"What kind of generation is this?"

- A social anthropological study about youth climate activism in Sweden

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Abstract

The climate crisis is upon us and our planet is crying out for help. This thesis is a story about the young people that have chosen to answer the call and take action. The purpose has been to explore how youth perform and internalize climate activism, by emphasizing emotions, activist performances, how they perceive their own movement or organization, other expressions of climate activism, the potential risks and how they relate to their opponents. The studies ethnographic material derives from interviews and participatory observations, and was discussed with the help of a theoretical framework containing performance theory, social movement theory, emotions, communitas, liminality and collective effervescence. The study yielded several results but the more pronounced may be summarized as: The reckoning that activism can be understood as moral identity-work and an ongoing negotiation –where morality, emotion and action merge; The importance of social ties and group belonging; The momentousness of having organizational values and strategies that align with the individual's own values and morality in the choice of which organization to join; And the complicated reality of activism from a culturally submissive position –where one's opinions, knowledge and actions are dismissed or exploited.

Key words: Social anthropology, youth climate activism, identity, morality & performance.

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1   Introduction

> It is a different frustration and motivation because it is my future that is on the line – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

We used to call it global warming, then it became climate change and today the word *change* seems almost inferior in the face of the monstrous threat to not only human life but all life. Mankind is aware of this menace, which was reflected in The Peoples' Climate Vote where 1.2 million people participated and 64% considered climate change to be a global emergency (UNDP 1).[1] Therefore, going forward I will refer to climate change as the climate *crisis*. The ramifications of increased global temperatures are already felt today with wildfires, floods, famine and drought. In just the last decade over 1.7 billion people have been affected by climate-related disasters and extreme weather. The World Food Programme predicts that a 2°C temperature rise will push 189 million people into hunger and with a 4°C temperature rise this figure could increase to 1,8 billion (World Food Programme 1). The damages will be unevenly divided, and the ones already living marginalized lives in poverty will face the most severe consequences, some or maybe many of them will face mortal danger. In the global north the ramifications will be undeniable with extreme weather and dysfunctioning ecosystems (O'Brien et al. 2018:1). Furthermore, the burden of the climate crisis will also be unevenly distributed across generations. Several older generations will be long gone when the crisis reaches its peak. Meanwhile, several younger generations, and not to mention future generations, is "inheriting a troubled world" (Nairn 2019:436).

Youth have organized, rebelled and fought for a more sustainable future for over sixty years and shows no signs of stopping, quite the opposite in fact. The modern environmental movement had its origin in the 1960s, and young people have since the beginning and throughout the decades continued to be a vital element for the movement (García 2020:349; Järvikoski 1995:84-85). In the last decades, and especially during the last few years, climate activism has become more and more visible in society. One could argue that the "new era" of

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[1] The UN Development Programme and Oxford University facilitated the Peoples' Climate Vote in 20 21. It included participants from 50 different countries.

youth climate activism began in the capital of Sweden. I am sure most of us remember the girl with braids in her hair and a yellow rain jacket, holding a sign with the words *Skolstrejk för klimatet* (School strike for the climate) outside the Swedish Parliament. Greta Thunberg quickly became a contemporary symbol for climate activism. Thunberg did not invent young people's commitment to mitigate the climate crisis, but she did add fuel to the fire and a movement emerged from the flames - Fridays For Future, which quickly became a beacon for climate activists all around the world. In September 2019 Fridays For Future spearheaded the Global Climate Strike –one of the largest environmental social movements to date, with 7.6 million participants from 185 countries (Martiskainen et al. 2020:1).

This thesis will predominantly focus its attention on the individual youth climate activist's narrative, motivation, experience and emotions in a Swedish context. As previously mentioned, it did not begin with Thunberg, even if her contribution is vital to understand its contemporary manifestation in Sweden. Youth climate activism has enjoyed a long history in the country with the establishment of Fältbiologerna (Nature & Youth) in 1948. In more recent history youth climate activists have successfully aided the rescue of the Ojnare forest on Gotland in 2015 (Petersen et al. 2018:417-422) and halted the expansion of Preemraff in 2020. [2] And at this very moment young climate activists, and the whole Swedish environmental movement, are supporting the Sami in their efforts to stop a mine in Gállok, Jokkmokk, which threatens the Sami people's way of life, reindeer herding and the nature surrounding Lule älv (Aftonbladet 1; Dagens Nyheter 1).[3]

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[2] Preemraff is Scandinavia's largest oil refinery, and is owned by Preem.
[3] During the spring of 2022 the Government, unfortunately, chose to approve the processing concession for the Sweden registered company Jokkmokk Iron Mines (owned by the British corporation Beowulf). This decision is one step closer to actual mining in the area, but the company will most likely face years of environmental processes (SVT 1). Following the decision, the Swedish environmental movement has condemned it as exemplified by Greenpeace Sweden's press statement where they accuse the government of favoring exploiters over people and nature (Greenpeace 1).

1.2   Purpose, research problem & research questions

This thesis will explore the issue of the climate crisis from the perspective of youth activism in Sweden. Becoming aware of the climate crisis, the decision to become involved and act and the form the action takes are all individual experiences I consider to be highly relevant for understanding youth climate activism. O'Brien et al. (2018:2) argue that once young people understand the issues of the climate crisis and begin to address it, it is inescapable that they also have to deal with the hard questions regarding how society collectively deals with such issues. They also argue that young people who engage in this issue dissent from prevailing societal and economic norms, such as consumerism and economic growth. Another aspect relevant for understanding youth climate activists is how they relate to other actors. In the highly politicized climate crisis, whether on an international or a national level, youth's access to influence and power is limited. Thew et al. (2020:2) advocate that young people face the same challenges as other fractions of civil society but that youth's position is compromised further since other actors monopolize participation in order to guard their own access to power, and continuously obstruct youth efforts. The core of my interest in youth climate activists in Sweden is to understand how they navigate their commitment, their position and their opponents.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore how youth climate activists internalize and perform climate activism. I aspire to contribute to the research on contemporary youth movements in general and on youth climate movements in particular. In order to fulfill my purpose, my intent is to investigate the intersection of emotions, commitment and action; how youth perceive themself and the movement; and how they relate to their opponents. This endeavor is guided by the following research questions:

- *What prompts climate activism, and how can we understand the process of becoming an activist?*

- *What part does emotion play in the internalization and performance of activism?*

- *What challenges and risks accompany climate activism and how do youth define and cope with such issues?*

- *How do youth climate activists relate to their organization or movement and the environmental movement, and how do they understand their position with regard to their opponents?*

2   Previous studies

In order to impose some necessary limitations I have chosen to focus on two overarching themes: Academic writings on the environmental movement and on youth (climate) activism. These two topics, and the wider social movement, have received substantial attention from several different disciplines, such as social anthropology, social psychology and political science.[4] The authors featured in the following chapter have their origin in disciplines ranging from social science and sociology (e.g. Mei 2021; Earl 2017; Järvikoski 1995; O'Brian 2018; Johnston 2019) or environmental psychology (Fisher 2015) to global environmental governance (Thew 2018). My study has an interdisciplinary character, which is a reflection of the contemporary multi-disciplinary epistemology for the field of youth climate activism and the related subjects.

2.1   The environmental movement

As described by García (2020:349) environmentalism in the shape of a social movement came about in the late twentieth century. Many grass root movements and organizations saw the light of day in the 1960s. Social movements and activists have, since then, tried to advocate for the environment, raise awareness or oppose initiatives with negative impacts on the environment. The modern movement leans heavy on science in its desire to mitigate the climate crisis. Martiskainen et al. (2020:2-3) claim that topics like fossil fuel, nuclear power and renewable energy have only grown in importance when climate change became a part of the discourse. The environmental movement has been successful in increasing the attention to the environment and climate in politics, which resulted in both national and international policies on e.g. wildlife protection and water provisions. According to Martiskainen et al. the environmental movement has historically enjoyed less academic attention than related fields like green parties, despite its global impact.

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[4] As an example see *Handbook of Social Movements Across Disciplines*, edited by Bert Klandermans and Conny Robbeband, published by Springer in 2010.

Fisher and Nasrin (2020:2-4) have studied climate activism and have concluded that environmental organizations in general have a limited commitment to efforts that have a direct impact on individual greenhouse gas emissions. Instead activists prefer to direct their attention to putting pressure on "the nodes of power", meaning business and decision-makers, with the intent to impact the decision-making process. Fisher and Nasrin use climate change as a way to explain the form of activism when people with less power work outside the system to put pressure on those in power. A particular outside-tactic is demonstrations, and this tactic has received substantial attention from researchers of both environmental movements (Fisher and Nasrin 2020:5) and social movements (Juris 2008; Della Porta 2009).

Järvikoski (1995) has studied young people as actors in the environmental movement, his description of the environmental movement's history provides an insight to how the movement has transformed over time. Like many before him he begins with the 1960s, linking environmental activism with the emergence of youth-oriented activism in the political culture in Western Europe and North America. During the next two decades the movement enjoyed both larger conservationist organizations and smaller action groups, preserving some of its radical or counter-cultural image. Järvikoski (1995:84-85) underscores that the "environmental activists were largely young and young adults", but claims that the environmental movement's radical image has lost its edge over time. This is partly because the strategies, at large, have become more accepted, but mostly because environmental consciousness is framed in a positive light. "There is no dispute about whether environmental protection is important, but there are often disputes about how the environment should and could best be protected" (ibid: 86-87).

2.2 Youth climate activism

Despite that some academics, like Järvikoski (1995:85 or Lee et al. 2020:2; Zummo et al. 2020:1207; Mei 2021:149), have called attention to young people's role in the environmental movement or social movements, there has been a theoretical inadvertence. Johnston (2019:2) underscores that in social movement research young individuals have not been appointed enough theoretical attention. He considers it to be strange because most of the movements that have been studied have close ties to "generational relations and the role of younger activists at their core". However, other scholars, like Earl et al. (2017:2), makes the point that social

movement researchers in fact have realized the vital role young people played in the development of several social movements. Earl et al. (2017:1) highlight that scholars, before and around the new millennium, painted a worrisome picture regarding young people's low political engagement. The arguments were supported by results from surveys indicating that young people were less inclined to follow the news or be interested in politics and advocacy organizations. Late 2000s scholars argued, in response, that youth have not stopped participating in society or politics, the participation has merely changed from party politics to protesting, volunteering and embedding politics in everyday lives.

Several scholars devoted to the field of youth climate activism underscore the message youth often advocated for; that they have a special claim to the climate crisis issue, because they will suffer due to adult negligence (Foran et al. 2017:361; Wallis and Loy 2021:1; Gibbons 2014:20; Zummo et al. 2020:1208; Hubbard & Williams 2021:4). This train of thought often leads to a discussion on intergenerational justice; which is viewed as a foundation for the claim young activists make (Wallis & Loy 2021:1; Gibbons 2014:20; Gross & Mark 2020:146).

Furthermore, I have made the decision to include literature on how youth are perceived by other actors, because I believe that it is important to understand the forces in society that the climate activists I interviewed co-exist with. Earl et al. (2017:3) calls attention to the common perception of young people as incomplete members of society. Moreover, young individuals are commonly treated in society as if they can't properly engage in politics (Mei 2021:155). In the case of climate governance, both locally and globally, there is a battle going on regarding how to view youth participation. Fisher (2015:229; and Lerner et al. 2003:172; Warming 2011:119) have seen the increase of young people in climate crisis issues, e.g. Fridays For Future, to have boosted the discussion of youth participation in climate decision-making. Thew (2018:380), who has published several studies concerning youth participation at COP, has interviewed decision-makers on how they perceive youth participants. [5] The results from her study becomes a fitting example of these competing conceptualizations as some consider the presence of young people to be a positive thing, while others view them as aggressive or arrogant. This is something that Maier (2019:10-11) relates to in her study of

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[5] COP stands for Conference of the Parties; the supreme decision-making body to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. COP has been held every year since 1995 and has grown to become the largest climate conference in the world with participants from governments, media, civil society and business (UNFCCC 1).

the Fridays For Future movement, where she argues that the movement has a narrative which views the current status quo and politicians to be the root cause for the climate crisis. Maier is concerned that the narrative will make other actors inclined to see young people as challengers or even an enemy.

Other scholars have also devoted their time to study youth's possibility to engage, particularly scholar concerned with youth participation in climate governance. Young people are usually a part of the narrative in climate governance but, more often than not, they are talked *about* not *with* (Hubbard & Williams 2021:5-6). There are several explanatory models for why young people's participation is limited. Decision-makers might question the capacity of youth to contribute in the decision-making process (Spajic et al. 2019:373). Warming (2011:124) argues that decision-makers devalue youth's cultural capital and knowledge. Young people are also framed as non-adults, immature, incompetent or as human becoming's –a conceptualization of young individuals as non-active contributors in society (Allen 1968:319; Thew 2018:3; Warming 2011:125).

Fisher's (2015) study of how youth activists conceptualize their life trajectories of climate activism has contributed to my study significantly. Fisher (2015:231) and I share the notion that much of the previous studies concerning youth climate activism have been geared towards, mainly, young people's attitudes and perceptions of the climate crisis. In his study Fisher focuses on what he refers to as "transformative moments" – when the individual recalled consciously committing to act, "I emphasize these moments' function for conscious commitment to highlight their role in participants' directed agency over actions targeting climate change" (ibid: 235).

I recognize Fisher's work as highly significant not only for my study but for everyone wishing to engage with young people's climate commitment. Fisher (2015:243) also makes the important point to not disregard the complex reasons and multiple experiences, which he found to be the foundation for the life trajectories for commitment. Fisher's study, however, bypasses the more problematic aspects of becoming an activist at a young age and the negative or complex trajectories the conscious decision to become active may have for an individual. Furthermore, Fisher does not consider the implications of performative activism for the individual's decision to act. I consider my study to be a continuation of Fisher's study, where I incorporate more aspects of the individuals' experience once they become active.

Another significant contribution is O'Brien et al.'s (2018) study that discusses and theorizes youth activism from the perspective of dissent. O'Brien et al. (2018:1) argue that the challenge in the context of the climate crisis goes beyond how young people can be included in decision-making, and becomes a question of how young activists may dissent from society's prevailing norms, lifestyles and "business as usual". Dissent as a concept will aid me in my arguments regarding how my interviewees conceptualize themselves, the movement and their opponents. O'Brian et al. also underscores the heterogeneousness of dissent –"with youth dissent expressed through actions ranging from symbolic acts to political mobilization, clearly not all forms of climate change activism are the same" (ibid: 1). Furthermore, they distinguish between dutiful, disruptive and dangerous dissent in their discussion, which we shall return to in chapter 6.

> It may be particularly interesting to investigate whether the lines between "youth" and "adult" are becoming blurred as young people take greater responsibility for their future, while many adults behave as children, protecting their toys and games as the climate continues to warm (O'Brian et al. 2018:9).

Mei's (2021) case study of youth activism in Hong Kong is the last significant study to be introduced. She discusses social identity, activism and group membership. Mei (2021:149-52) argues that youth's social identity stems from their group membership and when there is an external threat this identity becomes politically strengthened. Moreover, Mei draws on Tejfel et al.'s (1971) social identity theory to explain that individuals get their identity and sense of self from being members of a certain social group. A group membership provides young individuals with a sense of belonging and with the group membership youth are able to formulate a collective identity by a shared struggle. Mei claim that collective identity in general refer to "a person's sense of belonging to a group" but in social movements it instead refers to " the shared sense of we-ness derived from shared beliefs and emotions among a group pursuing social and political change" (ibid: 151-52). Mei does not specifically relate her study to youth climate activism, but I view her contribution on social identity and youth activism to be useful in my discussion regarding how the individuals I have interviewed view themselves, their movement and their activism.

This chapter has contained a literature review covering the environmental movement and youth (climate) activism. In the concluding paragraphs I aim to situate my own study. First, research in these fields usually apply a macro level perspective while discussing the

phenomenon (e.g. Mei 2021; Järvikoski 1995), or they express an interest to investigate it through one specific organization like Rokhmawati Susanto's (2007) study of Greenpeace's strategic transformation, or Maier's (2019) study of the Fridays For Future Movement or Furlong and Vignole's (2020) research on Extinction Rebellion. Second, there is a gap in the vast sea of environmental movement studies – the individual experience. But, as Melucci (1980:218) points out, personal identity and the individual is "the property which is now being claimed and defended; this is the ground in which individual and collective resistance is taking root". Therefore, instead of explaining the individual's behavior or identity through a macro analysis of a social movement, my study explains a movement through individual experiences. I argue that the individual perspective holds significance in social movement studies because the individual is the smallest building block of any movement. I, however, remain humble to the limitations of my study, such as the inability to make wide claims regarding youth activism, but I also argue that the individual perspective could render results and provide insights regarding youth (climate) activism.

Finally, I consider my purpose: to explore youth climate activism through the intersection of emotions, commitment and action, how they perceive themself and the movement and how they relate to their opponents, to highlight a relatively limited perspective in the pre-existing literature. Even studies like Fisher's (2015) that concerns trajectories and motives for activism contains gaps concerning the negative aspects of activism and the performative aspect. Another study, which relates to my own study, is Martiskainen et al. (2020:2) that are concerned with young people's knowledge about the climate crisis, emotions, actions and motivations for action. The topics Martiskainen et al. discuss are closely related to what I am trying to explore myself but they employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. I consider my own study to be a continuation of this study, providing a deeper description of youth activists' emotions, motivations, knowledge and experience of participating in actions. My study, with regards to the methodology and purpose, contributes to a more diverse account of the reality and experiences of youth climate activism. To conclude, several important contributions have been made to better understand youth climate activism, but I recognize my study to be situated in a gap where the individual's experiences, conceptualizations, perceptions and emotions is highlighted through qualitative methods in a fashion which could further studies in the fields of environmental movements and youth climate activism.

3   Theory & methods

3.1   Theoretical framework

I have developed a theoretical framework that draws on several different theoretical contributions: Social movements, Performance, Emotions, Collective effervescence, Liminality and Communitas. The theoretical framework is dominated by two disciplines: sociology (e.g. Della Porta, Melucci, Eyerman, Jasper and Yang) and anthropology (e.g. Escobar, Salman and Assies, Juris, Turner and Throop and Laughlin).

3.1.1   *Social movements*

Social movements is a well researched and well theorized subject and there are many different conceptualizations, one is to define it as a collective agent united to promote social or political change and articulate social conflict (Thörn & Svenberg 2016:597). Furthermore, social movements have been described as having a network structure that experiments with, and performs, cultural meaning. Social movements are living organisms characterized by weak leadership, fluid memberships and informally structured groups (Della Porta 2009:190). The term movement refers to a political phenomenon that became relevant in the early nineteenth century with the societal upheaval early industrialism brought and *movements* began to be used to describe the group responses that opposed the conditions of factory labor and urban life (Salman & Assies 2010:211). One of the most respected social movement scholars of our time – Melucci (1980:202), defines collective action as "the ensemble of the various types of conflict-based behavior in a social system. A collective action implies the existence of a struggle between two actors for the appropriation and orientation of social values and resources (…)". Moreover, collective action, for Melucci (1980:202), inhabits all types of behaviors that transgress institutionalized norms and social norms that go beyond the rules of the political system and attack the structure of society's class relations. If both of these things are true for a collective action Melucci would define it as a social movement.

There is, and has been, a long debate in social movement literature regarding the term New Social Movements (NSM), used to describe contemporary movements, and if there really is something new about them. I will not devote substantial time or effort to take the reader through all the twists and turns of this theoretical debate, but I will outline the two main conceptualizations. The first views NSM as a continuation of the labor movement and class struggles but with goals and ideas that is relevant for today's society (Olofsson 1988:16). The second advocates that class belonging has lost its significance for NSMs and is no longer a decisive factor for collective identity, instead NSMs occupy the realm of civil society, rather than political parties or unions, advocating for issues that impact everyday life (Cohen 1985:667).

> The new dimensions of the NSMs, from feminism to ecology, involve a reflexive relation to the objective, subjective, and social worlds insofar as they thermalize issues of personal and social identity, contest the social interpretation of norms, communicatively create and agree on new ones, and propose alternative ways of relating to the environment (Cohen 1985:708).

Anthropologists have also engaged in social movement research. Escobar (1992:395-96) advocate for anthropology research informed by social movement approaches. Contemporary social movements are also perceived to have a vast impact on the production of our world;

> Social movements, it is argued, emerge out of the crisis of modernity; they orient themselves towards the constitution of new orders, and embody a new understanding of politics and social life itself. They result in the formation of novel collective identities, which foster social and cultural forms of relating and solidarity as a response to the crises of meanings and economies that the world faces today (Escobar 1992:96).

Escobar (1992:407) sees value in an anthropological approach to social movement research because the origin of movements comes from "experiences of daily life under conditions of domination", something that cannot be understood without paying attention to the cultural context. Moreover, Escobar (1992:420) argue that recent social movement studies indicate that individuals continue to shape their world by political activism, and in order to understand the movements of today one should investigate;

> The micro-level of everyday practices and their imbrication with larger processes of development, patriarchy, capital and the State. How these forces find their way into people's lives, their effects on people's identity and social relations, and people's responses and 'uses' of them have to be examined through a close engagement and reading of popular actions (Escobar 1992:420).

The argument of every-day life resurges in Salman and Assies's (2010:206) work where they argue that an analysis of social movements ought to situate events in "the setting of ordinary, routine life patterns and in the dominant cultural configurations". Salman and Assies consider that an anthropological approach can contribute to social movement research in the following

ways; making culture central, mitigate the debate about structuralistic and agency-focused research approaches, bring forth the analysis of individual and group perceptions and take stock of cultural features such as bodily memory, collective attitudes, cosmologies, habitus and collective identities and invite to face-face interactions. I have been inspired by this notion and have chosen to focus on the individuals perception of the group, individual and collective values and morality, how individuals use their bodies in actions and how identity, action and morality relates to one another.

3.1.2   *Performance*

> Performance (…) is what gives this story life, adds drama and activates emotion, through mise-en-scene. If social movements articulate frames of understanding, the performance of protest actualizes them (Eyerman 2006:198).

This contribution to my theoretical framework represents both of the dominating disciplines with Juris anthropological and Eyerman's sociological approach to performance in social movements. Juris (2015:82-83) uses the term cultural performance to explain the process for how alternative values, meanings and identities are produced, embodied and communicated publically in social movements.

> In particular, emphasizing how protest performances are embodied allows us to explore the way meanings and identities are expressed through the body (Scheper- Hughes and Lock 1987), as well as the body as a lived subject and agent (Lyon and Barbalet 1994) (Juris 2015:83).

In his own studies of cultural performance in protest movements Juris underscores that not all performative activities (e.g. lobbying, urban gardens, letter writing) are performances in the same fashion that mass actions or marches are performances. The key is that the activity is more or less directed at a public audience. Performance should neither be understood as unique to social movements, nor as just a concept. Performance is an important tool and strategy for social movements to communicate with the public and fuel an oppositional discourse (Juris 2015:83).

Juris (2015:86-87) argue that activists, in general, are very aware of the performative dimensions of a protest since activists often are very self-reflexive regarding the tactics employed. Social movement performances also differ from one another due to internal and external factors, such as the action's purpose or context. Furthermore, Juris (2015:90) distinguishes between what he calls "institutional protests" and "free-form mass actions",

where the later is more emotively and visually compact. In mass actions the activists actually use their own bodies to initiate conformation and occupy space by a ritualized performance, and this makes it more impactful because it contains elements of play, danger and uncertainty. During the performance the activist's body is transformed into a site of political agency (ibid: 95). Previously it was reasoned that cultural performance is made with the intent to communicate with the public, but Juris (2015:99) underscores that activists via performance can produce more or less powerful emotions and aid in the forging of new identities. Performance may also provide building blocks for the " emergence of new subjectivities" and fuel solidarity, which sustains the movement.

Moreover, a performative action may set in motion what Eyerman (2006:195) calls "a process of collective will formation whereby individual identities and biographies are fused into a collective". The collective is characterized by solidarity, feelings of group belongingness, a shared memory and common purpose. Eyerman further explains that this can have both situational and long-term effects on an individual where the individual is changing by being a part of a larger social force that might become a part of the individual's biography.

> One can be "moved," in other words, before, during, and after the fact, as one recalls a situation through hearing a piece of music or viewing a film or a photograph, which represents an event, as well as the movement itself becoming objectified in organizations and networks, which one may be "moved" to join or support (…) An empowering can take place, especially as cognitive shifts occur, and clarity of vision and purpose give direction to the sense of movement. How does this occur? Cognitive framing and ritual performances are important mechanisms (Eyerman 2006:195).

For Eyerman (2006:193-94), social movements are conceptualized as a political performance, a form of acting in public that entails dramatic forms of representation to engage emotions and communicate the movement's message. To discuss performance in theoretical terms one should pay attention to place and space of movement, and in addition how the opposition is performed.

In analyzing performance three arenas or social spaces where the opposition is performed are vital to distinguish: "an emerging social movement, its opponents, and, finally, the general public". A movement occurs, according to Eyerman, when heterogeneous and ever-changing groups of people sense that they are united in the same cause, the people are ever-changing because individuals tend to move in and out of social movements, but the sense of unity and collective movement in the same direction endures and makes the movement what it is. To maintain this collective unity both solidarity and collective identity must be forged, in this

process the "Other" which the movement moves against becomes important as well as the individuals inside the movement. The us-them narrative in social movements is done symbolically in front of an audience with potential supporters which must be moved and addressed. How social movements *move* is by transforming emotions and identities through actions. These actions are often fueled by cognitively framed emotions like frustration, anger, guilt and shame, which are expressed publicly (Eyerman 2006:194-95).

Eyerman (2006:196), in his reasoning, underscores the importance of ritual practices that are performed as a part of collective protest. These practices are in turn transformative as they help to blur the line between collective and individual, public and private – and create strong emotional bonds between participants and produce solidarity and a shared collective memory. Finally, performance theory demands attention to acting and acting out, corporality and presence, the role of drama and the symbolism in movement activity, and will guide me in my efforts to understand 'being' an activist, in the sense of how the individual experience participating in an action (ibid: 207).

3.1.3 *Emotions*

> Emotional labor (…) channeling, transforming, legitimating and managing one's own and others' emotions and expressions of emotions in order to cultivate and nurture the social networks that are the building blocks of social movements'' (Taylor and Rupp 2002:142).

Bosco (2006:343) argues that emotions are vital for the understanding of how activists maintain their embeddedness in the movement. Furthermore, Jasper (2010:60-1) underlines that culture intersects with cognitive understandings of how the world is, how the world should be, moral principles and emotions. For Jasper (2010:81) the connection between morality, cognition and emotions is clear, as they are inseparable from culture. I would like to add the point that how we express, conceptualize and understand emotions is dependent upon our culture, hence, the emotions my interviewees' express should be viewed in connection to the Swedish context.

Furthermore, emotions are how we react to the world and show what matters to us. Emotions are also a fundamental dimension of rational action. I will use Jasper's concept of moral

emotions in my study.[6] Moral emotions are complex and relate to a person's morality (Jasper 2010:81-84). Before continuing the account of moral emotions I see the need to define morality. I, therefore, draw on a sociological perspective where morality is centered around "evaluative cultural codes" that defines what is good or bad, right or wrong and acceptable or unacceptable (Turner and State 2006:544).

Examples of moral emotions are compassion, outrage and disgust, anger and fear. Moral fear and anger differ from their reflex counterparts that occur when an individual is exposed to sudden danger. Moral fear is what my interviewees experience when they think about the effects of the climate crisis. Moral emotions impact both the individual and the outside. On one hand, can blame be mobilized in protest situations by activists defining the villains and stipulating blame upon them. The blame stems from a moral standpoint and a definition of what is right or wrong. On the other hand, moral emotions can provide the individual with satisfaction, a sense of moral pride, when we participate in an action we consider to be inline with our moral convictions, like blocking a road to save a forest, it gives us a chance to voice these moral commitments (Jasper 2010:81-84).

The last piece of my theoretical framework concerning emotions is the interplay between emotions and identity-work. As a concept, identity-work highlights the work individuals do individually and collectively to signify "who they are, who they want to be, and how they expect others to treat them". This process is an emotional process since it communicates who we are and we respond emotionally when our identity expectations are breached, met or challenged. Moreover, identity-work is closely tied to morality because it is a process, which is most likely to occur when individuals possess an identity that attracts either ardent public support or strong moral (Fields et al. 2006:164). Therefore, I will predominantly use the term *moral* identity-work in the discussion regarding my interviewees' process of becoming climate activists.

Furthermore, I will incorporate emotions in my theoretical framework because much of the stories from the activists I have interviewed concerns emotions. It should be noted that Jasper,

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[6] Jasper (2010:81-849, in addition to moral emotions, incorporates reflex and affect emotions in his theoretical argument. Reflex emotions can be anger, joy or surprise and send significant indications about an individual's character. Reflex emotion can sway the behavior of others like anger may encourage others to comply. Affect emotions, e.g. love, hate, trust and resentment, usually last longer than reflex emotions and are understood to be clusters of positive or negative feelings (Jasper 2010:81-84).

as a sociologist, prefers to use the term *identity*, like much of the social movement writings emerging from that field do. Therefore, I have chosen to also use identity in my arguments but I am conscious that the term *subjectivity*, favored by anthropologists', could serve the same purpose. Finally, it should be underscored that I regard identity-work as a process where morality and values play an integral part.

3.1.4 *Communitas, Liminality & Collective Effervescence*

To aid me in the discussion regarding the process of becoming and living as a youth climate activists I will draw on Victor Turner's (1969:95-96) theoretical contribution on liminality but more explicitly - communitas. Liminal entities can be found in the nexus of the positions assigned by ceremonies, custom, law and conventions, and tend to forge intense comradeship. Communitas is about individuals becoming one and it is a process that transgress the government structured and institutionalized norms, "constitute the "human condition" as regards man's relations with his fellow man" (ibid: 125-27). While I recognize the significance of Turner's original work I see it beneficial to also draw on more contemporary scholars that apply Turner's theoretical concepts.

Yang (2000:380-3) argues that social movements are liminal phenomenons because they are "identity-transforming experiences" where the individual is separated from pre-existing norms and structures and provide the individual with the power to redefine oneself and society. To keep the momentum in the liminal experience collective action is important because it aids the identity construction, as it creates a new order in light of old dominant social and cultural institutions and practices. Yang explains liminality to be about separation or liberation from either one or all forms of separations – temporal, spatial, social or moral. Finally, Yang (2000:397-98) underscores that by participating in a social movement an individual experiences a process of emotional and cognitive liberation and communion, and it's, like the liminal stage in a ritual process, a liminal process embedded in a bigger social process.

> The stronger the contrast between preparticipation structural embeddings and the leveling effects unleashed by the movement, the greater the liminal effect, and the more profound the transformative power of participation (Yang 2000:385).

In the outline of Turner's theoretical concept communitas I will employ Olavesons (2001:103-4) interpretation where communitas should be understood to be standing directly opposed to structure in the sense of blueprinted status sequences, role-sets and status-sets.

Communitas is an "unstructured or rudimentarily structured and undifferentiated communion or community of equal individuals". It is a connection between individuals that have a shared humanity and status roles lose their power, which is intense and emotional rather than rational.

Moreover, Turner (1973:193–94) distinguishes between 3 forms of communitas: (1) ideological communitas, found in utopian societies, (2) existential communitas, which happens during a counter-cultural event, and (3) normative communitas that happens when existential communitas is transformed because of a need for social control. When talking about communitas it's easy to see it as purely instinctual but it also involves consciousness and the individual is aware of the emerging comradeship.

> (…) as there is no society without individuals, so the impersonal forces that arise from collectivity cannot take form without incarnating themselves in individual consciousness, in which they become individualized" (Durkheim 1912:269 in Throop & Laughlin 2002:45).

Durkheim's understanding of the human condition, collectives and society is similar to Turner's. Durkheim argued that social life was built upon ideological factors such as symbols, myths and concepts and that representations of these were the key to understanding humankind. Moreover, Durkheim underscored that all humans have come to know the world through the same elementary categories of number, time, cause, class, space, person and totality, and that these categories are "given directly in our experienced interaction with cultural, social and physical worlds" (Throop & Laughlin 2002:41).

Collective effervescence is when the individual's social self collides with others in emotionally charged assemblies where the individual's bind themself to the ideals of their social group. The central aspect of collective effervescence is that it is inherently collective and communal – a prerequisite for the intense emotions individuals experience. The collective also works as a catalyzer for an intimate relationship within the group. Collective effervescence is a temporary state, like something one could imagine happening at a demonstration. New moral understandings, ideal conceptualizations of society and a belief that those can be realized may emerge during the collective effervescence state (Olaveson 2001:96-101).

It's possible to interpreted Durkheim theoretical contribution as an "attempt to ground the abstract, conceptual realm of human understanding directly in the lived experience of

embodied effervescent states generated through collective ritual" (Throop & Laughlin 2002:47).[7] The effervescent state alters the individual's cognitive conceptualizations, which then "ultimately result in the formation of the fundamental categories of understanding" (ibid: 47). Finally, Durkheim's theoretical contribution is a basis for understanding human cognitions as it is expressed directly through sensations, emotions and connotations (ibid: 47 & 54-56).

An observant reader might have noticed similarities between communitas and collective effervescence. Turner was inspired by Durkheim and Olaveson (2001:107) have compared the two concepts and outlines some similarities; both are understood to be social realities, refer to intense collective emotions or moral forces, are temporal and spontaneous, and allow behaviors not validated in normal social life – meaning they exist outside societies normal existence. As underscored by Olaveson communitas and collective effervescence are corresponding concepts, and I have debated if I should only use one of them or both, and then how and when I should use them. I consider Durkheim and Turner's contributions to sociology, anthology and my study to be momentous enough to motivate the inclusion of both. Therefore, I have chosen to take notice of the emphasis Turner places on the collective in communitas (Turner 1969:125-27) and in turn the understanding of effervescence as an emotional and temporary state (Olaveson 2001:96-101). Hence, I will lean on communitas in the account for how my interviewees became activists, the social component and the individuals' relation to the collective. Collective effervescence will, predominantly, be used in relation to performance.

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[7] Rituals carried much significance for Durkheim and collective effervescence. Thus, Durkheim considered rituals to be vital means for achieving a culturally permeate intersubjective attunement among participants in the collective (Throop & Laughlin 2002:41; Olaveson 2001:102). Furthermore, Durkheim considered human nature to be fundamentally social where universal properties of consciousness only can become fully active through rituals and the vitalization of collective effervescence (Throop & Laughlin 2002:47.

3.2   Methods

My aim is to explore how youth climate activists internalize and perform climate activism by investigating the intersection of emotions, commitment and action, how they perceive themself and the movement and how they relate to their opponents. Therefore, this study is devoted to understanding a wider social phenomenon, the environmental movement, by applying an individual perspective which focuses on the individual human experience (Pernecky 2016:2). Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2010:157) argue that the choice to make individuals the focal point of one's research has important methodological implications, meaning that the researcher needs methods which collect "attitudes, beliefs, opinions, motives, affect and emotions, intended and actual behavior" on an individual level. Marcus (1995:99) considers ethnographic studies to be "predicated upon attention to the everyday, an intimate knowledge of face-to-face communities and groups" and Jasper (2010:97-98) argue that some forms of involvement, e.g. observations or interviews, are the best method to capture "meaning and especially feelings of participants". Hence, my methods are participatory observations and interviews.

I had a vision to interview young people between the ages of 15-30 that are active in the environmental movement in Sweden.[8] The concept *youth* is a temporal term influenced by social and cultural norms. The United Nations defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 (UN 1).[9] But, I have chosen to let myself be influenced by Melucci's (1992:55-56) definitions of youth, where he argue that youth today has transcended from being purely a biological condition into a cultural condition as well. Furthermore, youth is not simply youth because they are a certain age but rather because they follow a certain lifestyle with certain codes of behaviors. For Melucci, this implies that adolescence is prolonged while adult life is postponed.

In my research I made the decision to expand the scope to include people up to 30. This choice was motivated by my desire to capture diverse experiences. The individuals older than 24 had been, and still are, involved with climate activism for the better part of their youth and

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[8] One interviewee had just turned 31 at the time of our interview but this individual had been a part of the environmental movement for almost a decade and therefore I saw the individual's knowledge to hold a higher value for the study than the person's age.
[9] The United Nations explains that this definition is primarily made for statistical purposes.

their experiences still carry significant value. The older individuals often had a longer experience of climate activism whereas the younger interviewees usually were quite new to the environmental movement.[10] This made it possible for me to gain insights from both "veterans" and new activists. The people I interviewed were members of WWF Youth, Fridays For Future, Klimatstudenterna, Fältbiologerna, Extinction Rebellion and PUSH Sweden. I came into contact with my interviewees by either meeting them on events hosted by their organization or by email. The initial contacts then referred me to other activists. As a result I interviewed 14 people during the spring of 2022. I purposely targeted individuals from organizations or movements that either was environmental youth organizations (WWF Youth, PUSH Sweden, Fältbiologerna and Klimatstudenterna) or environmental movements that have a large number of young members (Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion).[11] I was also granted the possibility to interview both individuals that held or had held prominent positions within organizations and ordinary activists, which gave me a diverse ethnographic material.

Moreover, climate activism is performative and practical in the sense that there are real actions, such as demonstrations, and it is at the intersection of these actions young people's engagement in the climate crisis issue and the different strategies youth employ meet. Jasper (2010:98) considers participation to be helpful because it allows introspection, and introspection is well suited for studies concerning emotions. Furthermore, Jasper makes the rather obvious point that emotions, in general, are hard to discern from the outside. Hence, participatory observations provide a way for me to capture this dimension in my chosen field. During the spring of 2022 I did participatory observations at several actions, organized by Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion, that took place in Malmö, Lund and Stockholm. The actions, with the exemption of the recurring Fridays For Future demonstrations are single-events, meaning that they happen right then and there, with a limited temporal scope. Therefore, I have chosen to be inspired by multi-sited observations where activism is the

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[10] The timespan ranged from a few months to over a decade.

[11] WWF Youth, PUSH Sweden and Fältbiologerna all have an age when members become too old for the organization. For Fältbiologerna and WWF Youth it is 25 and for PUSH Sweden it is 30 (Fältbiologerna 1; WWF 1; PUSH 1). Klimatstudenterna welcomes university students (Klimatstudenterna 1). Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion differs from the organizations above, these movements are open to anybody and places little emphasis on a person's age. Fridays For Future has a youth-profile, which I believe is because of Thunberg and the school strikes. But as the movement has progressed more and more people from older generations have joined in. At the Fridays For Future events I saw people of all ages and many pensioners. Extinction Rebellion is not a youth-profiled organization but I was able to interview six activists between the ages of 16-25, which I think indicates that this is a movement with a substantial number of young members.

interconnection between the various locations and becomes the fabric of the contextual reality of my "field" (Hannerz 2003:206).

Finally, reflexivity has become almost a stable feature in anthropological studies, which has sparked discussions regarding its usefulness and implications. Holland (1999:472 & 481) considers human reflexivity as the basis for social units because it defines personal existence. Salzman (2002:806) defines reflexivity as the "constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher's own contribution/influence/shaping of intersubjective research and the consequent research finding". Reflexivity can also, as Guillemin & Gillam (2004:262) states, be a way to mitigate "ethical moments" in the field. In my interactions with the interviewees I had to be reflexive and aware of my own position. My interviewees are not the only actor that brings knowledge to the table; I also harbor my own ontology and perceptions. Kvale (2006:496) underscores the power relations at play during an interview because the practice is not a neutral dialogue and Davies (2008:109) considers interviews to be knowledge-building practices where both the researcher and the interviewees impact the outcome. I strived to be reflexive during the interviews. In my interview-guide (see appendix) I aspired to formulate questions that inspired the interviewees to reflect independently. Moreover, I was transparent about my own personal position regarding topics like civil disobedience – a tactic I place a high value upon. I recognize that sharing my personal beliefs is a bit of a balancing act. At the same time I consider it to be disingenuous and potentially damaging to the studies credibility if I withheld my own thoughts when the interviewees asked for my opinion.

3.3   Ethics

The research design, with the explicit focus on the individual perspectives, experiences and emotions of youth climate activists, demands some ethical reflection. First and foremost, I have chosen to make activists between the ages of 15-30 my sample, meaning that some of my interviewees, even if the majority was mid 20 year olds, were under the age of 18 and recognized as children by Swedish law. Interviewing children implies some special ethical considerations. Etikprövningsmyndigheten considers it to be especially important to gain an informed consent from children, meaning that it is the researcher's responsibility to explain the intent and purpose in a way that allows the child to understand the basis for their

participation.[12] I chose to both introduce my study and aim in the initial contact and then I repeated it at the interview and encouraged the interviewees to ask for clarifications if they saw the need for it. Furthermore, because I only intended to interview children above the age of 15, I did not require parental consent (Etikprövningsmyndigheten 1).

Furthermore, interviews in general create ethical questions regarding the rights of the interviewees. Gaining consent from participants is key to assure and legitimize the research integrity; along with informing the participants of the purpose of the research data gathered from the interviews –a thesis (Mason 2017:127). Therefore, I made sure to dispatch this information before the interview and then repeating it at the beginning of the interview.

To ensure the personal integrity and confidentiality of the interviewees they are all anonymous in the sense that they have been given fictional names. I have, in addition, taken precautions to further protect the identity of my interviewees by not mentioning specific geographic locations or titles. The importance of protecting the identities of the interviewees became even more pressing due to the fact that some of them come from countries where activism carries a potential threat to a much larger extent than for my Swedish interviewees.

The participatory observations I have carried out also pose some questions. It would not be sufficient or feasible to ask all the participants at the various actions for consent. Nonetheless, I chose to be open and transparent about my intentions and answered questions regarding my presence at the happenings. Furthermore, the actions have taken place in public spaces where my presence as a researcher is not ethically questionable. The more pressing ethical dilemma connected to the observations was the actions that revolved around civil disobedience, which in their design is illegal and participants are potentially breaking Swedish law if they refuse the police order to disburse the demonstration.

Previously, I have been transparent about my position regarding civil disobedience and before conducting participatory observations at these actions I had to ask myself – where do I draw the line? Will I participate? After careful consideration I reached the conclusion that I would participate in the acts of civil disobedience in order to observe them from the perspective of a participant but that I would draw the line at committing a crime. In practice this meant leaving

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[12] Etikprövningsmyndigheten is an authority under the Ministry of Education, established in 2019, with the purpose to ethically review research in Sweden (Etikprövningsmyndigheten 2).

the area when the police told us to evacuate. At the same time, one could argue that the ethical thing to do would be to ignore the police command because one considers the action to be a morally justified act, opposing a system that benefits the climate crisis (Thoreau 1849 in O'Brian et al 2018:3). Nonetheless, I recognize my strategy to be the best way to mitigate this ethical dilemma without knowingly breaking Swedish law in the name of science.

3.4 Disposition

Chapter 1-3 has set the stage; the following chapters represent the story and the actors. Chapter 4 is intended to provide the reader with a comprehensive historical account of the Swedish environmental movement from 1950 to present day. In chapter 5 *Becoming an activist* we will meet the main characters for the first time and focus on the individual. How and why they became climate activists, their thoughts regarding their own identity as activists and eco-anxiety. In the next chapter, *The moral way to do it,* we will devote our time to different factors that contribute to the decision of which tribe (organizations or movement) to join once the individual has become a climate activist. After that the story continues with chapter 7, *The joy of doing it together,* where the focus lies on how the interviewees perform activism together and the social bonds they create. Consequently, chapter 8, *The dark side of social boundary crossing*, will concern altercations between the main characters and antagonists and the social dilemmas climate activism might cause for the individual. Finally, chapter 9 aims to summarize the thesis by highlighting the more pronounced results and bring this story of youth climate activism in Sweden to a conclusion.

4   The Swedish environmental movement: A history

This chapter will provide a brief history of the environmental movement in Sweden, and to some extent social movements in general, in order to provide context to the contemporary environmental movement in Sweden, which the activists I interviewed operate in. I anchor this decision in the notion that no social movement develops or works in isolation and therefore their tactics, identities and structures can differ across borders and time (Nissen et al. 2020:320).

Peterson et al. (2018:377-78) provides a historical overview of social movements in Sweden from 1950 to 2015. They use "wave analogy" for describing the development of social movements in general and the environmental movement in particular. The first wave began in the 1950s with post-war peace protests, but came in full swing in the 1960s when new social movements and protests began to occupy public areas in such a magnitude that police, government and media no longer could ignore it.[13] Peterson et al. (2018:379) is guided by the notion that one ought to understand social movements through the lens of the post-war political development in Sweden. Between 1932-1976 Sweden enjoyed an unprecedented period of uninterrupted Social Democratic rule. During this period the party constructed the Swedish model, which is still relevant in Swedish contemporary politics and society. Since the 1960s Swedish politics practiced an inclusive strategy for social movements and social movements adopted the Swedish political culture of cooperation, dialogue, compromise and consensus. For scholars, the institutionalization of Swedish environmental movements has been a recurring feature since the 1950s and 1960s when Naturskyddsföreningen (The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, established in 1909) was awarded a more or less

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[13] Perhaps a better phrasing would be to say that the first wave was the beginning of modern post-war social and environmental movements in Sweden. Because, like Ronny Ambjörnsson tells us in his book *Den Skötsamme Arbetaren* (The Conscientious Worker) social movements began to emerge in Sweden during the nineteenth century. The historical movements in the country were exemplified by industrial workers protesting work conditions, the temperance movement, and early trade unions with "conscientiousness" ideals of self-discipline, education and study-circles (Ambjörnsson 1993:4-12). The establishment of Naturskyddsföreningen as early as 1909 and its youth branch Fältbiologerna in 1948 provides another example of the long history of environmental and social movements in Sweden.

official role. Sweden also became the first country to adopt a comprehensive legislation for the protection of the environment (ibid: 380). Furthermore, Peterson et al.'s (2018:379) study analyze the post-war contentious politics in Sweden "through a narrative that focuses on movements that have constructed collective identities in connection to conflicts on urban space ('the right to the city'), peace and disarmament, anti-capitalism, gender inequality and sexuality, ecology, solidarity, global justice and racism/anti-racism (…)".

The late 1970s marks the beginning of the second wave, which is most well known for the new women, peace and environmental movements developing during the 1980s (Peterson et al. 2018:377). The post-war environmental movement came about in the 1970s in Sweden and came to a high point in the 1980s with the membership of leading environmental movement organizations resizing in unprecedented numbers (ibid: 380). In 1972 the political commitment to environmentalism was manifested when Sweden hosted the first UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm (exactly 50 years ago). During the conference an alternative conference was hosted by Fältbiologerna (Nature & Youth Sweden - the youth section of Naturskyddsföreningen, established in 1948) and Jordens Vänner (Friends of the Earth, established in Sweden in 1971). Fältbiologerna, simultaneously, took the first step in the direction of anti-institutionalization and rebelled against its mother organization's approach when they advocated for radical organizational democracy and direct action (ibid: 417-18).

A key historical moment for Swedish social movements was the 1982 peace march in Gothenburg where approximately 100,000 people from Northern Europe participated. This march was the accumulation of a new wave of civil society mobilization and is to this day one of the largest demonstrations in contemporary Swedish history. At this time Fältbiologerna devoted the majority of their efforts to the People's Campaign Against Nuclear Power, which resulted in a national referendum in 1980. Three years later Greenpeace established themselves in Sweden and just four years later the organization had recruited 95,000 members. Världsnaturfonden (WWF) also saw a rapid growth in memberships during this time (from 2,000 in 1982 to 170,000 in 1995). To sum up the 80s, Greenpeace, WWF and Naturskyddsföreningen had now managed to establish their role as leading environmental forces in Sweden (Peterson et al. 2018:396).

In the early 1990s Swedish politics took a different direction. This shift impacted the formation of new social movements. The new direction resulted in many changes but for our context the most significant was new strategies for decreasing the consensus dialogue with civil society and that the policing of protests became more confrontational and coercive. During the second wave protest had been predominantly peaceful and clashes between activists and law enforcement was uncommon, and the police treated the activists gently. During the 1990s the protest environment changed, partly due to new policing strategies but also because of the increased wish among protestors to confront the authorities. (Peterson et al. 2018:380-82).

The third wave saw the light of day in the 1990s, when social movements emphasize anti-austerity, anti-racism protests and global justice struggles. It is vital to understand that social movements in Sweden are a heterogeneous mass and the movements are operating on a continuum. Some organizations and movements have sought funding opportunities from the government and developed deep ties through cooperation and dialogue. Others have, for the most part, deserted the culture of cooperation, dialogue and compromise with decision-makers and have instead "changed the rules of the game and become more confrontational" (Peterson et al. 2018:424). Peterson et al. (2018:424) underline that social movements have been successful in impacting Swedish politics by both the tactic of dialogue and cooperation and through confrontative actions or by combining them. Consequently, Swedish social movements have been " both conditioned by, and shaped, state action" (ibid: 378). Thörn and Svenberg (2016:605) characterize the Swedish environmental movement "as a field of ambivalent positions taken by actors attempting to 'negotiate' conflicts and systemic contradictions defining contemporary environmental politics, dominated by ecological modernization".

Internationally the global justice movement, during the 1990s, began to gain recognition, and the protest against the World Trade Organization's Conference in 1999 in Seattle ignited a global wave of summit protests. In the Swedish context the global justice movement also became manifested in social movements and in 2001 tens of thousands of people flooded the streets of Gothenburg to protest the EU summit meeting and the visit of President Bush. I will not go into detail regarding the events that occurred in Gothenburg but in short it included violence between the police and activists, which resulted in injuries for both parties. In addition, on one occasion the police chose to fire live ammunition and injured three

individuals, a rather uncommon occurrence in Swedish protest history (Petersen et al. 414-15).

During the 2000s there was an increasing realization of the climate crisis issue, which came to fundamentally change environmental movements in Sweden with new organizations and agendas emerging (Peterson et al. 2018:421). Thörn and Svenberg (2016:593-94) conducted a case study of the developments in the Swedish environmental movement, in the 2000s, in order to advance the understanding of the relationship between institutionalization and social movements. Thörn and Svenberg claim that the environmental movement ought to be understood in relation to global and national developments during the 1990s. Mainly the influence of a neoliberal discourse on Swedish policy, the establishments of international environmental policies like Agenda 21, the introduction of the "sustainable development" discourse and the conceptualization of climate change as a global issue. Following this, the movement became increasingly globalized –the global level shaped it and the annual global climate conference (COP) became a focal point. Simultaneously, the attention to the climate crisis paved the way for new environmental organizations, groups and anti-institutionalist approaches (Peterson et al. 2018:421-22; Thörn and Svenberg 2016:598).

Thörn and Svenberg's (2016:595) introduce the Foucauldian concept of responsibilization in their study to underscore how institutionalization regulates access to policy-makers in the neo-liberal regime in Sweden. Swedish environmental organizations began to participate in policy-networks together with both government and business. Thörn and Svenberg draw on Burchell's (1993:275-76) argument of a version of responsibilization which offers or encourages collectives or individuals to become involved in solving issues the government previously was solely responsible for. The policy-networks, the environmental organizations became a part of, serve the purpose of generating self-regulation anchored in moral responsibility with the intent to establish environmental codes for the businesses sector. This self-regulation function is intended to work as an alternative to state legislation (Thörn & Svenberg 2016:595. One could argue that the neo-liberal shift in Swedish politics changed the function environmental organizations serve in Swedish civil society, at least to a certain extent. Thörn and Svenberg (2016:295-96) claim that this development leads to a professionalization that strongly encourages civil society to acquire professional skills in areas like business management and favor "environmental expertise".

However, as previously stated by Petersen et al., Swedish environmental organizations have chosen to both collaborate with decision-makers and oppose them publicly. The diversity of the environmental movement in Sweden has only continued to grow during the 2000s but regardless of this fact Thörn and Svenberg (2016:599) sees it fit to still consider it to be one movement "involving internal diversity, tension and conflict, but also, at certain moments, collective action across organizational and ideological boundaries". Thörn and Svenberg (2016) apply responsibilization to understand the transformation of environmental movements in Sweden. I consider responsibilization, as defined by Burchell (1993), to be relevant for how individuals have internalized responsibilities to mitigate the climate crisis through consumer and life choices.

Thörn and Svenberg have managed to decipher two main divisive lines within the Swedish environmental movement relating to responsibilization and institutionalization: (1) Relationship to the business sector –the more institutionalized and established organizations (e.g. WWF) have been "consensus-oriented" regarding cooperation with companies. Others, (e.g. Jordens vänner) are increasingly confrontational or critical and practice naming and shaming and direct confrontation. (2) Consumer politics and responsibilities – Naturskyddsföreningen promotes private sustainable consumption whereas Greenpeace's position on the matter has been ambivalent but is now leaning towards opposing the discourse. Jordens vänner has actively stopped advocating for responsibilization of the consumer (Thörn & Svenberg 2016:600-1). The activists I interviewed highlighted the problematic aspects of the individual's responsibility and generally stress system critique.

Petersen et al. (2018:378) argue that they, in their research, have observed a sprouting fourth wave after 2010. Climate, global justice and new urban movements define this new wave. With the division of the environmental movement in mind, several important events took place during the 2010s both in the wider social movement context and the environmental movement context.

In December 2013, at the anti-Nazi demonstration in Kärrtorp, peaceful demonstrators, including elderly and children, was attacked by Svenska Motståndsrörelsen (the Swedish Resistance Movement) – a militant neo-Nazi group. This event is significant because it generated a national moral outcry. In Kärrtorp, one week after the attack, 16,000 people participated in one of the largest anti-racist demonstrations in Swedish history (Peterson et al.

402). Furthermore, Peterson et al. (2018:378) provide examples from the sprouting fourth wave that are connected to international matters like the Refugees Welcome mobilization in the fall of 2015 in the light of the refugee crisis. Several of my interviewees underscored their fear of fascism and their commitment to human rights, anti-racism, refugees-rights and equality for all. Therefore, I argue that the picture the young climate activists paints of the environmental movement is something that includes far more than protecting nature and mitigating the climate crisis. Moreover, justice and equality is a part of the environmental movement in the sense that environmentalists gather under the banner of "global climate justice" and it is a staple feature within the movement as stated in the song *The people gonna rise like the water* that I sang together with climate activists from Fridays For Future in Malmö. One line is "I hear the voice of my sons and daughters saying climate justice now". [14]

For the youth environmental movement several key events took place in the beginning of the 2010s. PUSH Sweden (Platform for Youth Cooperation on Sustainability) was established in 2012 and WWF Youth Sweden was established two years after PUSH in 2014 (WWF 2). Thörn and Svenberg (2016:603) profile Fältbiologerna as critics of the institutional approach larger organizations have adopted, and in the 2010s their critique gained support from other organizations including PUSH Sweden. The beginning of the 2010s was also a peak for youth infused civil disobedience actions, as young activists from Fältbiologerna played an important role in the effort to save the Ojnare forest. Greenpeace and other environmental organizations supported the action and it was successful. The forest was saved and is now a protected area under Swedish law (Peterson et al. 2018:422). [15] The recent development in youth environmental movements reached its peak in Sweden in the late 2010s with the establishment of Fridays for Future (2018), Extinction Rebellion (2018) and Klimatstudenterna (2018) while WWF Youth, PUSH Sweden and Fältbiologerna continued their work.

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[14] A common song during climate demonstrations and rallies across the world, I sang the song together with both Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion.

[15] The need to protect the Ojnare forest occurred when the company Nordkalk desired to establish a limestone quarry in the forest. In response activists set up a camp in July, and filed an appeal to the Supreme Court to evoke Nordkalks permit to build the quarry. After two months the activists, joined by the local population and timber workers, sat down in front of the arriving machines, and the activists were evacuated by a massive police operation on 28 August. The action was however successful as the company Nordkalk employed to chop down the trees stopped their work a few days later. The ultimate victory came in 2015 when the Government designated the Ojnare forest as a EU Natura 2000 area, thus putting a halt to all future plans for building a limestone quarry in the area (Peterson et al. 2018.422).

5   Becoming an activist

This chapter will focus on the individual activist's experiences, thoughts and feelings.[16] It will begin with the motivations for climate activism and then move on to how the interviewees' began their activism. To be or not to be an activist marks the end of the chapter, where the question of how the interviewees' relates to activism is discussed. Morality, values, emotions, identity-work, transformative moments and boundary crossing constitutes the chapters overarching themes.

5.1   The call to action: Motivations, moral identity-work, eco-anxiety, fellow humanness, privilege & compassion

Motivation can be understood as the wish to obtain a goal and the energy to pursue said goal (Sekelenburg & Klandermans 2010:179). I asked what motivates the interviewees because I wished to gain a deeper understanding of the driving forces behind their commitment. Fisher (2015:236) also manifested this interest and his results convey that awareness of human or environmental destruction was salient for young people, where some connected their trajectories to becoming conscious of personal implications for the climate crisis, while others viewed it as transformative to become aware of the global implications. Meanwhile, Martiskainen et al.'s (2020:10) study underscores concern for future generations and vulnerable communities, the feeling that you participate in important change and influencing decision-makers as motivational factors for climate strikers. The answers that derived from my question, partly reflects Fishers and Martiskainen et al., and could be stored under a few sub-categories: Fellow humanness, the feeling of being privileged, the pressing feeling that you need to do something, compassion for animals and nature, and eco-anxiety.[17]

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[16] For the sake of simplicity I sometimes refer to the people I have interviewed as activists but when I speak about one particular individual who do not identify with being an activist I instead use their preferred definition.

[17] Fellow humanness is a translation of the Swedish word *medmänsklighet*, another word could be compassion but in a Swedish context compassion relates more strongly to sympathy, where as medmänsklighet is more about feeling a bond with fellow humans and a will to come to their aid.

> Sure, the climate crisis is about polar bears but it is above all about human life and death, rights and obligations, humans of flesh and blood and power resources, which is not always portrayed in the media – Karl, Fältbiologerna.

> I don't want to experience this, I don't want to have to flee because of the climate, and I knew I wouldn't have to do it because I'm privileged and live in this part of the world. But I know that others will have to do it and that feels just as terrible (...) the only thing that makes it better is to meet people who feel the same way – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

> Becoming aware of the privileges I have and thinking okay I have the possibility to use them, I have the free time, I am financially secure, I can do something and I also know more maybe because I dealt a lot with the issue online. Because I feel like most about the climate problem, crisis, you hear about it on the news and stuff, everybody hears it, but if you really try to understand then you need to dig in yourself because it is not such a big topic in school (…) the feeling of responsibility I would say – Alex, Extinction Rebellion.

Alex, Ina and Karl all speak about the driving forces in the form of fellow humanness, compassion and being aware of one's privilege.[18] Jenny tells me that she cares for humans, animals and nature that are already impacted by the climate crisis, " but you still have to try, it won't help if you lay down flat". I understand this as an expression of the need to act and, as Jasper (2010:80) underscores, emotions are a cornerstone for rational action and it is through emotions we communicate our reaction to what is going on in the world around us. The motivations for climate activism are thus tied to emotions (Kleres & Wettergren 2017:507).

Besides feeling solidarity with others (including nature and animals) some activists also linked the motivation to their eco-anxiety. One example is Ruth who takes solace in her sustainable life changes like to stop flying, "it can be nice to live after your values, but yet it is the activism that has alleviated the anxiety". Eco-anxiety is closely related to existential anxiety as it conjures feelings of uncertainty and uncontrollability but holds a practical element often resolving in problem solving attitudes (Panu 2020:2).[19] Eco-anxiety may impact the overall mental health, cause stress, panic attacks and insomnia or be a stressor for depression (Wu et al.2020:1). All of my interviewees had a personal relation to eco-anxiety, but not everyone relates to it in the same way.

> I think I also purposely avoid it (…) I believe that if I truly would think a lot about how bad it could become, and not just think about it but also feel it in me, in my body, then there is a risk

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[18] All names are fictitious in order to protect the identity and integrity of my interviewees.
[19] Världsnaturfonden (WWF) and Sifo conduct a survey each year regarding Swedish citizens attitudes regarding the climate crisis. In the age span of 18-29 421 people was interviewed and the dominating issue in society which caused most unrest was the climate crisis, rivaling terrorism, organized crime and high unemployment. The majority thought about the crisis as often as once a week (WWF klimatbarometern 2021). The survey reflects the results published in Hickman et al.'s (2021:6-8) international study about young people and eco-anxiety. The study suggests that eight out of ten people (16-25 years old) experience eco-anxiety and three quarters are worried about the future.

> I would become a weeping puddle on the floor and that would for sure not make me a more productive activist – Karl, Fältbiologerna.

The notion that feeling the anxiety would make Karl a less productive activist is his truth, but several of the interviewees have a different relationship to eco-anxiety and activism. Alex has not experienced eco-anxiety personally but thinks that it might be happening subconsciously and works as a driving force for action. Lisa tells me the story of when she participated in Fridays For Futures national meeting and was told, "if you have not been depressed in the climate crisis then you have not understood how bad things are". At first she thought that it was diminishing because she felt like she had understood how bad things are but she had not been depressed about it. Today, Lisa views anxiety as a healthy reaction, "it is a sign that you are a sound person that is capable of loving things in your surroundings and is hurting when you see how much is in danger". Lisa thinks it is important to know that you are allowed to feel bad but that you also need to "try to understand that it [eco-anxiety] can be a part of like a tool for acting". Anxiety as a tool for action echo's Stanley et al.'s (2021:1) argument that some negative eco-related emotions, despite them being unpleasant, can increase activity and initiate a fight or flight response.

> It's almost like you seek a medicine for this issue [eco-anxiety] – Dante, Klimatstudenterna.

Several of the activists considered becoming active in the environmental movement to have a mending effect on their anxiety, and during my interviews I began to see the connection between eco-anxiety, the urge to find like-minded people and the call to action. This notion was further confirmed when I spoke to Ruth. She explained that she never consider it to be a good idea to ignore anxiety, rather the only thing that helps is to do something about it; "You can also see it as something positive, I feel like I have to experience eco-anxiety in order to do something, before I read the book [Scener ur hjärtat] I did not feel much eco-anxiety and therefore I did not do enough (…)".[20] I have already explained that Alex has not personally experienced eco-anxiety but like Ruth he connects anxiety with action;

> Doing something, going on a demonstration or like trying to be a bit different, making this issue central in your daily life is definitely some form of desperation, because, yeah once you get a feeling for or you read things you haven't read before (…) than you are like wait why is not everyone doing something? It feels like then I have to do something, if I didn't do something right now I would definitely feel bad (…) a desperate try to also wake up other people and to be like come on [hand clap] we need to do something – Alex, Extinction Rebellion.

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[20] Scener ur hjärtat (English title: Our house is on fire) is written by Greta Thunberg, Malena Ernman (Greta's mother and famous opera singer), Greta's father Svante Thunberg and her sister. The book was first published in 2018 and is a written declaration of how they as a family was impacted by the climate crisis and how they found strength in each other and in their love for a living world.

To be a part of the environmental movement and actively try to do something for the better seems to alleviate the strain of eco-anxiety, but there is also a narrative of youth embracing the reality of eco-anxiety and even turning it into a drive for action. Eco-anxiety, or fear, has the capacity to motivate individuals to act, but individuals need hope to keep the motivation going and mitigate the fear. This is where the importance of community, group belonging and collective action comes into play because they install hope and fuel the individual motivation (Kleres & Wettergren 2017:510-13). Eco-anxiety can also be viewed as an expression for moral fear (Jasper 2010:82), and hence become a morally informed motivation for action. This lines up with Stanley et al. (2021: 2-4) argument that eco-emotions increases individual and collective pro-climate behavior and promotes collective action. The narrative of becoming active in an organization or movement as a "medicine" for eco-anxiety both confirms Stanley et al.'s argument, in the sense that the individual have become active, and adds to it because the collective action the youth experience might be partly fueled by their anxiety, but it also serves as a coping mechanism.

My interviewees experience moral fear (Jasper 2010:82) due to the climate crisis and this fear or anxiety then brings forth this feeling that you need to do something, because it is the moral thing to do according to the activists moral standpoint (Jasper 2010:82). And the right thing to do is to act. That to act is better than to not act is a recurring feature among my interviewees.

> I dreamt that my apartment was flooding and there was like water flowing and when I woke up I was like oh my god this is something I really don't want to experience or for anyone to experience in real life, but it is actually happening –Zoey, Fältbiologerna.

Moreover, the need to act is often connected to society's ignorance or indifference towards the urgency the scientific community conveys regarding the crisis. Jonathan, who has been a part of PUSH Sweden since 2013, is driven by his desire to be a part of the "blow torch" and be a bit radical to bring more attention to the science, "it's now or never to call on decision-makers, it's not just talking, it has to be action now". Vera speaks about the urgency and the seriousness of the issue and connects it to "the inner urge to do something". Vera tells me about her friends who also know how serious the situation is but is scared to do something about it. Vera, however, thinks action is more fruitful, "yeah I guess the difference is that actually doing something kind of makes it better in a way rather than just sitting and worrying about it". Maya provided a similar reasoning;

> If I'm engaged now, already, it becomes more bearable, and you at least try to make a
> difference. But then you often question if you really make any difference, but still it is better
> to do something then to do nothing at all – Maya, WWF Youth.

What Maya talks about, the questioning of the impact of your actions, is something that comes up every now and then in my interviews. Zandra has also battled with the fact that one individual can't have a big impact but much like Maya she advocates for action anyway; "but you can't give up, it is kind of a dilemma you have to choose to either become engaged or choose to stick your head in the sand, and I have made the choice to become engaged". Zandra also tells me that she feels like she has to be active in the environmental movement because otherwise it would go against her own personal beliefs and if she would not be active "in a way it feels like I would be a bad person". The motivations expressed here can be interpreted as a form of moral identity-work; to keep going because it is the right thing to do while simultaneously communicating whom they are (Fields et al. 2006:164). To make the choice to become active, or feeling like you don't have a choice not to continue because you understand the crisis is something Lisa manage to put into words;

> It is almost diminishing to say that I am engaged in the climate because well we are in a
> climate crisis and like this 'I'm passionate about the climate', no! I feel like I don't have a
> choice, that we are in a climate crisis and I believe that this is the most effective. And I feel
> like I have a responsibility as a fellow human being to do something when I see this, when I
> hear what the scientists say and see how humans suffer and will suffer in the future. That I in
> such a privileged country like Sweden where I won't get murdered because I am a climate
> activist. Like many of us are in other countries, that I really have a responsibility, I can't see
> that I have another choice – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

To sum up, fellow humanness, privilege, compassion and eco-anxiety are all motivational factors that I link to moral identity-work, fueled by moral emotions. Participation in a movement can be empowering for a person, thus mending eco-anxiety. To be among friends and like-minded people and do something that feels important together can be viewed through the lens of communitas, in the sense that it is about individuals becoming one, liberated from the prevailing status quo in a collective identity informed by a shared struggle for social and political change (Nissen 2020:319; Turner 1969:125-27; Mei 2021: 151-152). The emphasis should be placed upon the *act* of doing social action together as a collective. Morality is not something that is confined within our minds, it becomes real through the actions we take, and for my interviewees their moral identity is strongly informed by their social action. Motivation can be regarded as the preface for becoming a climate activist. One does not become an activist by chance, there has to be a moral foundation and an inner drive to initiate the process of becoming a climate activist –which will be the focus of the next sub-chapter.

5.2　　　　How it began: An introduction to climate activism

The process of becoming something, e.g. an activist, is a continuing social process where the self merges past social experiences with a sense of identity and the individual attaches multiple meanings to others and oneself to signify their identity (Fields et al. 2006:164). The individuals I interviewed were not a homogenous bunch; they all had individual interpretations of their environmental activism and how they became activists, some didn't even label themselves as such. Their introductions to climate activism share some similarities, most of the time it is not a linear story with a clear beginning, and for some it has been more like a "growing seed", like Moa told me in our interview. I will use Fisher's (2015:235) concept of transformative moments for when a person recalled consciously committing to become a participant in the environmental movement. I have an interest regarding the origin of the individual's commitment and transformation. However, unlike Fisher, I see it more as a transformative transition or process, rather than a moment in my interviewees' lives.

The transformation requires a reconfiguration of the individual identity and a process of becoming emerged in a collective. I deem Fisher's transformative moments to be necessary but not sufficient for explaining the process of becoming a youth climate activist. Therefore, I have chosen to borrow the concept of boundary crossing, a concept often found in literature on career paths when an individual changes their career from one domain to another. Ashforth et al. (2000:474) offers a broader definition of boundaries as "physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and/or relational limits that define entities as separate from one another". I consider the process of becoming a climate activist to be a form of *social* boundary crossing, the individual crosses over from being just another young person who may or may not be worrying about the future to become an activist. The social boundary crossing can happen in different ways, it can be a transformative moment or it could be a process that developed over time. My interviewees expressed both of these paths and we will begin with the ones who described it more like a process.

The interest in being out in nature is a common theme for the interviewees, and several of them connected their climate activism to an interest or awareness they had from a young age. Zandra told me that her commitment to the environment has always been in the back of her mind but then "it went from the background to become a very big part of my life". Many

interviewees had previous experience of being a part of organizations or movements before becoming engaged with the climate, some have a past in athletic organizations or youth politics and others have been a part of civil society organizations.

Alex, Zoey and Ina are all self educated and were inspired by documentaries or YouTube videos. A common misconception of how young people become politically engaged is that they get it from an adult-to-youth socialization, e.g. school or their family. But both Earl et al. (2017:3) and Mei (2021:155) underlines that youth, in addition, get their political socialization by experiences they seek out themselves and have agency in their political socialization, which my interviewees become an example of.

The road to joining a movement or organization is probably the thing that most clearly sets my interviewees apart from each other. Some of the activists struggled to find an environmental movement or organizations that suited them and their opinions regarding ideology, agendas and methodology. Like Bea, a Fridays For Future activist, said; "Greenpeace, as an example, they are more than welcome to sabotage oil rigs, I don't mind it but I feel like that's not me, I don't feel like I want to be a part of that and do that but then I found Fridays For Future, it is not politically affiliated [like political parties] and it is very easy, you sit down at a certain time each Friday". Jenny talked about that even if she grew up in a town in Sweden which is profiled as a town that cares a lot about sustainability she did not have people her own age growing up that shared her commitment to the environment, it was hard for her and it was not until senior high school when she joined Fältbiologerna and *Grön ungdom* (the Green party's youth organization) that she found it. Another story of how long the road can be is Moa, who went from being a handball player to environmentally conscious (her own description). Moa suffered a fatigue depression at the age of 18 and calls her beginning "a long journey". For a year she felt completely powerless and at the same time conscious about how unsustainable the world was, but she lacked the energy to engage. But after a year Moa began to feel stronger and she reached out to civil society organizations and eventually she found Fältbiologerna.

> It has been my way to find the meaning of life (...) that there is something worth living for, it does not have to be as terrible as it seems, we can put our energy into changing it together – Moa, Fältbiologerna.

Some activists remembered a particular transformative moment or experience while talking about how their commitment began. Karl, who has been a part of Fältbiologerna for 11 years,

explained that it was bird watching that invoked his passion for nature and biodiversity when he was 6 years old, but a key moment for him was when he saw Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* in school.[21]

> When I started to realize the threat to nature it went pretty much hand in hand with the interest, which in periods has been my greatest hobby, to watch birds – Karl, Fältbiologerna (environmental activist since the age of 13).

Ruth, on the other hand, who had been environmentally conscious for quite some time, eating vegetarian and buying second hand, explains that she realized the urgency of the situation after reading *Scener ur hjärtat*, and that was when she started to become active in Extinction Rebellion.

Another path to go from being conscious about the climate crisis to becoming active in the environmental movement, which turned out to be most predominant among the Extinction Rebellion activists, was actions or demonstrations. Alex, who joined Animal Rebellion when he moved from Germany to Sweden for school, was introduced to Extinction Rebellion when they had an action in Stockholm outside the residence of the Swedish Prime Minister. The next summer, Alex participated in civil disobedience actions with Extinction Rebellion in Germany. And when he returned to Sweden and moved to the south he was happy to find a big active local group.

Several activists told me that it was a friend, a family member or a family friend who introduced them and brought them to their first demonstration or action. Vera, an exchange student from the UK, joined a student group for the climate and some of the students there were also a part of Extinction Rebellion, "and yeah that is how they recruited me". Lisa, now a part of Extinction Rebellion, joined a Fridays For Future demonstration in 2019. Prior to this Lisa had focused a lot on individual adaptations but at the demonstration she felt "yes this is it, this is how you can make an impact (…). After the demonstration I was totally lyric". An action being your initiation to climate activism makes the beginning a bodily memory (Salsman & Assies 2010:63) wrapped up in a performance of alternative cultural meaning (Juris 2015:84), which re-shapes the individual's emotions and identity (Eyerman 2006:195). But it also makes it an initiation rite which gives the individuals, who have been interested in

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[21] Al Gore is a Former Vice President of the United States and an adamant spokesperson for actions against the climate crisis. He won the Nobel Peace Prize, together with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007. An Inconvenient Truth premiered in 2006 and won two Oscars the same year (Al Gore 1).

nature, anxious for the climate crisis or have practiced individual action, a positive moral boost because the collective action is inline with their moral convictions and gives them "moral pride" (Jasper 2010:83-84). I consider this to be a powerful liminal phenomenon that transforms the individual identity (Yang 2000:380) and introduces the individual to an expression of existential communitas (Turner 1973:193–94). In other words, the liminal experience to participate in an action was powerful enough to "liberate" Lisa from pre-existing structures and insert her into a movement (Yang 2000:385).

The interviewees, like Lisa, have usually practiced individual sustainability efforts prior to becoming activists. I view this as an inclination that the individuals already had a morality regarding the climate crisis but that their individual efforts were not enough to gain moral pride. Another example of this is Ina;

> But then it came to that moment when such small things make no difference and it is so focused on the individual, that is something the politicians want us to think about and then I was like I have to do something more. And then I heard about Extinction Rebellion from a friend of a friend of my mother – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

Ina then went to an action and she loved it. Ina also tells me; "I think that is how it starts for many of us, with individual stuff and that you then realize that that is not enough". Based on the experiences and stories the youth I interviewed shared with me I am inclined to agree with Ina. If the road to becoming active in the environmental movement differs from person to person, then the one thing they have in common is their passion, interest and consciousness regarding the environment and the climate crisis. And for most of them, their commitment started with individual changes in their lifestyle like stop flying, limiting waste or buying second hand. One could argue that their activism started with some form of internalized activism. The fuel was there and then a spark happened which ignited the fire and transformed internalized activism into performative activism. Or rather, to use Moa's metaphor, the seed sprouted.

In conclusion, I would like to reconnect with Fisher's (2015:235) transformative moments. Some of my interviewees could point to one experience or moment as the turning point for their lives. This is probably most true for the activists who began their journey with a demonstration or action. However, others have described it as a process, they have self-educated or searched for like-minded peers before becoming an activist. Therefore, I see the analogy of the growing seed to be fitting for those individuals' experiences. This process

could also be explained by liminality, as the nexus for becoming an activist, where the individual experience is an identity-transforming process that redefines the individual (Turner 1969:95-96; Yang 2000:380).

For some this process has been long, a seed growing over time, and for others it came fast. But their journeys all went through the same process, they crossed a social boundary. Our whole existence is made up of boundaries; they are limits that define entities separate from one another. The individuals I interviewed have left the domain of youth and entered the domain of youth climate activism. They are still themselves and they have not detached from their past selves but I argue that this is completely inline with crossing a boundary, you don't leave your old self at the door, neither do we shed our old skin when we experience a transformative moment or a life trajectory. I view human development not as a straight line but a temporal criss cross where we return to and draw from all our past selves in the making of the person we are today. Therefore, it is a challenge to present a linear account, but I have chosen to structure my research in such a fashion to make it easier to convey the results, but trajectories, boundaries and transformations are a process not a new beginning.

5.3   To be or not to be an activist

In any story there is a character development, this is true for my interviewees as well and in this story the character development is exemplified by the question to be or not to be an activist. I quickly came to realize that to be or not to be an activist was a complicated aspect of my interviewees' story. While it might be easy to say that you are engaged in climate activism, it might be harder to say: I am a climate activist. In this subchapter the negotiation process of how one relates to climate activism, as an identity, will be explored.

In order to guide my discussion on youth's relationship to activism I have chosen to draw on Fisher's (2015:231) conceptualization of activists as individuals that engage with intention in political actions connected to collective aims. And in addition, be inspired by Martin et al.'s (2007:79-80) inclusion of everyday practices made with the intent to alter power relations. Nonetheless, one should not disregard that activism as a concept has different meanings depending on the culture it occurs in. Zoey has been an exchange student in Sweden and Estonia but comes from a country where activism has radical connotations and people

generally don't feel safe calling themselves activists. Zoey consider Sweden to be a much more forgiving climate for activism, and that a moderate or even positive conceptualization of the word has been more broadly adopted

The different connotations for activism are something that others, apart from Zoey, reflect upon when they are asked if they would self-identify as climate activists. For Maya it took some time to self-identify as an activist, because of the connotation to the extreme and she describes activism as a charged term. Vera also considers activism to be a charged term and she explains that she does not necessarily connect strongly with it, and when I asked her if she would call herself a climate activist she said "I know other people probably would call me that, but yeah I guess, but not strongly". However, not all of the youth would identify as climate activists, both Jenny and Moa prefer other labels. Jenny does not feel like she has come to terms with her own definition of activism and she generally feels like all of the "ism-words" are so final and disputed, "is it a medal or a negative label?" Instead Jenny prefers to call herself "tree-hugger". Moa, on the other hand, prefers the word environmentally conscious, and for her activism is strongly connected to civil disobedience, that activism has to be that you fight *against* something but she feels like she is instead fighting *for* something.

Moreover, some of the young people who are newer to the environmental movement are not sure they have the right to call themself activists yet, because they have not done enough yet. Alex is hesitant to call himself an activist because "I connect historical persons with it, who did like a lot and who were affected by a lot of inequality or oppression and discrimination, I am not so comfortable say it (…) I am very proud of what I do but sometimes I have difficulty calling it this [activism]". Eventually, Alex reaches the conclusion that he is an activist but it is a "very big word". While many were hesitant, activism was a sure thing for both Lisa and Karl. For Lisa, it is a big part of her personality and morality to stand up for people in need and activism is a part of that. And Karl tells me; "I would say it is one of the most important things in my life, I would say that it is more primarily that I am an activist than what I work with".

Ollis (2008:231-32) distinguishes between circumstantial and life-long activists. Circumstantial activists have been incited to engage because of a "series of life circumstances", whereas life-long activists have grown up with activism socialization from their families. Life-long activists take on the activist-identity easier than circumstantial

activists who are, in general, less inclined to self-identify as such. Out of my interviewees Karl is the one who fits best with the term life-long activist, because when he was 10 he went with his dad (who also have a past in environmental civil society organizations) to put up posters and in high school he organized lists of signatures with the intent to strengthen Swedish environmental politics. This could be interpreted as Karl having a life-long socialization of climate activism from his family. I consider my interviewees, with the exemption of Karl, to fall in the category of circumstantial activists, which could partly explain the hesitation they express towards identifying as activists.

Nonetheless, most of the interviewees, even the ones who were unsure about the word and the negative connotations or were hesitant to self-identity as an activist, provided definitions to activism that harbored positive connotations. That an activist is "what you want to be" (Ina, Extinction Rebellion) or that it is someone "who desires to push for change, the one who makes sure something happens" (Bea, Fridays for Future).

Furthermore, the interviewees who self-identify as being climate activists were asked what makes you an activist? For Dante, a member of Klimatstudenterna, it is simply the fact that he works with these issues and Bea is an activist because "I don't work for someone, I work for a higher purpose". Several of the interviewees connected their identity as activists to that they try to live after their values and that it goes beyond participating in actions or other forms of activist-behaviors, it is also everyday life.

Values can be translated into moral codes, as they become ideologies (Turner & Stets 2006:545-46). I argue that becoming and living as an activist (in a collective of activists) is tied to the transformation of values, and that for my interviewees their values and morals are the foundation for them to become activists. Values can inform you that you should strive to make progress but in the activist domain there are ideologies (or criteria) that inform you how to realize these values (Turner & Stets 2006:545-46).

> Well this saying 'I am passionate about' does not feel, I don't know, like this is supposed to be something like 'oh I really like this' well actually being a climate activist and doing these things is not something you absolutely want to do, but I have to do this. So I feel like I can call myself a climate activist because I do something that feels important and I live after my values – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

In an attempt to wrap up this final section of chapter 5 I put forth the argument that after becoming active in climate activism there is, among my interviewees, an ongoing process of

negotiation regarding how to define oneself –how the character development might unfold. This could be viewed as a spectrum where 'not to be' (the ones who do not identify as activists) is one end and 'to be' (the ones who are secure with identifying as an activist) is on the other. The majority of my interviewees, who are hesitant or unsure if they have the right to call themselves activists, occupy the middle. The circumstantial activist (Ollis 2008:231-32 is one way to explaining the hesitation to call oneself an activist, and I consider the variation of confidence in calling yourself an activist to indicate that being an activist is a social-identity (Stekelenburg & Klanderman 2010:163). Finally, it is an ongoing negotiation for the individual, and some have progressed more in this negotiation than others. I believe that, in addition, the overall positive connotations my interviewees expressed (some even seemed to idealize activism and historical figures) together with values and social-identity negotiations, where the activist-identity is understood to contain strong moral values in the face of oppression, the individual might not feel like they have lived up to the ideological criteria's the social-identity prescribes.

6 The moral way to do it: Reformer or radical, & challenges from the outside

The previous chapter explored the different paths for becoming an activist. This chapter will continue the story by disclosing the different ways one can do climate activism and which factors impacted the interviewees' decision to join a particular movement or organization. The factors may be external, internal or organizational.

6.1 "You are just a child": Youth activism informed by a marginalized reality

> To be young and committed, it sucks in several ways. I think it is so sad that I should take so much time out of my youth and have so much anxiety. I often feel, well, angry with my parents, or my grandparents, because they don't act responsibly and it is hard to be young and shoulder this responsibility – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

When you are a part of a social movement you are forced to co-exist with other actors. Not all of them are your allies and many of them are more powerful than you. I align myself with Escobar's (1992:407) notion that movements stem from a life under conditions of domination. Hence, I consider external factors, in the shape of politicians, ignorant adults and the culturally informed position youth have in society, to represent this culturally infused dominating force that in its indifference towards the climate crisis has conditioned the emergence of climate activism and in part shaped my interviewees expressions of activism. Therefore, to understand the underlying reasons for why an individual chooses to join a specific organization or movement, one should aspire to understand how youth activists feel that others perceive them and how they relate to their submissive position in society.

The activists have different understandings about what it is like to be young and involved with the climate issue. Some have experienced it as something positive. Maya tells me about the "youth card" and that sometimes you can sort of hide behind the fact that you are young and you don't have to be an expert "but we still have the right to an opinion because we are young". Others speak about the age-power dynamic in society and the issue of people not

wanting to take what they say seriously. Zandra is old enough to vote but she tells me that for children and future generations there is no real way to communicate their claim and she feels like their opinions are not being accounted for at all. Moreover, some talk about the disadvantage of not having as much experience as other actors.

> People are in general more negative towards young people because they think you don't know what you are doing – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

> Grown ups have said but you are just a child. Trust that the grown ups can solve this; trust the politicians – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

Furthermore, there is a notion that they and their commitment sometimes gets discredited and labeled as a youth thing. Jenny tells me that adult interests are viewed as rational but things young people do are viewed as the opposite. This then leads the discussion over to how other actors, namely decision-makers and business, perceive youth climate activists and how they might use them to their advantage. Some of the interviewees talk about being viewed as a threat or as something annoying – a disruption and something that opposes their position of power. However, some activists are unsure if politicians or business representatives think about them at all. The most prevailing understanding of how decision-makers and business perceive young activists is to underestimate and sometimes discredit them. As an example, both Lisa and Alex refer to how easy it is to dismiss youth activists because they, in general, have not achieved the trajectories of adulthood, like going to university, getting a job or owning an apartment. In this sense youth activists find themselves at a disadvantage because they are less established in society. In other words, the activists are yet to go through all the trajectories of adulthood required in order to be viewed as full (adult) members of society.

> (…) you are a very easy target for people that are trying to discredit you and your message – Alex Extinction Rebellion.

> They probably just think we are annoying; what are they doing, should they not be doing something else like whatever youth do, listening to rap music, playing video games or going to school? – Vera Extinction Rebellion.

> You are at a constant disadvantage, and that is hard and can lead to negative emotions – Moa, Fältbiologerna.

Despite this rather negative understanding of how other actors perceive youth climate activists, some of my interviewees have a more positive outlook on the situation. Some believe that youth activism is seen as something positive but not necessarily something worth taking into consideration or actually listening to. Or as Zoey explains it to me - "youth activism is a momentum, when it suits them they use the youth activist but when it does not

have the momentum they forget". In general, the individuals who are a part of an organization that employs more inside strategies (Gulbrandsen & Andersen 20004:56) have a more positive image of how decision-makers perceive youth activists, even if they still are suspicious about the intentions. Maya has a lot of experience of interacting with decision-makers and she tells me that it has for the most part been a positive experience, and in meetings with politicians it has been beneficial to be a young person. Maya, however, also tells me that she has experienced that sometimes she gets invited only to talk about youth issues – "sometimes its like can't we just forget that we are young, why can't we just be engaged?" This experience entices us to explore the concept of tokenism.

Tokenism is a phenomenon likely to happen when one group controls the participation of less powerful groups, e.g. young people in climate politics (Long laws 1975:51). It can be understood as a form of fake participation where the disenfranchised group is deprived of real agency (Warming 2011:121-22) and instead experiences permanent marginality (Long Laws 1975:51). When I asked the interviewees about their experiences or thoughts regarding tokenism, most of them were unfamiliar with the term but after I explained it many of them came up with examples. Karl explains that it is hard sometimes to know beforehand if you are only invited to be "the radical young voice" and just be in a minority position without any agency. He also relates the question to when politicians refer to young people without having a youth representative present or involved, like with Fridays For Future – "they are trying to get a free ride from their success without respecting their political analysis".

> They give a false picture that says no, no you don't need to do anything, and you don't need to go to a demonstration. Look, we are already engaging them [youth]! – Alex, Extinction Rebellion.

Moreover, most of the activists relate tokenism to Greta Thunberg and how politicians talk about how great she is but fail to listen or act on her message. The conversations also revolved around how youth representation can actually be miss-representation when young people are included but not empowered or have influence. The reason for why youth activists are included in decision-making is understood as a way to legitimize the decision-makers and the process. There is also a sadness embedded in how young individuals are employed in climate governance – that youth voices are exploited.

Bea has given how young people are used by others a lot of thought and she relates my question about tokenism to how youth agency is not just overlooked but that young people are

also awarded a lot of the responsibility – making it a double edged sword. The image of young activists as bearers of hope and a solution is something that has come up in other interviews as well, and Bea thinks this conceptualization of young people is unreasonable, because many youth activists are still in school. And to ascribe them this responsibility is not fair, because they are not given the agency or possibilities to live up to the expectation. This might be the down side of the conceptualization of young people as societal resources (Warming 2011:119).

> I believe many young people feel disappointed with the politicians, the ones with power, and
> to grow up with that feeling, I think that shapes a person – Ina, Extinction Rebellion

To conclude, the conditions of dominance (Escobar 1992:407) appear to be pressing for young climate activists. First, young individuals' commitment is disregarded or discredited. I connect this with the perception that youth knowledge is not *real* knowledge, since it predominantly derives from life experience (Warming 2011:124). Youth things carry less value than adult things because being a real adult beats being a non-adult in an adult arena (Allen 1968:319). In literature the concept of human becomings is offered as an explanation for the negative perception of young people as non-active in society, passive and in need of assistance (Thew 2018:3). I consider this to rob youth of some agency in their co-existence with others, as it strengthens society's view of young people to be vulnerable, incompetent and immature becoming's (Warming 2011:125). Second, when young activists are invited they risk their participation to be fake and lack real agency (Long Laws 1975:51). And finally, despite this youth climate activists are still, continuously, promoted as the heroes of tomorrow by decision-makers that simultaneously shut them out from the present (Hubbard & Williams 2021:5-6). In the next sub-chapters, the internal and organizational factors shall be discussed and this will be made based on the assumption that the interviewees in their choice to join an organization or movement has made the decision party informed by their reaction to their position in society. Some have chosen to distance themselves from the forces of domination and others prefer more diplomatic approaches, but they all have the same goal to change the system and mitigate the climate crisis.

6.2　　　　Finding your tribe

It is nice that we are so many. We just have different ways to act – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

The process of finding your tribe can be a challenging process, which Bea expressed in chapter 5, and there are other factors at play besides the external factors. The following sub-chapters will concern the factors that proved to be significant for my interviewees in their decision to join a particular movement or organization. One can assume that the sense of community is strongest for the activists in relation to their own movement or organization. However, I discovered that there was a sense of community for the larger environmental movement as well. Sociology scholars, like Pellow, prefer to use framing and framing processes to explain social movements. Hence, this expression of solidarity could be explained by the assumption that the environmental movement and its members in Sweden invoke the same "master frame" (Pellow 1990:662-63) of climate justice and system change. An alternative explanation is dissent's overarching agency informed by a belief that a different world is possible, a uniting purpose in actions directed at toppling dominate societal norms (O'Brian et al. 2018). Or that the identified threat for the wider environmental movement, the climate crisis, means that they have formed a sense of collective identity stemming from a group belonging defined by an existential threat to all (Mei 2021:149).

During the Global strike for climate justice in Malmö, that was organized by Fridays For Future, I met an activist I had interviewed from Extinction Rebellion. I consider this to be both an expression of lending your support to other spaces of the environmental movement, and an indication that there is a sense of community and shared purpose for individual activists within the environmental movement as well. The majority of the activists thought that everyone was needed. As an example, Bea argued that there is a value in the diversity because people are comfortable with different things, and because of it more people can find their place in the environmental movement.

Nonetheless, even if my interviewees feel a sense of community with the whole environmental movement, the fact remains that they have chosen their tribe and they have made their choice with respect to different factors. It became clear during my study that the activists perceive their organization or movement and its role differently. Melucci (1980:218) underscores that contemporary movements are defined less by distinct social or class groups

and more by impersonal characteristics that bind people together by a particular culture within the movement. The interviewees appreciate different aspects of their social group, which could explain why they placed value on different aspects even if they belonged to the same organization or movement. It also became clear, during my research, that social aspects (which we will return to later in chapter 7), organizational resources and organizational values are dominating traits that attract youth activists. This can be viewed as expressions of values that exaggerate group identification, an important precondition for continued participation in a movement (Sekelenburg & Klandermans 2010:163). However, the most prevailing factor turned out to be the different strategies the various organizations and movements employ in their climate activism, which will be discussed further in the following sub-chapter.

6.3   Radicals and reformers

In order to explain the activists' opinions or skepticism, regarding different strategies and its impact for their choice to join a particular organization, I will draw on several theoretical concepts. First, one way to explain the different preferences among the interviewees is to look at dissent as a spectrum. As previously mentioned O'Brian et al. distinguish different forms of dissent – dutiful, disruptive and dangerous. Dutiful dissent is when youth utilize preexisting or new institutional spaces (e.g. NGOs or political parties) to voice their concerns. Disruptive dissent, on the other hand, "can be considered a type of activism that (…) seek to modify or change existing political and economic structures." Petitions, boycotts and protests usually portray disruptive dissent. Lastly, dangerous dissent challenges pre-existing paradigms and discourses concerning the relationship between social change and climate change. O'Brian et al. explains that what makes dangerous dissent dangerous is the defiance of "business as usual" where activists develop alternatives to inspire long-term changes in society. In addition, the danger resides in young people reclaiming or generating their own power and strengthens their political agency (O'Brian et al, 2018:4-6).

Second, Foran et al. (2017:363-68) use the concepts "radicals" and "reformers" to outline how activists view different strategies. This usage of radicals and reformers has close ties with one of the main narratives in contemporary studies of civil society strategies in climate governance – inside/outside strategies (Gulbransen & Andersen 2004:56; McGregor 2011:1; Rietig 2011:5). Outsider strategies' goal is to generate public pressure via e.g. demonstrations,

and insider strategies aim to influence decision-makers directly through lobbying (McGregor 2011:1). It should be noted that the choice of which form an action will take is determined by the organization's or individual's access to resources such as leverage capital (demonstrations) or political capital (access to decision-makers) (Gulbrandsen & Andresen 2004:58; Rietig 2011:7). One way to outline the difference between radicals and reformers is if they practice more consensus-induced behaviors or more conflict-based behaviors that transgress or at least directly confront societal norms (Foran et al. 2017:368; Melucci 1980:202).

Organizational resources and values, and its relation to strategies, were underscored to be important for the choice of which organization or movement to join. Karl, who has been a part of Fältbiologerna for a long time, explained that his motivation for joining and continuing is the risk that we will have a boiling planet with a relatively livable Europa, where Europa becomes "Fort Europa", where a privilege minority survives and the rest is allowed to die because they are not welcomed –"to fight this is the big goal with my climate activism". Karl, also, considers Fältbiologerna to be the organization that fits best with his personal goal. In addition he tells me that Fältbiologerna "is brave enough to be as radical as the situation demands". Jenny and Moa are also a part of Fältbiologerna and Jenny considers the organization's strength in the environmental movement to be its long history compared to the many new actors. Furthermore, the organization often manages to foster a long-term commitment among its members, which makes the organization more durable than others that are run by zealots. Moa places a lot of faith in the organization's size to realize a wider collaboration among actors, which she sees as a solution. For Jonathan, who has been a part of PUSH Sweden for almost a decade, it was the organization's culture that stood out, a culture, which allowed him to create a context where he could work together with people with a shared goal and learn new skills together.

Reformers favor working inside the system they consider to be insufficient in order to reconstruct it (Foran et al. 2017:363-68). WWF Youth, PUSH Sweden, Klimatstudenterna and Fältbiologerna can all be understood to work to reform the system from the inside by employing inside strategies. Maya chose WWF Youth because it was a more moderate option, and she relates to a more diplomatic approach that aligns with her ideology and opinions. WWF Youth also have powerful contacts and resources from WWF and others. Maya explains that WWF makes it possible for the organization to gain access in a way that might

not happen without the established actors backing. WWF Youth could be viewed as an expression for normative communitas where the need for social control and structure is desired, more than in e.g. the counter-cultural Extinction Rebellion –which in turn, could be understood as existential communitas (Turner 1973:193–94). Klimatstudenterna also practice more moderate tactics and focuses specifically on universities, which Dante prefers because he likes to "work in the box" and Klimatstudenterna gives him the possibility to practice direct action and see results; "of course you want politicians to do the right thing and we have to vote and think about it, but what we can do as individuals is to begin on the grass root level and influence people in our surrounding and not think to big and become stressed" (Dante, Klimatstudenterna).

PUSH Sweden, is profiled as working within the system, but Jonathan has personally been a part of civil disobedience actions and he believes in the method – to resist a law that is unjust as long as there is no violence. But he also believes in having a presence in "the hallways of power". Fältbiologerna is a versatile organization that employs both inside and outside strategies. Their status often results in them getting invited by decision-makers but at the same time they have participated and supported outsider strategies including civil disobedience action (e.g. Ojnare forest).

> We are the ones that go to COP-meetings every year, we meet politicians in the hallways of power, and not only outside, to a greater extent than others maybe. For example, Extinction Rebellion are out in the streets, Fältbiologerna are out in nature but they also engaged with decision-makers but not in the same way as us, and then there are other organizations like Klimatstudenterna that are more geared towards the universities – Jonathan, PUSH Sweden.

As previously mentioned, there were some expressions of skepticism towards other strategies. Even if Maya recognizes that demonstrations and civil disobedience have a purpose, she has concerns that there might be some activists or actions that could give the whole movement a bad reputation and discourage people from becoming engaged because they can not relate to the more extreme expressions of climate activism. Moa appreciates the more moderate tactics of Fältbiologerna, and that the organization has a focus on visions for how society can become more suitable. Moa struggles more with the us versus them narrative and "fight situations" other actors like Extinction Rebellion focuses on in their civil disobedience, according to her.

It should be noted that civil disobedience is not the only form of outside strategy climate activists perform, but it was a hot topic in the interviews. I have chosen to draw on Bedau's

(1961:653-61) definition of civil disobedience as a reaction of a person's moral convictions incompatibility with one's political circumstances. An action can only be civil disobedience if it is illegal. However, the *civil* is essential, civil disobedience must be non-violent, illegal, and public with the "intent to frustrate the laws, policies, or decisions of his government".

Out of the 14 activists I interviewed, it is quite fitting that the ones most open to outsider strategies were the people who were a part of Extinction Rebellion. Members of Extinction Rebellion can be regarded as radicals and the movement strictly employs outsider strategies. The skepticism for other strategies is present among the radicals as well, but in this case the tables have turned since radicals tend to condemn the system and prefer to work outside it (Foran et al. 2017:363-68).

> Of course it has this psychological, emotional barrier but you can just do it, you know. And other processes are frustrating, it takes a long time and you need to learn a lot and young people need to, I don't know (…) get a job or get influence in politics. I have a lot of respect for that, but in this way civil disobedience is very easy, you know, you don't have to learn anything you can just use your body – Alex, Extinction Rebellion.

Alex gives voice to the frustration of the slow process of other tactics that are more embedded in the system. I also think he highlights that radicals prefer to express their moral identity through their bodies in a performance of direct free-form action and the civil disobedience act itself is a form of identity-work where their moral convictions is fortified by action (Fields et al. 2006:164; Juris 2015:90). Furthermore, Lisa tells me that everyone is needed but that, according to her, civil disobedience is the most effective. Moreover, she explains that she sometimes feels a frustration – "no Fridays For Future and Naturskyddsföreningen we know this [their methods] is not what will (…) decrease the worst consequences of the climate crisis". The frustration occurs when she sees other activists do a lot of other things while she feels like civil disobedience is what is needed the most because time is in short supply. She laughs when she tells me "if I had the chance to take all the people who are engaged in climate and move them over to Extinction Rebellion I would do it". The frustration, or doubt, for other strategies effectiveness is something Ina shares with Lisa. Ina also believes that everyone is needed, but that we at the same time have reached a point where legal demonstrations are not enough anymore and that there are many historical cases where civil disobedience has proven to be sufficient, e.g. the civil rights movement.

> Civil disobedience is very extreme but it is also straightforward and it shows that we consider the situation to be seriously enough that we risk our freedom and how absurd it is that people

who are fighting for life gets their freedom taken away while people, including the politicians, are passively continuing to ignore everything – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

We did what was required and something that actually related to how emergent the crisis is, we did not just walk on the sidewalk and held up signs, we sat down on the street and showed that this can't continue anymore – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

Moreover, Extinction Rebellion activists strongly advocated for the important role their movement has in the Swedish environmental movement, and emphasizes the radical element. For instance, Vera views Extinction Rebellion to almost be like a middle ground between eco-terrorism and more moderate actors, and fills a void of civil disobedience, which was partly missing in the Swedish environmental movement. Ina, likewise, thinks her movements methods are needed because they are the most radical and other organizations have used more moderate methods for a long time but little progress has been made. Civil disobedience continues to be an important factor as Lisa explains that she believes they can create a stronger public awareness than other organizations, "we actually disrupt and we make sure we can't be ignored in the same way you risk being at legal demonstrations".

It is a movement that is very different but I would say that they are very important for trying to accelerate the changes, really pull and push, and then you need to be a bit radical. You don't stand politely on the side of the sidewalk and ask a person nicely to change their lives or ask politicians nicely to change their lives, which is needed too, but at the level we are now big changes are needed quickly – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

The activists engaged in civil disobedience, in general, feel strongly for the tactic even if they are reflexive about it. Vera, who used to be politically active and now is a part of Extinction Rebellion, thinks politics is a very slow process but at the same time she sometimes questions the movement's strategies or rather how the strategy is carried out - "do we know this actually works?" She explains that the actions are often not targeting big corporations, but rather disrupts normal peoples lives, e.g. blocking roads. Alex tells me that he is not afraid to question his choice to do civil disobedience, and that he never wants to push anyone to participate if they are not comfortable. At the same time he praises civil disobedience because it is easy to get into due to the low requirements of previous knowledge or skills. Furthermore, despite the devotion to civil disobedience there is a respect for other methods and that people have different comfort zones, even if there is a frustration because of the notion that civil disobedience is the better option. I think Ruth sums up the way the radicals view the different strategies quite nicely;

Everyone is needed in the climate movement, I don't want to patronize anyone and say that they are not needed because I think you should push in different ways and from different angles. And I think that is very important and very good. Then of course once you 'find

salvation' in one thing, then you might want everyone to be a part of it and do Extinction Rebellion and civil disobedience (...) – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

The different organizations and movements my interviewees are members of can be understood as representations of different forms of dissent (O'Brian et al. 2018). I would argue that all of the youth I interviewed practice dangerous dissent *ideologically* because they all advocate for a system change and a utopian society free from exploitation, fossil fuel and limitless economic growth. But in practice individuals from PUSH Sweden, Klimatstudenterna and WWF Youth perform partly dutiful dissent by using pre-existing institutional spaces and a more moderate form of disruptive dissent as they seek to transform the current political and economic structures. Fältbiologerna has a historically established presence of dutiful dissent, but has since then also rebelled and incorporated more disruptive practices like civil disobedience, and they pursue both paths simultaneously. Both Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion are strictly disruptive dissent, but the difference is found in the level of disruptiveness. Fridays For Future disrupts the status quo by legal demonstrations but Extinction Rebellion actually disrupts the system and society through civil disobedience (O'Brian et al, 2018:4-6). Therefore, I would say that partly what attracts youth to particular movements or organizations is the level and form of dissent they view as fruitful and are comfortable with.

As a concluding remark, even if the strategies are somewhat of a watershed among the youth, they are conscious and reflexive while choosing which organization or movement to become affiliated with. They do their research and are generally rather unwilling to compromise their personal belief system, values and morality. I argue that this can be connected with the notion that the activists make ideological demarcations, informed by a personal moral code deriving from their values (Turner & Stets 2006:545-46). Simultaneously, there is openness for other potential paths and an appreciation for the environmental movement as a whole. I view this as a result of the negotiation my interviewees have with themselves regarding their personal social-identity in the movement being one thing, and the sense of group-belonging in the environmental movement, fueled by the shared struggle to mitigate the climate crisis (Mei 2021: 149-51), to be something else. In other words, it is possible for an activist to decline radical outside strategies (e.g. civil disobedience) but still acknowledge its place in the environmental movement and its usefulness for the shared purpose.

7 The joy of doing it together

This chapter highlights the more performative and social elements of my interviewees' stories. In the previous chapter, the sense of community and the social component was featured as factors for the process of finding one's tribe in the environmental movement. This chapter is, however, partly devoted to exploring how the activists form these social bonds and how the bonds impact both their individual experiences and their tribes. Furthermore, performing climate activism together with your friends and fellow activists will be discussed with the help of performance theory and collective effervescence, highlighting cultural features in the form of bodily memory and individual and collective identities deriving from face-to-face interactions (Salman & Assies 2010:211).

7.1 Why social movements are social: Making friends and fortifying the sense of community

> It is such an amazing medicine for eco-anxiety to meet people and do actions – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

Based on my own experience of engaging in civil society organizations, I had an assumption that the social component or aspect is an important feature in explaining why and how youth choses to become and remain active in social movements. Nicholas (1973:65-66) argues that movements are social because they exist in society. I don't disagree with this reasoning but I would like to add another dimension as to explain why social movements are social – social movements are made up by individuals who come together to strategize and execute actions directed at accumulating social change. But a social movement is an inherently social setting; an integral part is the conversations, coffee breaks, and various other activities that create bonds, and maybe even friendships, between the individuals. Several of the activists told me that they had made new friends because of their commitment and they all agreed that the social component was vital for not only their own commitment but for the movement in general.

Moreover, some connected the social component to the hardship of feeling lonely and misunderstood by people in their lives and how nice it has been for them to find people that share their moral concerns and anxiety for the climate crisis. I have previously underlined the connection between identity-work, performance and choosing which organization to join. I, however, also see a connection between the social component and moral identity-work, when individuals who share a common moral conviction engage in social activities, e.g. playing board games; it creates a bond that powers the individual's moral subjectivity.

> We all stand behind the same goal, to fight for justice and act if we see injustice (…) – Zoey, Fältbiologerna.
>
> I don't believe that I would have felt like it was rewarding without the social aspect and I think it is important in a situation like this to help each other – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.
>
> If I went to a demonstration with Extinction Rebellion and did not like the people, thought they were totally bumptious or something then I would never want to continue, but that is exactly what it is about. It is a group of people that all have good intentions, who want to try to help each other, support each other, that understands that you go through tough times, are very supportive, and we are stronger together – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

In the quotes above the activists speak about the importance of liking their fellow collaborators and feeling a kinship with them. This links the social component of my interviewees' stories with communitas – an essential communion of equal individuals where there is a shared humanity (Olaveson 2001:104). Eyerman (2006:195) sees, in social movements, a process where individual identities are merged into a collective resting on solidarity, common purpose, feeling of group belongingness and a shared memory. Eyerman calls this a *movement* –"a sense of moving together", and this movement can occur by participating in collective action but it can also become incorporated in the individual's biography and be long-lasting. I consider Zoey, Zandra and Ina, in their account for the social aspect of their activism, to circle in on this process of moving together. The social aspect also proved to be a factor for why some activists chose to join a particular movement or organizations, like Alex who joined Extinction Rebellion, when he moved to the south of Sweden, partly because of the openness, safety and compassion he felt coming from the members.

> (…) they really care about the world and care about me, it has become like an extra family – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

Throughout the interviews, the youth continuously underline their commitment to help mitigate the ramifications of the climate crisis and this is true when we talked about the social aspect as well. However, when I asked the interviewees what they thought was the best thing

about being a part of their organization or movement, the majority of the activists answered the sense of community, the people or the social elements like going out in nature, playing board games or just hanging out. Much like what Bea told me about Fridays For Future's weekly demonstrations; "well yes it is fun to sit on the stairs and talk shit and stuff". Hence, there are many indicators that the sense of community serves the activist in several ways; it fuels their commitment, it provides support, decreases loneliness or anxiety and nurtures friendships. During my study it became explicit that there is, in addition, a strong link between the social component and activist performances, which will be discussed further in the next sub-chapter.

7.2   The joy of performing

> When you have a group of local people willing to stand by you and support you, you feel very empowered – Zoey, Fältbiologerna.

In social movements studies there is a strong emphasis on the importance of a collective identity, and the transformation of the individual identity. Activists can with performance forge new identities, and the process produces and embodies values, meanings and identities. Performance can, in addition, be a tool for sustaining the movement by conjuring solidarity (Juris 2016 82-83 & 99). Performance is important in order to analyze social movements, but in terms of sustaining a movement in-between collective action or through hardships, I would like to add the social components to this mode of explanation. It might be rather obvious to claim that a sense of community and the social aspects of activism is a prerequisite for the forging of a collective identity, and that it is closely connected with communitas (Turner 1969). However, the fact that so many of the interviewees related the question of what is the best part of their organization or movement to the sense of community, and the many results concerning why the social component matters to them, is an indicator for how important a sense of community is for the individual activist experience an the collective.

Moreover, this subchapter will concern the performative and practical aspects of being a youth climate activist. The experiences my interviewees have from participating in various forms of climate action will be discussed through the lens of performance theory. Public demonstrations are regarded as the most common strategy for civil society, and scholars have highlighted the symbolic capital embedded in them (Grosse & Mark 2020:154). Symbolic

capital entails emotionalizing information, and it is often mixed with scientific knowledge (Nasiritousi et al. 2016:113; Rietig 2011:17; Thew 2018:385). During a protest performance the activist's body becomes an expression of identity and agency (Juris 2015:83). In demonstrations activists perform symbolic acts using their bodies, like the Extinction Rebellion action I observed in Lund where activists cleaned the banks with mops to symbolize that the banks should clean up their business and stop funding fossil fuel ventures. Another example was the activists who glued their hands to the street in order to stop traffic during *Fossilupproret* (Fossil rebellion) in Stockholm. On both these actions the activists translated the scientific knowledge that we need to decrease fossil fuel emissions into an emotionalized symbolic act of protest performance.

During the interviews I asked the activists to share their experiences of participating in an action or demonstration. I specifically asked them if they had any specific memory and how it felt before, during and after. I quickly understood that climate performance is a whirlwind of emotions, anticipation and in some cases risk. The activists I interviewed also had different experiences from different roles, like Bea who has organized Fridays For Future demonstrations in the south of Sweden. Bea told me that there are always nerves before and during the action "you understand nothing but you think it is really fun". Karl also has experience from organizing demonstrations. Karl explains that it sometimes can feel a bit unfulfilling when you have prepared and hyped something for a long time and then it amounts to a small action, or you get a couple of hundred people but no media attention, which can feel a bit sad.

> In the media you only hear about those who succeed and get really big, you never, like, hear about that time you tried to organize a demonstration and seven people came and it was cold and no media wrote about it – Karl, Fältbiologerna.

Karl, however, also has several positive experiences from organizing and participating in demonstrations. He told me about the time when he created an event on Facebook for a demonstration and it grew fast, and in the end a couple of thousand people participated, and seven support demonstrations took place in other cities. "It was super fun and super cool, but very intense in the days leading up to it, but it was cool to be the one pulling the strings" (Karl, Fältbiologerna).

I have previously underscored that for some of my interviewees participating in an action or demonstration was the gateway to become active. Zandra describes her first action with

Extinction Rebellion as a magical event, even if it was a bit disorganized in the beginning. She was nervous both the day before, and at the action;

> You are almost totally shaking, on edge, and I thought it was really scary but also surprisingly calm once on site (…) when we took the street it was a mix of emotions and it really was super fun, we sang a lot of chants, a lot of music, there was so many people, there was almost a bit of a festival feeling – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

For Zoey, the festive element was hard to swallow at first. She tells me that she saw people having fun but she felt that this is a crisis and not the place for music and dance. But later she realized that it is an important strategy in order to encourage people to engage and to get the sense of community "where people feel safe and comfortable with supporting each other" (Zoey, Fältbiologerna).

The festive elements in protests are by some scholars regarded as play – a fun and liberating form of political performance that frees both the body and the mind. Through song, dance or even theater activists invite people to participate in, or watch, a non-violent, entertaining performance of resistance capable of fueling positive emotion and empowerment (Shepard 2008:1-3).

Furthermore, there are close ties between emotions, collective effervescence and performance. Cultural or protest performances inhabit the capacity to conjure a powerful emotional response for the individual (Juris 2015:99). I experienced this myself when I marched together with Fridays For Future in Malmö and sang chants and songs. I felt empowered, but also a rush of emotions that brought tears to my eyes. In collective effervescence, individual identities are momentarily merged to a group. Eyerman (2006:195) highlights that in this process there is an emotional transference allowing empowerment and a sense of belonging to something greater to emerge –a collective emotional energy.

Lisa's first action was a Fridays For Future demonstration and it made her realize that this was the right thing for her to do, "I always think it feels fantastic when you get together like that and do something". Today Lisa is active in Extinction Rebellion, and she told me about her first mass action in august 2020 which she went to together with her best friend. Initially, they had decided not to do anything illegal or high-risk but during the action something grew in them;

> We were sitting down, and we got such an adrenaline rush from being there so we both decided to remain seated at a blockade and then we got driven away by a police car and I just

could not contain myself. I had such a smile inside, and I know I thought Lisa this is so weird you can't smile when you are being carried away to a police car by the police, but I just felt I am happy now – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

Zandra had a similar experience;

> When the police came to lift people away from the street I had been thinking I would exit (…) but because it was so controlled and calm, but at the same time so many people. I don't know, it became fulfilling, very big. So very spontaneously I sat down on the street too and got carried away (...) that was a situation when the police were very good and it did not feel bad at all, it was scary but it felt calm and good too. And then when we sat there, waiting for the police to get our information, the Red Rebels came with music and movements and kind of surrounded us (…) that were a moment I will never forget – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.[22]

I understand Lisa and Zandra's stories as an expression of a shift in morality and moral rules, when the individual, experiencing a moral pride empowered by collective effervescence, chooses to remain in seated in the street or feels joy after being arrested (Jasper 2010:83-84; Fields et al. 2006:164; Eyerman 2006:195). During a performance the activist's body becomes a site for political agency (Juris 2015:95) that moves together with other politicized bodies connected by their common values, morality and shared struggle (Mei 2021:152; Juris 2015:82-83). I believe the morality and collective identity my interviewees experience at the actions has been developed over time, and the spontaneous decision to commit an illegal act might not be as spontaneous as it seems.

Ina has participated in climate actions but not civil disobedience actions (yet). Ina tells me that she has been to a training session for an action, and that that made her feel as if she really wants to do it, but before she got active it was unthinkable for her to do something like that.

> I really felt like I want to do this, I want to be carried away [by the police] which was a bit of a strange reaction but also fulfilling to do something dramatic, to remain seated until the police takes you away and spend the night in a cell (…) and the fact that I can say this now, what kind of generation is this? – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

During Alex's first Extinction Rebellion action he did not do anything illegal, but during the following summer he had the chance to "let it grow" and he had time to get into the high-risk in his own speed. Alex tries to stay within the realms of his comfort zone, and one of the more difficult things to navigate is the respect for, and fear of, the police. After an action, Alex feels relief but also, sometimes, doubt because he can't see the result, which can be frustrating and he underscores that the social aspect is important after an action because you need support.

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[22] Red rebels Sweden is a part of the Red Rebel Brigade existing in 50 countries and is a performance group dedicated to increasing attention to the climate crisis and gives support to Extinction Rebellion and others that fights to save all species. Red rebels move slowly and are silent, dressed in all red with white and black face makeup (Extinction Rebellion 1).

You definitely get nervous, you can feel your heart beat when you sit and you know you are doing something illegal and maybe the police will come soon and lift you away. The first time takes that barrier away and you feel like you are doing something right. Even if police repression happens it kind of reassures you, this is exactly the right thing, this shows me that someone doesn't want this to happen so we need to continue – Alex, Extinction Rebellion.

At some actions I haven't done anything illegal and then it has mostly only been feelings of joy afterwards but sometimes I have been arrested by the police and stuff and then it has been a lot of tuff emotions, it is actually strenuous and scary to be subjected to it, but then when you had a chance to process it, it feels good and you feel proud – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

My interviewees, at times, talk about their participation as a transformative event where they are among like-minded people and push their own boundaries. Moa tells me "you feel a fellowship and that you are doing something important when you sit on the road even if it invades your safety (…) and is a situation that creates stress". I joined Extinction Rebellion for their mass action *Fossilupproret* in Stockholm and I participated in so-called swarming's, when activists blocks a road for a few minutes or until the police tell them to leave. I was very nervous at first and initially not comfortable with holding the banner when we blocked the roads because I felt exposed and would have preferred to take a backseat, but when I was asked to help with the banner the need to be helpful and supportive outweighed the uncomfortableness I felt. During the swarming's I felt connected to both my group and the cause itself, and like Moa I felt my boundaries move, or rather I willingly moved my boundaries because of the fellowship I felt.

Juris (2015:86-87) underscores that there is no such thing as *the* performance, meaning that performances differ due to the participants' goals, identities or other circumstances like the level of danger, context and scale. The common denominator for social movement performance is that activists use their bodies and a space in certain ways to produce alternative cultural identities, meanings and emotional experiences. I would like to expand Juris' argument to include the notion that one performative action can include several miniature performance acts that work together to communicate the movement's message. For instance, the Extinction Rebellions in Lund when they mobilized against banks that fund fossil fuel ventures. The activists played different parts. Some used mops and other cleaning supplies to clean the banks, others held up a big banner or talked to people and one young girl communicated their demands through a megaphone.

It is useful to draw parallels between protest performance and theater, in both cases there is a stage, actors and an audience. Some actions, like the above-mentioned Extinction Rebellion action in Lund that literally cleaned the banks, are more theatrical than others. In actions there

can also be different levels of separation from the audience and the stage (Juris 2015:96). I will, in order to highlight the different forms of performance, compare Fridays For Future's Global climate march with Extinction rebellions *Fossilupproret*.

Both the Global climate march and the various actions during *Fossilupproret* underscores the way civil society actors mobilize symbolic capital. Through different forms of performance where scientific knowledge is delivered by emotionalized bodily performances (Nasiritousi et al. 2016:113; Rietig 2011:17; Thew 2018:385; Juris 2015:83). During the two examples symbolic capital was expressed in many different ways such as songs like *The people gonna rise like the water*, die in's, speeches and marching.

The climate march was a mobile performance, we (the actors) walked on the streets of Malmö, and hence, our stage was ever-changing. The divide between actor and audience was blurred, since we walked among them with our flags and banners. The happening felt more like a musical performance than a theater because we were singing the whole time. *Fossilupproret*, on the other hand, consisted of several actions over the course of a week.

At one of the Extinction Rebellion actions I joined the information was on a need to know basis, with the intent to increase the success of the action and confuse our police escort. Only the delegate of our friend group knew exactly where we were going once we left our camp in Humlegården, but we could all pretty much figure out the location once we found out we were going to Bromma –we were heading to the airport. We took a detour to avoid a large gathering ahead of the action, and I could feel the anticipation, nerves, excitement and anxiousness grow in me, and the rest of the group, as we got closer to the airport. When we were walking past some police cars at the entrance to the airport I felt a sudden surge of nerves and a flutter in my stomach, but once we got in and joined the other activists it quickly changed to excitement and a sense of purpose. This was the action I observed where the performance aspect was the most defined. The stage became the middle of the departure terminal as activists occupied the space and closed it off with banners and our bodies. The balcony along one side of the terminal also contributed to the theatrical feeling. We were also performers by our singing, the die ins where we laid down on the floor and played dead, the Red rebels entering the stage and the speeches. The police were actors too by their announcements, which we responded to by singing louder. The audience was the passengers

and everyone else at the terminal, some were interested, even supportive, others were annoyed but most of all they seemed to be entertained and we could not be ignored.

Before we return to the connection between the social aspect and performance I would like to underscore performing activism as an intersection for morality, emotions and community. The stories the activists told me regarding their experiences of performing activism, and the mix of emotions they experience before, after and especially during connects with moral emotions, e.g. moral pride, and the driving force for action (Jasper 2010:82; Kleres & Wettergren 2017:507). I also understand it as expressions for collective effervescence – a temporary state that can conjure new moral understandings (Olaveson 2001:101). In this state an individual might feel, for the first time, that it is moral to e.g. disobey orders from the police. Furthermore, performing activism in a way that puts one's own personal safety at risk is something that demands a lot from the individual and the sense of "we-ness" (Mei 2021:152) is a prerequisite for it. This could also be understood as performative and practical examples of communitas (Turner 1969) – as these performances are spaces where communitas is manifested and sustained.

Furthermore, the individuals I have interviewed are a part of several different forms of organizations and movements, some are local (Klimatstudenterna), others are national (e.g. PUSH Sweden and Fältbiologerna) and some are a part of an international network (Fridays For Future and Extinction Rebellion). In my discussion with Vera about what she thinks is the best thing about her movement she provided me with an example that binds activist performance, a sense of community and the social component together. For Vera, the best part is the knowledge that you are not alone and that she feels connected to movement members across the globe, because they have a shared purpose. When Vera hears about Extinction Rebellion actions in other countries she explains that she thinks, "yeah that's my people".

This made me reflect about the scope of the impact the social component and a sense of community has for a organization or movement in a globalized world, that even if the sense of community is experienced in a local group in the south of Sweden, it has the capacity to transgress geographical restraints or boundaries and connect individuals all over the world. This also brings Appadurai's (1999:299-301) concept ideoscapes to mind, where the global environmental movement, or in Vera's case Extinction Rebellion, has adopted a master-

narrative, or to use Pellow's (1990:662-63) concept a master frame, and can thus feel ideologically connected on a global scale. [23]

Finally, chapter 7 has aspired to underscore the significance of a social component for youth climate activism and the link between it and climate activist performance. I see my interviewees' statements to leave no room for doubt of how vital the social component and activist performance is for both the individual experience, identity-work, their tribe and their cause, as it sustains them and promotes strong bonds between activists– bonds that have been shown to be strong enough to defy national borders.

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[23] Appadurai (1990:296-300) understands the global cultural economy as a multiplex disjunctive order that "cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models". Appadurai has constructed a framework to better explain such disjuncture's by examining five dimensions of global cultural flow; mediascapes, ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscape and ideoscapes. Ideoscapes usually concern state ideologies and counter-ideologies of movements wishing to gain influence over the power the state harbors.

8   The dark side of social boundary crossing

This chapter concludes the story of youth climate activism in Sweden by introducing both antagonists and dilemmas the main characters face in their coexistence with non-activists, as clashes of morality may occur. The clashes could occur due to the fact that activists often question or dissent from status quo and dominant societal norms (O'Brian 2018:2). The clash of morality or, rather, ideology can be hard to navigate and lead to more or less uncomfortable confrontations. The confrontations can occur during actions or in everyday life as a reaction to lifestyle choices e.g. to refuse to eat meat or fly. This chapter discusses the more problematic aspects of social boundary crossing and climate activism in the form of potential risks both in the activists' social life and in their activist performances.

8.1   Navigating a social minefield

We sacrifice our lives for this – Ina, Extinction rebellion.

Participation in a social movement can have empowering positive effects for young people (see chapter 5), but the effects can also be detrimental in several areas of the youth's lives (Nissen et al. 2020:319). I have called my interviewees social boundary crossers and they are all individuals who are morally engaged in an issue, meaning that their commitment is a manifestation of their moral convictions. I argue that if you cross over to a social domain that is inline with your own morality the process of moral identity-work gets boosted, which might lead you to become completely absorbed by the collective you now are a part of. This can lead to activist burnout, which several of my interviewees considered to be a potential risk, but it can also lead to complications in interactions with people that have not experienced the same social boundary crossing. The complications can take many different forms, such as receiving negative comments, feeling disconnected or being regarded as strange or difficult. I have chosen to gather the various expressions for social complication my interviewees spoke about under the banner *social risks*.

> One risk with being committed is that you are going to have to feel all these emotions, and sometimes I think that it would be nice not to care and just go on living like most people do – Ina, Extinction Rebellion.

Different expressions for social risks came up quite frequently during the interviews. One activist talked about a puzzle, where you have to find a space for your life but that it is hard because you want to do so much with your activism. There is also a risk that people might think that you are strange and they might have preconceived notions about you because of your activism, the things you advocate for, e.g. refugee rights, or the way you do activism. Some of the activists have even received hateful comments online or during actions.

> Well yes, everyone will not think this is good, so you can just not give a shit about them, I think [laughter] – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

Moreover, the activists also talked about experiencing a harder time connecting with people that are not as committed or knowledgeable. Their circle of close friends is often other activists or people who are, at least, engaged with civil society. At the weekly Fridays For Future demonstration a person told me a similar story and explained that the person had an increasingly hard time dealing with people that are not engaged. I would argue that these are young people, and like all people they just want to fit in or find their safe space. This might contribute to why some of them avoid not-so-like-minded individuals, in order to limit the risk of having to justify your lifestyle. Jenny told me that she sees a risk that you might feel alone in your social commitment, or if you are the first one in your social setting, your friends might think you are boring or difficult and you risk being ostracized or disliked. Being a climate activist, when most people in your life are not, could create a barrier between you and people in your life.

> I believe you might scare away some people (…) And that I will, well, scare away friends, people I meet or someone you fancy (…) I would have probably scared myself too [laughter] two years ago if I would have met someone like me. I would probably have thought the person was a bit crazy, and now I am that person – Lisa, Extinction Rebellion.

In terms of how personal relationships have been impacted, it has been both sweet and sour. Most of their families and close friends have been accepting and supportive, but there might not be a deeper understanding of what they are doing. Some activists told me that they have actually inspired family and friends to become active themselves, like Zandra who's family joined her for her first action with Extinction Rebellion without hesitation and are still active themselves. Others have had a harder time getting acceptance from their parents, especially those who participate in civil disobedience or individuals who made a big transformation from their past self into a climate activist. Their old friends have generally been supportive even if

they don't share their conviction, but at the same time the activists sometimes feel disconnected from their old life and their friends' interests and lifestyles.

> At the same time I want to have a normal life in some way so I find it really difficult to find the right balance where you do enough to feel like a good person but still not get to deeply involved in the crisis and walk around consumed by it, yes it is difficult, I'm still working on it –Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

As previously mentioned, I view youth climate activists to be social boundary crossers that have crossed over a cognitive and ideological barrier that most people in their life have not. This cross-over or transformation of their social identity means they gain a group membership that gives them a sense of belonging in the environmental movement (Mei 2021: 149-51), but it may create a distance with people that have not experienced the same liminal separation from social structure and, thus, do not share the same group belonging (Yang 2000 382-83). The potential social complications deriving from being a climate activist can be hard to navigate, but they are not the only risks associated with climate activism. The next sub-chapter will continue the discussion surrounding risks, with a focus on risks connected to activist performance.

8.2   A dangerous performance

There are several potential risks associated with participation in an action, especially illegal ones. Getting arrested and facing legal consequences is one of them. Lisa, who has been arrested, is still not comfortable with openly disclosing her connection to Extinction Rebellion because she is worried it might impact her job seeking opportunities, especially if the employer looks at her criminal record. Bea, on the other hand, explains that she has given this some thought regarding her own organization (Fridays For Future), if it is ethical to encourage young school children to skip school and strike because of the *skolplikt* (school obligation). Bea is also concerned about very young people in Extinction Rebellion doing high-risk stuff, which could lead to long criminal records from a young age. Some activists might also be more at liberty to break Swedish law than others, Vera is not a Swedish citizen but she wishes to stay in the country after she graduates, and she feels like she can't do high-risk things that will lead to her being deported.

> Some [police] have been very aggressive with weapons and pushed you against a wall and that sort of thing, and that has been a bit, you don't really understand because we are not criminals

> (…) I don't understand it, where is the threat? We are not criminals; we have not harmed anyone – Ruth, Extinction Rebellion.

Getting arrested is, however, only one risk associated with activist performance. The police was framed as a potential risk not only because the activists are worried about getting arrested but because of how the police might behave or have behaved in the past. Several of the interviewees spoke about police violence or altercations with law enforcement that they had experienced while participating in actions. One example is Vera, she told me about an Extinction Rebellion action at a shopping mall that was " kind of scary, a police car basically drove through everyone at high speed and everyone had to get out of the way". Interactions with law enforcement can be very emotional, and feelings such as stress or fear were usually expressed in relation to the police during the interviews. The way the police have acted have also impacted how some of the activists feel after actions, and Jonathan told me that he still "gets feelings" when he sees the police, and especially police helicopters, after a civil disobedience action in Germany he participated in where they broke in to a coal power plant – "it stays with you".

> To be inside the coal power plant was an experience, the police had anticipated the action so they came inside after twenty minutes with riot gear, pepper spray, swinging their batons. It was a freaking adrenaline rush, around a hundred people got arrested but not me, my friends and I managed to escape– Jonathan, PUSH Sweden.

> At most of the demonstrations the police have been (…) very nice and very careful when they lifted people off the road (…) But at more recent actions it has become pretty violent from the police, and it is like pepper spray and all those stuff in situations where people just sit on a street and really it is just unnecessary chaos, unnecessary violence (…) so it feels like the risk increases more and more when it comes to those kinds of actions and I think it is super hard, I really don't like to create conflict (…) – Zandra, Extinction Rebellion.

The stories of excessive force from the police was shocking and moving for me as a person, but as a researcher I can analyze the interaction with the police as an expression of how activists use their opponents (in this case the police) in order to gain attention for their cause. In performance theory three social dimensions are significant: the social movement, the opponents and the public. Acts of protest performance, in the form of civil disobedience, are strategically done in public places in front of an audience. The interaction with the police as the opponent provides the movement with a symbolic us versus them narrative, which strengthens group solidarity and adds drama (Eyerman 2006:194-5; Bedau 1961:661). However, the interactions with the police could be viewed as a positive outcome for the collective if it entails the police lifting people off the streets. But when it comes to the point of excessive force, it is very unpleasant for the individual and the us versus them narrative gets pushed to the extreme and it is hard to still regard it as something positive.

Finally, in addition to the risk of getting detained by the police or experiencing police violence there is also a risk of altercations with dissenters or angry people. Nissen et al. (2020:319) underscores that activists might risk confrontation or surveillance from dissenters at actions. I witnessed this on two occasions during my participatory observations. The first time was in Malmö when I joined Fridays For Future's weekly demonstration and a young man started to take pictures of us without introducing himself. When one of the women asked him what he was doing he became very agitated and told her that he had the right to be there and then the woman told him that she had the right to know why he was photographing her friends. The man then yelled at her to leave him alone and continued to photograph us for a few more minutes. This altercation made me feel very uncomfortable and the atmosphere was tense, but after the man left one woman laughed and said "oh well I am on so many right-wing sites already". The mood then changed for the better and the group continued like nothing had happened. The second time was in Stockholm, at *Fossilupproret*, when a few men showed up from a known right-wing media outlet and tried to interview people and continued to film our camp without asking for permission. Moreover, at the swarmings, several drivers got out of their cars and yelled at us, some even drove their cars really close to our blockade, and it is something rather threatening to see a car driven by an angry person approaching you. I also witnessed an altercation at a road blockade when a driver got out of his car and forcefully ripped banners out of the activists' hands. During situations like this the importance of community becomes clear as activists continued to offer their support to others, asking if they were okay and giving each other hugs.

The risks conveyed in this chapter, *The dark side of social boundary crossing*, range from bodily harm, surveillance or getting arrested to social risks. These are all part of the youth climate activist's reality, but I also view it as an account of a negotiation process in regards to risk assessment and risk avoidance. The activists are aware of the risks associated with their occupation, but they do it anyway. They do it because they feel like they have to, which connects with moral emotions, values, morality and identity-work. I have previously underscored the intersection of action and morality (see chapter 5), but I would like to add the negotiation of risks to the mix. The interviewees are guided to action by their values and morality, but they are forced to confront their life-choices due to risks and, hence, negotiate with their morality. In other words, what price are they willing to pay for their moral and social identity?

9   Concluding discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how youth internalize and perform climate activism by investigating the intersection of emotions, commitment and action; how they perceive themself and the movement; and how they relate to their opponents. The ethnographic material gained from interviews and participatory observations regarding the activists' narratives, motivations, experiences and emotions have been filtered through previous studies and my theoretical framework. The theoretical framework consisted of; social movement theory, Juris and Eyerman's performance theory, Jasper's contribution regarding emotions and morality, Turner's communitas and liminality and Durkheim's collective effervescence. In this final chapter the most pronounced results deriving from my study will be presented and discussed. The results have been uncovered in relation to the following research questions: What prompts climate activism, and how can we understand the process of becoming an activist?; What part does emotion play in the internalization and performance of activism?; What challenges and risks accompany climate activism and how do youth define and cope with such issues?; How do youth climate activists relate to their organization or movement and the environmental movement, and how do they understand their position with regard to their opponents?

In my study, I have been able to identify some motivations for climate activism: fellow humanness, privilege, compassion, the call to action and eco-anxiety. I consider these motivations to have fueled the social boundary crossing my interviewees' experience as they entered the domain of climate activism. The process of becoming an activist differs among my interviewees. For some it has been something that has grown slowly over time and then blossomed, for others it was a transformative moment (Fisher 2015:235) in the form of an action. I understand the process of becoming a climate activist as a form of moral identity-work that reconfigures an individual's values and morality and makes them operational – in the sense that it leads to action. My interviewees continuously emphasized that what they were doing was the right thing to do, that they live after their values and that they had no choice but to continue. Therefore, it is possible to see (climate) activism as the manifestation of the intersection of values, action and morality. Becoming an activist is also a continuing

process of negotiation with oneself, as exemplified by the question to be or not to be an activist. It is a negotiation of how you understand activism as a social identity –and if or how it fits with your own morality and values.

Furthermore, emotions play a significant role for several different realms of climate activism. The link between emotions and participating in activist performances becomes clear as an intersection for emotions, commitment and action. Eco-anxiety has been shown to be a driver for action, but action also becomes a way to reduce anxiety. Activist performance is also a whirlwind of emotions. The activists themselves describe feelings such as nervousness, anticipation, disappointment, joy, happiness, pride, fear or unease. The positive emotions are informed by the notion that they are doing the right thing together as a collective. This connects with moral pride, and in extension moral identity-work, since our morality only becomes tangible through our actions. The rush of moral emotions at a protest performance, understood as collective effervesce, has also been shown to have the capacity to *move* the boundaries of a person's morality and prompt them to behave in a way which they deemed to be improbable before.

To do something together as a collective and be among like-minded individuals was important for my interviewees and the social aspect prevailed as a vital element for sustaining their commitment and the movement. The sense community is also an important coping mechanism for the various risks the activists spoke about: getting arrested, police violence, social risks and burning out. Being a part of a group that understands or even shares your process of moral identity-work is important for an individual, more so if other people in your life do not share it. My interviewees were very conscious about the risks associated with climate activism, but they do it anyway because they feel like they are obliged to. This is, however, also a process of negotiation with your values and morality – to be a climate activist is to risk your safety, whether it is physical, social or psychological, and the question becomes, not if, but to what extent you should risk it.

The sense of community was revealed to extend beyond their own organization or movement as solidarity across the environmental movement emerged. I believe the explanation for this to be the notion of a shared struggle, which provides a feeling of group belonging towards the entire environmental movement. However, I interpret the choice to join and remain in an organization or movement as a negotiation between individual and group values, if the person

can identify with the group and, hence, become a part of the collective identity or not. The divisive line for my interviewees was the different strategies, which can be explained by them being comfortable or identifying more strongly with different expressions of dissent (O'Brien et al. 2018:4-6).

Moreover, my interviewees had different experiences of their opponents (the dominating forces in society). More often than not they seem to perceive their position to be one coming from a point of disadvantage, due to young people's position in the social hierarchy –where youth things and knowledge are deemed to carry less value than adult things and knowledge. Their commitment is being disregarded, disvalued or used to further self-serving means by those in power through tokenistic behaviors. The decision-makers narrative of them being the heroes of tomorrow was also understood to further compromise their position.

I share my interviewees critique against this conceptualization, this is not to say that what they do is not admirable or inspiring, I think it is. But rather, that the narrative that the young individuals on the barricades are the hope for a livable future is unfair. It puts enormous pressure on the shoulders of individuals that, because of the current power structure in society, lacks the capacity or power to make changes sufficient enough to mitigate the climate crisis. All they can do is to pursue decision-makers and hope that they change their course of action. The responsibility put on young people is also unfair because they are the ones least to blame for the climate crisis –they boarded the train after it had already derailed but they, and future generations, will be the ones that will be left to clean up the wreckage.

The climate crisis will not go away, and neither will the young people committed to fight for a livable planet. Therefore, I see a need for future studies, which further explores youth climate activism –studies with an explicit focus on the individual's experience, morality and motivations. Future studies should allow the activists to be complex beings and allow the rest of us to better understand the foundation of youth climate activism in the anthropocene. I also see a need for more studies concerning indigenous youth climate activists both in Sweden and elsewhere, in order to conjure a more diverse account of youth climate activism and highlight the populations that are already facing the worst effects. Yes, young people are leading the way, walking in the front line, but we should not let them walk alone –and the least we could do is to tell their stories, share their knowledge and hear their voices.

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10.1　　Internet resources

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Appendix –Interview guide

The individual
Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?
(1) How did your commitment to the climate start, what motivated you?
(2) Any specific happening or situation?
(3) What are your thoughts on ecoanxiety?
(4) Do you have personal experience of ecoanxiety?
(5) What are your thoughts regarding the future, would you consider making working with climate issues a career?

The individual and the organization/movement
For how long have you been a part of (insert organization/movement)?
(1) What made you become a part of it?
(2) Other organizations or movements?
(3) What is the best part of being a part of (insert organization/movement)?
(4) How would you describe (insert organization/movement) role?
(5) Do you think the social aspect or component carries importance in a social movement?
(6) Have you found new friends or developed new contacts because of your commitment or engagement?

The individual and the commitment
Are there any risks involved, according to you, with engaging in climate issues or being a part of (insert organization/movement)?
(1) How have people (your family, friends and so on) reacted to your commitment, have they been supportive, indifferent, skeptical or something else?
(2) Have your commitment impacted other parts of your life, have you had to compromise with yourself or your time?

Have you participated in demonstrations or other forms of activities?
(If yes)
    (1) How did it feel before, during, and after?
    (2) Is there any particular happening that you remember that left a lasting impact on you?
(If no)
    (1) Why not?
    (2) Is it something you would like to do?

What does the word activism mean to you, what do you think about when you hear the word activism?
Would you describe yourself as an activist?
(If no)
    (1) How would you describe yourself instead?
(If yes)
    (1) How would you describe yourself as an activist, what makes you an activist?

There are many different strategies or forms of engagements a commitment can take, like civil disobedience, campaigns, demonstrations or lobbying, how would you describe your practical commitment, what strategies do you have experience from, is there any type you prefer?
(1) What are your thoughts regarding other forms of strategies?

What is it like to be young and to have a commitment in the climate issue?
(1) What are the challenges, what are the obstacles?
(2) What is youth's position, how to you feel other actors (politicians, decision-makers, businesses or bigger environmental NGOs) view young people's commitment?
(3) Is tokenism, when youth are being used by more powerful actors like mascots in order to increase their legitimacy but youth are not allowed to participate on equal terms, is sometimes described as an issue for youth activists, something you have experienced, if yes how did it feel?
(4) What are your thoughts on tokenism?

The individual, the climate crisis and the future?
Would you like to describe the climate situation with your own words?
(1) Are there any issues that are especially important to you?

If you could dream freely, and there were no limitations or non-progressive politicians standing in your way, how would you like society to change?
(1) Which solutions would you make a reality?