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# WHY BOTHER GETTING INVOLVED? COMMITMENT AND MOBILISATION WITHIN CURRENT CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

ABSTRACT: The present article analyses mobilisation in climate and environmental movements as a social practice. The research questions concern why people take part in said movements, and how this makes sense to them, in relation to the specific context. The study aims to understand participation on several levels, thus filling knowledge gaps regarding the cross-section of civil society, social movements and Bourdieu's theory of social practices. The empirical study consists of two cases of current climate and environmental movements. The first case concerns local groups and networks mobilised to preserve forests and parks. The second case concerns local and global climate strikes and manifestations. The reasons for taking part in such movements are found on several levels. Firstly, the explicit concerns and cares, as well as frustrations, trigger the commitment. Taking part is a way to handle the crisis in a way that makes sense personally. Secondly, previous experiences, education and professional life enable a sense of belonging and a sense of being able to take part. Thirdly, the socialisation that takes part within the social practice contributes to an increased commitment. In the stories about previous and coming actions, values and traditions – of the right ways of doing and being – a practical sense/habitus for this social practice is reproduced. The conveying of concerns in public is understood and explained as a ritualised practice, contributing to the commitment, as a key resource.

KEYWORDS: climate- and environmental movements, climate-strikes, local groups and networks, social practice, commitment.

## Introduction

Since the extreme heat waves and forest fires of the summer of 2018, around the world, as well as in Sweden, the focus on climate change and environmental issues has increased. Children, youths, adults and elderly people – with various backgrounds and experiences – have been taking part in demonstrations in streets and squares, expressing their concerns through actions such as 'school-strikes' and *Fridays for Future*[1]. There is a trend towards a sustainable lifestyle and of wanting to *do* something for the sake of future generations. In Sweden, new words such as 'flight-shame', 'climate-anxiety' and 'Greta-effect' have been established as a token of this trend[2].

New groups, networks and movements have evolved in relation to this. For example, climate strikes such as *Fridays for Future* and *Global Strikes for Future* follow the protests

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[1] https://fridaysforfuture.org/what-we-do/strike-statistics/, 5.06.2020.
[2] https://www.isof.se/sprak/nyord/nyord/aktuellt-nyord-2019/2019-05-03-gretaeffekten.html, https://www.svd.se/statsvetare-om-greta-effekten-unik-rorelse, 28.04.2020.

of Swedish teenager *Greta Thunberg* outside of the Swedish parliament[3]. Also, there is the global network *Extinction Rebellion*, known for its dramatised manifestations and occupations[4]. Other examples are local groups and networks, which act together to preserve valuable nature areas, forests and parks. Of course, climate- and environmental movements are not a new phenomena. However, what seems to be unique is the rapid growth and heterogeneity of the participants (de Moor et al. 2020).

In an article in the Swedish paper *Dagens Nyheter*, the historian of ideas, Anders Nyström points out, in relation to climate change, that 'the disasters show that we all live in the same state of vulnerability'[5]. The threat of climate change is experienced as more urgent the closer it comes. Nyström's article raises questions as to why some people are getting involved, and how this makes sense to them. It is vital to understand the potential meaning or function of getting involved as a way of dealing with climate anxiety or feelings of frustration, together with other people. Thus, the societal as well as practical relevance of the study is shown.

Additionally, there is a scientific relevance to the study. Researchers at the cross-section between social movements and civil society-research, oriented by Bourdieu's theoretical perspective, have pointed out the relevance of understanding mobilisation as a social practice, with its own beliefs and ritualised practices (Crossley 2003; Bourdieu 1990). In addition, the understanding of crises, risks and threats, as part of, or central in, a social practice, is an area of research of vital interest (Bourdieu 1996; Crossley 2003; Schmitt 2016; Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015). In this article a relatively original theoretical framework for understanding mobilisation as a social practice is constructed. The empirical data from two cases of current climate and environmental movements are described and analysed, showing some of the common traits as well as the heterogeneous and manifold character of mobilisation. The study is explorative, reconstructing the social and symbolic significance of local engagement and activism (Callewaert 2014; Bourdieu et al. 1999).

## Aim, research questions and the cases

The aim of this article is to understand the act of mobilisation in climate and environmental movements as a social practice, with its own beliefs and ritualised practices. The research questions are: Why are participants getting involved in mobilisation, and how does this make sense to them? How is the mobilisation organised, and what kind

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[3]   https://fridaysforfuture.org/what-we-do/strike-statistics/; globalclimatestrike.net/; 5.06.2020.
[4]   https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/, 5.06.2020.
[5]   "Katastroferna visar att vi alla lever i samma tillstånd av utsatthet" av Anders Nyström, Dagens Nyheter, 5.04.2019.

of strategies are used? How can mobilisation be understood as a social practice, with its own beliefs and ritualised practices?

Two cases are used in the study. The first case is an example of local groups and networks mobilising to preserve local forests and parks in a Swedish city. The second case concerns local and global climate strikes and actions, arranged by *Fridays for Future, Global Climate Strikes for Future* and *Extinction Rebellion*. These two, somewhat different cases, are presented in an attempt to capture some of the common traits as well as the heterogeneous and manifold character of new social movements (see Jonsson 2017). Within these cases, both formal and informal strategies are used, ranging from some form of 'light activism' to legal processing and civil disobedience.

## Civil society and social movements – context, implications, conditions

Previous research provides a background regarding the context as well as the various implications of mobilisation. Of particular interest here are studies that contribute to a sociological understanding of why people are taking part in social mobilisation, and how this makes sense to them.

The two cases of current climate and environmental movements take place within civil society. The civil society consists of arenas for engagement and shared interests, outside of state, market and domestic life (Jonsson 2017). These arenas have different implications, for instance a civic/radical implication that challenges some kind of prevailing order, or a citizen-democratic implication that activates the rights-responsibilities of democracy (von Essen & Sundgren 2012). The radical implication is perhaps most obvious when it comes to climate and environmental movements. However, the citizen-democratic implication might be worth problematising, due to different meanings about what democracy should be (being able to make an actual impact or mainly having the right to vote) (Larsson 2013). A third implication is a personal sense of meaning, without having a radical agenda (von Essen & Sundgren 2012). In previous research there is a tendency to categorise movements and participants as being either collective/radical or individual (Nørholm Lundin 2016). From a sociological perspective, though, it is more likely that various implications are intertwined, so that the collective/radical 'cause' contributes to the personal sense of meaning, and vice versa.

Social movements in Sweden and worldwide are considered vital for social and political transformation as well as citizenship, both historically and today (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther 2013). Social movements can function as arenas for the formation of opinions, learning and community (Jonsson 2017; Boström 2000; Larsson 2013). The two cases, in focus of this article, seem to build on these kinds of traditions. However,

the conditions for mobilisation need to be problematised. Apart from the various implications, described in the previous section, there is a mobilisation in social movements that aims at facing specific risks (Gougoulakis & Christie 2012). In this article the meaning of risks as a trigger for getting involved is of vital interest. On the other hand, risks might be something used strategically to evoke commitment.

In anti-consumerist and animal-rights movements threats (to the climate, society, animals etc.) function as driving forces for commitment, together with (other) personal and moral motives (Portwood-Stacer 2012; Jacobsson & Lindblom 2012). The concept of 'circumstantial' activists enables an understanding of commitment as being motivated by a problem or impending crisis (Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015). Svedberg and von Essen (2016) state that volunteering in Sweden is extensive and stable 'despite crises and significant changes in society' (p. 23). In this article the focus is somewhat reversed, focusing on the ways that crisis can lead to or enhance commitment.

However, not all people see participation in mobilisation as an option or as being accessible to them. Participation in civil society has been described as unevenly distributed among the Swedish population, so that some people are very active while others are not active at all (Svedberg & von Essen 2016). The participation seems to build upon, and at the same time increase, social and organisational capitals etc. (Harding 2012; Svedberg & von Essen 2016; Broady 1998). Here, the notion of capital is used in Bourdieu's sense, as resources of various kinds, enabling a sense of belonging in a certain context (Muel-Dreyfus 1985; Flisbäck 2006). However, the rapid increase in people taking part in climate movements as well as heterogeneous groups of participants in current mobilisation, call for further studies (de Moor et al. 2020).

Within social movements there is a tradition of strategically utilising knowledge and learning[6] as tools for pushing the cause forward (Gougoulakis & Christie 2012). This is central to being able to make strong arguments and to evoking commitment, as well as in the training and socialising of new activists (Haluza-Delay 2008; Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Crossley 2003). The strategic use of heterogeneous groups of participants and their varying access to knowledge, genres and networks have also been described (Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Anshelm et al. 2018). The concept of discourse coalitions describes this kind of strategy (Anshelm et al. 2018). There are various strategies for either preventing or creating change, ranging from political influence and participation in decision-making processes, to activist methods like civil disobedience (Jonsson 2017).

Of particular interest here is what keeps the often loosely organised social movements together as a community. One suggestion is the shared belief in the necessity of a sustainable behavior and lifestyle, and that this is essential for the planet's survival

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[6] The knowledge is related to the area of interest as well as related to mobilisation (organisation, strategies, methods).

(Boström 2000; Jonsson 2017; Anshelm et al. 2018). Additionally, there is a common readiness among activists to convey their knowledge and concerns in public (Horton 2003). Shared beliefs and rituals might contribute to the commitment of the activists as a vital resource. To be able to engage others and to maintain one's own commitment, is described as an important know-how within social movements (Haluza-Delay 2008). In professional practices, a commitment or 'calling' is something that is socialised and reproduced (Bengtsson & Flisbäck 2016; Nørholm Lundin 2019; 2020).

There is a proud history of social movements, as a potential arena for societal and personal growth etc. (see Jonsson 2017). However, it is important to problematise the conditions for mobilisation. While at times institutional arrangements have enabled movements to have an impact, at other times they have contributed to excluding the movements (Jonsson 2017; Fischer 2010). What characterises mobilisation might as well be struggles between different interests, rather than mutual processes of understanding (Anshelm et al. 2018; Polanska & Richards 2018; Nørholm 2020).

## A perspective on mobilisation and commitment setting out from Bourdieu

A social practice is an established social and symbolic dynamic of relations of actions in a given context (Bourdieu 1995). The practice consists of not only what is being done or said, but also of the social and symbolic significance of this, generated by the practical sense, with habitus as an underlying generative principle (Callewaert 2014).

The practical sense functions as a feel for the game, what is 'right' or 'natural' to do in a specific context (Bourdieu 1995; 1990). The members of the practice are being socialised into this feel for the game, its beliefs and ritualised practices (see Nørholm 2008)[7]. Habitus is the embodied history enabling a person to act with the proper 'feel' for the game. Also, habitus works as a horizon of possibilities, which explains why and how the social practice is reproduced (Bourdieu 1999; Muel-Dreyfus 1985; Hodkinson & Sparkes 1997). With this perspective, the researcher assumes that there is a social structure that is being reproduced.

To understand what a social practice is, and how it can reproduce itself, the concept of illusio is vital. Illusio is the socially constructed belief in what is being done in the practice, a belief that this makes sense (Bourdieu 1996). Illusio plays an important role in social movements, as a driving force for commitment (Crossley 2003). Beliefs in the 'cause', also in relation to how the mobilisation should be done, is at the core of mobilisation (see Haluza-DeLay 2008). In this article it is vital to try to understand

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[7] The concept 'ritualised practice' (from Bell and Bourdieu etc) places the ritual in the social practice (not only a ritual, not only having an immediate meaning) (Nørholm 2008, p. 23).

the content as well as the ritualised practices where illusio is reproduced (through, for example, the recognition of the 'right' ways of doing things, the 'right' way to be).

Doxa is another key concept for understanding social practices. Doxa is the most sacred agreement in a social practice, operating at an unspoken and taken-for-granted level (Bourdieu 1996; 2004). Doxa is related to illusio, in the sense that the core of the commitment or calling (the belief) cannot be questioned, and if it is questioned, it makes no sense to take part. Doxa even points out that there is a social order, so that the beliefs and ritualised practices are not random but structured. Doxa is usually conservative and silent, and it is only when the doxa is challenged that it is visible as such. Therefore, the concept enables an understanding of conflicts. Bourdieu and some of his followers have pointed to social movements, as for example the 68-movement, as an expression of a social order being challenged (Bourdieu 1996; Crossley 2003). On another level protests can be understood as a way of dealing with social crises (Schmitt 2016) or as an effect of a mismatch between habitus and field/position (Crossley 2003; Muel-Dreyfus 1985). This is a relatively undeveloped research-area, with potential for understanding why and how people are getting involved in mobilisation.

In his article about social movements, Crossley (2003) asks why (some) people bother getting involved when they might as well refrain and still benefit from the protests. A possible answer is that a radical or activistic habitus enables participants to take part (Crossley 2003; Ivanou & Flores 2018). Still, the heterogeneity of participants in new social movements calls for knowledge about what enables new activists to take part. One suggestion is beliefs and ritualised practices, that contribute to the commitment and the practical sense/habitus as an activist.

There are knowledge gaps in relation to previous research about social movements and civil society. The previous research on climate and environmental movements has mainly emphasised political macro-processes, while qualitative studies are more uncommon (Cassengård et al. 2017; Horton 2003; Portwood-Stacer 2012). As presented above, there are researchers who have asked sociological questions about why people are getting involved and how this makes sense to them. Still, the area is relatively undeveloped. There are studies about the strategic use of knowledge and learning in social movements (see Haluza-DeLay 2008). What is missing though, is a clearer understanding of how learning might contribute to commitment, as well as to a social cohesion and personal sense of meaning. In relation to a Bourdieu perspective, commitment and calling, in relation to mobilisation, is a potential research area that is still relatively undeveloped.

## Research Design

Methodologically this study is inspired by Bourdieu's reconstructive approach, which can be understood as abductive (see Bourdieu et al. 1999; Bourdieu 2004; Callewaert 2014). Within this approach the social and symbolic significance of mobilisation, its beliefs and rituals, are reconstructed. The empirical study consists of data regarding two cases of (1) local groups and networks mobilising to preserve local forests and parks in a residential area in a Swedish town, and (2) climate strikes and actions of *Fridays for Future, Global Climate Strikes for Future* and *Extinction Rebellion*. These cases are considered relevant as examples of current climate- and environmental movements, with both common traits and variations (e.g., strategies). They are both active and influential within their various contexts, attracting quite a lot of participants as well as attention and sympathy. It is interesting, in relation to the purpose and aim of the study, to try to understand why this is the case.

Nine in-depth interviews were conducted, with key players in the local groups and networks (case 1). The key players represent a core of activists, being particularly active. The interviews, from 2019, focused on goals, strategies, concerns, commitment, experiences and backgrounds. Regarding the climate strikes and manifestations (case 2), mainly the homepages *of Fridays for Future, Global Climate Strikes for Future* and *Extinction Rebellion* were analysed[8]. The documents were studied, with a focus on the descriptions of goals, strategies, concerns, commitment, experiences as well as the participants' backgrounds. The homepages were studied in the first half of 2020, making the COVID-19 pandemic part of the picture. The documents used are referred to in footnotes. The data, from both cases, was analysed to understand the social and symbolic significance of what is said about mobilisation (see Bourdieu et al. 1999).

Using two kinds of empirical data, i.e. interviews and websites, is challenging, due to the different characteristics of the data. The interviews are constructed to suit the study at hand, while in terms of official documents, the researcher had to work with preexisting ones. The interviews allow for the interviewees to be better known, while the public data provides a more general picture. Still, both types of data are considered relevant due to the similar content.

During the research process, ethical rules and recommendations were considered.[9] The interviews were conducted with informed consent, treated confidentially and with fictional names. The websites used were public sources, which require no consent. However, the use of official documents requires that the researcher carefully

[8] https://fridaysforfuture.org/; https://globalclimatestrike.net/; https://extinctionrebellion.uk/, 19.08.2020.
[9] http://www.codex.vr.se/index.shtml, 26.11.2019.

distinguish between what can be regarded as public and private communication respectively (Henricsson et al. 2017; Bryman 2012). Therefore, only homepages with public/general 'messages', for the networks, were used (and not social media). A high level of confidentiality was aimed for. Greta Thunberg is mentioned, but only as an inspiration for the networks (and not as part of the study). She is a public person, mentioned by name in previous research (see de Moor et al. 2020). The article is fully a result of the researchers' interpretation.

## Two cases of current climate- and environmental movements

The first case, of *local groups and networks mobilising to preserve forests and parks,* stems from a Swedish middle-sized town. The municipality is planning to sell forest and park areas for building purposes, and to densify the already existing residential area of about 7.150 residents. The plan is to build approximately 2.300 new apartments, in between and around existing houses as well as in forest and park areas. This plan has been opposed to for years, more intensely since 2017, due to massive protests from local residents and interest groups. Several new local groups and networks were established, mobilising actively to prevent or alter the plans. The groups, based on local blocks, are also connected in a network. The resistance has become well-known in the city, being both extensive and relatively successful.

The majority of the most active key players in the groups and network were interviewed for this study. The key players consist of eight women and one man. Four of them are retired or partially retired, and five of them are middle-aged or younger – still working. As a group, they are well-educated, with professions in healthcare, education, research, official administration, politics, culture and business. Most of them have previous experiences of mobilisation, for example in social movements, networks, associations, unions and politics. However, as will be problematised later, they invest a lot of time and energy in the mobilisation, sometimes near the limit of what they can manage. It would be too simple to say that these persons are just privileged. The conditions for mobilisation are complex when it comes to such things as transparency, deadlines and workload.

The second case of *climate strikes and manifestations* started in 2018 with Greta Thunberg's 'School strike for climate' on Fridays, outside of the Swedish parliament[10]. Apart from the strikes, she has been an often-invited speaker at top summits. Several

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[10]  She is still striking every Friday. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Greta-Thunberg, 24.08.2020.

local and global networks/movements[11] have evolved rapidly, inspired by the school strikes. In 2019, millions of people, worldwide, participated in *Fridays for Future* (FF) and *Global Climate Strikes for Future* (GCSF)[12]. The participants included children, youth, adults and the elderly. Parallel to this, the global network *Extinction Rebellion* (ER) was established in 2018, with demonstrations against climate change[13]. Since then, ER has received a lot of attention for its dramatic demonstrations and occupations, sometimes leading to arrests. A common goal for the networks, is to influence world leaders and governments to start treating the climate crisis *as* a crisis and to act accordingly. On the network´s websites there is rich material, describing goals, strategies and participants' experiences etc.

## Mobilising to preserve local forests and parks – broad strategies, dealing with challenges

The mobilisation of the local groups and network (case 1) used both informal and formal methods (see Jonsson 2017). A central strategy is to evoke commitment with strong arguments and passion. Various informal events had been arranged, e.g. demonstrations, guided tours, exhibitions and social events. The key players who were interviewed expressed an explicit pedagogical aim, to concretise the effects of the plan. The formal statements and legal processing (appeal in court) are based on facts, knowledge, laws and regulations – and critical analysis of the municipal decision-making process (plans, decisions etc).

The municipality conducted a public audit of the plan. Statements from residents and citizens were summarised and discussed in a municipal report. This process, however, has been widely criticised for not considering the approximately 420 incoming statements[14] seriously enough. The key players express major challenges in mobilisation, which are caused by a lack of transparency and uncertainty (e.g. long periods of waiting, followed by short deadlines). Also, the amount of expert knowledge needed for the critical review of the plans is extensive. 'Liv' says: 'If it is *this* difficult for me, someone used to reading complicated texts, how difficult is it for people in general?'.

The key players describe strategies for making use of knowledge and experiences and for learning what is needed in relation to the municipal decision-making processes. There is extensive learning about a wide range of topics. For example, the learning

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[11] The concepts are used synonymously, as the networks are also social movements or part of social movement/s.

[12] https://fridaysforfuture.org/; https://globalclimatestrike.net/, 24.08.2020.

[13] https://rebellion.earth/, 25.05.2020.

[14] Apart from name-lists, debate articles etc.

processes are about the preservation and protection of species and nature, the municipal decision-making process and related laws/regulations. Additionally, the learning is about *handling* the challenging municipal decision-making process and mobilisation[15]. Strategies are about finding formal faults to be able to 'win', as well as activism to put pressure on politicians.

Mobilisation is described as intense, consuming a lot of time and energy. At the same time, dealing with the challenges seems to actually *strengthen* commitment. Both positive feelings (goals, achievements) and negative feelings (frustrations) function as 'fuel to the fire' ('Birgitta'). What is striking, are the effects that come from handling the challenges, contributing to a sense of being *able* to be persistent and learn. This contributes to an almost self-generating commitment, which operates as an embodied practical sense (see Bourdieu 1995; 1999).

However, this needs to be contrasted by the many residents who are not active in the mobilisation. It can be observed in the municipality's audit process, that fewer people are sending in statements etc. over time. They act as if there is no point in trying, given the signals of minor revisions and a lack of transparency. When it comes to activating one's citizen-democratic rights/responsibilities to have a say in common matters, these variations are of course problematic.

## Local activists being persistent, critical and learning

Here, I shall try to explain why and how the key players (case 1) are *able* to maintain their commitment, despite the described challenges. What motivates them, when it comes to both explicit concerns and cares, and when it comes to the 'effects' of being part of a community, are explored. The key players express strong feelings of sorrow, sadness, fear, worry, anger and frustration when presented with the municipality's plan. 'Liv' expresses it like this: 'But not here, in our forest!'. There is a common love for, and need of, the forest and park areas for recreation and a general care for the residential area. Also, there is a sense of moral obligation to make use of one's own knowledge and resources for the sake of others. These concerns and cares are intertwined and function as triggers for the commitment.

This mobilisation is not only about these concerns and cares. It is also about resistance and challenging the social order at hand (the municipality, exploitation). As mentioned, the frustration can function as a trigger, even more than the initial cause. 'Birgitta' talks about a 'holy wrath', in relation to the municipality's way of handling the process in relation to being 'run over' (lack of democracy). Part of the groups' and

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[15]  As well as being able to critically review the process and decisions, as well as being able to do actual inventories of protected species etc.

key players' strength seem to be the ability to handle this, to use the frustration as 'fuel to the fire' ('Birgitta').

The key players talk about being surprised or even astonished by the municipality's plan and process. According to 'Liv', they are not used to being met like this. They *expect* more. What a person expects, can be understood as part of their horizon of possibilities (Hodkinson & Sparkes 1997). To take part in the mobilisation is described in the interviews as 'natural' and 'necessary'. This kind of practical activist sense/habitus can be explained by the key players' previous experiences of mobilisation, which are generally extensive (see Crossley 2003). Furthermore, this can be an effect of a broader socialisation, from education and professional life. In relation to the past (and present), there seems to be a sense of one's own abilities – as for example 'always' being engaged or previously being able to organise and motivate others. There is a sense of one's abilities to learn new things: 'we had no idea, but we are learning' ('Lars', 'Helena').

The fact that the challenges are handled and how this is done, can be understood as part of a practical sense/habitus. Key players describe a 'readiness' to act fast and flexibly and to re-organise and adapt strategies to what is happening in the process. This seem to be a recognised strategy, as well as a practical sense of being *able* to persist (being critical, learning). This is cultivated in the stories told, for example about the achievements of the group, the skills and attitudes of participants etc.

There is a positive sense for the other key players as colleagues too. In the groups and network repeated stories about achievements, a practical sense/habitus for mobilisation (how to do, how to be) are reproduced. The members even seem to function as role models for each other. One person, in particular, has the status of an informal leader and is recognised for her knowledge, work ethics, structure and constructive attitude etc. This makes sense, in relation to traditional values in mobilisation where the *conveying* of concerns is ideally based on knowledge as well as true concerns (see Gougoulakis & Christie 2012; Haluza-Delay 2008; Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Crossley 2003). This could be related to the second case, where Greta Thunberg is a central inspiration for many activists. She has been described as a role model or even an icon, for new activists in particular (de Moor et al 2020). Sociologically, the recognition of Thunberg can be explained by her *uncompromising* style, in speeches etc. Challenging world leaders with passion and knowledge, based on true concern and commitment, is something that is recognised by others[16].

Local mobilisation is both collective and individual. It is for a cause and it takes part in a community. It makes personal sense, as a way of *dealing* with the crisis. 'Magda' says that 'getting involved is better than sitting at home grieving and feeling anxious'.

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[16]  https://www.isof.se/sprak/nyord/nyord/aktuellt-nyord-2019/2019-05-03-gretaeffekten.html, https://www.svd.se/statsvetare-om-greta-effekten-unik-rorelse, 28.04.2020.

There are positive effects of being part of a community: 'when you are down, there is always someone who is positive, who can lift you up' ('Magda'). The various implications of taking part are intertwined. It is 'functional' to take part, dealing with the crisis, as well as sharing and strengthening one's resources in the community (see Schmitt 2016).

## Informal strategies and civil disobedience

For *Fridays for Future* (FF), *Global Climate Strikes for Future* (GCSF) and *Extinction Rebellion* (ER), the main activities are demonstrations and communication on webpages etc.[17] Unlike the activists in the first case, no formal methods are used. The two cases also differ as to whether or not there is a clear counterpart or process at stake.

Greta Thunberg is a clear influence for the FF and GCSF, or even part of the same movement – based on the grassroot level and with an informal global coordination (see de Moor et al. 2020). The common goal is to put pressure on world leaders to start treating climate change *as* a crisis. For ER, the aim is also to disturb the economy, to 'shake' the current political system and to use civil disruption to raise awareness[18]. Also, ER uses more radical and dramatised forms, for example 'grief-trains', 'die-ins' and 'the-blood-of-our-children'[19]. Together, the three networks, as well as the two cases, can be understood as part of the same social practice. Mobilising for the climate and environment, which also includes issues of democracy, is a common focus. There is a relational dynamic between the ways of doing and being within the social practice (see Bourdieu 1995).

The webpages of FF, GCSF and ER are extensive – with adverts for upcoming events, documentation of previous events (statistics, maps, pictures, films) as well as reading materials etc. for inspiration[20]. The repetition of stories (about goals, achievements and role models) online, can be understood as part of a practice, to evoke and main-tain commitment as a key resource. In 2020, demonstrations are mainly online (e.g. 'shoe-strikes') or in small groups[21]. The webpages seem to be more extensive in 2020, which is understood as a way of handling the challenges of Covid-19, which prevents large gatherings of people.

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[17]  https://fridaysforfuture.org/, https://globalclimatestrike.net/training/; https://extinctionrebel-lion.uk/, 22.08.2020.

[18]  https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-truth/about-us/, 14.08.2020.

[19]  https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/07/extinction-rebellion-climate-change-deniers, 26.05.2020, 25.11.2019.

[20]  https://fridaysforfuture.org/, https://globalclimatestrike.net/training/; https://extinctionrebel-lion.uk/, 22.08.2020.

[21]  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CE5Gywq7r_o, 11.06.2020.

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Offering to be a social arena to handle the crisis (within the crisis) seems to be stressed even more in the events of Covid-19 (see Jonsson 2017; Schmitt 2016). For example, ER presents the pamphlet #AloneTogether, as part of a 'regenerative' strategy[22]. This is another example of the status of persistence within this social practice. There is a sense of being able to persist that is cultivated in the repeated stories and activities of mobilisation. Also, to always keeping up with the struggle is a way to show others, and oneself, that one is truly committed (to belong, be worthy).

## Climate strikers as part of something 'big'

On the homepages of the three networks (case 2), there are descriptions of climate strikers' motives to take part, often based on a concern and a wish to *do* something actively[23]. In both cases, there seems to be pride, or positive self-esteem, in relation to taking part – and of being persistent, critical and learning. This positive sense, of being *able*, is also related to the community, and the mutual resources of the group (e.g. the 'Greta-effect').

Additionally, there is a feeling of being part of something *big* which seems to contribute to the commitment. There is also the feeling of being part of a local *and* global movement, of being successful and strong, which is notable in the 'Greta-effect'. As an ER-activist said, about a demonstration where a couple of hundred participants were expected, but 1500 came: 'the energy was contagious!'[24]. In relation to ER, the sense of being part of something big is also related to being part of something 'dramatic' – due to both the dramatised actions and the risk of being arrested[25]. This adds to the aspect of being *courageous*, as part of the practical sense of the right ways to act and be an activist.

The risk of being arrested is addressed on the webpage of ER, in, for example, stories about 'Humans of XR'[26]. Personal stories contribute to the credibility, as they show that the activist is truly concerned. This seems to be the case with, for instance, Greta Thunberg telling her personal story of true concern, in, for example, her first book (Ernman et al. 2018). On the homepages of FF, GCSF and ER, there is an increased use of personal stories (when comparing 2018-2020)[27]. This is understood as central to the

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[22] https://rebellion.earth/2020/03/23/alonetogether-regenerative-rebellion-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/, 16.06.2020.

[23] https://fridaysforfuture.org/, https://globalclimatestrike.net/training/; https://extinctionrebellion.uk/, 22.08.2020.

[24] https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us/, 16.06.2020.

[25] Due to occupations, civil disobedience.

[26] https://extinctionrebellion.uk/?s=humans+of+xr; https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us/, 22.08.2020.

[27] https://fridaysforfuture.org/what-we-do/activist-speeches/, https://globalclimatestrike.net/stories/, 4.06.2020.

practice, as a signal of being legitimate, inclusive and open. For example, ER presents heterogeneous groups of participants, such as grandparents, ex-careerists, parents and youth. ER also seems to use personal stories as a response to arrests[28]. This is another example of the practical sense of dealing with the challenges that are so central in this social practice.

## Discussion

This article is about mobilisation in climate and environmental movements as understood as a social practice. The empirical study consists of two cases, with common causes – climate, environment and democracy. Strategies are traditional, using facts and knowledge to make strong arguments, as well as using pedagogical and dramatised methods to evoke commitment (see Gougoulakis & Christie 2012; Haluza-Delay 2008; Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Crossley 2003). Additionally, the strategies are common for new social movements, building fast, flexible and productive networks – based on the grassroots level and coordinated by local/global networks (see Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Anshelm et al. 2018; Jonsson 2017).

The research questions are about why people take part and how this makes sense to them, in relation to this specific context. This study contributes to an understanding of this, at several levels. Filling knowledge gaps at the cross-section of civil society, social movements and Bourdieu's theory of social practices (1995, 1990). What motivates activists to take part in mobilisation are their (explicit) concerns and cares. Frustrations might also trigger commitment to a cause, acting as 'fuel to the fire'. Taking part is a way to *handle* the crisis in a way that makes personal sense. This is considered as 'right' or 'natural' for the activists, it is within their horizon of possibilities (see Hodkinson & Sparkes 1997). There is also a sense of moral obligation, for the future and others – and in relation to the efforts made by the co-activists and role models as, for example, Greta Thunberg.

However, for *other* people taking part might seem 'wrong' or 'pointless'. Conveying one's concerns in public and challenging the order of things might seem unheard of (see Muel-Dreyfus 1985). In relation to the local case, there are signs of a decreased interest in mobilising to preserve forests and parks. While the groups and network are still active, the activities of *un-organised* residents, in, for example, statements and debate articles, have decreased. There is a sense that it is sad and 'pointless' to try, thinking that the municipality has already made up its mind (given the signals of lack of impact).

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[28]  In 2018-2019 this was not so present. https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us/, 4.06.2020.

This study contributes with perspectives on why some people are very active in civil society, while some are not active at all (see Svedberg & von Essen 2016). The socialisation that takes part, from a lifelong and lifewide perspective, contributes to a sense of one's possibilities (see Callewaert 2014). It is a problem for democracy and society that participation is socially selected, as participation adds vital resources e.g. social and organisational capital to the often already privileged (see Harding 2012; Svedberg & von Essen 2016; Broady 1998).

The problem gets even more complex, if a broad definition of participation is used, with implications that are both radical, citizen-democratic and related to a personal sense of meaning (see von Essen & Sundgren 2012). As one of the local activists stressed, having a say in the municipal decision-process is a matter of simply using one's citizen-democratic rights/responsibilities to have a say in common matters. This is interesting, as activism is often seen as being radical, perhaps illegitimate. While it might just as well be reclaimed as something 'natural' to do – as citizens.

This study contributes with perspectives on the challenges in mobilisation and in having a say in common matters. It is a problem, if the citizens' commitment is being discouraged by institutional arrangements etc. (see Jonsson 2017). A related issue is the potential over-use of a few activists' efforts (c.f. Crossley 2003). Among local activists, there are expressions about being on the verge of what they can manage. There is a call for more people getting involved and having a say in common matters – not only as a symbolic support (for example, to follow, like, sympathize).

This study shows that getting involved can be a way of handling a crisis, as well as a source of learning and community (see Schmitt 2016; Jonsson 2017). This contributes to a positive sense of one's abilities, as well as a know-how when it comes to 'getting things done'. Within climate and environmental movements there are traditions of being fast, flexible and of learning – as well as of inclusivity (see Ollis & Hamel-Green 2015; Anshelm et al. 2018). To gather around a common cause of personal relevance, can be the starting point for creating strong co-operation – where heterogeneity is strategically used as a resource (see Anshelm et al. 2018). Challenges are handled, as self-evident and with the approach that one is never to give up. These ideals and norms function as central beliefs (illusio) and as taken-for-granted rules (doxa) (Bourdieu 1990; 1995).

The participants, who are *able* to take part, who choose to take part, have some type of access, key or 'way in', for example, by being invited in by friends and family (de Moor et al. 2020). Apart from that, the reasons for taking part can be found on several levels. The first are previous experiences, education and professional life, which enable participation (as a way in, a possibility). This also contributes to a sense of being able, critical and of learning. When being inside, the commitment seems to increase. This

study contributes with perspectives on the socialisation that takes place on a practical level (see Callewaert 2014; Bourdieu 1999). This means that what is done and said along with how it is done and said and the traditions, norms and values that are embedded in this have a *socialising* effect.

The stories told about the achievements, challenges overcome, resources used, constructive attitudes and role models, have a socialising effect. Also, the activities of the practice have a sosialising effect (see Horton 2003). For example, in the conveying of concerns in public. In these stories and activities, the central beliefs of the social practice, of how this 'game' should be played, is reproduced[29]. Therefore, the stories told and activities conducted, are also understood as ritualised practices (see Nørholm 2008). This means that they are understood in relation to their symbolic and social significance (see Callewaert 2014; Nørholm 2008). This might be called an identity or a know-how (see Haluza-Delay 2008). Following Bourdieu, however, this is understood as a practical sense – working at a quasi-embodied[30] level – as a way of doing, being and believing. Being persistent, critical, learning, uncompromising, challenging and courageous are examples of values, norms and self-esteems that are cultivated.

A part of being persistent is finding ways to maintain the commitment as a vital resource (Haluza-DeLay 2008). In the two cases, there are examples of an almost self-generating commitment, of never giving up and always handling the challenges. Only time can tell if and for how long this can last. The local activists are challenged by the very lengthy municipal decision-making process, stretching over many years. The climate strikers are very much challenged by the pandemic COVID-19, preventing huge gatherings of people as well as focus being elsewhere.

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[29] Formed, strengthened, maintained.
[30] The concept points at the complexity of the practical sense as a bodily – but also emotional/cognitive etc, and as being both unaware – but also aware (see Bourdieu 1999).

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