar thing happened with me and, and, these, these two guys that I met at the camp, and they've both said to me like, um thank you for chatting to me and, and stuff, because I think there were in a very similar situation to what I was in um. ... Yeah when people encourage you to, to take on a role even though you, you want to stand back and let them do their thing, and they're like, 'no actually we do need your help, can you, can you do this?' And you kind of feel like, yeah great, I will, be happy to do that. Like there was, I, I'd originally said I didn't want to get involved in the RBS Day of Action, and then we were sat round the table and they were like, we needed legal observers. And there was no pressure on me, they weren't looking at me or anything, and I was like, 'OK I'll take the morning off work and I'll do it' but they were like 'are you sure you want to do it?' And that felt good, that was like, 'OK we're aware that you were nervous about it to start with, are you, are you sure?' And that was nice.

A: Yeah...

Am: Yeah and 'cause they, they clearly new each other, quite well but they didn't make me feel like, like much of a newcomer, they treated me like just another person which was nice.

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