

Emotional Disobedience in Case of Climate Emergency:

how Extinction Rebellion organizes itself in its fight against
the climate crisis in the Netherlands



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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has created space to provide a deeper understanding of one of the new climate movement's key players: Extinction Rebellion. This thesis uses a social movement theoretical framework to study how Extinction Rebellion Netherlands organizes itself in its fight against climate change. From this theoretical framework, Extinction Rebellion's repertoire of contention and specifically its focus on civil disobedience is analyzed. Also, the framing processes which focus on the movement's framing of the climate as an emergency are studied, focusing on the strategic and contested framing processes. Importantly, the study of how emotions play a role in all phases and processes of the social movement are addressed. For this study, ethnographic research was conducted among activists in different Extinction Rebellion branches throughout the Netherlands. Through a context study, (participant) observations and through semi-structured interviews, this study finds that Extinction Rebellion organizes itself around emotions. The movement has placed emotions at its center and this study illustrates that emotions inform and influence the movement's framing processes, its theory of change and its repertoire of contention. Furthermore, forms of prefigurative politics including the movement's chosen organizational structure and its pursuit of a regenerative culture, are identified as important elements in the movement's strategy, in which feelings and caring are emphasized. Emotions are not only present in every phase and aspect of the movement; they play a vital role in them.

Key words: Extinction Rebellion, climate activism, social movements, civil disobedience, emotions, framing, regenerative culture

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In April 2020, a month after the Covid-19 pandemic hit us all, I decided I had to throw my plans to find an internship abroad overboard and write my master thesis instead. Elisabet, whom I had had contact with at an earlier attempt to write the thesis was happy to supervise me again, as she and Michiel were looking for students who might be interested in studying the effects of the pandemic on (climate) activism. Infected (no pun intended) by their enthusiasm, my thesis journey started.

I have spent more than two years working on this thesis. It has, somewhat against my will, become a constant part of my life, sometimes as a main character and sometimes simmering in the back while I was busy with life. However, it was definitely time to wrap it up. I think my supervisors Elisabet and Michiel would agree with that. I want to thank them profoundly for their support, empathy and encouragement throughout the good and bad parts of this process. Thank you both.

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1. Introduction

Human-induced climate change is causing dangerous and widespread disruption in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people worldwide. The most vulnerable people and ecosystems are being hit the hardest (IPCC, 2022). Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) Hoesung Lee says about their most recent assessment report: “This report is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction...It shows that climate change is a grave and mounting threat to our wellbeing and a healthy planet. Our actions today will shape how people adapt and nature responds to increasing climate risks” (IPCC, 2022). The climate movement, as a reaction, has developed greatly in terms of numbers but also in terms of approaches in recent years as the urgency for effective action reflected in Hoesung Lee’s words has become more evident. The year 2019 was an extraordinary year for the climate movement in terms of unprecedented scale and coordination of mobilizations. It was in this year that more transgressive actions by Extinction Rebellion and big protest campaigns by Friday For Future succeeded to catch the attention of the world, including its political leaders. However, when the Corona pandemic hit in 2020, this cycle of global street protests was broken by enforced global lockdowns. It seems like the pandemic can therefore simultaneously be seen as the end of the first chapter of in the recent climate protest cycle.

Just as these movements often saw the pandemic and its lockdowns as an opening up of space for reflection, I see the pandemic as an opportunity create a deeper and necessary understanding of one of the influential new players of the most recent protest cycle, or one of the ‘new kids on the block’, as de Moor, de Vydt, Uba & Wahlström (2021) describe Extinction Rebellion. Since the birth of this decentralized international movement that resorts to nonviolent civil disobedience in the fight for a radical change of the current ‘toxic system’, it has received controversial attention in the media, in the climate movement and in academia. Perhaps this is due to the fact that this relatively new player is hard to place for people. While pursuing radical system change through a mainly disruptive repertoire of contention which sees activists chained to government fences or blockading important streets in capital cities, Extinction Rebellion protests are characteristically peaceful and colorful events where emotions clearly lie on the surface. Extinction Rebellion activists are seen peacefully singing, talking, laughing, meditating, hugging, sometimes even while crying while surrounded by colorful flags and banners and while a speaker plays energizing or calming music. The controversy around the movement is understandable when not much effort has been done to get a deeper understanding of the different aspects that inform the movement’s organization like its theory of change, its (disobedient) repertoire of contention, its framing processes, its internal movement culture and its addressing of emotions that seem to be so present in all of Extinction Rebellion’s engagements.

Social movements have always been a breeding grounds for emotional dynamics and cultural processes, but the study of such emotional dynamics and cultural processes has long either been shoved to the background or been taken for granted in studies of social movements. In the edited volume called *Passionate Politics* (2001) Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta argue that ‘while not explicitly theorized or even recognized, emotions are nonetheless present in many of the concepts that scholars have used to extend our understanding of social movements in recent years...much of the causal force attributed to these concepts comes from the emotions involved in them’ (p.6). The study of social movements has only recently finally begun to reflect this and this thesis will contribute to this effort by studying how emotions play a role in a movement’s theory of change, the focus in its repertoire of contention, its framing processes, its organizational structure, and its internal culture. Extinction Rebellion is particular open and direct in their attention for and addressing of emotions, and emotions related to the climate crisis specifically, by, for example, organizing events around these specific feelings. The study

of how (participant's) emotions play a role in movement actions and framing processes, can provide a deeper analysis of these different movement aspects. This research takes the Extinction Rebellion branch in the Netherlands as its case study, and goes beyond a purely theoretical understanding of this movement towards a deeper understanding researched through practice and participation. The question answered here is:

How does climate movement Extinction Rebellion Netherlands organize itself in its fight against climate change?

There are plenty of available theoretical discussions about the various contentious tactics and framing work in and by social movements in general. The most recent climate movement cycle in 2019 and increasing societal concern about the climate issue shows, however, that the popularity for more radical forms of environmental activism like civil disobedience is growing and an increasingly urgent tone has been adopted in activist framing of the climate issue (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019; Smiles & Edwards, 2021). In these developments in environmental activism the role of emotions is increasingly important (Sauerborn, 2022), and after years of neglect, the academic study of this specific area has only recently started. It is important, especially in the study of emotions, that research goes beyond these theoretical discussions and adopts more practical approaches on an empirical level. Consequently, this study adopts an engaged ethnographic research approach that provides a deeper understanding of different aspects of the movement.

The following chapter contains the theoretical context and framework upon which this thesis is built. This thesis will refer back to the concepts discussed in the theoretical framework throughout the findings of this research. Social movement theory provides the broad theoretical framework along which Extinction Rebellion's organization in the fight against climate change is analyzed. The focus here will lie on Extinction Rebellion Netherlands's repertoires of contention and particularly its civil disobedience, its frames and framing processes and how emotions are interwoven throughout these processes. To unfold how Extinction Rebellion Netherlands organizes itself in its struggle, this thesis adopts the following sub questions:

- What is Extinction Rebellion?
- How does Extinction Rebellion develop strategies of contention surrounding the climate issue?
- How does Extinction Rebellion frame the climate issue?
- How does Extinction Rebellion address emotions throughout the movement?
- How do Extinction Rebellion activists experience activism?

These questions will be addressed in the chapters that describe the results of the empirical research done for this thesis. First however, the following chapter will describe the theoretical context and framework upon which this thesis is built and on which the sub-questions are based. Establishing an overview of the main concepts that form the foundations of the research questions will guide the analysis of Extinction Rebellion Netherlands and describe how it organizes itself. Then, chapter 3 will discuss the methodological approach of this thesis and provide a solid understanding of the ethnographic research approach this thesis takes. Here, I describe details about my field research and choices I made with regards to the research approach, methods and techniques but also address the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences for my thesis.

The three consequent chapters are empirical chapters of which the first, chapter 4 called Extinction Rebellion, serves to contextualize Extinction Rebellion in the Dutch climate movement and describes its origins as well as its aims and demands, hereby answering the first

sub-question: What is Extinction Rebellion? The second part of that same chapter focusses on Extinction Rebellion's framing processes and describes how its framing revolves around a climate emergency framing that is strategic, contested, and emotion-laden. The second empirical chapter, chapter 5 addresses Extinction Rebellion's strategy that includes their theory of change, its repertoire of contention in which civil disobedience is its main chosen tactic but also addresses the existing critiques of this choice. Extinction Rebellion's prefigurative politics are also discussed in this chapter when discussing the movement's organizational structure. Chapter 6 then goes further into a second example of prefigurative politics in the movement, namely Extinction Rebellion's pursuit of a regenerative culture in which they practice and demonstrate the cultural change they wish to experience in life and society. Emotions play an important role in regenerative culture and the second part of that chapter goes further into how exactly emotions play a role in different aspects and phases of the movement. This thesis will finish with a discussion and conclusion chapter where a coherent final analysis based on the previous chapters will be provided that reveals how, essentially, Extinction Rebellion Netherlands organizes itself around emotions. These findings are also discussed by connecting them to broader theoretical debates and addressing their implications.

2. Theoretical Context and Framework

Within societies, resistance and feelings of discontentment towards authorities has always existed and has often led to collective and contentious expressions of power against these opponents, or the state. Classic examples that are often brought up here are the French and American revolution. These instances that have occurred throughout human history where people come together collectively to bring about some sort of social change is described by Charles Tilly as ‘the sustained, organized challenge to existing authorities in the name of a deprived, excluded or wronged population (Tilly 1995:144). Della Porta and Diani (2006:20) defined social movements the following way:

“A distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective actions: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; and share a distinct collective identity”.

This definition forms a useful starting point in this thesis for understanding the social movement collective action processes present in Extinction Rebellion.

Many theories have been put forward by scholars from a wide range of disciplines and ideological backgrounds who have different views about the basis, mechanism and workings of these kind of challenges, as the following section will show in more detail. Some of them saw social movements as irrational mob behavior resulting from strain and societal breakdown, others described the participants as rational actors who made conscious choices about their participation and which resources they want to use. Later theories emphasized the interaction of movement actors with the state and the role of political opportunities, which in turn was challenged by those who preferred the role of culture or emotions as reasons why people participated in movements (Buechler, 2016).

This theoretical framework incorporates a number of important elements from different social movement paradigms into its analysis of Extinction Rebellion’s struggle against climate change. After briefly discussing the history of social movement theory, some concepts will be highlighted. From the political process model, Tilly’s analytical concept called the repertoire of contention – the routinized forms of collective challenges - has dominated the research on movement tactics and will be central in analyzing Extinction Rebellion’s array of tactics. As Extinction Rebellion’s main strategy consists of non-violent disruption and disobedience, this will be elaborated on further. From the social constructionist model, the section on framing will focus on the importance of frames and framing processes to analyze what information certain frames hold and how activists construct and interpret events, people and situations, and use it to create a course of action as well as give meaning to their actions. Some framing processes like frame bridging, amplification and transformation will be highlighted. Finally, emotion will be underscored in this theoretical framework as it has come forward in the field research as an important factor in every aspect and throughout all phases of the organization of Extinction Rebellion’s mobilization. This section will elaborate more on this often neglected but important dimension that, as it has become an increasing subject of research, has been shown to complement, refine and improve conventional explanations of movement dynamics and illustrate more clearly key concepts like repertoires of contention and framing, as this theoretical framework thus also aims to achieve.

Social Movement Theories

There is a multiplicity of theories to explain the dynamics of what brings people together in pursuit of social change which requires a short history of social movements. Useful in this endeavour was Buechler's *Understanding Social Movements* (2016) as it laid out this history, framed within broader sociological theory. As the history of social movement theory is very broad, this thesis will focus on the most relevant streams of thought.

The 'classical' models of social movements describe the study of social movements prior to the 1960s, which concentrated on issues of labor and the domination of nation states. This study was divided into the American school, which was a structural functionalist model which saw collective action as crisis behavior, and the European school which was a Marxist model in which capital and the tensions between working classes had a central role and (Buechler, 2016; Tarrow, 2011). The focus here lies on the American school, in which social movements were seen as symptoms of system malfunction and strain and participants as irrational, marginal and socially isolated people engaging in short term and spontaneous action that were the result of a wide range of frustrations and expectations.

The 1960s were a period in which there were many social, economic, political and cultural protests across the United States and the premise of irrationality among the participants of these protests was challenged (Buechler, 2016). Neither the European nor the American school could explain the upsurge in activism in the civil rights movement, the second wave of feminism or the anti-war movement that happened in the 1960s. This collective action and feeling of solidarity could not be explained along the lines of class division nor could it be dismissed as rational choice when the consequences of participation were evidently serious.

The resource mobilization approach sprang from this decade of contention in the 1960s, and was seen as an attempt to move beyond the traditional theories of collective behavior and rather saw collective actors as rational people who could use their newly obtained resources to push for social change (Buechler, 2016). It also contended that the success of a social movement was dependent on the resources available to it and the importance of organizational processes in popular politics was emphasized. While this was an important response to earlier approaches of studying social movements, this another approach is more relevant here. The evolution of political process theories, which developed by the end of the 1970s, did challenge some of the ideas of resource mobilization but more so, in Buechler's words, can be understood as 'twin responses to the same social, political, cultural and intellectual context of the 1960s' (2016:125).

Around this time, there was a lot of political activism and social upheaval in society. The scholars and activists of the political process theory approach challenged the way resource mobilization downplayed the ideological, psychological and grievance-driven elements of collective behavior. They promoted instead the understanding of collective logic through group loyalty, solidarity and political consciousness. There two frames of reference that I borrow from Buechler (2016) to view the distinction between the political process model and earlier models of collective action as well as the range of resource mobilization approaches. First, the 'high-altitude view' reveals the differences between the classical model of collective behavior, which studied a certain response to social strains and deprivations that was described as psychological, apolitical, and initially fragmented; and the resource mobilization/political process model which understood collective action as a response to shifting opportunities that was described as organized, rational and political (Buechler, 2016: 140). The 'low-altitude view' describes the gap between the resource mobilization model and the political process model. The resource mobilization model 'emphasizes formal organization, elite sponsorship, external resources, rational actors, interest group constituencies, entrepreneurial leadership, and manufacture grievances. The political process model, on the other hand, emphasized diverse organizational forms, informal mobilizing structures, solidarity and group consciousness within the mass base, indigenous resources and a more nuanced view of

rationality, changing repertoires of contention and the central role of opportunity (Buechler, 2016: 140). Finally, the issue of grievances was seen by the resource mobilization as irrelevant as it only seldom emerged as a response to resource availability. The political process model saw it as the other way around and put grievances back on the agenda, even though it has a secondary status in this model.

Three important proponents of this model are Charley Tilly, Douglas McAdam and Sidney Tarrow who all three advanced the movement with their arguments on why the political process model is a suitable theoretical framework through which to analyze social movements. While their work forms the basis of this, and many other research on social movements, it is not within this thesis's range to describe the full extent of their work. Sydney Tarrow's main contribution to social movement theory builds on the work of Tilly, McAdam and others and synthesizes the cultural process inherent in social movement activity and how they interact with political processes to bring about social change. This cultural focus is why Tarrow's contribution to the political process model will be discussed in more detail here, as it are these cultural elements that guide the current research.

In his book *Power in Movement* (2011), Tarrow argues that social movements operate in domains of 'contentious politics' through contentious collective action (Tarrow, 2011). Just like historical movements of the past, the contemporary social movements that Tarrow studied were shaped by the particular dynamics that resulted from recurring cycles of contention. This collective contentious action was often the main and only recourse that most ordinary people had to demonstrate their claims against opponents who had access to more resources, or powerful states. For Tarrow (2011: 6):

"Contentious politics is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives to take action for actors who lack resources on their own. People contend through known repertoires of contention and expand them by creating innovations at their margins. When backed by well-structured social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, contentious politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents – to social movements."

The four conditions Tarrow identified that have to be present within a society for contention within that society to result in the creation of a social movement are: "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities (Tarrow, 2011, p.9). The following will go further into these four elements, of which some will be elaborated on in later sections.

First of all, the existence of collective grievances can be expressed in many different forms of actions taken against authorities. In social movements, the nature of these actions often have a contentious nature and when they appear in a routinized form, they can be considered repertoires of contention (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). This concept will be elaborated in a later section, with a focus on civil disobedience in particular, as this is a repertoire that Extinction Rebellion mainly employs.

Secondly, in order for people to come together in a social movement, they need to have a clear motive that they can relate to. What brings them together is their overlapping interests and values, their collective identity. This collective identity can help to grow the movement when the common purpose is translated into clear goals that can inspire others to join. However, considering the risks of participation in a social movement, the conviction of this common purpose needs to be substantial in order for people to join the collective challenges (Melucci, 1995; Tarrow, 2011).

Thirdly, of great importance is what Tarrow (2011) describes as social solidarity, or awareness of the collective identity that people in a social movement share. By raising the awareness of the collective identity between people in society by emphasizing their shared

interests and experiences, social movements can turn passive followers into active supporters, which consequently enables the movement to maintain active and even grow. Here, the concept of framing plays a big role in creating solidarity, as it can make people aware of certain injustices present in society and assembling them around a common purpose. Framing will also be discussed in more detail in the later section that discusses this central theme from the social constructionist model.

Fourth and final, interaction with elites, opponents and authorities needs to be sustained in order to keep a movement alive. This sustained interaction is a characteristic specific to social movements and, when new political decisions result in new waves of protest, can be strengthened by political opportunities. This is also referred to as a protest cycle or a cycle of contention: a moment of intensified activity and new political opportunities for a social movement. (Tarrow, 2011; Edelman, 2001).

All of these elements are useful for understanding the cultural processes of collective action. However, from the political process model, Tilly's concept called the repertoire of contention will be discussed in more detail here, emphasizing Extinction Rebellion's main tactic: civil disobedience.

(Repertoires of) Contention

Ordinary people have frequently exerted their power in contentious means against opponents or the state. These kinds of confrontations, or contentions, go back to the dawn of history. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow describe contention as "making claims that bear on someone else's interests" (2015, p.7). Without prior feelings of contention, a social movement would not come into existence, making it an essential factor in the formation and survival of social movements. The dominant approach to studying contentious tactics by social movements has been and remains to this day Tilly's 'repertoires of contention' (Doherty & Hayes, 2019).

After many years of research on the history of popular movements in France and Great Britain from the 17th to the 20th centuries, Tilly (1977) made an observation that led him to this metaphor which he defines as: "the established ways in which pairs of actors make and receive claims bearing on each others' interests" (Tilly, 1993, p.265). He emphasizes that episodes of contention in which different actors participate in public claim-making, are in fact sets of interactions between these actors that constitute a public performance. Tarrow also argues that these repertoires should be flexible and adaptable to changes in the environment and applicable to a broad range of actors in order to force political leaders to deal with the issues. The aim of such performances is to encourage support for the claims of the social movements, and are often aimed at power holders and external third parties.

For Tarrow (2011), a repertoire is simultaneously "a structural and cultural concept, involving not only what people do when they are engaged in conflict with others, but what they know how to do and what others expect them to do" (2011, p.30). Consequently, these repertoires become institutionalized and routinized (Tilly, 1978).

The identification of how limited and regularly repeated these performances or repertoires actually are, is arguably one of Tilly's main insights. The concept of a repertoire is helpful in determining and describing a limited set of actions or performances that are relatively deliberately learned, shared and actively chosen to act out by all actors involved in a conflict. These repertoires, or array of collective actions which people employ, are learned cultural creations created in times of struggle, but they are often very limited as only a small number of alternative actions are learned during a particular point in time (Tilly, 1977, 1995). People in a specific place and point in time adapt each alternative collective-action repertoire to the specific circumstances of that context, the reactions of other actors involved, and the ultimate objects of the action. The choices available for collective interaction action in a particular

moment are thus very constrained by these limits of learning (Tilly, 1977, 1995), especially when compared to the range of actions which are theoretically available and employable. The repertoire of contention therefore also changes very slowly, as they are constrained by overarching rules of economics, politics and the slow pace of cultural change (Tarrow, 1993).

One of the most popular repertoires in most social movements that demonstrate the above arguments about repertoires of contention is protest, as ‘protest is a political resource of the powerless’ as Lipsky (1968) put it. Della Porta and Diani (2006:165) describe protest as ‘non-routinized ways of affecting political, social and cultural processes’ and as a phenomenon that stands in for elections, especially if it is a well-attended protest (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Protests are ‘sites of *contestation* in which bodies, symbols, identities, practices, and discourses are used to pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations’ (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004 : 268). The well-attended climate marches attended worldwide in 2019 are examples of this potentially powerful repertoire.

So, the idea of a repertoire implies that the standard forms of action taken are learned, limited in number and in scope, change slowly and are adapted to their own specific setting. However, they are not always premeditated or tranquil. Nevertheless, when, where and how effectively a group of actors can act are all constrained by a groups’ limited repertoire.

Various academics have categorized different repertoires of contention along a spectrum from more diplomatic and tranquil to disruptive or violent forms of action (Della Porta, 2013; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001;Tarrow, 2011; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). ‘Disruption, violence, and contained behavior’ are the three broad types of performative collective action and are important because they, first, add excitement to public politics and, second, ‘help solidarity to grow through the interaction of the “performers” in protest actions’ (Tarrow 2011: 99). This is based on earlier findings discussed in their book *Dynamics of Contention*, where McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow (2001) make a useful distinction between contained and transgressive forms of contention. Contained contention takes place within an established government or regime, using its established institutional repertoires of contention. In contrast, transgressive contention crosses institutional boundaries and challenges the existing repertoires by breaking with arrangements or by adopting innovative forms of claim-making. There can also be transgression within institutions and institutional routines. Within authoritarian governments, most forms of contention are transgressive because the government will often not facilitate contained forms of contention. Most democratic governments see both contained and transgressive forms of contention (McAdam, Tilly & Tarrow, 2001).

On the scale that varies from contained to transgressive contention, repertoires of contention can have different positions as their actions are more or less disruptive. A more disruptive kind of tactic is Extinction Rebellion’s main tactic civil disobedience. The following section will therefore discuss this form of action in further detail

Civil Disobedience

Some of the most famous examples of civil disobedience include: Gandhi’s refusal to pay the salt tax implemented by the British government, Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat on the bus, Martin Luther King Jr’s activism during the civil rights movements, the Egyptians’ sit0ins in Cairo to reject the Mubarak regime, and the Occupy movement to protest economic equality in the USA, among many others (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommer, 2019). The study of civil disobedience, like the study of social movements more generally were strongly influenced by the numerous anti-war, student and civil rights movements of the 1960s in the US. John Rawls (1971) popularly defined civil disobedience a “*public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law*

or policies of the government” (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 320). According to this ‘Rawlsian’ definition, the purpose of this action must be public, the action itself must be nonviolent and the disobedient activist should be loyal to the law and consequently accept the punishment related to their illegal activities (Rawls, 1971).

The conceptual approaches to civil disobedience, especially in political theory, law and philosophy, tend to rely on a Rawlsian understanding which establishes a stable and universal set of categories with which collective can be evaluated. If an action meets the required and universally predetermined number of categories, it can be said to be an act of civil disobedience; this is the normative way of constructing civil disobedience (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019).

The Rawlsian definition, which has become central in liberal political theory, has been challenged by many theorists from different theoretical traditions as they argue that the liberal definition simplifies civil disobedience and neglects its political, democratizing and revolutionary aspects. Two perspectives have emerged as a response to this definition. The deliberative perspective argues that like other forms of communicative action, civil disobedience is a morally grounded foundation and a democratic practice (Habermas, 1984). Civil disobedience can in this way also be understood as a form of democratic participation. Second, the critical perspective is more radical and challenges the strict ethical requirements of the Rawlsian justification of civil disobedience by for instance illustrating that the emphasis on nonviolent forms of disobedience reduces civil action to an idealist appeal and pacifies activists (Arendt, 1972).

This theoretical and normative approach to civil disobedience tells us little about the practice of civil disobedience however, as it assumes the conditions of a liberal constitutional democracy and ignores specific contexts, the motivations of actors or the way in which organized activists adopt, adapt and enact civil disobedience as a form of action (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019). To see civil disobedience as a performance is to understand it from the perspective of the action itself. The performative approach pays more attention to the ways in which actors develop and legitimize their own actions, the claims they make about the actions and the interactions that surround and shape them. This makes civil disobedience a more flexible and unfixed form of action that actors can re-signify within the context of their own actions (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019). This also makes the performative approach different to Tilly’s ‘repertoire of contention’ discussed above, which views forms of protest from an aggregate perspective, as results of large-scale structural changes in society like industrialization, urbanization and so on (Tilly 1977), while the performative approach sees “action within the given conditions of a particular encounter: the critique that the action performs is a question of the conditions of its intervention within a specific debate and the meanings that actors give to it” (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019:137).

Currently, civil disobedience actions are especially prolific in North America and Western Europe. The justifications of the contemporary practice of civil disobedience are interesting here, as groups with similar aims or even within the same social movements can diverge in their repertoires of action. This is also the case for the climate movement in the Netherlands, where a diverse array of organizations fight for climate justice, but with different tactics. A key argument advanced by campaign groups to explain and legitimize this course of action is found by Ollitrault, Hayes and Sommier (2019) to be the condition of emergency that requires this type of action, though possibly articulated in contrasting ways. Where previously, civil disobedience was characteristic mostly to religious and pacifist movements, it has since been adopted by citizen movements globally. Also, where in the classical formulation of civil disobedience the civil rights movement in the US mobilized for the extension and recognition of citizenship rights that were unjustly denied, in contemporary movements like global and climate justice movements, civil disobedience actions have been legitimized by activists in the

name of defending a public space and the fight against the domination of private corporate interests. Urgency is relevant in both cases but different, as it is frequently a logistical matter of stopping an action before it happens, like for example fossil fuel exploitation, rather than a moral question of rights denied for too long. Another justification identified by Ollitrault, Hayes and Sommier (2019) is “the failure of institutionalized approaches to convince elites, states, corporations, and publics alike to take the kind of action necessary” to prevent the worsening of the climate crisis or provide just remuneration.

The theorization of civil disobedience, as an outcome of the social mobilizations in the United States in the 60’s, has enabled the stabilization of the concept of civil disobedience, producing a set of universal criteria against which an action can be recognized. Importantly however, social movement actors constantly redevelop and rethink their action in the light of their previous action, adopting and changing disobedient tactics to their own cultural and ideological circumstances (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019). The focus in this theoretical framework does not lie on the prevailing definitional boundaries of civil disobedience but it emphasizes the perspective of the civil disobedient actions and the actors themselves involved in the struggle. The aim is therefore to analyze the practice of civil disobedience as a form of collective action and situate this tactic within the specific context of Extinction Rebellion Netherlands and their claims and actions. By doing so, I try to understand civil disobedience from the bottom up, as an embodied practice.

Alongside the emergence of the resource mobilization and political process models in the 1970s and 1980s that were discussed here, other approaches originated which also reacted to the inadequacy of the classical model. The concept of framing was already an important concept in the political process model but took center stage in one of these other approaches.

Framing

One of these other approaches that originated alongside the previously discussed models was focused more on micro-level dynamics in which framing, media, signification and the social psychology of protest became central. This was related to the broader ‘cultural turn’ in social theory in which social movement theorists began to involve the “social construction of meanings, grievances, motivation, recruitment and identity in the context of collective action” (Buechler, 2016: 142) which, these theorists argue, have been downplayed or marginalized in the other models. This approach, often called the social constructionist approach, however did not wish to replace the models discussed before, but merely added a new dimension to them in which the focus shifted to how political movements framed their grievances as injustices which required challenging. While framing has been placed at the center of the social constructionist approach, other aspects of movement activity, like mobilization and collective identities, have also been viewed through this lens. The scope of this thesis limits the social constructionist analysis to framing. However, collective identities will be discussed later on, when also discussing emotions.

The focus on social psychology and grievance formulation in social movements started when Piven and Clowerd (1979) argued that protest occurred if people become conscious that their leaders had lost their legitimacy and that their institutional arrangements were unfair or wrong; and that if the people believe that their action will make a difference, their participation is more likely. McAdam (1982: 50) called this process cognitive liberation, where instead of having to rely solely on the structural dimensions of opportunity and organization, actors could decide for themselves if there was a possibility of change.

During the 80’s this stream of thought was elaborated by David Snow, Robert Benford and others who emphasized the importance of “not merely the presences or absence of

grievances, but the manner in which grievances are interpreted and the generation and diffusion of those grievances” (Snow et al. 1986: 466). Benford and Snow refer to meaning work as the struggle over the production of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas and meanings. Movement actors according to them should be seen as important agents who actively contribute to the production and maintenance of meanings; they have the role of builders and interpreters of situations (Bedford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Parks, 2014). “They are deeply embroiled, along with the media, local governments, and the state, in what has been referred to as ‘the politics of signification’” (Bedford & Snow, 2000, p. 613).

Scholars on this subject describe a frame as “an interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment’” (Snow & Benford, 1992, p.137). One of the scholars who first started discussing the concept of the frame was Erving Goffman, who saw frames as keys used to bring different tasks and issues into focus in interpersonal encounters (Goffman, 1974). In this sense, a frame is can be understood as “a particular definition that *is in charge* of a situation” (Gamson, 1985, p.616). Snow and Benford were the first scholars to theorize the concept of the frame in relation to social movements in 1994 (see Hunt, Benford and Snow 1994). The frames attach certain characteristics and definitions to people and conflicts in space and time; they attribute blame and show alternative ways of reaching certain goals. These frames are therefore used to interpret the significance of a person, an event or a symbol and while doing so an attempt is made to align individual and collective identities (Della Porta & Parks, 2014). The verb ‘framing’ consequently refers to the signifying work, or meaning construction, and the products of this activity are called ‘collective action frames’ (Bedford & Snow, 2000).

According to Benford and Snow, “Collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change” (2000, p.615). In other words, the information a frame holds can be a) diagnostic – it identifies a problem; b) prognostic – it suggests how this problem should be solved; or c) motivational – it encourages action to draw attention to or solve the problem. Benford and Snow (2000) refer to these as a social movement’s ‘core framing tasks’.

Additionally, a second set of characteristic features that constitute collective action frame refers to the more discursive and interactive processes that attend to these ‘core framing tasks’. So besides studying how or why activists choose appealing frames for potential participants, this second set of processes studies how these frames are made: the development, generation, elaboration and diffusion of collective action frames. There are three sets of overlapping processes that can be conceptualized as discursive, strategic and contested (Benford & Snow, 2000). Due to the scope of this thesis, it will focus mostly on the strategic and contested processes in the development, generation and elaboration of Extinction Rebellion’s frames, and also omit the discussion of the diffusion process of framing.

Strategic processes have received a lot of attention within the scholarship on social movements and framing, and are also important in this thesis. Snow and Benford refer to this framing process as “deliberative, utilitarian and goal directed: Frames are developed and deployed to achieve a specific purpose – to recruit new members, to mobilize adherents, to acquire resources, and so forth” (Bedford and Snow, 2000, p. 624). Through frame alignment, a process which links individual interests, values and beliefs with social movement activities, goals and ideologies, frames help people to organize their experiences and guide their actions. Benford and Snow argue that frames are more likely to be accepted if they fit well with the beliefs of the potential recruits, if they involve observable and credible claims, and if the fit with the stories the audiences tell about their own lives. Social movement organizations put a

lot of effort into linking their interests and interpretative frames with potential participants and resource providers; it is seen as an ongoing accomplishment of movement activity that cannot be taken for granted because it is constantly subject to reassessment and renegotiation.

Snow et al. (1986: 496-476) identified four basic tactics of frame alignment of which, due to the scope of this thesis, the following will be addressed here: frame bridging, frame amplification and frame transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000),

Frame bridging involves the lining of two or more preexisting frames that are ideologically compatible but structurally unconnected. When a movement aims the diffusion of their outreach, education, promotion and diffusion work at an audience that is already sympathetic with (even if uninformed about) the movement's goals, this is called frame bridging. *Frame amplification* underscores links between preexisting values or beliefs in the population and a movement's goals. Finally, *frame transformation* is used when there are no preexisting sympathies or values which means that new values have to be planted, old meanings discarded and incorrect beliefs or 'misframings' reframed. Here, the objective situation may not change, but the intersubjective interpretation does. Frame transformation can redefine a condition that was previously seen as unfortunate but tolerable as unjust or immoral or even change the interpretation of blame attribution from self-blaming to system-blaming.

There is widespread agreement that these processes of developing, generating and elaborating collective action frames are contested processes. The 'politics of signification' (Benford & Snow, 1988: 198) is something that all actors that want to construct a reality are engaged in, as it is not possible to impose a constructed reality on someone. Gamson (1988:219) argues that as movement frames seek to challenge rival frames in order to achieve their goals, they become involved in a struggle with dominant interests that want to keep them quiet. This struggle can then get the movement involved in political culture and mass media. Three specific challenges that appear in movement framing activities that have been studied often are: counterframing by movement opponents, media and bystanders; debates within movement on frames; and the tension between frames and events (Benford & Snow, 2000).

In their study from 2014 on the re-framing period of the global climate movement, Della Porta and Parks analyze frames and framing work taking place in the climate movement to make sense of changes happening within the movement. Their interpretation of recent developments in the climate movement illustrates two perceived and historically pronounced 'camps': one more radical and one more moderate wing of the movement. The more moderate camp is labelled the climate change stream by the authors, and this stream is steered by more established NGO's like Greenpeace among others. The climate justice stream is the more radical, direct-action oriented wing (Della Porta & Parks, 2014).

Using the sometimes competing and sometimes complementary diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames found in the two streams of the climate movement, the authors are able to illustrate how each camp develops its understanding of the problem, suggested solutions and actions in line with their understanding of how climate change should be challenged. The moderate stream leans towards more progressive improvements within current institutional frameworks, while for the more radical stream the only solution is dismantling the global capitalist system (Della Porta & Parks, 2014). Frame bridging is found to be especially relevant in studying the change away from the 'climate change' frame by some and towards the 'climate justice' frame, as there seems to be an explicit goal of linking the climate movement with the issues of other movements, especially global justice movements. In concluding, the authors re-emphasize the interactive nature of the framing process and the dynamic fluidity of social movements, making framing a very contested topic in itself in the climate movement. Finally, the more radical side also hosts many hot debates about which frames should be adopted and

whether and with whom solidarity should be displayed. In this process, concerns about democracy, openness and representation also stand out (Della Porta & Parks, 2014).

Della Porta & Parks (2014) describe the beginning of the increasing importance of climate justice as frame and as a movement, and the effort to address this injustice is gaining urgency as impacts are being increasingly felt in poor nations threatened by the changes. The climate justice movement is focused on local and experiences, inequitable vulnerabilities on multiple-scales, and they argue for grassroots direct-action, community voice and sovereignty and they tend to be deeply skeptical of attempts to depoliticize climate action. (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014).

While the term ‘climate justice’ was apparently first used in the academic literature in 1992, it was not the academic use of the term that created the movement. Leading up to the COP-6 negotiations in The Hague in November 2000, environmental victims around the world realized that environmental justice was global problem, and they started creating international networks. During the COP-6, the Rising Tide coalition for climate justice came together, describing itself as fighting for climate justice (Roberts & Parks, 2009) and in the lead up to COP-15 in Copenhagen in 2009, climate justice arguable surpassed climate action as the dominant social movement frame (Chatterton, Featherstone, and Routledge, 2013). As the result of social movements who explicitly connected social and environmental justice struggles together to create a global network of solidarity, the development of the climate justice frame is generally located by scholars within a broader environmental justice frame. In the same way, the climate movement is understood as positioned within an environmental justice movement, and the climate movement within a broader environmental movement.

Extinction Rebellion’s own publications promote itself as being actively concerned with global justice and international solidarity, and the movement has held events that seek to raise awareness of climate justice concerns (Smiles & Edwards, 2021). However, one of Extinction Rebellion’s key criticisms (from in and outside the climate movement and even its own movement) has been its (lack of engagement) with climate justice (Smiles & Edwards, 2021). Due to the movement’s decentralized structure, it is difficult to draw generalizations across groups however, so this thesis will focus on one branch of this global movement, Extinction Rebellion Netherlands, and use the social movement framing perspective to analyze the frames and framing processes that are currently dominating in in the climate movement in general and Extinction Rebellion Netherlands and its branches in particular. Here, the movement’s engagement with the climate justice frame will receive special attention, and how actors engage with these and other frames will be telling of how the movement positions itself in its fight against climate change.

While the micro-level perspective of social movements was being analyzed by the social constructionist approach and the meso-level by resource mobilization and political process models, an even newer paradigm emerged in Europe, which claimed to focus on the macro-level orientation of social movement analysis (Buechler,2016), which this thesis cannot go further into due to its scope. However, describing social movement theory in terms of these paradigms risks suggesting that there was a clear coherence within and them and exclusivity between them. In reality, many theorists and ideas are linked to more than one paradigm, and some important ideas, like emotions, never found a home within any of them. Emotions in collective action is one of these threads, which has gained more momentum over the turn of the century.

Emotions

Scholars who emphasize emotions in their analyses of social movements routinely argue that earlier scholarship has ignored or undervalued the role of emotions in the literature (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). At this point, emotions in social movements are attended to regularly and this has developed the literature in important ways. A short review of the last 30 years of the developments in this field will show how it has gotten to where it is today.

The early scholars who studied collective behavior focused on emotional dynamics of crowds and social change, and mainly saw emotionality as irrationality. In the 1960's, activists who had become academics found it difficult to explain personal experiences using these existing theoretical frameworks, and so stopped discussing emotions altogether in their newly developed social movement field. The focus instead became the rational actor, and theoretical questions shifted away from the 'why' of motivation and toward the 'how' of organization-building, strategy and tactics (Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Consequently, the literature was mostly structural, rationalistic and organizationally oriented. So, just as the earlier scholars had argued that emotions made protesters irrational, this new generation of scholars (later called the resource-mobilization paradigm) saw rational protestors as lacking emotions (Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Then the 1980s saw the return of emotion in the field social movement, accredited by many in the field to the cultural turn, which returned interest back to the micro level. A lot of the work focused on framing, collective identity, codes and narratives. Many scholars who work on emotions critique this cultural turn for being too cognitive (Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2001), and a lot of work has been written trying to reverse this trend by reincorporating emotions such as anger, fear, indignation, joy, love and disgust into the research.

The main argument of scholars who work on emotion in social movement, as expressed by Jasper (2011) in his review theory and research on emotion in social movements from 1991 until 2011 is such: "Emotions are present in every phase and every aspect of protest. They motivate individuals, are generated in crowds, are expressed rhetorically, and shape stated and unstated goals of social movements. Emotions can be means, they can be ends, and sometimes they can fuse the two. They can help or hinder mobilization efforts, ongoing strategies, and the success of social movements" (Jasper, 2011, p.286). Scholars have studied emotions in social movements in wide-ranging areas of protest events and social movement campaigns.

The sociology of emotions sees emotions as culturally constructed: "in the constructionist view...emotions are constituted more by shared social meanings than automatic physiological states" (Jasper, 1998: 400). Partly due to their common roots in shared meanings, emotions are intertwined with moral rules and cognitive beliefs. The sociology of emotions has identified various dimensions of emotions while also making a distinction between long-term affective states and short-term reactive emotions.

One of these useful distinctions made in previous research on emotions is the distinction between primary and secondary emotions. Primary emotions are basic emotions like fear, anger, happiness and sadness. These are universal and form the foundation for more complex and culturally dependent emotions (Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Secondary emotions are more socially constructed and are often the result of combinations of primary emotions, with differing outcomes. Examples include: pride, disappointment, shame, hate, indignations, awe. (Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018).

For the study of emotion in social movements specifically, another definition along two dimensions has been made (see Figure 1). The first dimension concerns itself with how long a certain feeling lasts, distinguishing the long-lasting feelings like love, trust, hate or respect which accompany and co-define social relationships from the shorter-term responses to information and events. Jasper (1998) has labelled these two dimensions affective and reactive emotions respectfully. The second dimension is focused on feelings towards specific objects,

and contrasts this with more general feelings about the world that transcends specific objects. These different types of emotions are related in varying ways to movement processes and by distinguishing among them, it can help to identify the different resources that emotions give to movements, as well as the challenges they create.

TABLE 1 Categories and Examples of Emotions

Time Scale	Scope	
	Has Specific Object	General
Longer Term	Hate, Love	Resignation, Cynicism
	Compassion, Sympathy	Shame
	Respect, Trust, Loyalty	Paranoia, Suspicion
	Moral outrage	Optimism
	Some forms of fear (dread)	Pride, Enthusiasm
Shorter Term	Other fears (fright, startle)	Anxiety
	Surprise, Shock	Joy, Euphoria
	Anger	Depression
	Grief, Sorrow	

Figure 1 from Goodwin, Jasper & Poletta, 2011

When analyzing the role of emotions in social movement, this is often done by looking at emotions in different phases of a social movement: its origin, its spread and its decline (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Protest activities provide a rich situation for investigating emotion in social life. Hostility, solidarity or trust are examples of affective emotions; reactive emotions include anger, outrage or shame, and intermediate moods like envy, compassion, or pride can play a role in recruiting members, sustaining protest or reduce support and speed up the decline of a protest.

In a movement's growth and unfolding, what has been called 'moral shock', is often the first step in participation in a social movement. This occurs when an unexpected event or piece of information comes to light which creates a sense of outrage in a person that might incline them towards taking political action, whether or not this person has connections in the movement. Activists work hard, through framing work, to enhance certain mobilizing emotions such as outrage and anger, by providing a scapegoat against which these emotions can be vented. Many aspects of framing are thus also deeply rooted in emotional states. The attributing of blame for a problem in diagnostic framing for example is as much an emotional as a cognitive process (Buechler, 2016), and even though until now beliefs and values have been emphasized over emotions and affect, motivational framing is clearly embedded in emotional states. Finally, Gamson's injustice frames and McAdam's 'cognitive liberation' are both argued to indirectly demonstrate that beliefs are rooted in emotions. Additionally, participation in action and the (related) feeling of connectedness with others may bring certain pleasures which can be great enough to motivate participation without there being a cognitive belief that it will be successful (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018).

Emotions are also closely interrelated with the ongoing activities of the movements. A 'movement culture' can be understood as its rituals, songs, heroes, enemies and so on. The richer a movement's culture, the greater the pleasures are that participants may gain from their

participation. Besides shared rhetoric and belief, emotions which accompany these aspects are very important in the solidarity-building functions of movement culture. These are crucial aspects in sustaining movements. Emotional energy in this way may be seen as the social glue that binds many social movements (Buechler, 2016). Movements in themselves, as places with 'high ritual density' that are the result of people who are physically assembled together, are also settings in which emotions can be created or reinforced in an (explicit) attempt to elaborate intuitive visions into explicit ideologies and proposals (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Again, through framing among other tactics, social movements are especially in the business transforming these special states of high emotional energy and solidarity into action towards movement goals (Buechler, 2016).

Collective identity is another popular concept that is often conceptualized in cognitive terms even though there seems to be an obvious role of affective bonds in such identities. Jasper (1998), has made a distinction between two kinds of emotions that are generated within a social movement. Reciprocal emotions refer to participant's ongoing close and affective feels towards each other like friendship, love, loyalty, solidarity and more specific emotions that grow out of these. Many of the pleasures of participation are a result of this powerful 'we-feeling' (Goodwin, 1997). The second kind of emotion is called shared emotion, and these emotions are experienced by a group at the same time but it does not have other group members as its object, as it aimed to the outside like for example government policies or outsiders. Importantly, reciprocal and shared emotions reinforce each other and by doing so build a movement culture in which powerful 'we-feelings' and shared feelings towards outside objects help to account for the tight grip of such identities even in situations and against opponents that seem invincible (Buechler, 2016; Goodwin, 1997).

Finally, emotions also help to explain a movement's decline. Goodwin (1997) shows that love and erotic attraction can lead individuals or couples out of active participation in a movement and focus on private life. Frustration can result in a group's change of tactic or strategy, or a disbandment altogether. Individuals can also burn out and pull out of participation. Groups can fall apart as a result of feelings of jealousy, disgust, hatred or envy (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). In Albert Hirschman's study, he found that people retreat from the public to the private sphere because "participation in public life offers only this unsatisfactory too-much-or-too-little choice and is therefore bound to be disappointing in one way or another" (Hirschman, 1982, p.120 in Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001). On the one hand, voting offers too little involvement, on the other, social movements often demand too much dedication. He describes activists as becoming addicted to activities, committing large amounts of time and energy to them, resulting in exhaustion. Unrealistic expectation of social change easily lead to disappointment. These dynamics often implicitly depend on all-or-nothing emotions like disappointment, excitement and frustration. Additionally, in their less active phases, Verta Taylor argues that movements survive between periods of mass mobilization through what she calls abeyance structures, in which emotions are also recognized. Personal ties of love and friendship are found to be important cultural ideals in her study on the National Women's Party of the 1960s (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001). Finally, emotions displayed in protest reshape broader emotional cultures and emotional repertoires which later become available to other movements. An example of emotion as strategy here is the black nationalist movement in the 1960s, which practiced a 'politics of rage' that was later adopted by feminist and gay movements.

The edited volume *Passionate Politics* by Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) which this section has referred to often, underscores emotions in social movements and demonstrates through different themes how attending to emotion can complement, refine, improve or overturn conventional explanations of movement dynamics and illuminate more clearly all of

the key issues that have been studied by scholars of movements for a long time, including those on tactics and framing (Buechler, 2016). Culture and emotion can no longer be taken for granted or shoved to the background in studies of collective action. Social movements have always been breeding grounds for emotional dynamics and cultural processes and the study of movements has finally begun now to reflect that fact. Extinction Rebellion is particularly open and direct in their attention for and addressing of emotions, by, for example, organizing events around eco-emotions like ecological grief, creating space for moral shock in their introductory presentations, and the existence of regenerative commissions in their movement which address these (eco)emotions directly. The study of how (participant's) emotions play a role in movement actions and framing processes, can provide a deeper analysis of these different movement aspects.

3. Methods

In the previous chapter the theoretical framework and analytical concepts have been discussed that guide this research project. In this chapter, the various research methods will be addressed that I have used to conduct my own study of Extinction Rebellion the Netherlands. I will describe my research approach from an ethnographic standpoint followed by an elaboration on my choice of working from an engaged anthropology approach. The next section will discuss the various methods of data gathering used including a context study, participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Then, I will elaborate some reflections on my research choices my position as researcher throughout the research process. First however, the special circumstances in and as a result of which I first decided to write this thesis about Extinction Rebellion need to be addressed as it highly influenced the choices I made throughout the research process.

Covid-19

When the Covid-19 or Corona pandemic started in 2020, I decided to change the plans I had at the time and I started working on my thesis instead. The unique opportunity of studying activism in this time of lockdowns and social distancing soon made itself clear, and I took it, zooming in on Extinction Rebellion. Due to this unprecedented situation in which, and about which, I was doing research, my thesis immediately did not start out following the ‘usual’ process of doing research.

Even before identifying the specific problem I was to study within the vast world of climate activism, I was already and simultaneously gathering data about the broader situation, doing literature studies and deciding on the best methods and research approaches. This was due to the fact that the unprecedented situation which informed my research was happening concurrently with me studying it. Bernard (2017), says about this idea of ‘how the research process is supposed to work in the ideal world:

“Despite all the myths about how research is done, it’s actually a messy process that’s cleaned up in the reporting of results...In fact, all kinds of practical and intellectual issues get in the way of this neat scheme. In the end, research papers are written so that the chaotic aspects of research are not emphasized, and the orderly inputs and outcomes are” (Bernard, 2017: 54).

Furthermore, as I mentioned above, I started out with the intention to study how the Corona pandemic influenced climate activism, with a special focus on Extinction Rebellion. As the introduction and theoretical framework of the current thesis have demonstrated however, this thesis does not study the influence of the Corona pandemic, but focusses on Extinction Rebellion Netherlands and how they organize their activism against climate change generally. It was not until I was in the process of writing the results of my research that I made this decision. The reason for this significant change was due to the long amount of time the thesis had taken me to until that point already, which in turn was due to the unprecedented situation the world was in and difficult personal circumstances, the two often related. For these reasons, based on the rich data I had already gathered about Extinction Rebellion, I decided to write a solid thesis on the movement itself, omitting the Corona pandemic element from my research. The changes I had to make in my research questions were minor, mostly just deleting the words ‘during the Corona pandemic’. For reasons of transparency I mention these choices I made in the writing stage of my thesis which did not affect the methodological approach and the research process more generally. Having addressed these special circumstances, my research

approach and data collection methods will now be addressed, after which I will reflect shortly on my position as researcher in this study.

Research approach

In its aim to understand Extinction Rebellion Netherland's organization in its fight against climate change, this research adopted a qualitative research approach, which applies a more interpersonal kind of data collection method which aims to answer qualitative questions about 'how', 'why' and 'what' rather than quantitative questions that often start with 'how much'. There are different qualitative research designs, among which I chose an ethnographic research approach which emphasizes an up-close method to the subject in doing research, by emphasizing participation. Following this approach, participation is carried out in a relatively larger timeframe so that the researcher can immerse themselves into the local setting they are researching and become an active participant in the field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). An assumption here that justifies this chosen methodology is that oral accounts that occur naturally in spaces where Extinction Rebellion activists are active can serve as evidence not only about their experience of activism but also about how the larger movement organizes itself in its fight against climate change.

Anthropology has historically been a discipline that has engaged in political and social issues and by doing so played a role in educating, advocating and advising in ethical practices as well as public policymaking. Addressing these global issues by anthropologists have led to an increase in engaged anthropological approaches which use the engagement of the researcher in various forms during the fieldwork and in the later applications of the research. I have decided to conduct my research from such an engaged anthropological approach as well because of my personal interest and political stance in the climate activism topic which has informed my choice of doing research on it (Low & Engle Merry, 2010).

Low and Engle Merry (2010) have described different forms in which such engagement has been implemented within research. I will mention two which have been important for my own thesis: sharing & support, and activism. First, Low and Engle Merry describe how doing fieldwork research from a sharing and supporting approach can shift the narrative of the research from one focused on authenticity to one of sincerity and commitment. Furthermore, such an approach can also bring the researcher and the research subjects closer through their feeling of solidarity in relation to (social) injustices (Low & Engle Merry, 2010). This aspect of engaged anthropology was important in my own research as the perception of urgency of the climate problem and the social issues surrounding it was the common ground I had in conversations with the activists I talked to and observed. It was not always necessary to disclose these personal views, and it was often assumed by my presence itself, but I sometimes made a point of disclosing it in some way nonetheless, with which I hoped to create a space of understanding and trust in which people would feel comfortable talking about their own experiences with activism in Extinction Rebellion.

Another form of engagement that Low and Engle Merry (2010) have described concerns the taking on of an activist role as a researcher, while also as a human being. This form I particularly engaged with often in my research, by joining in certain actions not only as a participating researcher but also as a concerned citizen. Through this engagement I was able to better understand the practices of the activists of Extinction Rebellion and the choices they had to make in their participation of certain actions, even if just to a small extent. I reflected often on this form of engagement, as my reflection later in this chapter will elaborate on further. The insights I gained from this approach have been used in the expansion of this research to, besides repertoires and framing, directly include the role of emotions as one of my research questions. Furthermore, it has also been taken into consideration during informal conversations with activists and in the process of designing the semi-structured interviews.

Data Gathering

On- and offline

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the process of gathering data for this thesis started from day one because, as the pandemic was developing, I was concurrently gathering data on its effects on the climate movement (in the Netherlands). Additionally, the conditions that lockdowns and social distancing rules imposed on this research meant that, especially during the initial phase of data collection, I was limited to gathering my data solely online, as there were no (public) offline gatherings organized at the time due to the restrictions. Later on, as these restrictions became more flexible and some events were being organized offline again, I gathered data both on- and offline. The initial context study I performed online informed and guided my further offline research later on, but I also continued gathering online data as well as attending online events and actions through which I negotiated my access into the field.

Context study and negotiating access

I started my engagement with the context of climate activism by reading on and offline news articles about the effects of the pandemic on the climate and the activist organizations which tried to use this unprecedented opportunity to emphasize the importance of their struggle. In order to familiarize myself more with this world of climate activism, I visited the websites of all the climate organizations I knew, including: Milieudefensie, Greenpeace NL, Extinction Rebellion NL and Fridays For Future NL. The information I gathered through these websites gave me a broad introduction into the organizations, emphasizing their general focus in the climate change fight. Many websites also had links to their social media channels which led me to Instagram, which proved to play a major role throughout my data gathering process.

While the websites gave me a more general introduction into the organizations, actualities were, especially for movements like Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future, communicated through Instagram. Through Instagram I was led to other (climate) activist organizations through the ‘suggested for you’ function on organization’s profiles, like FossilVrij Nederland, Shell Must Fall, Code Rood and the regional branches of Extinction Rebellion. I started following all these Instagram pages through my personal account, and saw my timeline transform into a climate activism centered online space. I also observed that sometimes these accounts would ‘repost’ each other’s posts and engage with their own members as well as with other movements online. During the context study, Instagram therefore proved to be a major source of information in the context study and guided the narrowing down of my research topic.

Compared to other organizations and movements, the active presence of especially Extinction Rebellion on this social media platform, as well as the existence of many accounts for each of its branches, led me to naturally become more engaged with this particular movement. I decided to narrow down the focus of my thesis and, after briefly considering comparing a more established Greenpeace with Extinction Rebellion, I found that the richness of online information about Extinction Rebellion and the unique approach and position the movement seemed to have in the climate movement encouraged me to focus only on Extinction Rebellion, in more depth. My solidarity with the cause and my curiosity about Extinction Rebellion’s unique approach to climate activism motivated my desire to conduct the research from an engaged anthropological approach and shaped my decision to conduct fieldwork among the movement’s members. Instagram had not only informed the narrowing down of my research focus, but also became the starting point for negotiating access to the field.

Due to the lockdown and social distancing measures and consequent discouraged or even impossible international travel, I demarcated my research to a national range, therefore

including regional branches including XR Utrecht, XR Amsterdam, XR Wageningen, XR Zaanstreek, XR Rotterdam and others as well as the national coordinating branch: Extinction Rebellion Netherlands. Later chapters will elaborate on the relationship between these branches, but important is that in theory there is no hierarchy among these branches, as they operate independently but also collaborate in pursuing their goals. I decided to start my negotiation of access into the movement by focusing on Extinction Rebellion Utrecht (XR Utrecht) for two reasons: travelling with public transport within the Netherlands was strongly discouraged during the initial lockdown period in the spring of 2020 and due to the unpredictable nature of this pandemic generally. As XR Utrecht was the Extinction Rebellion branch in the city where I lived, I would not be dependent on the possibility to travel there with public transport. Meanwhile however, I also negotiated (online) access to the other branches, and kept up to date with the changing possibilities to travel to and attend the first organized events in this pandemic and restrictions with regards to the collective gathering.

Through Instagram I learned that general meetings were held monthly at XR Utrecht which were open to interested public. I decided to attend this meeting that, due to continuing restrictions, was held online on Zoom. The meeting had the aim of checking in, reflecting on recent actions, and showing what the branch was involved with at the moment and in the (near) future. Personal attention was given to everyone in the beginning check-in round, in which I could also express my intentions as researcher as well as my solidarity with the cause, which was received enthusiastically and positively. Immediately, I was welcomed to the movement, and a member from the integration commission gave me their contact details so that I could discuss further how I, both as an activist and a researcher, could be further helped along in the movement. This first encounter was characteristic for all my future engagements with activists from the movement: extraordinarily welcoming and helpful in referring me to people, information and events. I received a lot of advice on which actions to attend, which online spaces to join and I was added to the Extinction Rebellion Utrecht newsletter as well as WhatsApp group. This first attended meeting was therefore a crucial start in the snowball effect of negotiating access to the field, and allowed me to start collecting data through (participatory) observation.

Participant Observation & informal conversations

That first online meeting was the first time I engaged in participant observation and it continued to be a very important component of my research and data gathering for four months until after the rebellion week that was organized by Extinction Rebellion in Amsterdam in September 2020. The design and conducting of the semi-structured interviews, which were the second data gathering method I used in this research, was strongly influenced by the long period of participant observation that preceded it.

O'Reilly (2012) describes the importance of participant observation in ethnography to negotiate access as well as to familiarize oneself with the setting, customs and context of the research area, in this case the movement. In the process of negotiating access, as was illustrated in the first general meeting described above, participant observation is especially important to gain a relationship of trust between the researcher and individuals within the movement and to observe interpersonal dynamics and identify key informants or gatekeepers that could possibly help with the researcher. My openness about the dual motivation for my attendance of the meeting seemed to be appreciated and accepted, and presumably established a foundation of trust. The online nature of that first meeting limited by ability to observe interpersonal dynamics in the same way and extent as offline, but the integrator who contacted me personally helped me to identify key informants and gatekeepers anyway.

Furthermore, O'Reilly states that when familiarizing yourself with the setting of your research, it will first be as a newcomer who is able to observe the things that are peculiar and

specific to the setting and thus stand out to an outsider. Over time, once you familiarize yourself more in a setting, you shift to becoming an insider and these peculiar things will not be noticed anymore, as a deeper understanding of the setting, the culture and the people's views within that setting is cultivated (O'Reilly, 2012: 92). In my research, most of the initial observations I made about the movement were gathered in online settings: on Instagram pages, in online seminars and during online events.

To advance the validation of the insights I gained through participant observations, it was necessary to connect to this a method of tracking this data which I decided to do through fieldnotes. Fieldnotes are written notes which are made about the observed or heard information (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Throughout the months of participant observation, I continuously took fieldnotes, always immediately after or sometimes even during the observations of actions or meetings I participated in. Fieldnotes are considered a selective data collection method, as it is not possible to capture everything. During conversations for example, I did not interrupt this interaction to make notes, but would wait until I had a moment to myself shortly afterwards and had to depend on my short-term memory, thus possibly losing some details. To triangulate this information, I also kept a fieldwork journal, which deals with the newness of the research setting for a researcher personally (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this fieldwork journal I reflected on my personal feelings and struggles throughout the research process. Reflexivity is an important accounted issue in ethnographic research, and in my fieldwork journal I kept track of these reflections on myself and my relation to the field and the relationships I built with the people in it. Situations, feelings and emotional connections with participants were reflected on in this journal, which helped to minimize my subjectivity about these research participants.

My observations in the online settings I made observations in were often of a more covert nature than it would possibly have been if these conversations, seminars and actions had been organized offline. O'Reilly (2012) addresses how virtual ethnography can sometimes raise ethical questions about the covert nature of engaging in ethnography online. While it is important to give people online the same respect and responsibility in the research as would be given to them in other forms of research, I personally made the choice to engage in this covert way but to not use these online conversations, actions and seminars as specific or major examples in my data. Rather, I would use these online observations to get a general indication of the movement and activists' perspectives on their activism and how they conversed about the topic in and outside of the movement. The six-course seminar organized by a couple of the bigger climate movement actors called Climate Fight in Times of Crisis ('Klimaatstrijd in Crisistijd'), for example gave me rich insight into the climate movement in general and how Extinction Rebellion contrasted from other players. The 'Traanrede', or the action that was organized by Extinction Rebellion as a critical parody on the yearly event in which the king of the Netherlands gives a speech, was livestreamed on Instagram and provided me with rich data about the movement's tactics, framing, as well as the relation between on and offline activism. Finally, Extinction Rebellion's online platform MatterMost (to which I was invited) on which discussions are held, internal communications posted and documents shared (for feedback) was an indispensable source of information about the internal workings and communications of a nonhierarchical movement. While I thus decided to not use specific examples from these online settings in my data, they generated a deep understanding of the movement with which I guided the data collection in which I assume an overt position.

The first observations I made offline took place two days after the first general meeting I attended, at a Shell Must Fall demonstration at Shell's headquarters in the Hague. This event, as well as the Black Lives Matter demonstrations that were held two weeks after, was not organized by Extinction Rebellion but activists from Extinction Rebellion would be present in

solidarity with the organizers and the cause, as was announced on their Instagram. Shell Must Fall was the first demonstration held in the Netherlands after the lockdown for which permission was given for only thirty people to demonstrate. I decided against participant observation for this first event and chose instead to observe from an external perspective because it was my first offline event, there was limited space and it was not an event organized by Extinction Rebellion. Nevertheless, it was a very fruitful event to observe, as were the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in which I took a more participant observation role, and gave me an understanding of how different (climate) organizations engage with and are solidary with each other, especially within these Corona related restrictions.

The presence of Extinction Rebellion activists at these events organized by other parties also allowed me to observe Extinction Rebellion from an outsider perspective, and identify key figures who were present at every action. It was through these observations that, when I attended my first event organized by Extinction Rebellion themselves in Amsterdam in July (Figure 2), I was able to already recognize familiar faces whom I then decided to approach for informal conversations. Through these informal conversations I was referred to other activists in the Amsterdam as well as the Utrecht branch



Figure 2: XR Amsterdam bike action to KLM headquarters

who would be interested in conversation as well as interviews. I was also encouraged to join the next 'Die-in' action in Utrecht which was held monthly simultaneously with the testing of the national public warning sirens and the bike action co-organized by Extinction Rebellion to demonstrate the construction of a highway through Amelisweerd, an old forest area near Utrecht. I joined both of these actions, participating in the bike action and holding a more peripheral position for the die-in. For most of the actions I participated and observed in, I also joined the preparations of these actions beforehand in which there was more space to have conversations with the activists and through which relationships with them were strengthened.

It was through these closer relationships that, besides the organized actions, I was also invited to join and observe the meetings of the organizational bodies (circles, or workgroups, as will be explained later) behind the organized actions. The Action and Logistics circle for instance, was brainstorming about actions for the upcoming September rebellion when I joined their meeting in August. On another instance, I joined the Arts circle in making posters, banners and flags for another upcoming event. During these organizational meetings there was a lot more time and space for informal conversations as the atmosphere was also more relaxed than during or in the preparation for an action. This atmosphere allowed for different kind of observations and conversations, which were very fruitful for my data collection and sense of the movement in general.

Most importantly, this long period of (participant) observation built a strong foundation on which I built the foundation of my second data collection method: semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews

The second source of information I have used in this thesis is the data I collected through conducting semi-structured interviews from mid-August until the beginning of November. I chose this form of data collection because it allows for more in-depth information about activists' experiences and views, and allows them space to elaborate on whatever they feel like. Furthermore, from a researcher perspective, while the interview is still guided by a list of topics,

I can choose to deviate on a topic or ask further questions if something sounds interesting. I consciously made the decision to conduct these interviews after participating in observations at the actions and events described above, as it gave me time to familiarize myself with the movement, build a relationship with the activists, and identify a diverse group of people to interview.

For the interviews I composed one topic list beforehand that I used for all the interviews I conducted with activists from Extinction Rebellion. I used a slightly adapted topic list for the two participants I interviewed outside of the movement. I based this topic list on the research question and subquestions I had developed for the research. As I explained earlier, these questions had been to some extent also already been elaborated after my observations in the field, like the specific focus on emotion in my thesis. I also took into consideration some of the first observations I had made when I was still an outsider. Some of the topics I focused on in my interviews were: their view on the climate crisis; how/when they first heard about Extinction Rebellion; their motivation for joining Extinction Rebellion; their position/role in the movement; the strategies Extinction Rebellion uses, and their opinion on these tactics; their favorite actions; why according to them it's important to take engage in climate activism; how the climate problem should be communicated; if the Corona pandemic changed their perspective on any of these and other topics related to climate activism; and finally what Extinction Rebellion means to them. See Appendix A for the complete topic list.

As explained earlier in this chapter, I got into contact with most of the people I interviewed during the period that I was participating and observing during actions and other meetings. Many of these people were from the Utrecht branch, where I spent most time as it was in the city where I live. I made the conscious decision however, that I wanted to talk to a diverse group of Extinction Rebellion activists and tried to find diversity in sex, age, education level, geography, roles in the movement, and extent of involvement in the movement. I was not able to achieve great diversity with regards to age and education level but most of the other aspects were achieved through asking my contacts or interviewees for specific referrals, like was the case in finding someone outside of the 'randstad'. I approached people who I found outside of these referrals on MatterMost, the online organizational platform Extinction Rebellion uses that I mentioned before to which I was granted access to during my observational period. In the end, I conducted interviews with 16 people in total, of which 14 were members of Extinction Rebellion and two other interviews I sought for their expert and/or outside perspectives. The table below gives an overview of these interviews. All the names are changed in this table for privacy reasons, except for Peter, my expert interview, who gave his permission to share his name.

Table 1 Interview participants overview

Interview	Date	Location	Name	Branch	Role
1	10/08/2020	Utrecht	Helen	Utrecht & national	Regenerative Culture; Inclusion & Power
2	24/08/2020	Utrecht	Bjeno	Utrecht & where requested	Action & Logistics
3	30/09/2020	Utrecht	Maria	Utrecht	Action & Logistics
4	01/10/2020	Utrecht	Michael	Utrecht & national	Regenerative Culture
5	07/10/2020	Wageningen	Aria	Wageningen & national	Action & Logistics
6	08/10/2020	Utrecht	Lotte	Utrecht	Political Strategy & Change
7	10/10/2020	Online videocall	Ivo	Amsterdam	Outreach & Training
8	13/10/2020	Utrecht	Henk	Utrecht	-
9	24/10/2020	Telephone	Ella	National (&Utrecht)	Political Strategy & Change; People's Assembly
10	25/10/2020	Online videocall	John	Amsterdam	-
11	26/10/2020	Online videocall	Aron	Amsterdam & national	Media & Communications
12	27/10/2020	Online videocall	Marvin	Utrecht	Political Strategy & Change; Integration
13	05/11/2020	Online videocall	Fiona	Amsterdam	Arts in Action
14	05/11/2020	Online videocall	Bella	Amsterdam	Arts in Action
15	16/10/2020	Online call	Peter	Expert interview: co-founder Stroomversnellers & works at Milieudedefensie	
16	23/10/2020	Online videocall	Lucy	Outsider interview: Master thesis research on Dutch climate organizations	

Before starting each interview, I asked the participants if they gave me permission to record the conversation. This allowed me to be more present in the interview without having to take constant notes as I could transcribe the interviews afterwards using the recording. Besides this, I also informed the participants of their privacy and confidentiality in this research and guaranteed their names would not be mentioned. Furthermore, if they were not comfortable with any of the questions, did not wish to answer a certain question, or wanted to stop altogether I emphasized that this was okay. Then, I introduced myself and my research.

The data I gathered in the form of transcriptions was then analyzed using the program Atlas.ti with which I could assign certain statements or expressions to codes. I made a general code book based on the topic list I had used for the interview, in which the biggest codes were explained and their relation to each other visualized. I also added the fieldnotes from my months of observations to this program, and thus to the code book. This program helped to save a lot of time in the process of finding similar statements, experiences, and stories from different interviews. These codes then formed the guideline for the body of my thesis.

Reflections and position in the field

There are two things I wish to reflect on here. First, emotions were not directly included in the topic list of the semi-structured interviews. During my participant observations at actions, meetings and events I observed that emotions seemed to play an important, and sometimes very clear, role in all processes of the movement. However, I also noticed that while some activists were very expressive and open about their feelings, others clearly felt less comfortable did not wish to express themselves in this way. These differences sometimes led to a greater detachment from the conversation by the people who were less expressive about this topic. For this reason, I left the direct questions about emotion out of my topic list and decided to decide during each interview whether or not there were appropriate moments to address this topic, based on my intuition about the participant and the overall atmosphere. The interviewees that I had already met before the interview and that I had, to various extents, already built a relationship with were generally easier to address emotional topics with, while others that I had

not met before the interview often brought up emotions by themselves which allowed me to continue with follow-up questions. There was only one interview in which the addressing the topic of emotions felt unwelcomed and there were no accounts given by the interview on which I could ask follow up questions. Finally, as I was interested in the emotions of movement members, I did not address the topic of emotions during the two interviews I had with participants who were not Extinction Rebellion activists. As emotions are a big part of what this thesis tries to research, I felt the need to address this choice I made about using my intuition and omit this topic from my topic list. I believe that this choice was right, as I might have made people uncomfortable if I approached in in another more static way.

Finally, my position as researcher was another theme that I reflected upon very often in my fieldwork journal throughout the data collection phase of my research. I realized that I was often struggling with walking the delicate balance between my role as researcher and activist with solidarity for the cause. I stood behind my decision to approach this research from an engaged ethnographic way based on Low & Engle Merry's (2010) arguments that emphasize sharing and support as well as the activist role, but I often found myself struggling with taking decisions in the moment as I was insecure about the consequences of certain choices on the subjectivity issue of my research. I started my data collection from a purely observational approach and quickly became more participative in 'low-risk' (this refers to the level of legality; the risk of being arrested) actions and through low-profile roles I took on. As I felt myself becoming more acquainted with the movement and established relationships with its activists, I became more willing to participate in higher risk actions or started taking on more responsibility in my roles. I struggled often with making these decisions, taking into account that I was there to conduct research, often resulting in choosing the safer option. I am convinced that I made the right decisions and that my dual position did not compromise the research, due largely to the fact that I continuously reflected on this issue in my fieldwork journal, with which I can triangulate my observations and minimize the subjectivity of my position.

The fieldwork journal also makes me realize now how influential spending so much time immersed in a close group with strong ideals and in an enthusiastic atmosphere can be. At the time of data collection, I reached a point in which would seriously consider participating in an arrestable action, as an activist and researcher. Before spending so much time with Extinction Rebellion, and now that I barely engage with the movement anymore, I would have not even have come close to such a decision, as I have always been a more risk averse person. I have no regrets about the choices I made or almost made, but rather I am grateful that I immersed myself as much as I could that not only enriched my research but also strengthened my solidarity with climate activism. Keeping the fieldwork journal in which I could take my time to reflect on this dual researcher and activist role proved very important for my research.

In this chapter I have provided an overview of my research approach and the methods I have used to answer my research questions. The engaged ethnographic approach I have chosen to use is a qualitative research method in which I can use a solidary standpoint with climate activists to better understand the movement, its context, and the personal experiences of people active in the struggle against climate change. I have used participant observations to engage in various organized collective actions, meetings and events and familiarize myself with the movement, its context and its people. These participant observations and informal conversations I had with members allowed me to establish a foundation of trust on which I built relationships with some activists. Additionally, I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of Extinction Rebellion activists that varied in terms of sex, geography, roles in and extent of involvement with the movement; as well as 2 interviews that provided me with outside perspective on Extinction Rebellion and on the climate movement more generally. In combination with my fieldnotes on my participant observations, this has resulted

in a large amount of data that I have collected that have provided me with rich insight into how Extinction Rebellion organizes itself on a movement level and how individual activists relate to this struggle against climate change. The results of this data will be presented in the next three chapters.

4. Extinction Rebellion

During the first couple of in-depth interviews that I had with various members of Extinction Rebellion Netherlands, these rebels corrected me multiple times when referring to Extinction Rebellion (XR) as an organization, instead of a movement. One of the first activists I talked to, Maria put it like this:

“Well first of all, I see XR as a citizen’s movement. A lot of people call it an organization, but I don’t agree that XR is an organization, partly because sometimes it’s just not that organized, but that’s part of it. So it’s a movement, and specifically a citizen’s movement of people who do other things in life besides this. An ambitious citizen’s movement.” (September 29th, 2020; Utrecht).

The description on the homepage of their website confirms this, describing itself as being a group of ordinary people who are very concerned about the climate-and ecological crisis ("Who is Extinction Rebellion - Extinction Rebellion", 2021). So, Extinction Rebellion can be described as a global decentralized mass movement of concerned citizens that mobilizes around climate and ecological change.

This chapter will place Extinction Rebellion in the (Dutch) climate movement context and link this to social movement theory. Then, it will describe the movement’s origins and go deeper into how Extinction Rebellion frames the climate problem and their theory of change. Understanding these foundations on which Extinction Rebellion builds its movement is a crucial step in understanding Extinction Rebellion’s fight against climate change.

Dutch Climate Movement Context

When looking at the development of the climate movement in the Netherlands, the four conditions that transform contention in society into the creation of a social movement (collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with opponents, authorities and elites) (Tarrow, 2011) were indeed present in Dutch society. When the environmental movement emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s in a whirlwind of collective action that has been termed the new social movements (Melucci, 1980), the first environmental activists were mostly well-established people in society including journalists, scientists, and politicians. The publication of a very influential report in 1972 by the ‘Club van Rome’, a group of scientists, called *The Limits To Growth* collides almost simultaneously with the origin of the Dutch climate movement. An initial critique of the environmental impacts of rapid economic growth and industrialization changed in the late 1980’s when environmental organizations became increasingly institutionalized and professionalized. A neoliberal policy environment facilitated the incorporation of these environmental organizations into government negotiation and decision-making processes. Mass mobilizations, direct-action and growth techniques became less popular as the environmental movement in the Netherlands generally embraced ecological modernization which was characterized by a belief in market mechanisms, technological innovations, and a resistance to systemic change while the economy was greenwashed and ecology was put on the market (Cramer, 2014; Spaargaren, 1997, p84). The Netherlands, seen as a pioneer of ecological modernization, would shape EU-level policies on environmental topics and beyond for many years (Cramer, 2014). However, the increasing societal concern for the climate issue is evident in the growth of one of these Dutch climate organizations in particular, Milieudefensie, in the new century (Milieudefensie, n.d.).

Climate organization Milieudefensie is an important player in the Dutch climate movement known internationally for their action plan for making the Netherlands more

sustainable (Actieplan Nederland Duurzaam 1992) and their long-term publicity campaigns against the expansion of airport Schiphol and business parks and promoting organic products in supermarkets throughout the 90s and 00s, and in this way increasing their influence in the country over time (Cramer, 2014; Milieudedefensie, n.d.). In the new century, Milieudedefensie has a leading role in the national climate movement but also gains international attention by becoming more involved with international climate issues like air pollution, the meat industry and addressing the responsibilities of major polluting companies (Milieudedefensie, n.d.). The climate summit held in 2000 in The Hague as well as multiple legal cases against Shell in which Milieudedefensie is involved are followed internationally.

A new wave of social mobilizations that started around 2010 destabilized the environmental movement's support of this ecological modernization, however (Cramer, 2014). This new wave of protest, also referred to as a cycle of contention in which there is intensified activity and new political opportunities for the social movement (Tarrow, 2011), reflects the sustained interaction, between the Dutch climate movement and the authorities by, in this case, reacting to the environmental policies characterized by ecological modernization that had dominated politics for some time. This new protest wave marked the beginning of the emergence of a bottom-up climate movement of citizen's initiatives (Cramer, 2014), which was followed by a new generation of organizations focused on direct-action, like Code Rood, Fossil Free Netherlands, Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion.

Here, Della Porta's (2012) argument for the importance of (dis)trust in democracies that hold authorities accountable for the policies they create is evident. The Dutch climate movement reflected society's increasing distrust in the government's environmental approach, and created a counterdemocracy in which bottom-up action empowered and gave people hope that influencing the status quo in politics is possible as well as created a space in which trust could be rebuilt (Della Porta, 2012). Established environmental organizations, like NGO's such as Greenpeace and Milieudedefensie, were also affected by this new development as they increasingly reoriented themselves towards citizen mobilization (Cramer, 2014). Additionally, the emergence of the grassroots movement also resulted in an increase of critical voices about inclusion and diversity in the grassroots and institutionalized environmental organizations. The emergence of this 'climate justice' movement has started to unsettle the ecological modernization discourse which still dominates the climate movement in the Netherlands today, as an emphasis is being put on systemic change, the uneven impacts and responsibilities of climate change and the intersections with social justice issues (Cramer, 2014).

As a grassroots movement that argues for radical systems change, Extinction Rebellion is often understood to be a part of this new movement. As the name hints at however, Extinction Rebellion has claimed to go beyond, and transcend politics as we know it by breaking with a climate movement that has failed in fulfilling its mission. To better understand these claims and what they mean for the movement's understanding of the climate problem as well as the consequent approach of this understanding, it is useful to address the origin story of this movement in some more detail.

Origins of Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion was the result of extensive discussions between a small group of activists, academics and friends, including Roger Hallam and Gail Bradbrook (Extinction Rebellion, 2019; Taylor, 2021), both unorthodox environmentalists. Bradbrook, who had worked on various social justice campaigns but had become disillusioned by the lack of political progress the groups had made, concluded that she was missing important information on how to bring about meaningful change. In March 2016, she travelled to Costa Rica, where she took some powerful psychedelic drugs hoping to find the 'codes for social change' in her hallucinogenic

trip. A couple months after she returned to the UK, she met Hallam, where they endlessly discussed the unfolding environmental crisis, the seeming inability of the current system to do be honest about it and about theories on how to transform politics. These conversations with Hallam, a farmer who was also researching a PhD about political activism, continued over the following months, along with a small group of like-minded people who were led by two questions: why had the climate movement failed up until that point to stop climate change, and how were they going to stop it? After a long time of research on organizational systems, collaborative working styles, momentum-driven organizing and direct-action campaigning as well as their own site research, in April 2018, the idea of Extinction Rebellion first came up (Taylor, 2021).

Then came the work of building a movement from scratch. A presentation titled *Heading For Extinction* was developed, which became known as ‘the talk’ (Taylor, 2021). This presentation (see Figure 3) urgently outlined the scale of the environmental and ecological crisis and the severe consequences of inaction (“The Truth” – Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019a), and ended with outlining and explaining Extinction Rebellion’s belief that if enough ordinary people took to the streets in peaceful protests, or civil disobedience, radical change would be possible. This second part of the presentation was later turned into a separate presentation called *And What To Do About It or Act Now* (“Act Now” – Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019b). As Hallam told a journalist from *The Guardian* (2021) in the early days of the movement, Extinction Rebellion explicitly did not want to be an online phenomenon that could lose popularity as easily as gain it. Instead, the movement was built by volunteers going into their own communities to inform and recruit using the presentations mentioned above (Taylor, 2021).



Figure 3: Slides from the *Heading For Extinction* PowerPoint presentation

Finally, on October 31st, 2018, Extinction Rebellion formally launched their first big campaign with a Declaration of Rebellion (see Appendix B) outside the Houses of Parliament in London. Five months later, in April 2019, came the protest that the movement had been working towards since its foundation. Thousands of people occupied important sites across London for almost two full weeks (Extinction Rebellion, 2019, Taylor, 2021). Many people were arrested, but the protests were peaceful and respectful, often filled with joy. These protests turned Extinction Rebellion into an important global movement. Since then, in a small amount of time, hundreds of Extinction Rebellion groups have been established in countries across the

world, including the branch in the Netherlands, which was set up only months after XR's founding. In general, the Extinction Rebellion branch in the Netherlands has adopted the UK's aims, goals and key demands (Extinction Rebellion, 2019; Extinction Rebellion NL, 2020) and in conversations with various Dutch rebels, the UK branch continues to be a source of inspiration and guidance for many of the activists of the Dutch branches I talked to.

The presentations *Heading For Extinction* and *What To Do About It* are, in adapted forms, still given regularly today by the different branches of Extinction Rebellion worldwide to spread information and grow the movement. The following sections will adopt the presentation's structure by first addressing Extinction Rebellion's view on climate change, or what it means to 'tell the truth', as well as Extinction Rebellion's aims and the demands from the (Dutch) government. As the framing approach explains, frames can help us understand how activists construct as well as interpret certain information by attaching certain definitions and characteristics to people or conflicts (Olsen, 2014). They attribute blame for these things and show alternative ways of reaching certain goals (Della Porta & Parks, 2014). Activists in Extinction Rebellion also engage in framing by constructing frames that support their interpretation of the climate issue, attributing blame, and showing alternative paths. The following section will go into their interpretation of the truth and the frames they construct, which is analyzed using framing theory in the subsequent section.

Telling The Truth: Heading for Extinction

“Scientists have warned us for decades: we’re facing an unprecedented climate- and ecological crisis. We’re heading towards the sixth mass extinction, of which humans are the cause, and our governments do too little to protect the Earth, her inhabitants and their future” (“Why do we rebel - Extinction Rebellion NL”, 2021).

The problem, as presented in the *Heading For Extinction* presentation (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019a) as well as on the Extinction Rebellion website (“Why We Rebel” – Extinction Rebellion, n.d.- a), is clear and urgent: the way humans live causes the CO₂ levels in the atmosphere to rise, pollutes large parts of the planet and drives away nature, leading to grave consequences for all living things on the planet. One rebel, Henk, who often presents the Introduction to Extinction Rebellion talk and refers to himself jokingly as a ‘pretty good doomsday prophet’ explains what he covers in the first half of the talk:

“The climate problem is initially addressed in the following way: what do we know is happening now, followed by what uncertainties are there and what things do we know will happen based on science. Then we discuss what should happen to avoid these problems followed by what is being done at this moment in that regard. We emphasize that the difference between these things, what should be done and what is being done at the moment, is alarming because we are doing way way, way too little” (October 13th, 2020; Utrecht).

The ‘what we know is happening now’ and ‘what we know will happen’ information, is based on a special report on the systemic effects of 1,5 degrees Celsius increase released in 2018 by the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (IPCC, 2018) among other scientific reports and articles which Extinction Rebellion refers to and links on their website. There are two sharp consequences of a rise in CO₂ in the atmosphere. First, the temperature on Earth is rising and, if nothing is changed, the so-called ‘tipping points’ will be triggered after which radically reducing CO₂ emissions will not be able to stop the process of warming anymore. Second, is the serious threat and increasing numbers of extinction of all living species on Earth. The consequences of this climate and ecological crisis for humankind are grave, as humans are dependent on stable temperatures and moderate weather. The way this crisis is

headed will lead to millions of people who will have to flee and lose their homes, a higher risk of conflicts and wars, failing crops and more vulnerability to diseases (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019a; Extinction Rebellion, n.d.- a). For many people that join the movement the information above about climate change and its impending consequences is not new. Ivo, a rebel whose first contact with Extinction Rebellion was at one of these Heading For Extinction Talk says:

“I have been worried about the climate for years, about that so little happens and the destruction of the climate. From a young age I noticed that we take more from the Earth than we can get back. You can see that that will go wrong” (October 10th, 2020; online).

What many rebels have mentioned that has changed their reception of this information however, is how Extinction Rebellion consciously chooses to embrace an explicit sense of urgency in its messaging on the climate issue and avoids conveying what it calls ‘false hope’ about the gravity of the problem, which it accuses other climate movement and informational presentations of doing. This messaging is not only apparent in its introduction talk, but also on Extinction Rebellion’s website, on its posters, banners and in its slogans. Aron, for example, remembers that what first caught his attention at his first Extinction Rebellion action and convinced him to join the movement was the crystal clear black and white banner that read: ‘Climate change: we’re fucked’ (paraphrased from interview, October 26th 2020, online).

This way of storytelling and framing the climate issue is a deliberate one that makes Extinction Rebellion different from other climate movements that always try to convey a sense of hope. Instead, various feelings connected to climate change like grief, anger, sadness and frustration are embraced in the movement, as will be discussed later on. The urgent sense of being (almost) too late to prevent climate catastrophe dominates the atmosphere and framing in the movement.

“There’s always a lot of talk about us having a certain amount of time left. But I mean, I feel like it’s kind of already too late. Because I think 2019 was the time when we could have kept it below 1.5. So we’re already above that. So it’s only going to get worse... There’s certain temperatures where there can’t be any life on Earth anymore... There’s really no time left” (Helen, August 10th, 2020, Utrecht).

While trying to avoid conveying false hope, Extinction Rebellion does however believe that “there is still time to change this story” (“Why We Rebel” - Extinction Rebellion NL, 2020b) through radical system change. According to the IPCC, reducing carbon emissions by 45% before 2030 and reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 should avoid a rise of 1,5 degrees Celsius. Consequently, Extinction Rebellion urges for a radical change in lifestyle and interaction with the Earth by living within certain ecological boundaries and by building new systems that are aimed at regeneration instead of profit. Importantly, they believe that no individuals are to blame and that we live in a ‘toxic system’ (Principle’s and Values number 8), therefore addressing the radical change they seek at a system level. The answer to the question ‘Why do we rebel’ on the website is therefore answered in the following way: “We have no other choice. We rebel against the toxic systems that brought us here. We rebel for the future we want. We rebel because it’s our responsibility to act. Nothing is impossible, we can still write the story we want. We can make a difference if we stand together: make a positive change and build a beautiful future for everyone” (“Why We Rebel” – Extinction Rebellion, n.d.- a).

Answering the same question, Ella answers: “

I want to help create bottom-up change and I think XR is pretty developed in comparison with other activist organizations who look more at one-issue problems instead of looking at the issues in the whole system. Also, the view of having to be the

change ourselves, and creating new cultures ourselves really attracted me to XR” (October 24th, 2020, telephone).

Aron said the following about his realization that system change was the answer:

“I didn’t consciously choose to join XR or anything, it was more like that at a certain moment I just realized that companies weren’t going to solve the problem. And that the sustainable innovation I was pursuing was not really the solution, but that we were going to need social change. At the time I had an activist friend who posted a lot about climate change on social media. So then I thought, okay if I’m not going to sell solar panels, let’s see what she’s doing...” (October 26th, 2020, online).

So, the belief that it is necessary to go beyond the known approaches and develop new ways of fighting for climate and addressing it that goes beyond single-issue and looks in a more systematic way that also includes the social aspect that this change needs is what attracted and attracts rebels to Extinction Rebellion.

In pursuing the radical system change that Extinction Rebellion believes is necessary to minimize the damage of climate change, Extinction Rebellion targets (inter)national governments. On their website, Extinction Rebellion Netherlands states that the Dutch government is refusing to introduce the necessary policies to keep the citizens safe and instead choose to help the industries that are harming the environment and the people, showing that the government fails to understand their perceived urgency of the environmental crisis (Extinction Rebellion NL, 2021). In failing to take the necessary action to protect its citizens from (future) danger, Extinction Rebellion declares the bonds of the social contract between the government and its people to be null and void (see Figure 4) (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019).

“When you read about the social contract – and I totally agree- that the government like has an obligation to protect us as citizens and as they don’t honor this, that gives us the right to disobey their laws. So yeah, I find it justified to do so” (Aria, October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

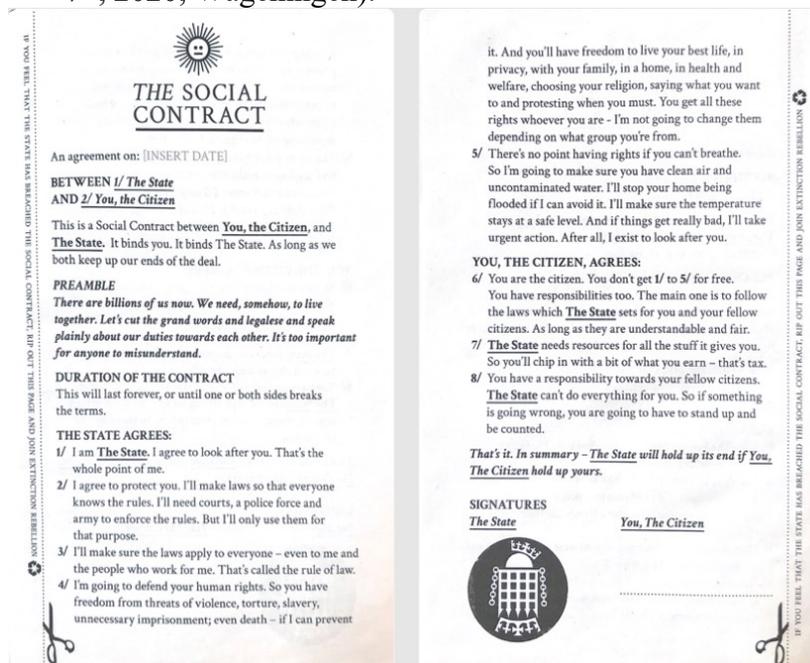


Figure 4: The Social Contract (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019)

Della Porta’s studies (2012) show that in a democracy, the component of (dis)trust is very important as it holds authorities accountable for their policies. By making claims on injustices in society and in this way expressing their lost trust in the elected officials, social movements can be seen as forms of organized distrust, or a counterdemocracy (Della Porta, 2012). The declaring of the social contract between a government and its citizens to be broken is a concrete example of this broken trust, and in doing so, Extinction

Rebellion not only challenges institutions but arguably also creates a space in which they hope

to rebuild trust and create alternative democratic systems. How this is done in Extinction Rebellion will be discussed later in Extinction Rebellion’s third demand.

Aims and Demands

The urgency in the interpretation of the climate and ecological crisis and its devastating effects by Extinction Rebellion, supported by scientific research by the IPCC (2018), are reflected in the urgent nature of Extinction Rebellion’s messaging and framing. Additionally, Extinction Rebellion attributes blame and responsibility for this crisis primarily at the door of the government and by discarding the social contract between government and citizens, a space is created in which critical subjects can rebel as well as rebuild trust. All of this is reflected in Extinction Rebellion’s three main demands (This Is Not A Drill, p. 11), often referred to in short as: tell the truth, act now, and go beyond politics (or let the people decide) (see Figure 5). Below, these three demands are elaborated further.



Figure 5 - Extinction Rebellion's Three Demands

1. **“The government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change”**

Extinction Rebellion blames governments and politicians for ignoring and understating the warnings that climate scientists and activists have been giving about the climate and ecosystems breaking down for centuries. By playing down the problem and making empty promises, Extinction Rebellion claims that they have kept up an illusion of false safety and time to fix it. Only by facing the severity of the crisis through a declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and active and honest communication about the fast and fundamental changes in society and economy that are needed, Extinction Rebellion believes the government

can still uphold its constitutional duty to protect its citizens and the environment ('Our Demands - Extinction Rebellion NL, 2021).

While Extinction Rebellion believes that the first step in taking this responsibility starts with the acknowledgment of governments on various levels of the fact that we are in a climate crisis through the declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, many people I talked to both in- and outside of the climate movement also see it as a very symbolic action. Many cities in the Netherlands, including Amsterdam, Groningen, Haarlem, Utrecht, Nijmegen and Rotterdam have already declared such an emergency (Klimaatcoalitie, n.d.), but such declarations are often perceived void without consequent action inside the movement as some activists have shared with me, and concerning to others outside of it (Ruiz-Campillo, Castán Broto & Westman, 2021).

Finally, Extinction Rebellion's explicit targeting of the government and politicians in their demands and in their actions, as was evident especially in the beginning of the movement and as is expressed in their communications, has seemed to broaden to include destructive individual companies in the private sector as well. While Extinction Rebellion has not officially addressed this broadening of its focus in for example their demands, many actions are increasingly organized by Extinction Rebellion groups throughout the world that target specific companies, instead of only the governments. There seem to be discussions about this change in strategy being held in many branches, a discussion Marvin has also not made up his mind about when reflecting on the September Rebellion organized in Amsterdam in 2020 in the Zuidas, the business district of Amsterdam:

"I had to get used to the idea of targeting the Zuidas because it's not the government anymore, but businesses. But on the other hand...well I haven't made up my mind about it yet but it is also safe and easy to always only target the government. I mean, we know what other destructive power structures exist, so is it just cold feet that you don't target them? Or is it just the best strategic decision there is? I don't know, I'm still making up my mind" (Marvin, October 27th, 2020, online).

So, while the demand still specifically focusses on the government, companies are increasingly targeted in actions to force them to take responsibility as well.

2. "The government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2025"

In Extinction Rebellion's view, the opportunity for a slow and more gradual transition to a way of life in which human activity does not destroy ecosystems and communities around the world is wasted after decades of hesitation and no action. Therefore, to prevent avoidable suffering, Extinction Rebellion demands that the government set immediate binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop environmental degradation by 2025 ('Our Demands - Extinction Rebellion NL, 2021). Under the Paris Agreement, 184 countries made pledges to reduce carbon emissions by 2030, five years later than Extinction Rebellion's demanded aim. They claim that the Dutch government's action to the crisis has been far from adequate, as it does not meet its own reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions. While they acknowledge that their demand is 'a challenge' they do believe that it is necessary to act fast ('Our Demands - Extinction Rebellion NL, 2021).

Furthermore, the demands explicitly address the importance of taking the most vulnerable groups in the Netherlands and worldwide into account in this transition to a zero-emissions economy. They emphasize that the climate crisis has disproportionately great effects on poor and marginalized communities worldwide. In the Netherlands, Extinction Rebellion recognizes and points at the country's historical and current responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions

and environmental damage. In addition to the Netherland's prosperity and technological opportunities, Extinction Rebellion NL argues that the Netherlands should take a leading role in the transition to ensure its fairness and equitability ('Our Demands - Extinction Rebellion NL, 2021).

This perspective is in line with the climate justice stream in which Extinction Rebellion exists, which frames or rather reframes mainstream debates around climate change towards more critical attention to its social impacts, outcomes, and justice concerns. Climate justice scholarship, generally speaking, shows how climate change is not just a science, techno-managerial or financial issue, but demonstrates how it is also a moral and justice one (Sultana, 2022). In other words, it looks at how climate change affects people differently, disproportionately and unevenly and rectifies the consequent injustices in fair and equitable ways through various forms of climate reparations (Burkett, 2009; Sultana, 2022). Extinction Rebellion's perspective on the Netherland's responsibility in the climate change issue especially regarding justice and reparations therefore supports the critical climate justice perspective, in which a strong justice frame is identified from which the movement interprets and strategizes.

3. "The government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizen's Assembly on climate and ecological justice."

Focusing again on the failure of bodies of government to act in response to the climate and ecological crisis, Extinction Rebellion's loss of trust is also reflected in their third demand, in which an alternative way of initiating a rapid and equitable transition is put forward. According to Extinction Rebellion, a due mandate by the Dutch Parliament shall help a randomly selected, representative group of citizens that are appointed as a Citizen's Assembly, to consider appropriate public policies to achieve Extinction Rebellion's required targets by 2025. This Citizen's Assembly will be informed by experts and stakeholders and under competent supervision, these smaller groups of people will deliberate openly and ultimately decide on proposals for concrete policies. By proposing to go 'beyond politics' in this way, this demand makes the movement stand out from others.

This Citizen's Assembly is expected by Extinction Rebellion to break the impasse in the transition to a new system. Extinction Rebellion argues that the corporate lobbying efforts have had powerful influence on politics as well as politicians' dependency on positive media coverage to get re-elected. By empowering citizens to take the lead in this, it also allows politicians to take radical actions without political retaliation and therefore gives a voice to groups that are usually excluded from the decision-making processes. Free from political influence and based on balanced scientific advice, this group of people is argued to be able to make well-considered decision that serve the public interest.

Examples of situations in which this democratic instrument has been successful further strengthen their case. Countries including Belgium, Ireland, India, and Poland have realized ambitious goals and progressive policies in this way, and Extinction Rebellion Netherlands claims that it is especially suitable to Holland's traditionally participatory political culture.

The proposal of radical system change and the three demands are the concrete results of Extinction Rebellion's interpretation of available information surrounding the climate crisis and form the foundation of the Extinction Rebellion movement, something the movement continuously refers to. Below, the framing processes regarding Extinction Rebellion's understanding of the climate issue are analyzed in more detail using framing theory.

Framing: Climate Emergency

Emergency Framing

Extinction Rebellion does not shy away from telling the alarming truth about climate change as they interpret it just as it is, by adopting and using “climate emergency” framing. Without sugarcoating the facts or offering feel-good false solutions, the main sentiment that prevails in all their messaging, like in Figure , is one an alarmist and urgent one, steeped in a belief that we are almost too late, if not already too late, to make a significant change and avoid more climate and ecological destruction. Just like other climate-oriented organizations and movements, Extinction Rebellion’s interpretation of the issue of climate change is based on various scientific sources, like the IPCC’s reports, among others. However, in conveying their interpretation to (future) members through presentations and other messaging both on- and offline, Extinction Rebellion deliberately adopts an alarming tone, while safely creating a space in which the related emotions are welcomed.



Figure 6 Before it's too late...

Crisis scholarship has been emerging since the middle of the last century, but only recently has ‘climate emergency’ become a global declaration. In 2019, also the birth year of Extinction Rebellion, climate change framing shifted dramatically when “climate emergency” entered mainstream discourse. Until that point, the climate issue had often been framed as the “climate risk” which connoted a future issue. The emergency framing conveys more immediate danger or threat to people, ecosystems, natural resources etc. (McHugh, Lemos & Morrison, 2021). There is also power in choosing the word ‘emergency’ over ‘crisis’ because the latter had been used to describe a broad range of negative situations or threats including public relations while the former tends to describe more urgent and impactful situations like natural disasters or medical emergencies. Describing something as an emergency implies that it has properties of danger and immediacy, and often unexpected in location or timing (Markusson et al., 2014, p. 282; McHugh, Lemos & Morrison, 2021). While Extinction Rebellion is supported by many in academic and activist circles that believe that such an emergency framing is helpful for the advancement of climate awareness and action and demands a historical transformation, others raise various concerns about this type of framing and its possible effects (McHugh, Lemos & Morrison, 2021).

The concerns raised is that this emergency discourse conveys the idea that we have a very limited and closing window of time to address climate change issues, which results in the end of civilization if we fail, or in other words, they are overly deterministic. Another concern is that emergency framing might not be sufficient to motivate political actors in setting urgent climate targets that are increasingly unlikely to be met, which might result in the frame losing salience. Finally, climate emergency framing can signal the need for emergency politics that encourage ‘states of exception’ that operate outside of established democratic processes and in the same process can result in the neglect of other issues that contribute to human wellbeing (McHugh, Lemos & Morrison, 2021). However, for Extinction Rebellion, this state of exception that goes beyond the established democratic processes is exactly what is needed, and emergency framing can trigger swift action and is therefore an important tool for rapid social mobilization.

Extinction Rebellion's first demand, which calls for governments to declare a climate emergency, shows the importance of this emergency framing in the movement and its goals. In their study Ruiz-Campillo, Castán Broto & Westman (2021) understand these declarations as 'the culmination of social movement's efforts to raise the climate change profile in public policy. Climate emergency discourse brings together multiple constituencies, including established environmental movement, direct action groups (such as Extinction Rebellion), and a rapidly-growing international youth movement (Fridays For Future)". As mentioned before, Extinction Rebellion's motivation behind the demand for a declaration of emergency goes beyond raising the climate change profile in public policy to also forcing the government to uphold their constitutional duty in protecting their citizens and the environment. The study by Ruiz-Campillo et al (2021) focusses on the motivations and intended outcomes of 300 of such declarations of climate emergency and while the authors doubt that such declarations will generate new forms of quick and transformative action in fighting climate change after their analysis, they do signal new and more local political interactions in this fight. The declarations also have a performative power, they add,



Figure 7: Extinction Rebellion Utrecht Uithof 2022

in that local governments in this way commit to being held accountable for their decisions (Ruiz-Campillo, Castán Broto & Westman, 2021). While these results do not fully support Extinction Rebellion's intended goal of radical system change with the declarations, the increasing adoption and popularity of such declarations show that an emergency framing can be successful in changing the political landscape of the fight against climate change.

Strategic framing processes- Motivations to join the movement

A collective action frame like climate emergency fulfills its three core framing tasks – diagnostic, prognostic and motivational (Benford and Snow (2000): the problem is identified in and based on scientific research, it is suggested through the three concrete demands aimed at the government how this problem should be solved, and it encourages action to draw attention to or solve this emergency. The climate emergency framing as used by Extinction Rebellion serves them in multiple ways. The identification of especially the strategic and contested processes of this frame are interesting here. Strategic framing processes are deliberative and goal directed as frames are developed and deployed to achieve a specific purpose. This could be to recruit new movement members, or to mobilize followers or to obtain resources among other goals.

Extinction Rebellion puts a lot of effort into connecting their interests and interpretative frames like climate emergency with potential participants and members as well as movement donors. These strategic framing processes collectively form the movement's frame alignment model (Benford & Snow, 2000), and gives insight into the different framing tactics that the movement employs. One of these processes is frame bridging, or: "the linking of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem. Bridging can occur between a movement and individuals, through the linkage of a movement organization with an unmobilized sentiment pool or public opinion cluster, or across social movements" (Benford & Snow, 2000, 624) In the case of Extinction Rebellion, bridging occurs by addressing a sentiment pool, or public opinion cluster of very concerned citizens who

have not yet been mobilized. The group they mostly target seem to be people who are already familiar with the information around the climate crisis, acknowledge in varying degrees the severity of it and experience feelings related to this concern, and are willing to do something, or more than what has been done so far. The climate emergency frame captures the honesty, urgency and willingness for action that convinces many people to align themselves with the movement. Bridging is just one of many different

So, Extinction Rebellion does not try to reach the whole population, but targets the small portion that is already familiar with and concerned about the issue and, making use of climate emergency framing, tries to connect with this part of the population to convince them of the urgency of the issue and persuade them to take action; to mobilize them. Aron, who is part of the national communications circle says:

“A lot of our communication does not reach the normal citizens, let’s start there. So I mean, half of the Netherlands sees you, but doesn’t hear you. It’s only a small group – so not people in XR but the people who are just outside of that shell - that hear our message. And I think currently they are receiving that message well, as in, I think they are starting to see that our work is necessary...[A newspaper poll] says that 14% of the population feel that it is exactly what should be done...So I think our messaging should focus itself on: ‘I’m glad you understand and agree, but now it’s time to join in the action’” (October 26th, 2020, online).

The idea of climate emergency influences many motivations for people to join Extinction Rebellion. In my interviews with members of Extinction Rebellion many (but not all) of the motivations mentioned illustrate that Extinction Rebellion’s climate emergency collective action frame directly and indirectly plays a big role in member’s motivation to join the movement. By framing the climate as an emergency, Extinction Rebellion aligns its ideology with important elements of activists’ motivations to join the movement. Extinction Rebellion’s frame alignment model therefore seems to be relatively successful. Below, five popular motivations of which elements are linked to Extinction Rebellion’s emergency framing are illustrated through rebels’ experiences.

One motivation for joining Extinction Rebellion is the movement’s clear and straightforward framing of the climate emergency and not making this issue smaller than it is. Being honest about the gravity of the problem is perceived by many people joining the movement to be convincing, refreshing and relatable. Such is also the case for Aron:

“What convinced me about XR was the power and honesty of their story. Like yeah: ‘climate change: we’re fucked...I always call XR ‘knuffel radicalen’ (huggable radicals). So they’re really radical but also very accessible, at least in my perspective. Radically telling the truth like yes we are fucked. Period. And we are going to have to do our best to fight that. I think that’s very clear” (October 26th, 2020, online).

Often, there is an already present and growing awareness and concern among new members about the climate issue which results in constant feelings of stress, frustration and/or anger. These feelings are often combined with uncertainty about how to act on them. The urge to want to act NOW and DO something about the urgent issue of climate change and in this way address these negative feelings often motivate rebels to join the movement.

Lotte expresses it like this:

“I just cared [about the climate]... I care about it a great deal. Yeah. I see when people say that they don’t want to do anything because their own individual action is not going to count. Because it should be up to the huge corporations, governments. And I see that. But it’s also just like, personal fulfilment. I just feel so much better when I do something that could potentially help the world. So it’s important, I think, not only

doing things that are gonna count, but it's also for your own mental health that you're doing something for the world”.

She elaborates:

“And taking action in the way XR does I think it's also important, but also you have to think for yourself. You don't have to go on the streets and be arrested if that's not your thing. If you don't believe in it, or you don't feel comfortable, you can just, I don't know, craft strategies or think with people or go through regenerative culture and help people deal with climate anxiety, that's already huge. But you know, it really is at the end of the day, it really is up to big corporations, to those fricking politicians who are just making lots of money from this. And it's, you know, when you start thinking about it, it's really depressing. So doing something, you can at least think less about that. At least you feel like you put your frustrations somewhere, you direct them somewhere. So I think it's just better for your own wellbeing when you do something about it and not only think about it 24/7 and be frustrated at the world and at yourself”(October 8th, 2020, Utrecht).

Similarly, Fiona shares:

“I notice that it [XR] is something my energy flows to easily. I really enjoy trying to do something with likeminded people, even though I'm quite pessimistic about the change we will actually make. But still it is nice to be able to do something. To feel like at least you're doing something” (November 5th, 2020, online).

Aron adds:

“XR's narrative is that the time for talking is over and it's time for action. That narrative resonated with me. It's resolute and decisive, but also well thought out when you look at the demands and stuff” (October 26th, 2020, online).

So, moving beyond a passive state to a necessary active state in which action is taken is something Extinction Rebellion encourages, which resonates with many (new) members.

Another motivation related to this, is the agreement with Extinction Rebellion's statement that efforts to make a change in the climate change fight up until now like petitions, marches and politics have proven to not be enough (anymore). The urgency behind the climate emergency requires steps and actions that until now have not been taken; what has been done has not been and will not be enough anymore.

When trying to explain to people why she chose to become active (in Extinction Rebellion), Aria often encounters people who disagree with the movement ('s approach).

“I often ask them: ‘so what would you do?’. We are now deep in a climate crisis and action, yeah, it's really time for action. Do you have another idea? And sometimes they say something like a petition, or a march. And then I think and say that we've been doing that for 40 years now, and I see little change. So I tell them there really is no other way” (October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

As Aron shares, this belief that the *'time for talking, petitions and marches is over'* is a strong motivation to join Extinction Rebellion who promotes and facilitates actions that go beyond this. Another motivation is therefore also that the movements provides a 'well thought-out toolkit' on what to do about the climate issue and about the feelings mentioned before that includes detailed instructions on how to go about this. An emergency requires specific and new approaches, a toolkit that Extinction Rebellion readily provides. Marvin compares this clarity to other climate organizations:

“I think Extinction Rebellion is very clear in a certain way. They have a clear vision about their strategy, about the strategy: civil disobedience as the way to enforce change. And three demands, very clear demands that everything revolves around. I think that clarity is hard to find in other groups and organizations. They might be

clear, but in a more philosophical way. I think XR is clear in a very practical way” (October 27th, 2020, online).

Aron adds:

“Extinction Rebellion’s foundation seemed to be solid. Take those three demands for example. They’re very clear, simple, but also very radical. And the same goes for the principles and values, which are very well thought-out. That very clear foundation tries to make radical almost mainstream, if you know what I mean. It makes it accessible... Extinction Rebellion puts forward a very good plan about what to do. They tell the truth and then have an ambitious plan to back that up, which can make an impact” (October 26th, 2020, online).

So, Extinction Rebellion provides a welcome practical and well-thought-out toolkit which people who want to take action can use to steer their activism.

One final motivation for joining Extinction Rebellion which is influenced by the climate emergency framing is the freedom and possibility that the movement and its organizational structure gives. Within the movement’s 10 principles, it is found that anything is possible. This flat organizational structure is helpful in decision making and quick and creative response in perceived urgent situation. Climate emergency framing supports this kind of organizational structure and people who are attracted to the freedom and possibility to make quick change, or who do not want to join established organizations with hierarchical structures are therefore motivated to join the Extinction Rebellion. Fiona compares Extinction Rebellion with other more established organizations in this regard:

“I can tell you how nice it is that this is a real bottom-up organization where no one gets paid. So it’s not an established organization like for example Greenpeace or Milieudefensie who are structured differently I think. You can volunteer there as well, but there’s always a coordinator and so some kind of hierarchy. I really like that lack of hierarchy here” (November 5th, 2020, online).

Helen makes the same comparison with a similar conclusion:

“XR is really new so that’s a lot more freedom right now to figure things out however you want them. And the point of it is that it’s more decentralized. Not much of a hierarchy. I don’t know Greenpeace that way but I guess it’s an international organization so I’m assuming there’s hierarchy to an extent. I don’t know. To an extent also a bit more corporate, I suppose. A bit more of a business than what XR is trying to be” (August 10th, 2020, Utrecht).

“I think it’s awesome that everything is possible inside Extinction Rebellion. Well, not everything, but it’s such a flat organization and there is so much space for your own initiative. So if you think like oh there’s a possibility there for improvement or growth you can propose something and execute it. I think that’s awesome. That way of organizing, very flat, non-hierarchical, but still organized. It’s an interesting contradiction. There’s a lot of people tired of the hierarchy, and tired of organizing and yet we have a very clear role division, or mandates, that give people space and potential to do what they want. I want to be involved in this kind of organizing. It’s basically a revolution against the government. It contrasts strongly against – without wanting to derogate the work that organizations like GroenLinks and Milieudefensie do – these kinds of organizations that have and work in a certain existing and established structure. Extinction Rebellion can still do so much, it’s worldwide, it grows fast, so much is possible” (Marvin, October 27th, 2020, online).

As both Helen and Marvin's accounts show, Extinction Rebellion attracts people who see the advantages of such a non-hierarchical way of organizing and the freedom and possibilities it creates.

There were a couple of other strong motivations to join Extinction Rebellion that were not related to the climate emergency framing discussed in this chapter but which were often mentioned in my interviews and conversations and that I therefore want to include in this section. The non-hierarchical way of organizing mentioned above also results in a perceived accessibility that is advantageous for the movement as it motivates new rebels to join and find their place in the movement. The movement works hard to maintain this accessibility and puts a strong effort in warmly welcoming new members and guiding them in finding their role in the movement as well as creating a strong movement culture that binds members to the movement. Henk gives an example of how this is done in the Utrecht branch:

"In Utrecht they used to have this weekly meeting organized by Regenerative culture. It was more for fun, for bonding. So we'd have a vegan potluck, or we would have talks about a certain topic, that kind of stuff. Those kind of things are important, and maintaining contact with the other people is important. It hypes you up for the actions as well" (October 13th, 2020, Utrecht).

Also, many rebels often mention 'like-minded people' or 'likemindedness' when they explain what attracted them to and made them stay in the movement. Like Fiona, they state that "working with these like-minded people on fighting this problem' and organizing actions and building relationships with them are strong motivators for joining but especially staying in the movement. In this way, people are more deeply bound to the movement.

By framing the climate as an emergency, Extinction Rebellion aligns its ideology with important elements of activists' motivations to join the movement which are illustrated in the first five incentives for joining Extinction Rebellion stated above. Through communicating in a clear, direct and honest way about the climate situation, targeting an audience that is already familiar with and experiences strong negative feelings about this issue and is ready to take the necessary action, they prove that their emergency frame seems to align well with activists' experiences and thus the frame is relatively successful. Furthermore, the movement's non-hierarchical structure and the well-thought-out strategic toolkit they provide to future members are all supported by the framing of the climate issue as an emergency, for which these new structures and toolkits are necessary. Finally, unrelated to framing but an equally strong motivator, the like-mindedness of people in the movement and the movement's accessibility and culture can be identified as strong elements in how the movement binds its members to itself.

Contested framing processes

Looking at the politics of signification around the climate emergency frame helps to understand the challenges in the movements framing activities as a movement cannot just impose a certain frame on (groups of) people, but have to deal with anyone who is engaged in the collective action frame in some way and the challenges they might pose. These challenges may include counterframing from people outside the movement, disputes within the movement and the tension that may exist between discourses around collective action frames and collective action events (Benford & Snow, 2000).

The emergency dimension of the chosen climate emergency frame is exactly the aspect that movement opponents, the media and bystanders challenge in their counterframing activities.

While climate change as a phenomenon is generally accepted in society, the urgency in Extinction Rebellion’s diagnostic and prognostic framing as described above often seems to go too far for opponents, the media and bystanders. Counterframing against the climate emergency framing specifically revolves mostly around the active avoidance of this framing by the media, sarcastic use of it by movement opponents, or the justification of adopting antagonistic and radical views of the movement and its members by opponents and bystanders.

Independent journalist platform OneWorld (Van Den Berg, 2022) analyzed how the Dutch media frames the climate issue by tallying the use of different ways to frame this issue in six Dutch newspapers. Climate emergency was almost never used, while terms like ‘warming of the Earth’ and ‘climate change’ were more commonly used, followed in much smaller amounts by ‘climate crisis’ (Van Den Berg, 2022). The article also reveals that there are internal discussions in these media outlets about which words to use, however, there is caution about antagonizing readers, or losing objective credibility: ‘we are not activists’. The article further identified that the word ‘climate emergency’ and ‘climate disaster’ had been used sarcastically in a couple newspaper columns which critiqued left politics of taking too ‘extreme’ measures in the energy transition in the Netherlands (Van Den Berg, 2022).

Finally, movement opponents and critical bystanders engage in counterframing by reframing the movement and its members as ‘radicals’, ‘extreme leftists’, or ‘klimaatgekkies’ (climate crazies). This attempt to undermine and downplay the diagnostic and prognostic goals of Extinction Rebellion’s climate emergency frame is a perfect example of counterframing. By categorizing them as such, they don’t take them or the urgency of their interpretation of the problem seriously. Especially the word ‘klimaatgekkies’ is often used by critical bystanders and opponents at action to describe Extinction Rebellion rebels. The movement generally resists this labelling (see Figure 8) while others proudly wear badges with the word on their clothes (see Figure 9), embracing the passion they feel for the climate fight in this framing contest.



Figure 8: Proud 'klimaatgekkie' Bruijsje (@bruijsje_b.ruiz)



Figure 9: 'Klimaatgekkie' tweet

Framing contestation do not only take place between movements and their opponents but also internally (Bedford & Snow, 2000), also referred to as ‘frame disputes’. In the case of Extinction Rebellion, the climate justice framework which they adapt in their second demand as well as in their 10 values has caused internal discussions. The extension of the climate emergency frame beyond the primary interest of climate change to include the intersections of it with other issues such as indigenous, feminist and racial issues is a subject of continuous internal discussion in the movement. Questions arise about how far should the movement diverge from its primary concern to address these other struggles, about inclusivity, about the effect of such choices on strategy and efficacy of the movement. Marvin recaps this sentiment:

“For some people in the movement climate justice receives too little direct attention in the demands as we have them now. There are people who want it as a fourth demand in order to be able to refer to it more instead of leaving it as a small subtext on the second demand...Because all these struggles are so interwoven with the consequences of the ecological crisis that you cannot look at it without sort of being obliged to acknowledge these connections and fight for them too. It differs how people look at this and how much they want to emphasize this. So in the United States there was a conflict around this. I believe there’s now an Extinction Rebellion America and an Extinction Rebellion United States because one of the groups wanted to leave climate justice out completely and be a pure climate movement, while the other one thought it was extremely important to make the social justice component stronger as the core of the movement... So then you take minorities central in your narrative. But if you go purely for efficiency, it might be better to focus on the majority group and yeah...stay as apolitical as possible. While others say that’s impossible without maintaining the status quo and therefore being neoliberal, racist, patriarchal etcetera” (October 27th, 2020, online).

The example of the US branch of Extinction Rebellion shows that internal disputes about the different understandings of the diagnostic and prognostic roles of the climate emergency framing can differ greatly and transform a movement. While in the Netherlands these discussions are also regularly had, they do not seem as advanced as in the US.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified Extinction Rebellion to be a global citizen’s movement that is very concerned with the climate crisis which can be situated within the climate justice movement which has characterized the recent wave of climate mobilizations. The first sections of this chapter have laid out the history of climate activism in the Netherlands and described the origin story of the now global movement, that has its roots in the UK. Extinction Rebellion is built on a belief that if enough ordinary people take to the streets in peaceful protest, or civil disobedience, the radical system change that is necessary according to Extinction Rebellion to minimize the damage of climate change, would be possible. In pursuing this belief, Extinction Rebellion targets governments as they believe governments are failing to understand and communicate the urgency of the environmental crisis and it is their responsibility to protect its citizens from (future) danger. Extinction Rebellion demands governments to tell the truth of the urgency of the climate crisis, act now and accordingly, and let the people decide on climate issues through citizen assemblies.

When studying the movement through a theoretical framing lens, Extinction Rebellion has adapted and deploys a ‘climate emergency’ frame in which a sense of urgency and alarmism is deliberately used to discursive, strategic and motivational ends. This emergency framing, while increasingly mainstream, also describes Extinction Rebellion’s break with the climate movement as it justifies going above and beyond what others have done so far. Extinction Rebellion’s refusal to spread false hope or sugarcoat the truth in their presentations and demonstrations as a result of this, is one of the many motivations XR activists mention that motivated them to join the movement. The climate emergency frame has also been the target of counterframing efforts by opponents, as framing and emergencies are both contested processes that do not happen in a vacuum. Finally, the way a movement frames an issue does not necessarily lead to a specific choice about strategy but can greatly inform and motivate it. The following section will go into Extinction Rebellion’s repertoire.

5. A Civil Disobedient Repertoire

“This is an emergency and for emergency situations we need emergency action.” – Ban Ki-Moon, Former UN Secretary General

As the Former UN Secretary General’s quote above demonstrates, a movement’s strategy in their specific fight can often be deduced from the way they frame the issue. In case of emergency, emergency action is needed, as Extinction Rebellion would agree. This chapter therefore describes Extinction Rebellion’s theory of change, borrowing from co-founder Roger Hallam. It also describes some of the principles which everyone that acts in the name of Extinction Rebellion has to adhere to. This theory of change informs the non-violent disruptive, or civil disobedient actions that are the main character in Extinction Rebellion’s repertoire of contention. Some critical comments with regards to the exclusivity of this chosen tactic are also addressed. Finally, Extinction Rebellion’s organizational structure is described and explained as a form of prefigurative politics, and thus also part of the movement’s strategy in fighting climate change.

A Theory of Change

Extinction Rebellion is a decentralized and autonomous movement, which entails that anyone can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion, as long as they follow its ten principles and values (see Appendix C) (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.-b). The first principle has been addressed above, namely the shared vision of change in which the members of Extinction Rebellion want to create a world that future generations can live and thrive on, a different world. How this vision is achieved inform the other nine principles, of which many will be addressed here in varying detail. In order to do so, it is helpful to go back in time again to one of the founders of Extinction Rebellion, Roger Hallam.

Hallam emphasizes that conventional campaigning for the climate, like sending emails, signing online petitions, giving money to NGO’s and going on ‘A-to-B marches’, does not work. He respectfully observes that after years of this kind of campaigning, the necessary changes in slowing down climate change have not come about. The reason, according to Hallam, is capitalism, or as he puts it: “the rich and powerful are making too much money from our present suicidal course” (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2018). The only way to overcome this deep-rooted power is not through persuasion and information, but through disruption. This disruption needs to be non-violent (Principle 9) in order to create progressive and successful change, as the civil rights movement in the USA as well as the Indian independence movement have shown. He refers to model of non-violent disruption as the ‘civil resistance model’ (Extinction Rebellion, 2018; Taylor, 2020).

Extinction Rebellion’s theory of change leans heavily on research in the social sciences, and especially political scientist Erica Chenoweth’s studies, in which she claims that the nonviolent strategies are a very powerful way of shaping world politics. In her and Maria Stephan’s work called *‘Why civil resistance works’* (2008) they researched hundreds of campaigns in the last century, and found that nonviolent campaigns are twice as likely to achieve their goals as violent actions. While exact dynamics depend on many factors and situations, they show in their research that it takes around 3,5% of the population to actively participate in protests to ensure serious political change (Robson, 2019).

Roger Hallam has mentioned to be directly inspired by these findings and this research is also reflected in Extinction Rebellion's second principle: mobilizing 3,5% of the population to achieve system change (see Figure). Here, 'momentum-driven organizing' is mentioned as a way in which to achieve this. By integrating the best of structure-based organizing and mass protest, the momentum-driven organizing idea is believed to be able to build movements to a big scale that can achieve significant change. This process consists of pursuing active popular support, creating escalation in non-violent actions, and finally absorbing people into the movement smoothly with the help of a clear structure and organization.



Figure 10: Extinction Rebellion's theory of change on a banner: system change

In and outside the movement, many view this theory of change and the specific percentage doubtfully and critically. Many rebels understand it should not be taken too literally, such as Henk:

“That number is just the average of a specific dataset, so it shouldn't be taken too literally. It's not like at 3,5 percent poof magically all is good. No, it is just used to illustrate that we actually don't need the whole population to join us to address this problem. It's more an illustrative statement than a goal in itself I would say. That's why it's also not in our three demands” (October 13th, 2020, Utrecht).

The main critique is that the cases upon which the 3,5% claim is based have are not relevant or have no bearing on the fight for climate action (Berglund & Schmidt, 2020). The kinds of movements that the 3,5% research is based on are not comparable with the climate movement, and so the basis of this theory is unstable according to many.

However, while many acknowledge these critiques, they still believe in the power of this theory of change, as does Michael:

“We're trying to achieve a huge system change which has never been done. And for everybody, and not for just a segment of the population as it was with the suffragettes or civil rights movement, which are usually the comparisons, you know. So yeah, I do think that it's bullshit, like the 3.5 percent. But it gives an indication that we're not trying to convince everybody, we're trying to convince actually a minority to take action. And once we do that, we're going to create such a situation that it is worse for the government ignore us than to consider our demands” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

This theory of change thus informs the main tactic around which Extinction Rebellion organizes, and what they are most known for: non-violent direct actions. Since the Declaration of Rebellion, Extinction Rebellion has been non-violently disruptive globally with the goal of system change. In April 2019, members of hundreds of Extinction Rebellion groups that had been established in countries across the globe have signed up to block roads, shut down bridges to ultimately get arrested worldwide during the International Rebellion (Extinction Rebellion, 2019). In Pakistan, Extinction Rebellion marched through the capital, in the US they glued themselves to a bank, in Austria, they blocked roads while in Chile they participated in a lie-in in which people lay down in the middle of the street. In Ghana, finally, whistles were blown to sound the climate alarm. One of the events that received most attention took place in the UK itself, when Extinction Rebellion shut down five iconic locations in central London for ten days, delivering a program of speeches, discussions, and assemblies (Extinction Rebellion, 2019). During these days, other actions included shutting down fossil-fuel companies, blocking the roads around the British Treasury, and gluing themselves to the London Stock Exchange.

The goal was to cause as much economic disruption as they possibly could (Extinction Rebellion, 2019).

In the first year of their existence, the Extinction Rebellion branch in the Netherlands (NL) has also received attention in the public through various different actions. They blocked the Stadhouderskade with their bodies (see Figure 11) and the Blauwbrug in Amsterdam to announce their demands to the government; blocked the international court in The Hague because the court has not recognized ecocide as a punishable offence; and occupied Shell's headquarters because it is responsible for years of destroying the habitat of



Figure 11: Blockade at Stadhouderskade, Amsterdam

millions of people and animals worldwide. Citizens in cities and villages throughout the country participated in die-ins, in which citizens pretend to fall dead in a public space to gain attention for the climate problem, as well as read-ins, in which speeches and information is read aloud in big store chains responsible for exploitation and pollution. A large mourning procession was organized to express grief for the species which are quickly becoming extinct. Willem-Alexander, the king of the Netherlands, was forced to pay attention to Extinction Rebellion activists who threw themselves in the water in Amersfoort 'by the sea' to draw attention to the victims of the rising sea levels worldwide during his visit to the city (Extinction Rebellion NL, 2020). The cities of Amsterdam, Haarlem and Utrecht finally declared a state of environmental and ecological emergency after these actions, although no concrete policies have been developed since then. The following section will link these non-violent disruptive, or civil disobedient actions, to the repertoire of contention theory, with a focus on civil disobedience in particular.

Civil Disobedience

Tilly and Tarrow's most useful insight in their repertoire of contention theory is arguably the identification of how limited and regularly repeated a repertoire is, as a collective action repertoire is adapted by people in a specific point in time to fit the specific circumstances of that context, the reactions of others and the goal of the action. Especially when compared to the complete range of actions which are theoretically available and employable, these choices are very constrained (Tilly, 1977,1995; Tarrow, 1993). Extinction Rebellion has particularly emphasized the strategy of non-violent direct action, specifically civil disobedience, as the most important tactic in their repertoire since the very origin of the movement. This section will connect Extinction Rebellion's specific performance of civil disobedience and its justification to the theory. Some aspects of this tactic that Extinction Rebellion emphasize or handle in a particular way will be addressed followed by comments and critiques around this choice of strategy.

Extinction Rebellion's strategy and justification of choosing lawbreaking as their main tactic rely heavily on the history and literature of civil disobedience, and Rawlsian's perspectives in particular. Civil disobedience according to the widely accepted definition of John Rawls is a "*public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim*

of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government” (Rawls, 1971, 1999, p. 320). There are many challenges to Rawls’ conception of civil disobedience, but in his terms, disobedience requires the breaking of laws and rules and disobeying law enforcement.

Extinction Rebellion puts the emphasis in their tactics on disobedience through their peaceful confrontations with the police and explicit goal of arrests, making them disobedient. Also, according to Rawl’s understanding, civil disobedience has to be civil, or non-violent. Fighting climate change and pursuing climate justice in a nonviolent and public way, with respect for the civil rights of the majority and with goals that improve the common good, then also makes Extinction Rebellion’s tactic civil. Their willingness to accept the legal punishment, such as arrests, shows their fidelity to the law.

As a movement, Extinction Rebellion takes the civility part of civil disobedience particularly seriously by drawing on Gandhi’s spiritual notions of it. To participate in XR’s disobedient actions, activists are strongly encouraged to attend a special training session, or Non-Violent Direct Action (NVDA) training, where they learn how to remain calm under different kinds of pressure, relaxation techniques, and commitment to nonviolence under any circumstance. This emphasis on and commitment to nonviolence is also instrumental or, as Henk puts it, *“when you resist nonviolently, you attract and appeal to more people than through violent resistance”* (October 13th, 2020, Utrecht).

The abstractness of Rawlsian’s theorization however tells us nothing about the actual practice of civil disobedience, about the importance of specific contexts, actor’s motivations or how the tactic is adapted by actors as a tactic. Here, seeing action as a ‘performance’ or repertoire is more relevant as it places the meaning that actors negotiate and give to actions they participate in in the center of the analysis. Following a performative understanding of civil disobedience, the way activists develop and legitimize their own actions, the claims they make about those actions and the interactions around the actions that help to shape it are central to this study’s observations (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019).

Within the context of their actions, Extinction Rebellion activists can and do refer back to and re-signify historical and theoretical points of references (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019). As was already shown above, Gandhi is often mentioned in Extinction Rebellion’s discourse when discussing their emphasis on non-violence in their actions. Furthermore, Extinction Rebellion also actively builds on and refers to other celebrated movements and figures, although they also acknowledge differences. According to Michael, the choice of the civil disobedience tactic

“is based on comparisons with causes that are by no means comparable to what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to achieve a huge system change which has never been done. And for everybody, and not for just a segment of the population as it was with the suffragettes or civil rights movement, which are usually the comparisons that are made, you know” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

Even though the awareness of the differences between these movements and their environmental fight exists among many, a strong belief in the tactic prevails, caused by a strong sense of urgency around the issue. As the section about framing above has shown, the condition of urgency is articulated extensively by the movement to frame the issue and mobilize people, but it is also a key argument advanced by Extinction Rebellion to explain and legitimize the choice for their choice of tactic. Some rebels legitimize their choice to act disobediently in the following ways:

“So, October seventh was the first time I experienced it [civil disobedience]. It was really intense, because generally I am someone who follows the rules. I mean, I don't even bike through a red light. So you really need to have reached a level of urgency to participate in civil disobedience. So yeah, I did it, and it felt really good. Also because

if you read about the social contract, which I totally agree with, that the government has a duty to protect us as citizens, which they are not doing then we also have the right to not follow their rules. I think that's justified, even though it feels intense to break the law... We are in a climate emergency, we have to act now" (Aria, October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

"I liked that they [Extinction Rebellion] says like: other ways haven't worked you know. We can not keep being nice, we can not keep doing small scale actions that have no effect. It has to be like, because there is no other way" (Bella, November 5th, 2020, online).

"Extinction Rebellion is simultaneously trying something new and something that has been tried before. Something new because for this specific problem – the climate and ecological crisis – we tried all kinds of things that did not work. We tried to walk climate marches, we tried to sign petitions, we tried things like Greenpeace and Milieudefensie and such, who do great work but it is not enough because the problem still remains and we've not come any closer to solving it. So we have to do something new, that's actually the idea. And that something new is something that we know has already been tried for other subjects, and, in many cases, proven effective. That something is civil disobedience" (Henk, October 13th, 2020, Utrecht).

Civil disobedience is thus seen by Extinction Rebellion members to be a 'reasonable approach' given the state of urgency of the climate issue on the one hand. Additionally, the failure of institutional approaches to persuade states, businesses, the elite and the general public in the past and now to take the kind of action that could save the climate and ecological crisis is also mentioned as a common justification. In line with this reasoning, Ollitrault, Hayes and Sommier (2019), find that the original Rawlsian perspective that civil disobedience is an action of last resort, only usable when all other forms of actions provided by the democratic system have been exhausted, is challenged by the temporal requirement of the climate issue. In other words, for the climate issue there is not enough time to go through the democratic processes so choosing civil disobedience is choosing to take action in the present in order to short-circuit the decision process and try to speed things up (Ollitrault, Hayes & Sommier, 2019). Aron's perspective demonstrates this justification:

"No more petitions and asking politicians and that stuff. The time for talking is over, it's time for action and it's time to make that very clear. Yeah, that narrative really resonated with me" (October 26th, 2020, online).

The public nature of civil disobedience as named by Rawls as a key aspect of civil disobedience is also experienced by experts and rebels to be a great advantage this tactic has. Peter Kodde, cofounder of Stroomversnellers, a volunteer organization that helps progressive movements increase their impact, and currently working at Milieudefensie states:

"If you're looking at which forms of protest can make a lot of impact, then it's always that you either bring mobilize a great mass of people to the street, or you do something disruptive. And preferably both of course, but that is difficult". He continues: "With a disruptive action you create a counterforce that cannot be ignored. If you're only going on the streets with a sign that says 'I'm against this', then it's really easy for the authorities to just ignore you and continue with the plan. But if you occupy a coal mine or a tree that's about to be cut down, yeah, then they have to do something with you" (Peter, October 16th, 2020, telephone).

Rebel Aron adds to this:

“Why it [civil disobedience] is effective? Well, I think for a couple of reasons, but in the first place because you... With mass protests and mass civil disobedience you take the fight out of private conference rooms, out of Shell’s coal mines and into the public space. To a place where nobody can avoid us and where everyone has to feel like: hey this is about me, this is about the Netherlands, this is about our future. So if you’re protesting at Shell or in a coal mine, people can demarcate it, like that is there not here. If you’re protesting at the Ministry, people can think oh right the Ministry should do better. But if you’re standing in the middle of a crossroads in the middle of Amsterdam, then suddenly it’s about you and you are literally standing still for the climate and that’s just something that needs to happen” (October 26th, 2020, online).

So, the power of civil disobedience lies partly in the public performance of it, where it can no longer be ignored. Taking the fight out of the private and to the public sphere seems to be the aim of the disruptive non-violent actions organized by Extinction Rebellion.

Another aspect of civil disobedience is that it also helps to create a space for activists or other parties involved to have a say in the political sphere. Peter explains this: “

By being very radical and disruptive, you shift the overtone window and create a lot of space politically that you or others can then use. If you play that game well, it can be very effective and fruitful because you, well you’re suddenly not playing the game of the authorities anymore, you’re not following the rules they created to usually solve these kind of problems. The moment you do not let the rules stop you anymore, you’ll notice so much more is possible. As long as you don’t, either through internal dynamics or just how the public perceives you, get categorized as a bunch of radical crazies. Then you waste the space you created” (Peter, October 16th, 2020, telephone).

Here, Peter also touches upon an important element of civil disobedience actions, namely the perception of it to the public and the media’s role in this. What makes an action ‘public’ or open and an accountable action is the fact that activists are prepared to submit themselves to potential excessive force from opponents and policies, or as Extinction Rebellion rebels call it: ‘being arrestable’. It shows strong commitment from the activists that breaking the law requires and in general, it has strong symbolic value. This commitment and offering of the body also play a central role in media representation, as it helps to construct the action as a media event. Peter:

“It seems like - when you look at the media and the consequences of actions – it seems that the only that that gets some attention is civil disobedient actions” (October 16th, 2020, telephone).

Movements like Extinction Rebellion who use civil disobedience combine the discipline and solidarity in their non-violence actions to expose the opponent’s repression and show it in the worst possible light, hoping to shift opinions and power relationships in their favor in this way. When people see the dedication of the activists and the oppression of the authorities, they might withdraw their support and instead give it to the movement, that is the hope. In order for this to happen however, the situation has to be perceived as unjust, so Extinction Rebellion puts effort in effectively communicating that to the audience by creating an atmosphere that is joyful, colorful, and peaceful. The media construction of civil disobedient actions is not always reliably positive, as they are actors who have their own interests and agendas. To gain more control over public perception and media representations, activists often develop their own media, often social media, to document arrests and intimidation, coordinate their actions and reach a broader public. Extinction Rebellion intensively uses their own social media for these purposes and has a whole circle (workgroup) responsible for this.

As mentioned before when discussing the motivations for joining the movement, the clarity of Extinction Rebellion’s chosen tactic and justification for this tactic, as well as the organization

around it like the NVDA trainings are a major advantage that rebels saw in Extinction Rebellion when first joining the movement:

“Why I chose XR and not another movement? Uhm, I think because XR has got their hands on a very important tool, namely civil disobedience. And that tool is so strong, as in, it is really what we need right now to ensure action from the government. But it’s also a strong outreach tool, to get more people involved. You see it on the news, I hear my friends talk about it, that’s also how I got involved” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

“It just seemed to me that Extinction Rebellion had it all in order, had knowledge about it and just had a very big toolkit all thought out. So I thought, okay I can do something with this” (Ivo, October 10th, 2020, online).

Just like Marvin and Aron express in their motivation to join the movement, Ella and Ivo also express Extinction Rebellion’s philosophical and practical ‘toolkit’ as a convincing feature that the movement provides. They see the advantages of this toolkit not only for starting their own activism but also as an outreach tool.

While some rebels show great commitment to the movement and its disobedient tactic, others in the movement are more critical and doubtful about Extinction Rebellion’s choice of civil disobedience as main tactic and the way the movement and actions revolve around these types of actions. The following section will focus on the main critique: the issue of inclusivity of this tactic and in the movement in general.

Non- Inclusivity

In both academic as other online sources around Extinction Rebellion, an issue that comes up often and consistently is the issue of inclusivity in the movement. The focus of Extinction Rebellion on civil disobedience and arrests is seen as a stumbling block in the movement’s aim to be more inclusive as it alienates groups of people who for different reasons (feel that they) cannot participate in these types of tactics. In conversations with various rebels, it was also apparent that everyone has to some extent heard about this issue, while some are much more engaged and concerned about it than others.

What stands out immediately in the different Extinction Rebellion branches in the Netherlands is that they are not very diverse in terms of ethnic background, age and, less visible at first glance, level of education and social class. The first two characteristics are more obvious when looking at the rebels at Extinction Rebellion actions, meetings or workshops. Most people in the movement are white, and are also either Dutch or from a country in the Western hemisphere. The people of color stand out, as there are not many. While nationalities vary, which also has to do with the number of international (exchange) students who join the movement, they are all from other European countries or North America. The group is furthermore made up of mostly people between about 20 and 35 years old, almost all from the middle class. Many are students or people who have recently started working (observations, informal conversations, interviews). Michael similarly observes that focusing only on civil disobedience is the same as

“not being inclusive, because indeed, as you see on the streets it’s mainly people that are white, middle class, educated. So it’s not inclusive, nonviolent disobedience” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

While inclusivity in terms of ethnicity is most obvious at first glance, education and social class are also dimensions in which diversity in the movement is a problem. One rebel, himself a person of color comments:

“What I hear often from people in XR is that XR is too white. What I don’t hear anything about is that XR is too middle class. That there is too little attention for connecting with people from the middle class, people who are more worried about the next month, instead of the next decade because they’re trying to make ends meet. I think the gap there is significantly bigger than the gap in terms of ethnicity. That’s maybe too much from a personal perspective, but it’s how I experience it. There are not a lot of people in XR who come from an active working-class background, like carpenters, plumbers or... There’s just not many, for many reasons probably. So then I think that there’s a lot to say about how XR doesn’t take the perspectives of people of color into account, but I think people forget that a lot of people of color also belong to the working class. That there’s a gap there, and it’s connected to each other. So there are some people of color at XR, they are usually middle class like me” (Ivo, October 10th, 2020, online).

This issue of inclusivity has some similarities to the internal discussion that was described when discussing frame disputes. Extinction Rebellion, according to the principles and demands it sets at its foundation, wants to be an open and inclusive movement. However, at the same time, the issue that the movement seeks to address, its main focus, is the fight for the environment with the goal of avoiding a climate and ecological catastrophe through climate justice. The discussion is therefore again about how far the movement is willing to diverge from their focus on the fight for the environment to include the intersections this fight has with other (social) issues. Ella explains:

“First of all, I think that the theory of change we have now, the one of civil disobedience, that it is inherently a not completely inclusive theory of change. And that that is also not necessarily the goal. And that in itself is already a difficult discussion because... Of course we want to be as inclusive and as diverse as possible and reach as many people as possible. On the other hand though, we also say: do what is necessary. We want to mobilize 3,5 percent of the population to do things, and not everyone wants this... Look, an alternative that you can do is that you start weakening your methods to make it more inclusive, which quickly leads you to doing protests and we have tried that for a very long time. Or signing petitions, that is even more accessible. But then, where is the real change? So if you start weakening your methods, your impact will also decrease. So I think that’s what you want to avoid because you want to keep making an impact. But in a sense it stays exclusive then” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

This tension about the inclusivity of the movement’s choice of civil disobedience as main tactic are the source of constant discussion inside the movement as well as critique from outside, and one that Extinction Rebellion is attempting to address.

What is emphasized throughout the movement both online and by the rebels I talked to is that civil disobedience might be the tactic that Extinction Rebellion focusses on the most and is most known for, but that it is importantly not the only tactic in the movement’s repertoire. Ivo:

“XR’s strategy is not only doing civil disobedience but to cover the whole spectrum. So also doing legal things, or things that are not totally permitted, but are tolerated” (Ivo, October 10th, 2020, online).

An example of the latter is the ‘discobedience’ flash mob, an unannounced but rehearsed massive dance organized on Museumplein that interrupted the public flow through the park. While legal, this dance was not communicated with the authorities and attracted a big number of spectators and joiners, besides the already big number of organizers and participants. Later, this dance was repeated, in similar size, on the Blauwbrug in Amsterdam, blocking traffic and

causing disruption, making that performance of it an arrestable action. Michael, active rebel in the national Extinction Rebellion branch comments:

“We’re trying to promote that arrestable roles are not the only ones that are needed nor the only ones that are important. Like for for the inclusivity of it. Because also you are taking a day off, not everybody can do that, take a day off work and go on the streets. There’s a lot of different components that still require work” (Michael, October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

Fiona confirms this:

“Of course not everyone can afford to get arrested. Indeed. But that always, or should always be very clearly emphasized that you can contribute to the movement in many different ways. So getting arrested is definitely not the only thing you can do...” (November 5th, 2020, online).

About his own experience Michael says:

“It’s good still, I think, that arrests are still one of the main tactics because you want to create a lot of people talking about it. Unfortunately, that’s what makes the news. So I do think that that’s important, that there’s certain people doing that and they should be supported. But they should not be portrayed as the XR heroes, you know. You know with the image of people being dragged and doing this [makes superman gesture]. Because it’s alienating people that don’t want to be arrested. I don’t want to be arrested. And in the beginning I had to struggle, saying am I still a worthy rebel if I don’t get arrested? And then, I did find my position and now I love it. And I also feel a lot of reward and support in the position I have. But for some people, they might stop there and say actually you know, I either do it or I don’t do it and quit” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

So, to be more inclusive and counter the critique of exclusivity of civil disobedience, Extinction Rebellion has been promoting all the different roles (new) members can take up in the organization of the movement and in actions, varying in levels of legality. While these options are now more available and celebrated, the movement’s main and most celebrated tactic remains civil disobedience.

An ecosystem

While being arrestable still has high regard in the movement, the importance of supporting roles as well as making use of diverse repertoire of actions is found by many rebels to be a necessary and better approach. Activist expert Peter refers to this sentiment that is shared by some in the movement with the use of the metaphor of an ‘ecosystem’:

“One of the things that we try to convince people of at Stroomversnellers workshops is that a climate movement, or a social movement in general, is a sort of ecosystem where there are all kinds of creatures in the forest that all have their own niche, their own function in the ecosystem, and their own demands, which partly compete with each other but which also together uphold the ecosystem. Another dream that activists have is having one central plan or central strategy that we all work on, but that’s not how an ecosystem works. There is no central plan, but there is a lot of interaction and coordination and yeah, other ways to find an organic way of working together. But there will never be one strategy, and the power behind the ecosystem is that it is immensely flexible....I’ve always believed that the world is constantly changing, and no one can promise me that there is the one strategy that will bring us ecoparadise. So it’s just a fact that we have to try different strategies, and sometimes one thing works, and sometimes another thing. May the best one win. But I notice I’m sort of

unique in this perspective, a lot of people are sold on this one strategy” (Peter Kodde, October 16th, 2020, telephone).

A diverse repertoire throughout the climate movement would thus, according to Peter, be necessary to uphold and strengthen the ecosystem of the climate movement. Many Extinction Rebellion activists share this belief about Extinction Rebellion, emphasizing the importance of promoting supporting and non-arrestable roles as well.

In her own master thesis comparing two Dutch climate organizations, Lucy also concludes that the disruption used by Extinction Rebellion is often effective in terms of causing change in policy but certainly not alone. She argues that the Dutch climate movement needs to consist of various different organizations to create one strong front; they need each other (Lucy, October 23rd, 2020, online). A couple of rebels that I have spoken to agree with this opinion, emphasizing the importance to not ‘diminish daughter techniques’ but to keep promoting more accessible forms of actions as well such as demonstrations for people who choose to be less radical (Michael); some rebels see civil disobedience as an important tactic, but doubt the relevancy or effectiveness of it for the climate issue and believe we should search for new tactics (Lotte); some have observed new ideas that move away from the notion of nonviolence being born inside the movement (Marvin). Ideas about new repertoires of action or organization are constantly discussed in the movement, with the goals of improving inclusivity, accessibility and efficiency of the movement. Repertoires inside the movement are therefore always dynamic, changing and adapting to new ideas and circumstances, much like an ecosystem

The ecosystem that Peter refers to also describes well Extinction Rebellion’s position and approach beyond tactics only, referring to the all-encompassing culture of change Extinction Rebellion aims at, embodies, and prefigures. Ella states that as a movement she believes they cannot say

‘look this is our theory of change, deal with it, if not you don’t belong here’. Instead, she says: “we have a ‘regenerative culture of change’, I think that’s really important. So we do not only work with civil disobedience, but also with creating things, repairing things, practicing permaculture together, I don’t know that sort of stuff. Because then you really become more of a movement, instead of an action group. I think that community building especially, that we really need that effect. And personally I feel more called to do those kind of things, than to go onto the streets...” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

This organic perspective on strategy extends further into the movement, like into Extinction Rebellion’s prefigurative organizational structure, which the following section will go into.

Prefigurative politics - Organizational Structure

Extinction Rebellion’s organizational structure can be understood as a form of prefigurative politics, which can also be understood as the organizational and social strategies that Extinction Rebellion adopts on a movement level to model the future society they wish to see with the aim of causing social change in and through practice. As a form of prefigurative politics, Extinction Rebellion’s organizational structure can in itself also be understood as a strategy, which is why it is included in this chapter. In addition to civil disobedience actions, XR also organizes events, workshops, discussion panels and local workgroups to promote a more sustainable and regenerative way of living amongst individuals and communities. Extinction Rebellion has consciously developed an organizational structure to help organize all these aspects which are not only useful to understand for this research, but also gives more insight in the movement and its values. Extinction Rebellion’s aim to ‘be the change’ is evident in all aspects of the movement, as this section will begin to demonstrate.

Extinction Rebellion Netherlands is organized based on sociocracy, which refers to a governance system that is horizontal and decentralized. It suits Extinction Rebellion because of their wish to self-govern based on values of equality as their list of values and principle portray. They use the Self-Organizing System (SOS), which means that there are no hierarchical positions, but different roles. Power is vested in roles through the use of mandates, instead of held by people. Anyone, whether new to the movement or an experienced activist, can take up a role. These roles are changed every 3-6 months, and these roles are also given through the sociocratic system, meaning that members are nominated to take up a specific role, or someone can nominate themselves, which a brief motivation. The person can accept or decline the nomination, also with a motivation. Everyone can nominate someone, but they do not have to. If there are objections, these can also be expressed and discussed here. This system is adopted to ensure the non-hierarchical and decentralized system by avoiding ownership by one person or too much dependence on one person's knowledge and experience (PowerPoint).

This sociocratic way of organizing is one of the arguments why some of the rebels I talked to were convinced to join the movement. As Marvin puts enthusiastically:

“I think it's awesome that A: everything is just possible, in Extinction Rebellion. Well, not everything, but it's a flat organization and there is so much space for initiative. So if you're thinking: oh I see a chance for improvement there or growth, you can just propose it and work on it. I think that's great. I think that way of organizing is great, that it's so non-hierarchical, but still organized. I think that contrast is really interesting. Because there are enough people who are fed up with hierarchy, but also fed up with organizing and uhm while we have a pretty clear role division, or mandates, I think that's an interesting contradiction. I think the potential there really gives people the space, and I want to be involved with that. It's just great. It's an uprising against the government. As opposed to the same old things – without selling the amazing work that Groenlinks and Milieudefensie do short – but they are just the same old organization, part of an existing structure it's already embedded in. And this, us, can still go in any direction. It's worldwide and is growing super fast, in all directions. It appeals to the imagination, so to say” (Marvin, October 27th, 2020, online).

Fiona shares this preference of non-hierarchy, comparing it with the same two large climate organizations in the Netherlands:

“In hindsight now I can say that it's pleasant that it's a bottom-up organization, where no one gets paid. So it's not an established organization like for example Greenpeace or Milieudefensie, who are organized very differently I believe. I've heard some things, that you can sign up as a volunteer there as well but of course there is always a coordinator. So there is always some sort of hierarchy. And I really like this lack of hierarchy that we have” (Fiona, November 5th, 2020, online).

There are working “circles” at national as well as on local level who have mandates on specific topics as well as a couple of functions. An overview of all the circles that exist can be found in Figure 12. Each circle is free to make decisions and act autonomously within its remit, this also avoids hierarchy and centralized control, while also aiming to create an efficient system.

An overall Coordination Circle is made up of one person from each circle who represent their respective circles. Local groups are organized in the same way. One representative from the coordination circle represents the local group in the national Coordination Circle.

To avoid this coordinating representative holding a lot of power, roles are changed every three to six months. Michael explains about his decision to let his role as coordinator of the Utrecht branch go:

“we're trying to change it every like three to six months so that then when first of all these new ideas are circulating, a person doesn't hold too much knowledge and power, because then it means that the movements cannot do without this person. And also in order to mitigate for powers, like also, being conscious indeed. You know, that also like we're also being very conscious of the fact that certain people tend to get certain roles and in this case, you know, like men maybe are more prone to step up. And so it's really good to step back in and give a chance for everybody, so create the conditionality to take the central position” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

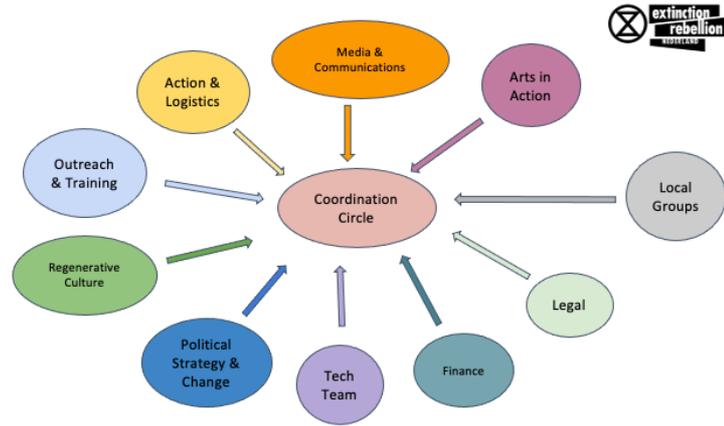


Figure 12: XR NL's circles overview – Introduction to XR Presentation

Five circles are identified here to be most relevant to this study, as they are in some way involved in the process of developing strategies and tactics, in the framing processes and/or are (actively) involved with different aspects of emotions in the movement. These circles include: Political Strategy and Change (PSC), Action and Logistics (A&L), Outreach and Training (O&T), Media and Communication (M&C) and Regenerative Culture (Regen). These permanent organizational circles (help to) organize other events and gatherings alongside and in support of the actions they are known for like the NVDA workshops and introduction presentations for possible new participants as mentioned earlier, and mobilization days and People Assemblies in which strategies are discussed for its members. All of these events and gatherings require a lot of organizational work by volunteers who in this prefigurative way collectively model a future society they wish to see.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Extinction Rebellion’s repertoire of contention is focused on, but not limited to, civil disobedience, following a non-violent and disruptive theory of change with Roger Hallam at its head. Extinction Rebellion’s specific performance and justification of civil disobedience rely heavily on both the civil or non-violent aspect of this tactic as on the attractiveness of disobedience and disruption. Building on previous social movements and historical figures, whether or not relevant for their specific struggle, helps the movement to legitimize the use of this tactic that sets Extinction Rebellion apart from others in the Dutch climate movement and a selling point for the movement. Simultaneously, there is critique from inside and outside of the movement on the issue of diversity of the movement and tactic exclusivity, as many people feel excluded from being able to participate in this type of action. These kinds of issues are internally and openly discussed in Extinction Rebellion, and the movement has been emphasizing the importance of other tactics and roles in the movement as well. This supports what some refer to as a mutually supportive ecosystem of tactics in Extinction Rebellion, and in the climate movement in general.

The section on Extinction Rebellion's organizational structure has shown that it is a form of prefigurative politics in which the movement pursues a sociocratic self-organizing system in which decentralization non-hierarchical organization are central to avoid the unequal holding of power in the movement. The conscious choice to control the movement's internal power relations and organize the movement along these ideas are understood here to be a strategy in itself, justifying its analysis in this chapter on the movement's strategy. Extinction Rebellion embodies the change they wish to see. Another very present expression of prefigurative politics is the regenerative culture that Extinction Rebellion pursues in all aspects of their movement. The following chapter will go into Extinction Rebellion's regenerative culture and how emotions play a role throughout many phases and aspects of the movement.

6. Regenerative Culture & Emotions

Regenerative culture: putting a little bit more in than we take out

For me regen is a lot about reprogramming yourself, you know, and learning new ways of being in this world that kind of create a new world that is not based on the values that we have now. It's based on love and care, care also for the planet and for nature, in a way that it doesn't reproduce the toxic system that has caused all this social crisis, interpersonal crisis, spiritual, and of course, climate crisis. – Michael (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht)

Besides being focused on significant change in democratic and economic areas, what really makes Extinction Rebellion different from other movements is its focus on developing a regenerative culture that is resilient, healthy, and adaptable internally, locally and in all collaborations, partnerships and relationships. The regenerative culture in Extinction Rebellion can be understood as a prefigurative culture through which Extinction Rebellion seeks to bring a different approach to the climate movement and activism in general. They see it as a way towards practicing and demonstrating the change they wish to experience in life and society, through which they want to nurture a new culture that is resilient and can support humanity through all the changes that they believe society and the world in will inevitably have to go through (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2021).

This regenerative culture is based on ‘deep care’ and finding new ways to come together to nurture this kind of care. While this concept is loosely defined and interpreted differently by different rebels, it can be understood to have foundation of action care, self-care, community care and Earth care (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2021; Westwell & Bunting, 2020). This kind of regenerative culture (often called ‘regen’ for short) cares for the planet and the life on it, in the belief that this is the most effective way to create a sustainable future for all of humanity. Regenerative culture consists of continuous improvements; taking small steps to improve and heal on individual level, in communities as well as in the natural environment like the soil, water and air (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2021). Regenerative culture is something Extinction Rebellion pursues, while they recognize that to truly embody it, a lot of work will need to be done and continue to be done in the movement. In their understanding of regenerative culture, Extinction Rebellion, regenerative culture comes down to ‘putting a little bit more in than we take out’ on all four mutually supportive categories of care addressed earlier.

Action Care

Many rebels’ first introduction to Extinction Rebellion was during an organized action and for many rebels, the focus on wellbeing before, during and after the action was a unique selling point of the movement that stood out for them and sometimes convinced them to join the movement. Important aspects of action care are affinity groups, the check-ins and check-outs, and the care offered during the action.

First of all, affinity groups are an organizing structure of (civil disobedience) actions’ support groups made up of about 8-12 people. These affinity groups are autonomous to do the actions they want to do in the name of Extinction Rebellion as long as they adhere to the movement’s principles. These groups are often created during NVDA trainings but can also be created among friends or acquaintances. Affinity groups can decide to organize actions by themselves, join forces with others, or to join mass movements as a group, keeping a special eye out for each other. Participating in actions with these kinds of small groups is more likely to ensure the wellbeing of the activists taking part in the action. Furthermore, as John also observes, affinity groups also create relationships that help to sustain a connection with the

movement and with each other, holding each other accountable and in this way sustaining the movement. In John's opinion:

"the most important component in that [sustaining the movement] are affinity groups who maintain the regenerative culture because when you don't really know anyone in a big movement or action, you'll be more likely to stop joining actions. Like me: I'm still part of an old affinity group that I went to the September Rebellion with and they're still active and encourage people to go" (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

All actions start with a 'check-in', and end with a 'check-out'. During the check-in, people can share their initial feelings to the group, and the regen person makes sure to remind people to take care of themselves and their neighbors reminds people where they can go for help, if they were to need it. The check-out consists of participants shortly sharing their experience of the action. Ivo says about the check-out after joining a short march:

"that element of connection, of social connection, of talking to each other, that really moved me more than walking from point A to point B" (October 10th, 2020, online).

Henk also identified these practices when comparing Extinction Rebellion actions with other actions he had attended. He said the difference lay

"especially in the preparation and the debriefing. At an XR action, wellbeing has top priority. So there always has to be a good briefing and debriefing, there are always a couple of people who are looking out for how everyone's feeling and make sure everyone's all right and that kind of stuff" (October 13th, 2020, Utrecht).

Finally, during actions, wellbeing is organized on three levels: between individuals, in affinity groups, and action wide. Individually, people are encouraged to have a personal 'anchor' outside the action situation who checks-in on the wellbeing from time to time as well as a buddy with which to participate in the action with. Within an affinity group there is again an anchor who distances him or herself from the most intense part of the action to reserve energy to support the people in their affinity group with post-action wellbeing. There is also another person in the affinity group who stays and looks out for the wellbeing of their affinity group during the action as well. Finally, actions that are made up of two or more affinity groups are often supported by the general movement with additional wellbeing supporters and first-aiders who wear blue or green vests to stand out. In my own experience it is very refreshing and comforting to be looked after like that by multiple people, strangers, with continuous questions like 'are you okay?', 'do you need some water, some food?'. In the beginning it can feel a little bit excessive, but as an action progresses and energy rises it feels reassuring to have this constant check up.

In the preparation of actions, wellbeing coordinators organize workshops, train supporters and organize a schedule of supporters. After an action, they organize a debriefing of the action among the wellbeing supporters so people can share and learn from each others experiences. In big actions, sometimes a wellbeing hub is organized, in which people can find a calm and quiet place and first aid.

"In one of the rebellion weeks we had a central point that we could always go to. That was at Museumplein. It was great, that we could go to Museumplein straight after an action and reflect on our actions and talk about it. Because that's also really important in regenerative culture. So in organizing a place for that that Extinction Rebellion is really ahead of others" (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

I made a similar observation as John, as this square was indeed a place where people went to to unwind, relax with each other in the grass and discuss the actions and how they felt about them. The place had a very peaceful atmosphere to it, which was how the regenerative culture had intended it. I realized the benefit of this place, both as a central point for such a rebellion week and as a place to unwind, that really strengthens such a rebellion week.

Helen, who is part of the regenerative culture circle in Utrecht and often fulfills a wellbeing role during actions, explains that, among many other things, during actions her role as wellbeing agent is to “*keep an eye out that everyone’s feeling well, and maybe giving them food and water, and cookies*”. Looking back at the first experiences I had with Extinction Rebellion, the handing out of the cookies are what stood out to me the most. I remember looking for my wallet to pay for some cookies but the wellbeing supporters laughed and to my great surprise said: “*they’re to keep up your good energy!*”. This helpful and caring sentiment is not only reserved for the wellbeing supporters but seems to be contagious and shared by everyone in such an action. The atmosphere seems tranquil and joyous and everywhere are colors, music and dancing. Often, people can be seen hugging each other or sitting close to each other, sharing food, drinks and sunscreen with strangers they’ve just met.

The importance of regenerative culture in Extinction Rebellion is often first and most obviously visible around actions where wellbeing is top priority, as is noticed by many new members and often regarded as one of Extinction Rebellion’s unique selling points. For many rebels, their understanding of regenerative culture is mainly focused around action wellbeing, but supported by the regenerative circles of the movement, many go further to explore regenerative culture in themselves, and their relationships with others and maybe even with the Earth, as the following sections will illustrate.

Self Care

Self-care is understood by many inside and outside activism as the basis from which other acts of care and consideration stem. It focusses on emotional and physical wellbeing, by focusing on personal needs and recovery from the ‘toxic system’ in which we live (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020; Westwell & Bunting, 2020), which will be discussed in more detail in the Earth care section. Extinction Rebellion argues that people who actively engage with climate change, like the activists who join their movement:

“are susceptible to a special kind of stress due to the overwhelming nature of the problem. Looking after our own needs, personal care and recovery is important because we are not machines, we need to look after ourselves in order to better look after each other and achieve what we want to achieve and looking after ourselves mirrors and models the Regenerative Culture we are trying to bring into existence” (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020).

While this is a ‘personal responsibility’, Extinction Rebellion’s regenerative culture circles facilitate and encourage this inner work throughout all facets of the movement, like the briefing and debriefing moments of actions mentioned above but also in other events, meetings and workshops organized by Extinction Rebellion.

Regenerative culture is not just a new way of being and activism that Extinction Rebellion is pursuing however, but also has a strategic purpose for the movement. Linking personal experience with activism creates space for emotional work and feeling in the movement strategy and ensures movement longevity by preventing activist burnout (Westwell & Bunting, 2020). Mobilizing emotions is not unusual in social movements, but most campaigns tend to purely focus on positive feelings of hope and transformation, while Extinction Rebellion uses negative emotions like grief and despair as motivational tools by emphasizing the necessity of facing all emotions head on and channeling it into action. Through a regenerative culture that promotes self-care, they try to challenge cognitive dissonance, or the mental discomfort that people experience in relation to the planetary threat from climate change and the confronting consequences of that threat (Westwell & Bunting, 2020). Self-care and emotional connection can foster a solid foundation for collaborative and compassionate action. John:

“regenerative culture is mostly about the sustaining the movement because in the past there have been many movements who after a while grow silent or break apart. And XR tries to avoid that through regenerative culture” (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

Regenerative culture thus also has a strategic purpose.

Self-care and avoiding burnout go hand-in-hand in Extinction Rebellion Sydney’s well-known regenerative workshop booklet that they created in 2020. In it, they offer tools and techniques on how to deal with intense emotions and stress. They warn that for activists, burnout can be imminent if self-care is neglected because the work of an activist involves a big amount of selflessness, compassion and empathy in sometimes adverse circumstances that are energy draining which may lead to negative emotions of mental and physical exhaustion, helplessness, hopelessness and resentment that may affect other areas of life as well. Therefore, they urge the importance of mental and physical preparation before an action (through Regenerative culture actions) to deal with the stress of the action as well as a good debriefing in which there is space to process and reflect. The booklet offers 10 ways in which to ‘build resource and resilience’, to deal with and undo burnout as well as how to avoid it. Reaching out and talking to other people is one of these tips, emphasizing the importance of relationships in regenerative culture.

Community Care

Community care, or people care, is focused on people’s relationships with each other, both within the movement as well as outside of it. Within the movement, the care for community and relationships are best observed through the wellbeing roles at actions, the check-ins and check-outs and the existence and working of affinity groups, as discussed above. As well as promoting wellbeing among its own activists during actions and providing arrestee welfare, Extinction Rebellion activist also show care to members of the public (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020; Westwell & Bunting, 2020). This is evident through workshops and sessions of non-violent communication and de-escalation organized by the movement, which are often well attended. It is common to see bystanders and even police having a friendly chat with the activists. There is usually a peaceful and friendly atmosphere at the border of disruptive actions where activists, police and bystanders meet. Other organized activities that support relationships in the movement include Restorative Circles, in which conflicts are addressed through conflict resilience systems and empathy circles, in which are structured dialogues based on mutual active listening. These activities, alongside non-violent communication foster a regenerative culture around interpersonal relationships in the movement.

Here also, the issue of inclusion is relevant. For instance, as Extinction Rebellion’s regenerative culture causes it to adopt a stance of respecting and collaborating with the police, as a regenerative culture has respect for all human life. While this is in line with many activists’ values and may be interpreted as appealing to the public, for groups who experience the police as an oppressive institution, this stance can be very alienating. There seems to be a growing critical awareness of systemic inequality within Extinction Rebellion the Netherlands and some regional branches, especially the big cities, leading to collective discussions on the topic.

Expressing emotions in groups of people the way regenerative culture encourages and as practiced by Extinction Rebellion can also be alienating for newcomers and for people from cultures where this is not common and therefore illustrates another tension in relation to inclusivity and regenerative culture. During my first engagements with Extinction Rebellion, the established practices of sharing your emotions with strangers at check-in and check-out felt a bit strange and alienating as everyone else seemed so comfortable with sharing emotions in a group setting. I noticed some similar discomfort among the handful of other new participants present, mirroring my unfamiliarity and perhaps uncertainty. Extinction Rebellion also has a

lot of non-verbal emotional expression with the use of hand movements like waving both hands in the air to show support, excitement or agreement. Not being familiar with these signs might initially feel alienating. These established practices stem from the regenerative culture, and the regenerative circle members in particular wish to see in the whole movement. For newcomers and/or people from cultures where emotions are less readily expressed, these practices might feel like a barrier and exclusive.

The instances illustrated above are examples of interpersonal tensions or tensions in movement culture. The regenerative circles in Extinction Rebellion are the bodies in the movement that address these issues by organizing collective and open discussions and activities around them. Michael sheds a light on his personal goal to create a safe and healthy movement culture in the Utrecht branch:

“Regenerative culture is a lot about creating new way of making decisions as well, and new ways of working. So it was really visible in the meetings themselves, that there was like this new way, this like more conscious and careful way of taking space, of mitigating for power, knowing that in a room men tend to take more space like to talk first for example, and really, like be conscious of this. So it's really cool. And I think that it drifted also into the different circles. Slowly but surely...” (October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

Fostering and facilitating safe spaces and practices for healthy relationships is something that Extinction Rebellion stands out in, while acknowledging and addressing the fact that they themselves are not perfect.

How community care is understood in Extinction Rebellion’s regenerative culture does not correspond with everyone’s interpretation of what interpersonal care entails as this can be different in different cultures and other key factors that differentiate people’s position like gender, race, age, education and social class. When looking at people’s relationship with each other both in and outside of the movement, Extinction Rebellion’s pursued system change in which regenerative culture plays a big role is arguably informed by and based on an exclusive culture which expresses emotions and communicates in a certain way. Extinction Rebellion is arguably trying to change the system with the help of and towards a regenerative culture that excludes many who do not feel comfortable in this culture. This becomes especially evident in how Extinction Rebellion’s regenerative culture approaches interpersonal relationships.

Earth Care

Earth care, or planet care, tries to prefigure a new relationship with the environment into the future which makes it different from action care, self-care and community care. Instead of movement building, developing tactics and strategy for actions and constructing new ways of being in this world in the present, this care is focused on ideas about an alternative future. Of all the cares that make up regenerative culture, this care is the least discussed in Extinction Rebellion, perhaps because among the already broad set of ideals regenerative culture tries to entail, this one seems most intangible.

While many slogans and banners read: ‘Another world is possible’, no one seems to have a good idea of what planet care would look like exactly, and it seems to rarely be discussed collectively, if at all. It seems that finding a balance of effective collective action in the present while trying to map out alternatives for the future. Furthermore, my conversations with rebels showed that almost all of them had little confidence in Extinction Rebellion being successful in their actions, and apocalyptic thinking was more dominant among them, often clouding their ideas about an alternative future. For example Aria:

“We really have a deadline with this fight, we don’t have much time left. Every day counts with the climate crisis. So yeah, myself I’m a bit skeptical” (October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

Others however, might not have an answer ready for what Earth care would manifest into in the future, but are still big proponents of pursuing a regenerative culture that goes beyond action care, self-care, and even community care into finding alternative resilient and adaptable ways of being existing in the world. Lotte:

“That’s [the future] present in my mind very often, yeah. And I think, especially right now, it’s really difficult to predict the future. Because I’ve also been reading literature where they say that we’re all gonna be dead in 10 years. So I’m trying not to think about that scenario, because, well that’s just depressing. So I try to stay positive... Um, so I really hope that we’re gonna advance with XR. That in five years, you know, we’re gonna be much more on social issues also. And much more open and regenerative, much more regenerative” (October 8th, 2020, Utrecht).

Interestingly, these deeper understandings of regenerative culture are not as widespread in the movement as its proponents would wish it to be and seem to reserve itself to regenerative circle members and/or people who are interested in spirituality.

For example, John’s perception of the importance of regenerative culture as expressed above has a strategic focus, Helen speaks mostly of action wellbeing roles and Henk appreciates the events organized by the regenerative circle to discuss important topics and facilitate social interaction. Most rebels who are not active in the regenerative circle or any circle at all interpret regenerative culture mostly in practices like the check-ins and check-out sessions or wellbeing roles. More general principles of regenerative culture and personal self-care practices do not come up when prodded. This is not the case for members of the regenerative circle, who often engage more with the deeper layers of regenerative culture and the system change they are trying to enact with it.

Helen, part of the Regenerative Circle in Utrecht speaks of the toxicity of the current system we live in and how regenerative culture tries to address the intersectional symptoms of it:

“the climate crisis is one symptom, of all the bad stuff [gesturing in the air], the toxic system, whatever they want to call it. And then the other side is like mental health, and the fact that we all are usually very stressed, and that it shouldn’t be that way. So it’s also kind of looking at the systemic issues around that” (Helen, August 10th, 2020, Utrecht).

This same intersectional approach to system change is also appreciated by Ella, a big proponent of prefiguring a healthy regenerative culture:

“I wanted to make bottom-up change possible and I think XR is already pretty developed in comparison with other activist organizations or movements. They look more at hey what is going wrong wrong, or where is the inequality, and then they address that. So it’s often addressing these one-issue problems instead of looking at it systematically, at the system. And also, we the view that we ourselves also need to change, WE need to create other cultures, and that really appealed to me about XR” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

One of the big proponents of regenerative culture in Extinction Rebellion is Michael:

“I realized that indeed regen was so misconceptualised, because it was really thought to be, you know like, how do you get energy back? Which is like part of it, but even in this part it was just reduced to yoga and mindfulness. While getting energy back, and like being able to take care of yourself is definitely a big part of it and mindfulness and yoga are even like a smaller part of it... It is really trying to address the bottom of the iceberg. And not just the deep, which is the climate crisis, but the bottom you know.

Like, how do we relate to nature? How do we relate to each other? And how do we relate to our own selves? And I do think that that's really unique. Just further focus on this aspect, on the aspect of really trying to create a new world a bit within the old one, while also trying to change the old one. So it's like, both components, while most social movements are either or: either they say 'okay, we'll just create our own world, you know, like an eco village' or they just take the streets and protest or whatnot. So I think that it is very unique". (Michael, October 1st, 2020, Utrecht).

The four categories of care addressed above are mutually supportive and in different scopes and areas address the same thing: emotions. While this focus is more evident in some aspects of the movement like regenerative culture, it quickly becomes clear that emotions are interwoven in all aspects of the movement, including framing and strategies. The following section will illustrate how emotions play a role in Extinction Rebellion.

Emotions

In this thesis, many instances and examples have already been given in which, directly or indirectly, emotions play a role in the framing, strategizing or in the movement organization and culture. This section will address the function of emotions in Extinction Rebellion the Netherlands directly, by connecting these and other instances to the theory on emotions in social movements. As one scholar who works in this, Jasper (2011) states: “Emotions are present in every phase and every aspect of protest. They motivate individuals, are generated in crowds, are expressed rhetorically, and shape stated and unstated goals of social movements. Emotions can be means, they can be ends, and sometimes they can fuse the two. They can help or hinder mobilization efforts, ongoing strategies, and the success of social movements” (Jasper, 2011, p.286).

Furthermore, according to an increasing number of studies, climate change has significant negative effects on mental health and well-being. These effects are and will be felt mostly by vulnerable populations and people with preexisting serious mental illness (Doherty & Clayton, 2011; Stanley, Hogg, Leviston & Walker, 2021). The study of these emotional responses to climate crisis did not originate from or develop in academic fields exclusively. New directions for the study of these kind of emotions have also been developed in the public domain, like for example the concept of eco-anxiety which started being used around 1990 publicly and since then has increasingly been picked up by media. Since 2008, after a big US newspaper featured an article about ecoanxiety, this concept has been picked up in academic and nonacademic publications (Russell & Oakley, 2016).

Extinction Rebellion is an organization that addresses emotions directly. On many of its branches' websites as well as in booklets and on social media, Extinction Rebellion mention various emotions, some of which are very specifically aimed at activists in the fight against climate change. These emotions are referred to as 'Earth Emotions', which they describe as emotions that human have, both positive and negative, that are in relationship to the health of the planet, see Figure . These Earth Emotions are borrowed from philosopher Glenn Albrecht, whose book *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* (2019) discusses eco emotions he has coined and introduces new ones, some of which are included in Figure 13. In line with his argumentation, Extinction Rebellion argues that the state of the Earth has a strong influence on human beings' minds and emotions, and that people who engage with the climate emergency through activism are susceptible to a special kind of emotional stress because of the overwhelming nature of this crisis. To fully recognize the devastating impact of the climate crisis on our way of life can arguably be very hard to process, accept and communicate to other people (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020). Extinction Rebellion urges that new vocabulary to express these eco emotions is necessary in order to build resilience and understanding in dialogues between people with different perspectives (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020).



Figure 13 Earth Emotions (Extinction Rebellion Sydney, 2020)

I have identified descriptions of, or direct references to, some of these Earth emotions used by the activists I have observed and spoken for my research. The experiences of the interviewees will demonstrate how these emotions are defined and used by activists themselves. To analyze the role of emotions in the movement, the three different phases of a social movement, namely the origin, the spread and the decline, will be analyzed separately as is often done in academia (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018).

Origins

The first step in participation in a social movement is often called ‘moral shock’, which occurs when new information or an unexpected event comes to light that sets off intense feelings like outrage, frustration or disappointment. These feelings might then incline people towards taking action, whether or not they already have connections to a movement or not. Eco-paralysis (Figure 13) is also a passive emotional state people might find themselves in when they know the severity of the issue but feel unable to act. Activists then put a lot of effort into enhancing these emotions, in different ways, to possibly get people from a passive to an active state. (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). In Extinction Rebellion, the introduction presentation ‘Heading for Extinction’ is a clear example of the hard work that the rebel activists put into enhancing certain (existing) mobilizing emotions like outrage, frustration and anger, captured by the Earth emotion terrafurie. Henk, who has given many of these introduction presentations for Extinction Rebellion, explains how he goes approaches them.

The message Henk conveys in his presentations is deliberately not a positive one, he explains.

“So at the end I don’t say ‘Yeah so if we do a, b, c and d, then everything will be alright’. Because that’s often what other presentations about the climate problem do. They always end on a positive note – looking at the technological solutions we have like solar panels and such, leaving everyone to go home with a relieved feeling. No, I end the first part of the presentation with: ‘it is all really fucked’” (October 13th, 2020; Utrecht).

By explicitly choosing to provide this (new) information about the climate issue in a frame of emergency, it is clear that the intended outcome of this presentation is moral shock, and other short-term reactive emotions (Jasper 1998) like terrafurie, to the information in the presentation.

After the first part of the presentation, Henk always leaves a moment of pause for the audience to think about the information they just received, and to let them process it and take it in. This allows space for reactive feelings of eco-grief, outrage and despair or other emotions that emerge as a consequence of this information, instead of pushing it all away. Such was also the experience of Ivo who attended one of these presentations when he first got involved with XR:

“I knew everything that was said, in that talk, the standard talk about tipping points in the climate system. About the disruption that creates and the food shortages and such. The Netherlands doesn’t face a bright middle to long-term future, because of the rising sea levels. I knew all of that. But that was sort of sub conscious, not actively. And I also did not know it on an emotional level. And that talk moved me because it changed the way I thought about that information. I realized it will affect me personally, in thirty years or sooner. It will affect people I love, cousins, brothers. It all affects them directly. That realization hit me then” (October 10th, 2020; online).

Henk explains that the willingness to take action that often follows comes from uncomfortable feelings like grief, frustration and terrafurie. This willingness to take action is the starting point of the second part of the presentation, which is about the movement itself and about how they believe they can do something about the problem they just addressed, how the people can show that they have understood the information, that they care, and that they want change. “We need to take action now and make drastic changes. This will affect all of our lives” (paraphrased from interview, October 13th, 2020; Utrecht). Consciously choosing a framing of emergency therefore elicits certain emotions like outrage and despair that Extinction Rebellion deliberately tries to enhance in order to mobilize the audience. The framing in the presentation by Extinction Rebellion also provides a scapegoat for these problems, namely the

government and the status quo, against which the emotions that came up during the presentation can be vented.

The presentation is aimed to elicit reactive emotions like terrafurie and eco-grief, but many longer-lasting, or affective, feelings that are not aimed at a certain object but capture the more general feelings about the world (Jasper 1998) are also identified and shared among the people who attend these presentations. These feelings can best be described using the Earth emotions described above, including eco paralysis, eco-anxiety and global dread. Marvin recounts how restless and anxious he felt before joining Extinction Rebellion Utrecht, and how he found himself in a state of eco-paralysis, constantly feeling anxious:

“Well, I was aware of it [the climate emergency] for a while, but it was still outside of me. For a long time I thought: I want to do something with that because I don’t know how to relate to it, but it doesn’t feel okay to ignore it. I think I felt that anxiety for a couple of years” (October 27th, 2020, online).

He goes on to explain how the eco-anxiety and (global) dread he felt before joining the movement was given a place:

“I’m very relieved that I decided to take action. Like I said, for a couple of years already I had the sense that I had to do something, that I was underestimating the seriousness of the problem, the climate and ecological crisis. And now that I’ve decided to do something, well, that’s a really big relief and has enriched my life” (Marvin, October 27th, 2020, online).

Lotte has a similar experience with feelings of eco-anxiety and frustration:

“It’s also just like, personal fulfillment. I just feel so much better when I do something that could potentially help the world...it’s important, I think, not only that it’s gonna count, but it’s also for your own mental health that you’re doing something for the world... You can go through regenerative culture and help people deal with climate anxiety...because it’s, you know, when you start thinking about it, it’s all really depressing. So doing something, you can at least think less about that. At least you feel like you put your frustrations somewhere, you direct them somewhere. So I think it’s just better for your own wellbeing when you do something about it and not only think about it 24/7 and be frustrated at the world and at yourself” (Lotte, October 8th, 2020, Utrecht).

Similar to Marvin, being able to act on these Earth emotions is also experienced by Lotte as a relief.

These and other affective and long-term feelings often lie at the foundation of people’s motivation to join the movement, but also at the foundation of shared emotional experience with other new members. The similar emotions and perspective these new members experience in relation to the climate emergency are experienced as a connecting factor, often leading to reciprocal emotions, or the ongoing close and affective feels towards each other like friendship, love, loyalty and solidarity (Jasper, 1998) in the later phases of joining the movement. Many rebels mentioned like-mindedness with other rebels and the sharing of similar (Earth) emotions as something that made them feel connect and understood when first joining the movement. The joy of participation in action (with like-minded people) is found by scholars to be great enough to motivate people to participate without there being an actual cognitive belief that the action will be successful (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). The following excerpts illustrate these statements.

“The people there [at actions] all probably went through the same process as you. First discovering what’s happening to the world – that’s the moment that you go into action modus- because when you realize that you’re powerless and that there’s no

more hope, THAT'S the moment you feel that rage come up. And everyone at Extinction Rebellion has went through and experienced that process. You can have good conversations about that with each other, and everyone will understand you" (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

The people are what attracted me. A lot of people with the same mindset and the same perspective on things, that I really click with (Aria, October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

"Well, what I like the most is meeting people who join the movement and share the same ideals. It surprises me every time how much I enjoy that... people who think the same as yourself" (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

So, by actively acknowledging and enhancing existing emotions of eco-anxiety and terrafurie and creating and giving space for a moral shock and eco-grief in their introductory presentations, Extinction Rebellion clearly uses emotions strategically in the initial phase of movement joining. These efforts aim to get people out of eco-paralyzed states, and encourage them to take action. Furthermore, the first steps of creating a collective identity are taken in this initial phase where shared emotions with like-minded people are a big motivation for joining the movement and also results in more joy in participation of actions.

Spread

Emotions are also closely intertwined with a movement's ongoing activities. A 'movement culture' is often understood as a movement's rituals, songs, slogans, heroes and enemies and so on, and the richer this movement culture is, the greater the pleasures of participation by participants (Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018). Activists in Extinction Rebellion work hard to create a rich movement culture, in which regenerative culture (circles) takes a lead role in organizing activities and events that promote and enhance the shared rhetoric, belief and accompanied emotions that build solidarity and thus help sustain the movement. Furthermore, movements in themselves are also settings in which emotions can be created or reinforced in an (explicit) attempt to elaborate intuitive visions into explicit ideologies and proposals (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018)

In contrast to the origin phase of the movement, Extinction Rebellion focusses on the positive mobilizing emotions during the spread phase, instead of negative ones. While negative emotions like grief, frustration and anxiety are still given space and addressed according to regenerative principles, it is the positive emotions and relationships that are actively addressed here. The shared emotions which play a role in the identification of like-minded people in the initial phase are the foundation for reciprocal emotions that are experienced as people join the movement. Through the creation of small affinity groups, Extinction Rebellion enhances the establishment of reciprocal emotions between smaller groups of people, which can result in pleasure of participation in actions as well which can be great enough to motivate participation without there being a cognitive belief that it will be successful (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018).

Many rebels I spoke to have formed friendships and strong connections with people in Extinction Rebellion, which is an equal or sometimes more important factor for people to remain active in the movement, or as Aria simply puts it:

"The people you're with and the goal are the reasons you're there" (October 7th, 2020, Wageningen).

Bella has a similar experience:

“When I moved to Amsterdam I didn’t know a lot of people here. That wasn’t my motivation to join XR but it did help to stay because the people were really nice and my kind of people” (November 5th, 2020, online).

Working towards the same goal provides a connection with like-minded people that members enjoy, as Marvin also expresses:

“I meet interesting people. Friendly people. And I enjoy going through these processes with them. We understand each other and stimulate each other too” (October 27th, 2020, online).

These connections increase the pleasure members have in the participation in actions and other movement activities (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001; Jasper 1998; Van Ness & Summers-Effler, 2018).

What some of these quotes already hint at is the collective identity that is created and enhanced in Extinction Rebellion and in its affinity groups. Collective identity is usually contrasted to ‘interest’ which suggests that kinship explains the connection to a movement’s aims better than material interests of the movement. These collective identities can, besides ascribed traits like sexual preference, race and so forth also be based on beliefs and principles, as is the case with Extinction Rebellion. Furthermore, collective identity is used to describe a sense of solidarity that exists among members of a social movement itself, suggesting bonds of trust, loyalty and affection. Strong feelings for the group make participation in a movement enjoyable in itself, independent from the movement’s goals or the outcomes of its actions. By participating in protests, it can be a way of expressing oneself and one’s morals, while finding joy and pride in them. The strength of a collective identity therefore arguably lies in its emotional side (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001, p. 8).

Affinity groups in particular create and enhance the possibility of reciprocal emotions and collective identity, as it establishes a smaller group of people that experience activism together. These affinity groups are created among existing friends/acquaintances or at Extinction Rebellion trainings among strangers, and often consists of people who have similar perspectives on their role in the movement. Whether or not the group members are strangers, there is a lot of emotional investment in each other in these groups, due to the function and responsibility these groups have in actions.

Many of the rebels I spoke to could be categorized in the more active member category of Extinction Rebellion who spend more time on the movement and with its people, which logically leads to more likeliness of deeper personal connections and a stronger sense of collective identity.

“We all give up a part of our work and studies to do XR. All our evenings are spent on XR, we see our other friends less and the people from XR more to work on all this” (Aron, October 26th, 2020, online).

The most active rebels I spoke to often share a similar understanding of the urgency of the problem which often results in a strong dedication of their time and energy going into the movement. They forge strong bonds with people who make the same choices with their time, as Aron explains here:

“It’s super chill that in XR you don’t have to explain why you stopped your studies. That’s the easiest example. But everywhere you go people are like: ‘but your studies, your income, security’ stuff like that. In XR people are like: ‘yeah but we’re fucked, of course you stopped’. So yeah, the fact that we’re all starting from the same... well a shared understanding maybe, that’s very nice. They are all the same kind of people. I’ve never been a big fan of getting drunk every Friday and Saturday night and going to pubs and chitchatting. I was always looking for those deeper connections, which you find easily with people in XR who generally are also more concerned with doing things than thinking about what to do next weekend” (October 26th, 2020, online).

Arguably, and as Ella also expresses in the following, these personal connections based on similar understandings of the climate issue not only lead to more solidarity with the movement, but can also make it more difficult for people to detach themselves from activities in the movement without affecting these personal connections.

“I have many personal connections so I feel strongly connected to the people in XR and that makes it harder if I would want to take a step back in the movement. That sounds negative but it’s also positive because I feel that connection with the people there and with what we fight for is just that strong” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

Concern about the climate in the form of eco-anxiety, global dread, or frustration/anger can be created and reinforced in this setting of close connections where collective identity is important, in an (explicit) attempt to elaborate these emotions into explicit ideologies and actions.

Decline

Finally, emotions also play a role in a movement’s decline when: all or nothing emotions lead to unhealthy dynamics; frustration leads to a change in tactic/strategy; activists burn out or because of small group or interpersonal dynamics (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001). All of these instances were identified by this study in Extinction Rebellion. However, they are also often averted by the movement’s regenerative culture and affinity groups.

Hirschman (1982) finds that people retreat from a movement because they are unsatisfied and disappointed with the too-much or too-little choice a movement offers, because while voting offers too little involvement, social movements often demand too much dedication. He ascribes the level of dedication that some activists demonstrate, as also portrayed in some of the quotes in the previous section, to these activists becoming addicted to activities as they commit a lot of time and energy into them. These dynamics depend on all-or-nothing emotions like disappointment (with not seeing social change), excitement and frustration.

Frustration can also lead to wanting to pursue a change in tactics or strategy, and if this change does not fit the movement, members might choose to leave or be expelled. An example of this in Extinction Rebellion is the discussions around the social justice component and inclusivity and diversity in the movement and what role those discussions should have in the movement. While the ‘purists’ believe that the focus of the movement should remain on climate, another strong current wishes to make this social justice component as important. While some wish to make the movement more inclusive and open for all, others believe they should not ‘weaken’ their main tactic of civil disobedience by diverging into other tactics. Differences in opinion about changing strategies might lead people to move away from the movement, be cast out, or create a (separate) group with other, sometimes more radical, ideas. As one of the rebels told me, Extinction Rebellion co-founder Roger Hallam set up a political party Burning Pink (previously #BeyondPolitics) that focusses on making a citizen assembly around the climate issue possible through civil disobedient actions, but more radical than Extinction Rebellion. It is suspected that Extinction Rebellion’s principles and values as well as its internal discussions about how far non-violent action must go and who it in- and excludes, were limiting Roger Hallam in his goals.

Sometimes these large amounts of time and energy lead to activist burnouts due to the resulting exhaustion of dedicating large amounts of time and energy into work for the movement. Burnout was mentioned by most of the rebels I spoke to, whether they had experienced it themselves, or knew other members that had. There is a lot of awareness in the movement about the risk of burning out, and it’s something that some members have to struggle

with, as they do not want to have to give up their activism because of it. The following statements demonstrate this.

“I’m struggling [with the activist fight for the climate] now to be honest. I’ve done a lot for XR the last couple of months and I’m very grateful for that. I notice that I need to find a balance in work because I’m getting ahead of myself, and I see this around me with other people a lot as well. Activist burnout is a real thing, you know. So I think that we all also really need to take care of ourselves. So I’m trying to find a balance. Sometimes there are moments that the climate crisis really grabs a hold of me and I’m really anxious about what we’re going to do. I need to learn how to deal with that” (Ella, October 24th, 2020, telephone).

“I just hope that in the future I’ll still be a climate activist, fighting the fight because it needs to be fought. We just need to find the most efficient ways I think, without burning out people. That’s the tricky balance” (Lotte, October 8th, 2020, Utrecht).

The Earth emotions mentioned earlier like constant **eco-anxiety**, **global dread** and general frustration, or **terrafurie** influence these activist’s struggle to find a balance between their activism and time for themselves to avoid burnouts, without feelings of guilt and dread. Fiona explains that the constant dread she wakes up with because of the state the world is in played a part in her burnout.

“I had a kind of burnout last year, which is why I make sure that I always try to hold back a bit. Because I notice that it’s way too easy to put a lot of time into activism, but I’m scared that at a certain moment you’ll realize like: yeah so now I put all this time into it but what did I actually get left with?” (Fiona, November 5th, 2020, online).

Her caution and skeptical stance are not unique among the activists. John, for example, chooses to avoid commitment to the movement altogether, only joining some actions when he has the time and energy for it:

“I sat in my room once watching all these news videos about the destruction of nature and yeah, that really affects you. You just want to close your eyes and hope it’s not true, but it happens. There are a lot of people who are mentally exhausted because they keep confronting themselves with those negative thoughts. Personally I prefer to keep it at a distance, to not get exhausted. Which is also a reason why I don’t join a circle in Extinction Rebellion, it’s just too confronting for me. Yeah, until now I’ve been able to keep it at distance I’m comfortable with while still joining actions sometimes” (John, October 25th, 2020, online).

Finally, there are also small group dynamics or interpersonal relationships that might go awry and result in the group falling apart, people disconnecting with each other, and the consequent distancing from the movement. As was mentioned before, conflict resolution, meaningful dialogue and interpersonal communication are therefore topics that Regenerative culture circles in Extinction Rebellion organize workshops and events for, to avoid these kinds of falling out. Emotions thus play an important role in every phase of engagement with the movement: it motivates to join, to stay, and can strongly influence its abandonment.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the direct function of emotions in Extinction Rebellion that play an important role in the framing and strategizing as well as in the organization and culture of the movement. By connecting movement practices, observations and rebels’ experiences with

theory around emotions in social movements, it is shown that Extinction Rebellion uses emotion as a strategy in every phase and every aspect of the movement. Emotions motivate individuals to join the movement and sustains their commitment to participation; emotions are generated in crowds and relationships in smaller affinity groups and creates a strong movement culture; Extinction Rebellion's regenerative culture is built on the acknowledgement, expression and addressing of various (Earth) emotions. In the movement, negative emotions like frustration, despair and grief are given space and strategically get reinforced, as well as the positive emotions that stem from interpersonal relationships and the joy of participation in protest.

Regenerative culture in Extinction Rebellion can be interpreted as another prefigurative model through which the movement seeks to bring a different approach to the climate movement and activism in general by introducing a culture in which they practice and demonstrate resilience for all future changes society and the world will inevitably have to go through. Finding new ways to come together and care for each other and for the planet can be seen in the movement in four broad areas: action care, self-care, community care and Earth care. Regenerative culture in Extinction Rebellion demonstrates that in the movement, emotions are not only acknowledged as means, but also as an end, or a fusion of both. The pursuit of a regenerative culture allows Extinction Rebellion to remain flexible and dynamic in addressing major issues in- and outside of the movement, while recognizing that a lot of continuous work is needed to truly embody it.

7. Discussion & Conclusion

Between 2018 and 2020, the climate movement worldwide grew to an unprecedented size with large-scale global protests that demanded government action to address the climate crisis. This momentum was in response to the IPCC special report released in 2018 which sketched a dire picture of the climate situation. Extinction Rebellion was a key player among the couple of climate activist groups in this last cycle of climate mobilization that called for system change and managed to catch the world's attention with its mass civil disobedient protests and other transgressive actions worldwide. The Corona pandemic brought an end to what can perhaps be viewed as the first wave of a new cycle of protests and simultaneously created space for developing a deeper understanding of this new and influential player in this most recent cycle. During this global pandemic, from an engaged ethnographic approach, and focusing on Extinction Rebellion branches located in the Netherlands, this thesis has sought to develop a deeper understanding of this movement and its fight against climate change. In this pursuit it is guided by a social movement theoretical framework and has adopted concepts from this framework including framing, repertoire of contention and emotions as theoretical lenses through which to analyze the movement. In the concluding chapter of this thesis, the findings of this ethnographic study will be summarized and analyzed, thereby revealing how Extinction Rebellion Netherlands organizes itself in its fight against climate change.

Extinction Rebellion organizes itself around emotions. This might sound striking because Extinction Rebellion is often better known for its dramatic disruptive practices including mass arrests, roadblocks and protestors chaining themselves to objects. This movement, often labeled as particularly radical, has placed emotions at its center, as it informs and influences the movement's framing processes, its theory of change, its repertoire of contention (those dramatic practices for which it is known), its chosen organizational structure, and its internal culture in which feelings and caring are emphasized. Emotions are not only present in every phase and aspect of the movement; they play a vital role in them.

Emotions, and specifically eco-emotions like eco-anxiety, terrafurie (eco related rage) and ecological grief among others, are dominant feelings among Extinction Rebellion activists about what they often perceive as the immanent end of the world, or at least the beginning of the end. This focus on emotions is part of the movement's very comprehensive understanding and pursuit of radical system change: transitioning from a 'toxic system' to a more sustainable one in which the well-being of people living in harmony with themselves, each other and the environment are central. To have a future worth living for, it's not enough for Extinction Rebellion activists to fight against climate change and species extinction but rather they pursue a deep cultural transformation as well which is aimed at a sustainable lifestyle. Quite importantly therefore, this thesis has found an essential element of Extinction Rebellion's theory of change and strategy to be prefigurative politics in its organizational structure and in its pursuit of a regenerative culture. In the movement, emotions are not only acknowledged as means, as in its framing and its choice for civil disobedience as main tactic, but also as an end through its prefigurative politics like its pursuit of regenerative culture. It can also be a fusion of both. The following sections will go into emotions as means and emotions as ends respectively.



Figure 14: 'Love and Rage', the standard signature in XR communications

Emotions as means: framing and civil disobedience

Looking at the movement's framing efforts demonstrate that emotions are strategized in the different framing processes and tactics deployed by Extinction Rebellion. Extinction Rebellion uses 'climate emergency' framing with which they illustrate their alarming interpretation of the gravity of the climate crisis. They do not shy away from or sugarcoat the fact that if we fail to make significant changes (if we're not already too late), this will lead to increased climate and ecological construction and consequently possibly the inevitable end of the world. The movement also does not offer feel-good false solutions in this framing of the problem, as the main sentiment that is supposed to dominate in all their messaging an apocalyptic imagery is urgency and alarm. In this framing of the climate crisis as an emergency, emotions including eco-anxiety, rage, and grief that are often already present among the people that Extinction Rebellion targets in their messaging and presentations are acknowledged, justified and shared.

This study has found that by framing the climate issue as an emergency the movement aligns its ideology or philosophy with important elements of activists' motivations to connect themselves to the movement and that eco-emotions play an important role in many of these motivations. Constant and growing feelings of stress, grief, frustration, anxiety and/or anger are common feelings among prospective new members, who are often unsure about how to act on them. Extinction Rebellion's emergency framing and use of apocalyptic imagery demonstrate that the movement acknowledges and shares these feelings. The movement provides relief for prospective new members: the emotional relief in finding a group of like-minded people who experience similar emotions about the environment and the relief of finally knowing how to act on these emotions. Also, frustration and anger with the failure of governing institutions not only to tell the truth about the gravity of the climate issue but also to take the necessary steps to solve the problem are also strategically used by Extinction Rebellion who provide exactly what these angry and frustrated people want. Many new members are relieved with Extinction Rebellion's honest and straightforward messaging about the urgency of the climate emergency, and thankful for the space Extinction Rebellion provides in which these concerns are shared and addressed. By aligning themselves with these kinds of existing sentiments, the movement strategically uses emotions to recruit new members.

Extinction Rebellion also directs, strengthens and reinforces emotions with the aim of motivating its followers to take action, to mobilize them. They argue that as an emergency, the situation should be handled as such and they place their three demands are placed at the door of the government: tell the truth by declaring a climate emergency, act now and go beyond politics. Whereas previous years and other movements saw climate activism focus increasingly on grassroots solution and other do-it-yourself forms of action like taking direct action against the fossil fuel industry, Extinction Rebellion puts the responsibility for protecting its citizens from this emergency in the hands of governments. This return to the state redirects responsibility away from the individual and to governing institutions and in this way arguably also protects the mental health of many (prospective) activists who already experience various negative emotions or even eco-paralysis about the gravity of the climate. Extinction Rebellion emphasizes in their messaging that a future (or even present) emergency warrants urgent action now and emergency framing encourages action to draw attention to the issue and urge the government to act. The willingness to take action has been found to come from uncomfortable affective feelings like grief, frustration and terrafurie, as well long-lasting emotions like eco-paralysis, eco-anxiety and global dread. These emotions are highlighted, strengthened and reinforced in introductory presentations, on banners, in songs and slogans and in speeches given by Extinction Rebellion, with the goal of mobilizing people to take action. Why this action is necessary and what it should look like is described in the movement's theory of change.

Emotions also lie at the center of Extinction Rebellion's theory of change and the consequent main tactic around which their repertoire of contention revolves. The first of Extinction Rebellion's ten principles states the shared vision of change, radical system change, with which Extinction Rebellion wants to build a different and better world. Roger Hallam, one of the movement's founders emphasized that the way towards the necessary change that has failed to come about thus far, is through non-violent disruption. Mobilizing the masses to be disruptive therefore becomes the goal, and momentum-driven organizing in which active popular support is pursued, escalation in actions is created and people are finally absorbed into the movement smoothly, is mentioned as the way to achieve this. This theory of change informs the main tactic around which Extinction Rebellion organizes, and what they are most known for: civil disobedience.

The same emotions lie at the foundation of the justification of this theory of change as at the choice and justification for civil disobedience as main tactic, namely: despair, frustration and anger. Extinction Rebellion activists feel despair, frustration and anger about the toxic system that is destroying and will continue to destroy the environment in which our societies exist. The past and continued failure of institutional approaches within this toxic system to persuade states, businesses, elites and the general public to take the kind of action that could save the climate and the ecological justification is one of the reasons why civil disobedience is seen by many Extinction Rebellion members to be a reasonable approach.

The other justification is the state of urgency of the climate issue, in which a key issue that is often expressed but mostly felt is the irreversibility of the damages being done to the climate. Anxiety, grief, despair and sometimes paralysis about the reaching of tipping points beyond which certain irreversible natural mechanisms will begin that lead to increased environmental damage is inextricably linked to the issue of irreversibility. The temporal requirement of the climate issue in combination with the exhaustion of all other forms of action provided by the democratic system leads activists to try to short-circuit the decision processes and take action in the present through civil disobedience.

Finally, civil disobedience is also an area of emotional tension. While the urgency of the state of the environment and the related emotions support the choice for participating in civil disobedience, this choice is not as easy or obvious for everyone. The issue of inclusivity with regards to this choice of main tactic alienates groups of people who for different reasons (feel that they) cannot participate in these disobedient actions. Even though other types of (more) legal actions are also organized by Extinction Rebellion to accommodate these people and emphasize their importance to the movement, their pursuit of radical system change in these ways does not include everyone to the same extent. Furthermore, while supportive roles and legal actions are also promoted and given importance in movement messaging, some of this study's participants have expressed that they have experienced indirect or social pressure to participate in civil disobedience nonetheless. It seems that while no one forces anyone to participate in these kinds of actions, people who participate do seem to be viewed with higher regard socially. It then also becomes a situation in which personal emotional boundaries need to be reviewed in this kind of disobedient activism to make sure that emotions lead to the taking of actions with which activists are comfortable, and not beyond. This might harm activists' mental health instead of providing them with release or relief. Emotional wellbeing is taken very seriously by Extinction Rebellion, which is why prefigurative politics are an important part of their strategy in which the types of issues described above are addressed.

Emotions as ends: prefigurative politics

Besides using emotions strategically for different advantageous purposes for the movement, Extinction Rebellion also aims at an all-encompassing culture of change by embodying and

prefiguring this change. In other, more well-known words: being the change they wish to see. Prefigurative politics, as these organizational and social strategies that Extinction Rebellion adopts on a movement level are called, model the future society that they wish to see, with the aim of causing social change in and through practice. This study has found two forms of prefigurative politics in Extinction Rebellion Netherlands branches in which a different way of acknowledging, accepting and handling emotions in movement processes becomes the goal in itself; a new emotional culture is embodied and put to practice. In its organizational structure and especially in its pursuit of a regenerative culture emotions play an essential role.

Extinction Rebellion's organizational structure is based on sociocracy, which means that their governance system is decentralized and non-hierarchical. This study has found that way of organizing appeals to many activists who feel frustrated with the hierarchy in other often more established (climate) organizations. This frustration or anger with the slow pace of decision-making contrasts sharply with feelings of freedom and possibility that Extinction Rebellion's way of organizing provides, as anyone can act in the name of Extinction Rebellion as long as they adhere to the ten principles. The possibility to form affinity groups with whoever you want and act together in the name of the movement also provides more social freedom for Extinction Rebellion's activists. They have a choice in the people they form groups with and thus have to interact with.

Furthermore, this form of governance system aims to avoid the unequal holding of power in the movement. This is a conscious strategy in itself to control the movement's internal power relations and avoid the corruption of power or the centering of power in one or a small group of people. No one in the movement is allowed to hold a role for more than six months, and roles are sometimes even changed after three months. In this way, Extinction Rebellion is conscious about the power one person can hold. They address interpersonal and group dynamics that always exist in group settings and in which some people who speak up more are more likely to get central roles than others who are less vocal. By changing roles constantly, everybody has a chance to take central positions and give their personal input. The regulation of the mitigation for power in combination with the freedom for activists to organize however and with whomever they want creates a social safe space in which everyone should theoretically have the same opportunities to contribute to the fight against the climate crisis. The prefigurative aspect which revolves around emotions more directly is the movements pursuit of a regenerative culture.

By pursuing a regenerative culture, Extinction Rebellion aims to bring a different approach to the climate movement through prefiguring a culture where they practice and demonstrate resilience for all future changes society will inevitably have to go through. Regenerative culture therefore has its own circle, or workgroup, that is specifically responsible for this aim. Regenerative culture tries to find new ways for people to come together and care for themselves through regulating their emotions, caring for each other, and caring for the planet in four broad areas: action care, self-care, community care and Earth care. In these different areas, regenerative culture contributes to the increased emotional reflexivity and emotional self-management of the activists and provides relevant emotional and physical techniques and guidelines for actions. Regenerative culture therefore also plays a role in the targeted production of feelings, and thereby contributes to activists' mental health.

Vera Taylor (in Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001) argues that 'abeyance structures', in which emotions are recognized and personal ties of love and friendship are important aspects, help movements to survive between periods of actions and mass mobilizations. Regenerative culture lies at the foundation of the abeyance structures present in Extinction Rebellion. The challenges that are inherent in all movements, in which emotions directly or indirectly play a role, are addressed by Regenerative culture (circles) through conflict resolution, meaningful dialogue and interpersonal communication to avoid the kinds of falling

out that lead to the decline of a movement. In this way, regenerative culture can also be understood as a survival strategy, and thus emotions in regenerative culture become a fusion of means and an end.

This study has attempted to sketch a nuanced picture of a movement easily put away as radicals and deepened our understanding of it by identifying the key role of emotions throughout the movement. However, some critical notes are also applicable. In its pursuit of system change through civil disobedient actions to address the climate emergency, as well as in its prefiguring of a regenerative internal culture, the question can be asked: who exactly is this new system and culture catered for? Who does it exclude? Extinction Rebellion's activism still revolves around civil disobedience and excludes those who (feel that they) cannot participate in these kind of activities. While supporting roles are also promoted, an interesting internal hierarchy still seems to exist in which civil disobedients score higher and have higher regard. The existence of a social hierarchy in a non-hierarchical organization is possibly an interesting starting point for future research. Furthermore, attempts to create a space of emotional support with eco emotions through a pursuit of regenerative culture encourages the expression and addressing of emotions in a way that can be alienating for newcomers, people with more introverted personalities, or people from cultures where this is not common. Are in this way whole groups of people excluded from the new system Extinction Rebellion works so hard towards?

In conclusion, Extinction Rebellion organizes itself around emotions. The image of Extinction Rebellion as a group of disruptive radicals is nuanced by this analysis of a movement that places emotions at its center as it informs and influences all aspects of organized activism as a means, an end or as a fusion of both. Emotions of despair, frustration, anger, grief and anxiety about the alarming state of the environment and the failure of past attempts to do something about this urgent issue informs and justifies the theory of change that lies at the heart of the movement in which radical system change is approached with a diverse repertoire in which civil disobedience plays a central role. It informs the way Extinction Rebellion frames the issue of climate change as an emergency and the strategizing of emotions to recruit new members and mobilize supporters. In its pursuit of a regenerative culture, emotions also become a goal in itself as prefigurative emotional cultures are embodied in which self-care, care for others and care for the planet are central and emotions concerning the environment are addressed. In its prefigurative approach to radical system change, Extinction Rebellion becomes to its volunteers an attempt to collectively, with like-minded people, model the future society they wish to see. Lotte answers this to the question what Extinction Rebellion means to her:

“It means so many things. It's a family to me. It's like somewhere where I go for comfort when I feel climate anxious or depressed even. It's activism so I feel like I'm being useful and I'm doing at least something for the thing that I care about. It's also psychological help, mental health, because everyone is always ready to hear you out and to help you out. Or just be silent with you. So yeah, I don't know, I can't really put it in words...it's everything” (October 8th, 2020, Utrecht).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Topic List Semi-Structured Interviews (in Dutch)

Intro:

- Intro over mezelf en het onderzoek
- Doel van het onderzoek
- Waarom hem/haar voor dit interview
- Vertrouwelijke informatie – anoniem
- Stoppen/pauzeren/vraag overslaan als je dat wilt
- Vragen voor mij nu?
- Toestemming op op te nemen (transcriberen, terugluisteren, vertrouwelijk)

Algemene informatie:

- Naam (als je niet anoniem wilt blijven),
- Leeftijd
- Beroep/ wat doe je in het dagelijks leven

Klimaat activisme

- Wanneer hoorde je voor het eerst over de klimaatproblematiek
- Hoe werd dat toen verteld? Wat voor invloed had dat op jou?
- Wanneer besloot je actief te worden?
 - o Wat deed je toen?
 - o Waarom besloot je dit toen?
- Ben je ook lid (geweest) van andere klimaat organisaties?

XR / Organization

- Waarom bij XR en niet een andere organisatie?
- Kan je me een beetje vertellen over XR – hoe het is georganiseerd, wat de visie is, het doel, de strategie, de structuur
- Hoe verschilt XR van andere klimaat organisaties?
- Wanneer hoorde jij zelf voor het eerst over XR?
- Sinds wanneer ben je actief voor XR?
- Hoe gebeurde dit?
- Wat voor functies/rollen/circles heb je gehad/heb je nu nog steeds bij XR
- Wat houden deze functies in?
- In wat voor activiteiten ben jij betrokken?

Acties/strategieën

- Wat zijn strategieën die XR gebruikt?
- Was je voor XR ook al bekend met dit soort strategieën?
- Wat vind jij van deze strategieën?
- Kan je wat voorbeelden geven van dergelijke acties?
- Hoe worden beslissingen omtrent strategieën genomen?
- Hoe worden acties bedacht binnenn XR?
- Heb je ooit zelf een actie bedacht/georganiseerd?
- Hoe verloopt zoiets?
- Zijn er nog andere acties waar je aan hebt meegedaan die jou persoonlijk nog erg zijn bijgebleven?

- Waarom waren deze acties voor jou belangrijk? Waarom zijn ze je bijgebleven?
-
- Hoe heb jij het begin van Corona ervaren?
- Was je nog actief voor XR?
 - o Wat voor dingen deed je toen?
 - o Met welke acties heb jij meegedaan?
 - o Welke actie is je echt bijgebleven?
 - o Hoe zijn de acties anders dan voor Corona?
 - o Welke dingen zijn hetzelfde gebleven?
 - o Zijn er nog andere dingen in het proces van het organiseren verandert door Corona?
 - o Welke functie had jij in deze acties? Was dit anders dan voor Corona?
 - o Wat was de voornaamste reden waarom je tijdens Corona toch actief was?
 - o Waren er nog belemmeringen of uitdagingen in deze tijd?
- Hoe heb je je activisme tijdens deze tijd ervaren?
 - o Waardevolle kanten?
 - o Negatieve kanten?
 - o Lessen? Verbeteringen? Ideeën?
- Zijn er acties waar je liever niet aan mee doet? Waarom?

Samenwerking

- Ben je ooit betrokken geweest bij een samenwerking tussen meerdere klimaat organisaties?
- Heb je hier over gehoord?
- Hoe verliepen deze acties/evenementen? Hoe gaat het verloop van dit soort acties?
- Hoe heb je de samenwerking zelf ervaren?
- Hoe worden deze acties vormgegeven?
- Is er iets veranderd in de samenwerking tijdens Corona?
- Hoe belangrijk is volgens mij jou samenwerking tussen XR en andere organisaties?
- Als je een lijst zou moeten maken van organisaties om mee samen te werken welke zouden daar dan op staan? Waarom deze? Waarom anderen niet?
- Hoe zie jij de toekomst van de algehele klimaatbeweging in Nederland?

Framing

- Als iemand die nog niet zo veel over het klimaatprobleem weet jou zou vragen waarom het zo belangrijk is om actie te ondernemen, wat zou je dan zeggen?
- Hoe denk je dat de strijd voor klimaatrechtvaardigheid bij het grotere publiek wordt ontvangen?
 - o Waarom?
 - o Hoe denk je dat XR specifiek wordt gezien?
- Wat betekent Corona volgens jou voor de klimaatbeweging?
- Wat betekent Corona volgens jou voor XR specifiek?
- Heeft Corona de manier waarop jij naar het klimaatprobleem kijkt verandert?
- Heeft Corona de manier waarop het klimaatprobleem wordt benaderd of moet worden opgelost verandert?

Algemeen/concluderend?

- Wat betekent Extinction Rebellion voor jou? /What does Extinction Rebellion mean to you? How would you describe it?

- Is jou positie/perspectief op het klimaatprobleem in de loop van deze pandemie verandert? Hoe?
- Is jou positie/perspectief op activisme in de loop van deze pandemie verandert?
- Hoe zie je de toekomst van de klimaatbeweiging in Nederland?

Is er nog iets wat je met me zou willen delen waar we t nog niet over hebben gehad?

De uitkomsten van het onderzoek

Bedankt voor de tijd!

DECLARATION OF REBELLION

*"To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection
in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues"*

John Locke

We hold the following to be true:

This is our darkest hour.

Humanity finds itself embroiled in an event unprecedented in its history. One which, unless immediately addressed, will catapult us further into the destruction of all we hold dear: this nation, its peoples, our ecosystems and the future of generations to come.

The science is clear – we are in the sixth mass extinction event and we will face catastrophe if we do not act swiftly and robustly.

Biodiversity is being annihilated around the world. Our seas are poisoned, acidic and rising. Flooding and desertification will render vast tracts of land uninhabitable and lead to mass migration.

Our air is so toxic that the United Kingdom is breaking the law. It harms the unborn whilst causing tens of thousands to die. The breakdown of our climate has begun. There will be more wildfires, unpredictable super storms, increasing famine and untold drought as food supplies and fresh water disappear.

The ecological crises that are impacting upon this nation, and indeed this planet and its wildlife can no longer be ignored, denied nor go unanswered by any beings of sound rational thought, ethical conscience, moral concern, or spiritual belief.

In accordance with these values, the virtues of truth and the weight of scientific evidence, we declare it our duty to act on behalf of the security and well-being of our children, our communities and the future of the planet itself.

We, in alignment with our consciences and our reasoning, declare ourselves in rebellion against our Government and the corrupted, inept institutions that threaten our future.

The wilful complicity displayed by our government has shattered meaningful democracy and cast aside the common interest in favour of short-term gain and private profits.

When Government and the law fail to provide any assurance of adequate protection, as well as security for its people's well-being and the nation's future, it becomes the right of its citizens to seek redress in order to restore dutiful democracy and to secure the solutions needed to avert catastrophe and protect the future. It becomes not only our right, it becomes our sacred duty to rebel.

We hereby declare the bonds of the social contract to be null and void, which the government has rendered invalid by its continuing failure to act appropriately. We call upon every principled and peaceful citizen to rise with us.

We demand to be heard, to apply informed solutions to these ecological crises and to create a national assembly by which to initiate those solutions needed to change our present cataclysmic course.

We refuse to bequeath a dying planet to future generations by failing to act now.

We act in peace, with ferocious love of these lands in our hearts. We act on behalf of life.



**extinction
rebellion**

Search Extinction Rebellion / Follow us on social media for updates and events

Please sign-up with MissionLifeForce.org | Aligning the force of law with the force of life
Extinction symbol courtesy of www.extinctionsymbol.info
In solidarity with all beings already affected by the ecological crisis

Appendix C: Extinction Rebellion's Principles and Values

Principles and Values

Extinction Rebellion is a decentralized and autonomous movement, which entails that anyone can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion, as long as they follow its ten principles and values:

OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

All are welcome who want to adhere to our principles and values

- 1 WE HAVE A SHARED VISION OF CHANGE**

Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.
 - 2 WE SET OUR MISSION ON WHAT IS NECESSARY**

Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change - using ideas such as "Momentum-driven organising" to achieve this.
 - 3 WE NEED A REGENERATIVE CULTURE**

Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.
 - 4 WE OPENLY CHALLENGE OURSELVES AND OUR TOXIC SYSTEM**

Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.
 - 5 WE VALUE REFLECTING AND LEARNING**

Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.
 - 6 WE WELCOME EVERYONE AND EVERY PART OF EVERYONE**

Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.
 - 7 WE ACTIVELY MITIGATE FOR POWER**

Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.
 - 8 WE AVOID BLAMING AND SHAMING**

We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.
 - 9 WE ARE A NON-VIOLENT NETWORK**

Using non-violent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.
 - 10 WE ARE BASED ON AUTONOMY AND DECENTRALISATION**

We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion.
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Images from Appendix B and Appendix C both retrieved from <https://rebellion.global/about-us/>