Navigating the politics of transformative change towards sustainability: A case study of Extinction Rebellion’s climate crisis framing

Hannes Eggert
Abstract

Research on transformations has recognized that trajectories towards sustainability are negotiated and contested through framings and narratives. There is, however, still a greater need to explore the role of social movements and their ability to characterize a problem, propose solutions and motivate the public to become engaged. This holds particularly true for the extensive field of climate politics in which different climate change framings compete.

In recent years, a new wave of climate activism has emerged amidst an increased sense of urgency and severity of the climate crisis. One of the driving forces, Extinction Rebellion (XR), has managed to engage large numbers of people while making radical demands to the government. However, critical voices have challenged XR’s use of politically “neutral” language which communicates climate change in moral rather than political terms for displacing power and conflict. Drawing on framing theory and post-foundational political theory, I examine how XR UK frames the climate crisis in relation to political change, to better understand how the movement navigates between consensus and antagonism in the context of a depoliticization of climate change discourses. The analysis is based on a collection of semi-structured interviews with XR UK activists as well as key movement documents.

The analysis and subsequent discussion reveal a dynamic and contentious discursive field, with key findings including the identification of three collective action frames: (1) Climate Breakdown, (2) Web of Life and (3) Global Justice. These are linked together by the Global Climate Emergency master frame. The degree to which the frames are (de-)politicized varies and reflects different interpretations of transformation towards sustainability.

keywords: Extinction Rebellion, social movements, framing, climate change, (de-)politicization, transformation
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1. Introduction

“We hold the following to be true: This is our darkest hour. Humanity finds itself embroiled in an event unprecedented in its history, one which, unless immediately addressed, will catapult us further into the destruction of all we hold dear: this nation, its peoples, our ecosystems and the future of generations to come.” (Extinction Rebellion 2019: 1)

In recent years, there has been a change of tone in the public discourses around the consequences of climate change. Scientific findings that spell out the devastating effects with increasing clarity are reflected and amplified in the climate movement\(^1\) - increasingly understanding climate change as an existential threat to human civilization. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a special report interpreted by many as an alarming warning of disastrous climate break-down, if there was a failure to implement decisive action within 12 years and limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels (IPCC 2018; Booth 2019). The same year, Steffen \textit{et al.} (2018) outlined the risk of planet earth moving on a trajectory towards “hothouse earth” conditions and Jem Bendell (2018) introduced his framework for “deep adaptation”, warning of imminent societal collapse.

These increasingly dire predictions have spurred transformations to become an increasingly prominent research theme and subject in policy debates about possible responses to climate change (O’Brien 2017). Broadly defined as “physical and/or qualitative changes in form, structure or meaning-making” (O’Brien 2012, p. 670), transformation has been treated as a variant of adaptation which is better suited to address the underlying drivers of climate change-related risks and vulnerabilities (O’Brien 2017; Pelling \textit{et al.} 2015). The negotiation and exploration of different pathways of transformative change is generally understood to be a contested process which involves questions of power and politics, and the consideration of meaning-making processes – and thus the inclusion of social movements (O’Brien 2012; Pelling \textit{et al.} 2015; Stirling 2014). However, the degree to which attention has been directed at the role and potential of social movements and their framing processes in transformations, varies across different research communities (Patterson \textit{et al.} 2017).

\(^1\) In accordance with Dietz and Garrelts (2013), the term ‘climate movement’ will be used in this thesis as an umbrella term comprising a variety of different collective and individual civil society actors such as NGOs, local initiatives, or activist networks. They are loosely connected through their activities in climate politics and typically become most visible during international climate conferences and negotiations.
The heightened sense of climate change as an emergency has been accompanied by a new wave of grassroots climate activism, most notably, in Europe, Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Fridays for Future (FFF). Calling for the immediate translation of scientific findings into effective climate change policy, both movements have managed to inspire large-scale mobilizations and receive wide-spread public attention (Saunders, Doherty and Hayes 2020). Less than a year after XR in the UK famously declared rebellion against the UK government and within two weeks of their first mass action of non-violent civil disobedience, the UK parliament declared a national climate emergency.

In the face of the global climate emergency, XR has developed a messaging that calls for radical transformative changes to be firmly based in popular support. XR has been praised by many in the wider climate movement for their radical demands to governments, their ability to engage large numbers of people, many of whom are entirely new to climate activism, and for strengthening climate change on the public and political agenda (de Moor et al. 2020; Gunningham 2019; Kinniburgh 2020).

Nevertheless, XR’s crisis rhetoric and apocalyptic climate change imaginaries have also faced scrutiny. It has been argued that mobilizing on moral rather than on political grounds, pushing for a “universalist” response, risks turning a blind eye to the structural inequalities and vulnerabilities connected to global climate change, not engaging sufficiently with questions of justice and inequality (Doherty, De Moor and Hayes 2018; Cretney and Nissen 2019; Hulme 2019; Kinniburgh 2020; The Wretched of the Earth 2019). These criticisms have been heard and addressed by XR UK to some degree (Slaven and Heydon 2020), but the overall quandary remains and it reflects a general tension in (climate) politics. Social movements like XR face tensions trying mobilize a broad coalition across society trying to preserve their radical political ambitions and address differential power and responsibilities between different social groups (de Moor, Catney and Doherty 2019; Schlosberg and Craven 2019).

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2 Since its formation in the UK in 2018, XR has spread to over 70 countries with well over 1000 groups on local, regional, and national levels (Extinction Rebellion Global n.d.)

3 As of April 2021, there have been at least 15 declarations of climate emergency on national level and over 1,900 by jurisdictions and local governments that cover 826 million citizens (Climate Emergency Declaration n.d.)

4 In May of 2019, The Wretched of the Earth - a climate justice grassroots collective for of Indigenous, black, brown and diaspora groups and individuals published an open letter to XR welcoming its ability to shift public consciousness of the climate crisis and help build a collective will for action (The Wretched of the Earth 2019). At the same time, the open letter expresses the need for XR to explicitly politicize the exclusionary and colonialist power dynamics that caused the crisis and recognize the struggles of frontline communities in the Global South (The Wretched of the Earth 2019).
Multiple meanings and representations exist around climate change. While “traditional climate denialism” has meant political actors questioning or outright rejecting the scientific quasi-consensus on anthropogenic climate change, thereby drawing a clear line between two sides of an (uneven) “debate”, over the years, a new form climate denialism has formed (Daub et al. 2021, p. 236). In this new form, denial does not relate to the basic properties of the scientific problem, but rather to the nature and extent of the response needed. Post-foundational political scholars argue that dominant discourses in international climate politics - such as ecological modernization and green growth or green economy - have led to a depoliticization of climate change, essentially implying compatibility with the current socio-political systems and thereby masking conflict and true confrontation of different worldviews (Swyngedouw 2007; Methmann, Rothe and Stephan 2013; Blühdorn 2014). It forecloses a socio-political analysis through the lens of power, thus limiting the imaginations of different trajectories of transformative change. Instead, top-down techno-managerial approaches compatible with the global neo-liberal economy are promoted. This disavows the contentious nature of climate change politics - it has become ‘post-political’.

However, the ‘post-political’ diagnosis runs parallel to the rise of the climate justice discourse and framework, which has acted as a politicizing force within the broader climate movement (Dietz and Garrelts 2013). The notion of climate justice has, according to della Porta and Parks (2014), transformed the wider climate movement in reframing moderate conceptualizations of climate change into an issue of justice and rights, calling for radical transformations of the economic and political systems. Grassroots movements and campaigns, particularly in the Global South, have been at the forefront of shaping climate justice demands and principles in broad coalitions with NGOs since the 1990s, emphasizing the unequal climate change-related impacts and vulnerabilities of (local) communities (Schlosberg and Collins 2014).

In short, XR is part of a larger discursive arena of climate politics in which depoliticized discourses mainly configured in international institutions and policy forums, are challenged by some civil society actors. Within this contentious field, XR is pushing for radical transformative changes given the urgency to act in the face of the existential threat to humanity. At the same time, XR UK negotiates their ideas and ambitions for radical change in a strategic manner to

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5 The notion of the ‘post-political’ condition is often introduced with a particular apparent paradox in climate politics: despite the stark increase of weight and breadth of climate change in public discourses and on the international policy agenda over recent decades - resting firmly on overwhelming scientific consensus regarding key drivers and effects - international policy efforts on climate change have remained largely ineffective at reducing global GHG emissions (Methmann 2013; Swyngedouw 2010; Pepermans and Maesele 2014, 2016).
allow for broad movement mobilization and support. Having emerged as one of the most powerful voices in UK climate politics within a short time, XR does not only have an impact in society through its actions in the streets, but also is able to shape climate discourses through its representations of climate change and the politics of change envisioned. These different articulations impact how solutions, strategies and visions for the future are brought about.

1.1 Thesis aims and research questions

The objective of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of how climate change as a multi-issue problem - given the scale, complexity, pervasiveness, and inherent scientific uncertainty (WBGU 2011; Bushell et al. 2017) – can be represented and communicated in ways that reflect the necessity of radical transformative change and speak to a broad portion of society. How do XR UK’s representations of climate change relate to the depoliticized discursive field of climate politics? Specifically, I want to better understand how the movement navigates between different representations of climate change and the ideas of political change which are thereby implied or promoted. To that end, this thesis aims to address the following main research question:

How does Extinction Rebellion UK frame climate change in relation to political change?

I will draw on a post-foundational understanding of political change, which treat antagonisms and conflict as instrumental in driving political change (Mouffe 2005). De Moor (2020) distinguishes between three dimensions in which (de-)politicization in environmental activism has been researched: radical political ideas, antagonistic theories of social change, and contentious action to challenge power. In this thesis, I focus on the first two, discursive dimensions, since depoliticization happens at the level of discursive representation of reality (Kenis 2019). The former dimension, radical political ideas, refers to the degree to which the movement offers a structural critique to the problem at hand. On this point, I follow

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6 A report published by Onalytica identified XR as the most influential global organization during the COP25 in 2019 when it came to climate change education and awareness (Jackson 2019).

7 In general, I follow Rogers' (1974, p. 1428) definition of power as the “ability, which derives from the requisite resources, to influence”. The power relations concealed through depoliticization can be different in nature. However, the discursive process of depoliticization can itself be so considered an expression of ideational power, the “power over ideas” (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016, p. 326).
Kakenmaster's (2019) translation who distinguishes between singular and multiple conceptions of climate change\(^8\). The latter dimension, antagonistic theories of social change, refers to whether the driver for social/political change is consensus or antagonism. These two dimensions correspond to two of the three core functions which social movement frames perform in social movement studies, diagnosis, prognosis and motivation (Benford and Snow 2000). I will further elaborate on these dimensions in chapter 2.2.

Based on the notion of the 'post-political’ condition, I will split the idea of political change into whether the framings by XR treat climate change as a singular or multiple issue and whether change is advocated for in consensual or antagonistic terms. Thus, the main research question will be broken up into three sub-questions:

\[\begin{align*}
a) & \text{ Which frame(s) of climate change exist(s) within Extinction Rebellion?} \\
b) & \text{ In the frame(s), is climate change conceptualized climate change as a singular or as a multiple problem?} \\
c) & \text{ In the frame(s), is political change to address climate change conceived of in consensual or antagonistic?} \\
\end{align*}\]

To answer these questions, I will conduct a frame analysis and map out different representations of climate change that exist within Extinction Rebellion and analyze their contents through the lens of (de-)politicization. My analysis assumes that climate change framings are constructed in interactive discursive processes which (1) take place between the collective of activists which together form Extinction Rebellion and the beliefs, values, and ideologies of its members (2) are shaped by existing frames and discourses around climate change and (3) exhibit a certain degree of strategic rationality with the aim to foster mobilization. Despite this context of collective action, the questions raised are pertinent to wider questions around the politics of transformations, because I assume that difference in climate change framings and their relation to political change may be based on different interpretations of sustainability transformation.

A further objective of this thesis is to explore links between transformations research, framing theory in social movement studies and post-foundational political theory. This comes in

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\(^8\) I am aware that representing the multiplicity of climate change does not necessarily lead to a structural critique that brings conflict and power relations to the fore. At the same time, representing climate change as a singular problem does not necessarily show lack of critique. However, as I will explain in chapter 2.2., a singular conception of climate change often is based on the idea of a singular notion of ‘nature’ which is expressed in the threat of an all-encompassing climate apocalypse.
response to urges within the social-ecological systems (SES) research community to draw upon social movement studies in transformation research to better include issues of power and politics (e.g. Olsson, Galaz and Boonstra 2014). How could SES research be enriched by focusing more on the role of social movements as critical change agents in transformations? What can transformation scholars learn from the tensions and synergies of climate change framings for their own work?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

In the Theoretical Framework, I bring together the ‘post-political’ perspective (2.2.) with framing theory from social movement studies (2.3) and locate my theoretical approach within transformation towards sustainability (2.1). My decision to place the theoretical framework in front of the literature is based on the theoretical orientation of my study. Subsequently, I provide a brief Review in which I outline the research field of climate change discourses (3.1), specifically in relation to (de-) politicization (3.2), the emergence of the Climate Justice master frame (3.3.) as well as show how environmental social movements navigate in/against the ‘post-political’ condition. This leads me to the description of my Case Study, Extinction Rebellion UK (4.1 and 4.2). Following a detailed description of my Methods, including data collection (5.1), analysis (5.2) and limitations (5.3), I turn to the Findings of my frame analysis. Here, I first provide a summary (6.1) and then present a detailed version (6.1.1-6.1.3). This is followed by a Discussion in which I return to my research questions and put my findings into context. Finally, I summarize the most important findings in the Conclusion.

Throughout the thesis, I use abbreviations for movement documents which do not specify authorship for the sake of a good reading flow, particularly in the Findings section. Additionally, the three demands are abbreviated as d1-d3 and the ten principles and values as p1-p10. A list of all abbreviations used can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E.
2. Theoretical Framework

I begin by sketching out different strands of the literature on transformations towards sustainability. I look at how they relate to social movements, framing and contestation and, finally, I situate my study within the Pathways to Sustainability approach. After that, I introduce parts of Few et al.’s (2017) typological framework on transformations. Following that, the ‘post-political’ condition is introduced as a theoretical perspective which can help to critically examine the discursive dynamics and the tension between consensus and antagonism in the field of climate politics. I will outline the origins of the ‘post-political’ analysis in political theory and elaborate on its manifestation in climate politics. Afterwards, I introduce the framing perspective in depth as part of social movement studies to show how social movements discursively interact in the political arena. Finally, I weave the theoretical strands together into a coherent theoretical framework.

2.1 Transformational change, social movements and conflict

Different research communities have offered distinctive conceptual approaches for studying transformation processes towards sustainability based on their diverging ontological commitments and epistemological strategies (Patterson et al. 2017; Shah et al. 2018). Taking a closer look, Patterson et al. (2017) distinguishes between four perspectives, namely social-ecological systems (SES) research, socio-technical transitions, sustainability pathways and transformative adaptation. Amongst the former three, there has been a substantial amount of dialogue and cross-pollination across the synergies and divergences (e.g. Smith and Stirling, 2008; Geels, 2010; Leach, Raworth and Rockström, 2013; Olsson, Galaz and Boonstra, 2014; West et al., 2014). Generally speaking, SES research and socio-technical transitions share similar conceptualizations of the system as being complex, adaptive, multi-level and both place importance in processes of learning and experimentation as well as the institutional context (Smith and Stirling 2008). In both perspectives, trajectories for transformations emerge from the interplay of activity on different levels of system governance facilitated by system

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9 I decided to exclude the transformative adaptation approach, because (1) the literature suggests that most interaction has happened between the other three and (2) it shares similar assumptions with sustainability pathways approach.
entrepreneurs. While the socio-technical systems perspective focuses on the structures and processes, in SES transformations, the focus lies on the functionality of the system, e.g., the normative goal of achieving system-level resilience. This is based on a systems ontology which draws rather firm boundaries around the social, ecological, and technical systems which are perceived as close to ‘objective’ (West et al. 2014). In contrast, the boundary-setting in the Pathways to Sustainability approach is less clear and emphasis is placed on how there are multiple pathways towards sustainability which are constructed in contestation and negotiation through narratives and framings (Leach et al. 2007b; Stirling, 2014; Scoones, Newell and Leach, 2015). In other words, a fundamental difference lies in the boundary-setting of the system. In SES research, transformations involve a profound shift in the entities and their relationships including the feedback mechanisms within a clear (place-based) system boundary. In the pathways approach, the setting of the system boundaries as such, the system framing as well as a multitude of possible pathways emerge from political and discursive struggles (Stirling 2014; West et al. 2014). Two questions pertinent to this contestability and ambiguity of transformations are “whose system framings count, and whose sustainability gets prioritised?” (Smith and Stirling 2008, p.2).

With these differences in mind, SES transformations, socio-technical systems and sustainability pathways give different weight to the role of social movements and their discursive power of framing.

Although SES scholarship on social-ecological transformations has recognized the importance of collective action by social movements, it has remained largely unexplored – or stayed at a local, place-based level of transformations in ecosystem management (Olsson, Folke and Hahn 2004; Ernstson, Sörlin and Elmqvist 2008). At the same time, there is a general awareness in the SES research community that issues of power and contestation and - in a wider sense the underpinning social dynamics - have been underrepresented in the study of transformations (Moore et al. 2014; Olsson, Galaz and Boonstra 2014). Common critiques against the SES perspective have been related to the treatment of culture, power, and social differentiation (Fabinyi et al. 2014; Malm and Hornborg, 2014) – to the point that SES research risks “producing managerial governance recommendations and foregrounding material over social drivers of change” (Gillard et al. 2016, p. 251).
Both Moore et al. (2014) and Olsson, Galaz and Boonstra (2014) suggest that, among other research fields, social movement studies could help connect issues of power and politics to the study of social-ecological transformations. This could help address questions such as

“Can transformations be carried out in a deliberative, participatory manner that is both ethical and sustainable? How can power, politics, and interests present barriers, or pathways, to transformation?” (Olsson, Galaz and Boonstra 2014, p. 5)

In their framework for studying SES transformations across disciplinary perspectives, Moore et al. (2014) attribute great potential to the role of social movements during the initial two subprocesses of SES transformations labelled ‘triggers or pre-transformation’ and ‘preparing for change’. Accordingly, it is understood that social movements, through acts of resistance and protest, can help disrupt the dominant status quo which has locked the system onto a trajectory of unsustainability and improve the conditions for change by making opportunities for change visible, enhancing the system’s ‘transformability’10. Following that, social movements may be engaged in ‘sense making’, referring to the interpretation of the current state of the system including the assessment of what needs to change (Moore et al. 2014). They may envision alternative pathways of the future and through different strategies, mobilize supporters and gather momentum. These roles that social movements can take up in social-ecological transformations loosely correspond to the three core discursive functions ascribed to ‘collective action frames’ in social movement research: diagnostic, motivational and prognostic (Moore et al. 2014; Snow & Benford 2000). In this way, social movements may promote specific climate change frames that allow certain trajectories of change and foreclose others.

In the sustainability pathways perspective, social movements are given importance for their ability to frame problems and give a platform to otherwise excluded voices which point towards multiple trajectories for change (Leach et al. 2007b; Stirling 2014). Stirling (2014, p. 22) underlines the importance of social movement contention maintaining that

“just as it was arguably only in agonistic contention by social movements that high-level recognition of environmental and social justice imperatives ever came about, so too is this the best hope for sustaining them towards their promised aims.”

The sustainability pathways perspective runs diametral to the functionalist perspective prevalent in SES research in which change happens through co-operation, collaboration and

10 ‘Transformability’ has been defined by Walker et al. (2004) as “the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social (including political) conditions make the existing system untenable”.
consensus-building (Smith and Stirling 2008; Geels 2010). By choosing to position my study within the sustainability pathways perspective, I seek to demonstrate the importance of conflict and antagonism as a driving force for radical transformative change and particularly the role that social movements can take in transformations. Ultimately, I hope this study reveals starting points with SES transformations research and efforts therein aiming at a stronger integration of issues of power and conflict.

To relate my findings, i.e. the map of different climate change framings, to sustainability transformations and reveal different interpretations of transformation in XR UK, I will draw on Few et al.’s (2017) typological framework of transformations. It is based on a review of transformations literature and will allow me to explore different framings regarding the underlying (1) mechanisms of change and (2) the target outcomes.

In the former, Few et al. (2017, p. 4) distinguish between

- innovation (= “completely novel activity or application of an activity in a new location”),
- expansion (= “application of an existing activity at a much greater scale or much greater intensity”),
- re-organization (= ”major change in the governance structures that frame adaptation”) and
- re-orientation (= ”reconfiguration of social values and social relations in adaptation”).

In the latter, Few et al. (2017, p. 5) differentiate between

- instrumental (= “addressing climate risk as an environmental problem”),
- progressive (= “targets reduction of differential social vulnerability”) and
- radical (= “tackles underlying causes of social vulnerability to climate risks”) target outcomes.

2.2 The ‘post-political’ condition

Over recent decades, post-foundational\textsuperscript{11} political theorists have examined recent developments of the ‘political’ in modern liberal democracies, the functions and effects of consensus and

\textsuperscript{11} Post-foundationalism, as described by Marchart (2007), is a post-structuralist school of thought which interrogates “the metaphysical figures of foundation – such as totality, universality, essence, and ground”. Applied to climate change, this perspective is not anti-materialist in the sense that it conceals the biophysical and material reality of the world around us, e.g., the melting of glaciers or changes in weather patterns. It does, however, imply that our perception and understanding of the world and our actions that follow from that are embedded in discourse and depend on their discursive representation (Methmann et al. 2013)
antagonisms in politics as well as the implications for equitable political change (e.g. Rancière, Panagia and Bowlby 2001; Mouffe 2005). Essentially, they have developed a conceptual framework on what they argue to be a ‘post-democratic’ and, in a wider sense, ‘post-political’ condition in dominant political discourses: A representation of society in consensual or technocratic terms which makes conflict, division and power relations invisible (Kenis and Lievens 2014).

For the sake of analytical clarity, both Chantal Mouffe and Jacques Rancière differentiate between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’\(^\text{12}\). ‘Politics’ is centered around the state which organizes and administers social processes (e.g., government or voting). In other words, it refers to the institutional and administrative sphere – a ‘conventional’ take on politics. ‘The political’ is broader in scope and describes both a symbolic and discursive movement in which contestation and conflict are recognized and given space to the effect that power and conflict are made visible (Mouffe 2005). In processes of depoliticization, this latter ‘political’ dimension is foreclosed and reduced to ‘politics’, the mere social administration based on consensus and inclusion. This does not necessarily mean that debates are silenced or that public participation is being hindered. On the contrary, they may even expand; however, with little to no actual distribution of decision-making power and always “in a non-committal way and as a non-conflict” (Swyngedouw 2009, p. 609). Rooted in post-foundationalism, Mouffe and Rancière stress the indeterminacy and contingency of societies’ social order (Marchart 2007; Kenis 2019). From this perspective, every social relation is the product of power which produces exclusions that inevitably lead to forms of antagonistic we/they relations, the masking of which is considered an act of depoliticization (Kenis and Lievens 2014). Crucially, Mouffe (2005) suggests that the inevitability of antagonistic we/they relations does not mean an impossibility of social change through pluralist democratic politics. Rather, she envisions relations in which the conflicting parties – despite their differing positions - recognize their respective positions’ legitimacy to the effect that they are not treated as ‘enemies’, but as ‘adversaries’. This common ground can be achieved when both parties consider themselves part of the same democratic playing field, i.e., they are subject to the same regulations and conditions. Thus, Mouffe (2005) considers it a task of a pluralist democratic system to allow for antagonisms to transform into agonisms.

\(^\text{12}\) Mouffe (2005) uses the terms “the political” and “politics” for her differentiation, whereas Rancière (2001) speaks of “politics” and “police”, nevertheless referring essentially to the same distinction.
2.2.1 The ‘post-political’ condition in environmental/climate politics

In Western liberal democracies, environmental concerns were introduced to the political arena in the 1970’s and early 1980’s by social movements and civil society groups calling for radical transformations of the social and political order, the economic model and putting in questions wider society-nature relations. While this was marked by ideological divisions and a clash of radical ideas, Blühdorn (2014, p. 148), among others (e.g. Jamison 2001; Kenis and Lievens 2014), observes that “these conflicts have been largely pacified and environmental concerns have been fully institutionalised and integrated into the policy process”.

The ‘post-political’ condition in climate politics describes how the dominant discourses have become depoliticized by representing 1) the causes and effects of climate change as singular rather than multiple and 2) the political process of finding solutions in consensus-seeking rather than in antagonistic terms (Swyngedouw 2007, 2010; Goeminne 2010, 2012). A great number of scholars have elaborated on the often-interlinked dynamics and mechanisms which, they argue, dislocate conflict and power relations from climate change discourses in favor of consensual representations: scientization, moralization, economization, technologization and the use of apocalyptic imaginaries. To be clear, from a ‘post-political’ perspective, neither does the problem lie in discourses which offer a moral perspective on climate change or that consider technological innovations to be part of an effective policy response. Nor is it questioned that from a phase of contentious debate should eventually emerge a democratically formed agreement for action. Rather, it is problematic when climate change is represented in a manner which hides conflict and forecloses alternative socio-ecological imaginaries. Let me elaborate on this by exploring why environmental discourses are susceptible to depoliticization.

Kenis and Lievens (2014) argue that the depoliticization of environmental concerns is not only the result of ongoing and unavoidable modernization processes, but also the product of an active appropriation and translation of environmental concerns by those with economic or political power to manifest the perceived ‘inevitability’ of the neo-liberal market economy (Goeminne 2012; Swyngedouw 2010), or as Carvalho, van Wessel and Maeseele (2017, p. 128) call it, the “naturalization of the capitalist system”.

Although depoliticization processes have been studied in different areas of society (see Swyngedouw and Wilson 2014), there are several reasons why environmental discourses – especially in climate politics - have become particularly susceptible (Kenis & Lievens 2014, 2015). Firstly, the underlying conceptualization of ‘nature’ in modern Western history –
separate from ‘society’ – lends itself to ‘post-political’ interpretations, because it treats environmental change as separate from social change (Cote and Nightingale 2012). Nature then becomes a ‘symbolic tapestry, a montage, of meaning’ that can be invoked with value and meaning which Swyngedouw (2011, p. 257) considers to be a political gesture – the disavowal or masking of which signifies depoliticization.

Secondly, Swyngedouw (2007, 2010) and others have argued that – unlike other historical social movements related to women’s or labor rights which have been framed as emancipatory struggles – environmental social movements often lack a clearly identifiable subject of change. Given the complex interconnections of spatially and temporally diffused social-ecological problems with a variety of actors entangled across different scale, it is not always clear who is the subject that fights the environmental struggle or is to be held responsible. This can develop into a dynamic of shifting focus away from the uneven distribution of responsibilities and environmental burdens, and towards a consensual notion of ‘we are all in this together’ and a universal responsibility held by humankind (Kenis & Lievens 2014; Swyngedouw 2011). Swyngedouw (2010) and Russell (2012) argue that the consensual representation of climate change is sustained by apocalyptic environmental imaginaries as a universal existential threat to humankind. The invocation of fear and danger, according to Swyngedouw (2010), are instrumental in a depoliticized environmental discourse since these are powerful tools to disavow or displace social conflict and antagonism. There simply is “no space, time, or need for politics” MacGregor (2014, p. 620). Following from the existential threat that climate change poses to the universal human subject, the rationale to prevent ‘dangerous climate change’ is primarily formulated as a moral imperative which has been echoed throughout media and political circles (Russell 2012). Relating to Mouffe (2005), he argues that the adversarial dimension of the political has not necessarily disappeared, but that it has been transferred to a moral register of ‘right vs. wrong’ or ‘good vs. evil’.

Thirdly, besides lacking a clearly identifiable human subject of environmental change, Kenis & Lievens (2014) argue that environmental problems are also vulnerable to depoliticized representations because they tend to lack a specific object for environmental change. As virtually all social processes are to some extent interwoven with the ‘natural’ world, both dependent on it and affecting it, there is a risk of masking the complexity of social drivers through reductionist narratives that focus entirely on CO2 emissions, something Swyngedouw (2010) calls the ‘fetishization of CO2’. Examples of such dynamics, according to Carvalho, van Wessel and Maeseele (2017) could be found in UNFCCC agreements and, coupled with
‘economization’, in cost-benefit analyses as proposed in the 2006 Stern review. On the one hand, there is then a reduction of the myriad of climate change processes to greenhouse gas emissions. Hulme (2019) is concerned that the policy focus on climate as an emergency could potentially crowd out other global crises from the international policy agenda, such as microbial resistance or soil health. On a practical level, Wapner (2011) argues, that the “bandwaging” behind climate change pushes civil society actors to feel the need to frame their issue of concern through the lens of climate change in order to gain funding and recognition. After all, as Kenis & Lievens (2014, p. 539) argue, “environmental problems only exist as political problems to the extent that there are representations of them in the public sphere”. Evaluating and acting upon this universal threat of climate change primarily in terms of a dangerous level of CO2 concentration in the atmosphere, according to Goeminne (2010) and Russell (2012), lends itself to a scientization in the dominant climate change discourses. Underlying is the notion that climate science can be translated directly into policy without requiring the filtering and through a democratic political process (Bowman 2010). Climate change thereby becomes a scientific or technical issue which requires techno-managerial solutions. Policymaking and the spaces for discussion and debate for solutions and different pathways are removed from the people to expert-driven rational decision-making. Russell (2012) argues for the importance to go beyond a positivist perspective of climate science capable of extracting an ‘objective truth’ and recognize that scientific knowledge is generated not in a vacuum. Rather more, “scientific facts are necessarily imbued with meaning, which is to say, they are neither produced nor do they exist outside of the systems of thought which make sense of those facts” (Russell 2012, p. 93). This is not to question the validity of climate science, but that the way climate change is represent can structure the way government intervenes (Russell 2012). Putting it in the words of Bruno Latour,

“we must not conflate ‘matters of concern’ – the consequences of living in the Anthropocene; the effects of climate change – with ‘matters of fact’. To do so is to go far beyond the necessary rejection of climate denialism […] , to the mistaken presumption that

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13 At this point, it is important not to dismiss actual subjects of environmental change - the manifoldness of local, indigenous and grassroots movements that are actively and vigorously resisting powerful corporate and political interests on the frontlines of social-ecological conflicts that they are directly affected by. Moreover, there is a broad range of academic fields that seek to shine light on the interconnection between social and environmental struggles by exploring conflicts, power relations and uneven distribution of environmental costs and benefits – for example, political ecology (see Escobar 1998; Hornborg 1998; Martinez-Alier 2002; Forsyth 2014)
On international and domestic levels of climate politics, this ‘post-political’ condition has been forged and configured in prevailing discourses of ecological modernization, ‘Green Economy’ or ‘Green Growth’ that have centered around state- and market-based solutions which suggest a compatibility between global capitalism and sustainability (Swyngedouw 2007, 2010, 2011; Catney and Doyle 2011; Kenis & Lievens 2015). The frameworks and policy tools are drawn from within the current parameters of the existing form of society, private property, commodification and reject radical social transformations (Kenis & Lievens 2015). For example, UNFCCC climate change negotiations have focused on emission trading schemes and carbon taxes which are based on the commodification of CO2 and market mechanisms. These consensual modes of climate governance submerge their inherent conflicts and exclusions which are tied to structural global inequalities and conceal the possibility of alternative future trajectories (Swyngedouw 2007, 2010). In other words, climate change is primarily understood through a narrowly ‘scientized’ lens instead of a political lens cognizant of power and conflict.

2.2.2 Limitations

To be true to its own rationale of analysis, it is important to bear in mind that the ‘post-political’ condition is far from being an undisputed analytical perspective and also treat it – as Larner (2014, p. 192) suggests - as a ‘matter of concern’ rather than a ‘matter of fact’. To begin, by conceiving a relatively narrow and formalized idea of the ‘properly political’, the perspective risks turning a blind eye on the diverse spectrum of political action and could potentially be counter-productive – which has been one of the main points of critique for several scholars. (North 2010; Chatterton, Featherstone and Routledge 2013; McCarthy 2013)

A particularly elaborated account of this critique has been articulated by environmental sociologist Ingolfur Blühdorn (2014). He goes along with the general interpretation of the outcome of what he calls the ‘technocratic politics of unsustainability’ (2014, p. 147): the channeling of radical environmental concerns into consensual discourses of institutionalized governance arenas – bringing about technocratic and managerial approaches. However, he rejects the notion of the ‘properly political’ as too narrow and simplistic as he stresses the role
that profound shifts in culture and social values play in these changes as a part of wider modernization processes.

2.2.3 Outlook

I believe it is important not to employ a ‘post-political’ perspective in a binary assessment between the ‘properly political’ and the ‘post-political’, but social movements as a key player within the contentious field of climate politics. Throughout the thesis, I will not deal with the ‘post-political’ in absolute terms, seeking a ‘diagnosis’, but use it more as an analytical lens and a steppingstone to broader discussions around Western climate activism in the 21st century.

To sum up, the ‘post-political’ condition describes the universalization of the human subject and the environmental object which can be underpinned by a moralization, scientization and the use of apocalyptic imaginaries, foregrounding a techno-managerial logic in the responses to climate change. In the analysis, the main dynamics of the ‘post-political’ condition outlined in this chapter will be used for guidance. It provides a starting point to understand how XR UK operates in a contested field of climate politics. It provides useful ideas to interrogate the relationship between antagonism and consensus, ‘the political’ and ‘politics’ for XR UK’s climate change framing.

2.3 The framing perspective

In the course of the linguistic or cognitive turn in the humanities and the social sciences in the 1970s, the framing perspective within social movement studies has emerged as a central research field (Lindekilde 2014). Within social movement studies, the dominant research approaches on resource mobilization and political opportunity structures were criticized for being overly structural and over-emphasizing of the importance of rational calculus which minimized the role of human agency (Benford and Snow 2000; Lindekilde 2014). In contrast,

14 Blühdorn (2014, pp. 153-154) maintains that two significant elements of modernization processes drive what he calls the “post-ecologist” turn: a transformation of individuals’ subjectivity and identity formation driven by differentiation and increasing complexity, information-load and virtuality of contemporary society.
the framing perspective has helped to improve an understanding of the ideational and discursive elements in social movements (Noakes and Johnston 2005; Snow et al. 2014).

Rooted in the symbolic interactionist and constructionist traditions, one of the main contributions of social movement studies lies in the investigation of how meaning arises in relation to mobilization, mediated by interpretative processes in a cultural context (Lindekilde 2014; Snow et al. 2014).

Most commonly in social movement studies, frames are referred to as ‘cognitive schemata’, a concept borrowed from Goffman's (1974) work *Frame Analysis*. They are used by social movement actors to give meaning to a situation or event, a key activity of social movements with the goal of mobilizing supporters and bystanders of the general public or affect media coverage (Goffman 1974; Benford and Snow 2000). When discursive and interactive processes within and around a social movement generate a shared interpretation of a situation which leads to mobilization, these social movement frames are referred to as ‘collective action frames’ (CAF) (Benford and Snow 2000).

There are three ways in which CAFs facilitate interpretative processes: First, by focusing attention (What is ‘in’ and what is ‘out of frame’?), elaborating and articulating certain aspects within the frame in order to convey meaning (Which story is being told?) and thus, often transform the meanings associated with the object, situation or event (Snow 2013). According to Benford & Snow (2000, p. 615), CAFs are

> “constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and thus urge others to act in concert to affect change.”

These core framing functions are categorized by Snow *et al.* (1986) into (1) ‘diagnostic framing’ - problem identification and blame attribution, (2) ‘prognostic framing’ - proposed solutions and strategies and (3) ‘motivational framing’ - rationale for engaging in collective action. Gerhards (1995) specifies that a CAF covering all three functions in equal depth can

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15 In this thesis, my understanding of what a social movement constitutes is based on the definition by della Porta and Diani (2006, p. 354) as “mostly informal networks of interaction, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, mobilized around contentious themes through the frequent use of various forms of protest”.

16 To briefly illustrate what a CAF can look like, I turn to Tucker's (2011) frame analysis of the resistance movement against genetic engineering in New Zealand. He identifies four different CAFs in which genetic engineering in food production was framed as “risky”, “unnatural”, “all about the ownership of life” or
be considered an ideal type with maximum mobilization capacity – which are rarely found in social reality. While they have been treated as fixed cognitive structures in some research, another strand of research treats them as emergent cognitive processes, in which case they are referred to as a framing process (Johnston 2002).

In a metaphorical sense, the functions of social movement frames could be likened to those of a ‘picture frame’ or a ‘window frame’ in that it focuses attention, marks the boundaries (of a problem), and conveys a particular interpretive perspective on an issue or event. On the other hand, they operate similarly to ‘frame of a house’ which holds together the structure of the movement which carries the ‘cultural building blocks’ that provide a framework for shared meaning and interpretation (Creed, Langstraat and Scully 2002, p. 37).

The processes of diagnostic framing are often marked by what Benford and Snow (2000) refer to as “boundary framing”, drawing a line between movement protagonists and antagonists, or even the contrasting what is ‘good’ and what is ‘evil’ (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 616). While the diagnostic elements of a frame can loosely be divided into problem identification and blame attribution, the prognostic elements are either substantive (solutions or goals) or procedural (strategies or tactics). Diagnostic and prognostic framing have been found to be intertwined, as the solution of the problem inherently depends on what the problem is interpreted to be (Gerhards 1995). The motivational framing task, however, translates this interpretation to the personal level of the activist through ‘vocabularies of motive’ and provides an account for engaging (Benford 1993). The ‘vocabularies of motive’ may emphasize the severity of the problem, the urgency to act, the probable efficacy of joining others in the cause, the moral priority of doing so, and the enhancement or elevation of one’s status (Benford 1993; Snow, Vliegenthart and Ketelaars, 2018).

CAFs that are broad in scope and less movement-specific are referred to as ‘master frames’ (Snow and Benford 1992). They are conceptualized as general frames which can help bridge differences between different social movement groups and organizations. Generally, they allow for easier communication to a wider range of audiences, as they simplify and highlight particular aspects of a multi-dimensional issue – more flexible, elastic and inclusive than CAFs “involving a wide range of issues”. For example, in the ‘unnatural’ CAF, genetic engineering was diagnosed to be “in opposition to nature” and foods produced seen as “contaminated”. The companies involved in the practice as well as the food safety authorities and their food labelling practices were to blame. The main prognostic message was to boost organic farming and the main motivational element was preserving “nature” and food safety.
They are often associated with the emergence of entire ‘cycles of protest’, which are described by (Tarrow 1983, p. 215) as “sequences of escalating collective action that are of greater frequency and intensity than normal”. Examples of master frames in the literature include the equal rights and opportunities frame in the civil rights movement in the US (Snow 2013), the climate justice frame (Allan & Hadden 2017; Della Porta & Parks 2014) or the anti-imperial frame in the context of a protest campaign against the IMF and the world bank (Gerhards and Rucht 1992).

Within social movement studies, several scholars have pointed out the broad and blurry use of key ideational concepts such as ideology, discourse and narrative and the lack of a coherent methodological framework (Benford 1997; Johnston 2002; Gillan 2008). Closely linked to these ongoing discussions is the role of intentionality and consciousness during framing processes (see Bacchi 2009). Much empirical attention has been given to strategic ambitions in a movement’s framing processes. To mobilize followers, spreading their ideas or getting access to resources, social movements seek to link their interpretative frames with the cultural stock of the audience they wish to speak to (Benford and Snow 2000; Johnston & Noakes 2005). In

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17 In this study about the protest campaign which took place in West-Germany in 1988, the relationship between the master frame (anti-imperialism) and its several different collective action frames (relating to e.g., the “ecological crisis”, “hunger and poverty in the third world” or “weapons export”) is examined in depth.
this case, ideology is considered part of a larger ‘box of tools’ that contains other ‘cultural resources’ such as meanings, practices, beliefs, narratives, values and myths (Swidler 1986). Four different ‘frame alignment processes’ have been conceptualized in that respect, frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. Other scholars, such as Bacchi (2009), emphasize that the cultural and institutional context of a movement is not merely a toolkit from which deliberate frames can be assembled, but that the cultural and institutional context also unconsciously shapes framing. At the same time, there is widespread agreement that framing is a contested process, in which social movements may experience framing disputes within the movement or face counter-framing from outside (Benford and Snow 2000).

In line with Oliver and Johnston (2000) as well as Snow (2004), I view frames and ideologies as separate entities which may share overlap in the social constructionist process of meaning making. Ideology in the social movement context is commonly described as a relatively coherent system of ideas connecting an understanding of how the world operates with particular ethical, moral, and normative principles which guide personal and collective action (Oliver and Johnston 2000).

The relationship between frames and discourse is contested. Based on discussions in the literature (Oliver and Johnston 2000; Lindekilde 2014), I will treat frames as embedded in discourse and frame analysis as a sub-variant of discourse analysis. Framing takes place in what (Benford 2013) calls ‘discursive fields’ which form around a contested issue or event and include cultural materials and different sets of actors.

I locate my approach to frame analysis in the discourse theory tradition Bacchi (2009, p. 22) refers to as ‘analysis of discourses’ rather than ‘discourse analysis’. Accordingly, I adopt a political theoretical rather than a social psychological focus and the goal of frame analysis in this study is to “identify, within a text, institutionally supported and culturally influenced

18 Lindekilde (2014) states both discourse and frame analysis are used in social movement studies to understand how ideas, culture and ideology are used and connected to create meaning and interpretative patterns through which a particular issue or event can understood. However, he identifies three key areas in which they differ. Firstly, employing a framing perspective in the study of social movements is suited for a narrow, less ambitious analytical focus on causal questions around relations between movement texts and practices on participation and mobilization, whereas discourse analyses look at broader questions around the social construction of reality. Secondly, more so than discourse analyses, frame analyses assume a relatively high degree of strategic rationality by social movement actors. Essentially, Lindekilde (2014: 4) argues that framing analysis can regarded as a “focused sub-variant of discourse analysis”.
interpretive and conceptual meanings (discourses) that produce particular understandings of issues and events” (Bacchi 2009, p. 22).

Frames and narratives are both persuasive discursive strategies used by social movements to perform similar tasks such as shaping meaning around an event or situation and thereby drawing support and sustain mobilization. However, they do this in different manners. Narratives highlight the importance of personal stories and the personal connection to the individual recipient and often show more temporality than frames (Olsen 2014). Furthermore, narratives are often considered larger super structures which frames fit into and can draw from, i.e., part of the ‘box of tools’.

In a nutshell, CAFs are constructed through the interaction of individual cognitive processes in a collective setting and the interpretation of an issue is mediated by the cultural context of movement members and existing discursive regimes. Vice versa, frames may also highlight the microlevel and everyday processes through which discourses and discursive regimes – such as the ‘post-political’ consensus – are reproduced, contested and re-fashioned. In the context of social movements, they are driven by strategic intentions as well as unconscious influences of the cultural context, so that frames could be understood as a strategic slice of discourse.

Limitations

Critical assessments – both from within and outside the field of social movement studies - interrogating the utility and limitations of the frame analysis approach and the concept of collective action frames have highlighted several methodological and epistemological tensions and ambiguities that are important for me to be aware of, reflect upon and – when possible – mitigate (Benford 1997; Oliver & Johnston 2000; Gillan 2008; Snow, Vliegenthart and Ketelaars 2018). In the following, I will outline some of the most widespread.

Back in 1997, Benford had pointed out that social movement scholars conducting frame analyses have the tendency towards anthropomorphizing when speaking about movement activities, thereby downplaying human agency and the role of emotions (e.g., the movement “speaks”, “frames” or “acts” in a certain way). Accordingly, this is tied to a larger overall tendency within social movement frame analyses, namely the issue of reification, in this context referring to the “process of talking about socially constructed ideas as though they are real, as though they exist independent of the collective interpretations and constructions of the actors involved” (Benford 1997, p. 418). Social movement frame analyses are positioned on a
spectrum ranging from reification at the one end and reductionism at the other, which refers to seeking out explanations for collective action and interaction on the individual, cognitive level, dismissing that frames are “modes of interpretation that are socially and culturally constructed” (Benford 1997, p. 420). According to Alberto Melucci (1996 p. 14), the theoretical problem around reification is based on an epistemological assumption that scholars encounter when studying social movements and which has persisted in the study of collective phenomena. In his own words, “the proximity in space and time of concomitant forms of individual and group behaviour is elevated from the phenomenological to the conceptual level and thus granted ontological weight and qualitative homogeneity; collective reality, as it were, exists as a unified thing” (Melucci 1996, p. 15). It appears useful to understand social movements not as uniform entities, but more as ‘field of actors’ of which each has different experiences, goals and visions for strategy (Gamson and Meyer 1996). Consequently, it can be expected that within a movement, there exists a variety of frames, some complementary to each other, while others create tensions: A challenge for this study will be how can social movements with their internal complexity, dynamism and heterogeneity be studied without the assumption of unity?

2.4 Framing climate change in the ‘post-political’ era

A broad variety of discourses exist around climate change. Environmental social movements such as Extinction Rebellion are embedded in a political, cultural and historical context and follow movement-specific rationales and processes.

Adopting a framing perspective allows me to study cognitive processes of interpretation and meaning-making in XR which – based on several indicators – I can assume to have a relatively high degree of strategic rationality, i.e., to motivate and mobilize for action (Lindekilde 2014). Initial and brief examination of data both from the document analysis and the fieldwork showed that XR uses strategic messaging to appeal to a wide range of audiences. Despite slight retraction from their prominent 3.5% mobilization goal¹⁹, mobilization – as for most social movements – is still one of XR’s critical objectives. Furthermore, several fieldwork experiences (interviewees, workshop and HFX talk) showed a high degree of self-awareness regarding the

¹⁹ Based on the analyses of historical movements by Stephan and Chenoweth (2011), the co-founders of XR believe(d) that when 3.5% of the population participates in civil disobedience, the government will cave to their demands.
movement’s actions and messaging, also referring to ‘framing’ in some instances (SV; Hallam 2019; HFX). Teasing apart the strategic intentions and the inherent underlying belief structures – just as distinguishing between collective-linguistic or individual-cognitive processes – is difficult and not the objective of the study. Rather, identifying and characterizing different frames of climate change will be the first step, on the basis of which I will map out a contested landscape of frames that can be found in XR UK.

In general, it is interesting to employ a ‘post-political’ lens as it shines a light on how social movements collectively bridge their different rationales, navigating between environmental and social agendas, between idealism and pragmatism, between dissensus and consensus. Combining the framing perspective with that of (de-)politicization is useful for two reasons. On the one hand, investigating the ‘post-political consensus’ within XR through a framing analysis allows for a closer look at the (in)visibility of openly communicated and underlying ideas – precisely what the ‘post-political consensus’ is concerned with: the distinction and relationship between ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ and the (in)visibility of consensus and antagonism. On the other hand, the framing perspective allows for me to study differing frames – conflicting and complementary - that are united under the same umbrella of Extinction Rebellion. As the framing perspective is rooted firmly in the social constructivist paradigm, it aligns with the post-foundational perspective of the ‘post-political’ condition which is concerned with the representation of the political on the assumption that social reality is constructed and contingent.
3. Review: Social movement in the contentious field of climate politics

In this short review, I seek to present three points. First, I briefly show that the ‘post-political’ condition in climate discourses, as introduced in 2.2, has been empirically examined in research. Second, countering these depoliticizing dynamics, I zoom in on the climate justice master frame, as it (1) represents an antagonistic counterpoint to depoliticized climate change discourses (2) a large part of research has focused on describing its emergence and development. Third, I give an overview of research which has examined how environmental social movements navigate between antagonism and consensus.

3.1 Climate change discourses and framing

In the theoretical framework, I established that when developing and employing frames, social movements are embedded in the complex landscape of global climate change discourses. They have been recognized as important discursive actors through which different representations of climate change are negotiated, challenged, or reaffirmed: While certain policy instruments may be legitimized and others may be opposed or pressed for changes, social movements also play a key role in formulating collective demands and executing collective action (Görg and Bedall 2013; Methmann, Rothe and Stephan 2013). They are thus considered key arenas for shaping public opinion and bringing about social and political change within societies (Benford and Snow 2000; Crossley 2002; Giugni and Grasso 2015).

In recent years, an abundance of scholars have analyzed and classified environmental discourses and specifically climate change discourses (e.g. Dryzek 2013; Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2016). Political science and international relations scholars analyzing discourses in international climate governance from a post-structural perspective have identified depoliticization as a common thread. Methmann, Rothe and Stephan (2013) found that depoliticization is caused by the overarching themes of securitization, scientization, economization and technologization in the dominant discourses. In the case of Methmann, Rothe and Stephan’s (2010) study which looked specifically at how climate protection discourses at the WTO, IMF, World Bank and OECD are structured, he identified four discursive pillars: globalism, scientism, an ethics of growth and efficiency. Machin (2013) distinguishes between four dominant climate change discourses, the Techno-Economic,
Ethical-Individual, Green Republican, Green Deliberative which, according to Kakenmaster (2019) all share features of depoliticization.

3.2 The climate justice master frame

While the depoliticizing frames in climate politics are primarily forged and configured in the climate change discourses that dominate intergovernmental forums and institutions as well as domestic party politics, social movements are considered an active force of (re-)politicization, specifically through the emergence and spreading of the climate justice discourse (Chatterton, Featherstone and Routledge 2013; Kenis and Mathijs 2014; Thörn et al. 2017). According to Schlichting and Schmidt (2012), climate justice represents one of the four major master frames in climate politics, the other ones being ‘Scientific Uncertainty’, ‘Global Economics’, and ‘Ecological Modernization’.

Several studies have examined the emergence of climate justice as a master frame in the European climate movement and argue that it has become the prevalent master frame in the climate movement (Della Porta and Parks 2014; Allan & Hadden 2017; Wahlström, Wennerhag and Rootes 2013; Fernandes-Jesus, Lima and Sabucedo 2020). Historically, it has been interpreted as having developed in the context of antagonistic struggles for environmental justice (Schlosberg 2013; Schlosberg and Collins 2014), the alter-globalization or global justice movement (Goodman 2009; Reitan and Gibson 2012; Hadden 2014) and trade unionism (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). On the one hand, it is by no means a unified movement, but should rather be seen as a dynamic and heterogenous network of social movement organizations and individual activists which operate in an “emergent, amorphous, and living” fashion (Reitan and Gibson 2012). On the other hand, the climate justice frame has worked as a unifying force across a variety of groups, a ‘discursive nodal point’ (Cassegård and Thörn 2017, p. 34) in the broader movement, which has allowed the climate movement to expand and draw in wider coalitions of actors (Allan and Hadden 2017).

The climate justice frame is in opposition towards traditional institutionalized climate politics which are perceived as a failure (Allan and Hadden 2017). While some articulations emphasize the disparate historical responsibilities for the root causes of climate change (invoking the notion of climate debt) and the unequal distribution of costs and burdens, others focus on the inclusion and participation in decision-making processes towards just transitions (Bond 2011; Schlosberg and Collins 2014). In this frame, climate change is linked to structurally unequal
social and environmental relations and vulnerabilities and is particularly driven by activist groups from the Global South.

As the climate movement is typically most visible during international climate negotiations and conferences (Dietz and Garrelts 2013; Hadden 2014), these have been times and spaces in which antagonistic articulations towards the dominant perspectives on climate change have been galvanized and which have helped explore visions and tactics (Chatterton et al. 2013; Russell 2012)\(^{20}\). In particular, the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009 and the protest mobilizations around it are seen by many scholars (e.g. Della Porta & Parks 2014; Allan & Hadden 2017; Chatterton et al. 2013; Goeminne 2010) as a turning point for climate change framing, representing “a key moment in the development of an antagonistic climate politics” (Chatterton et al. 2013, p. 3). The oldest and largest network of organizations participating at the annual negotiations was the *Climate Action Network* (CAN) with its over 1300 affiliated NGOs in over 130 countries at the time\(^{21}\). CAN had been the civil society voice during the negotiations. In the run-up to the summit, a broad coalition of NGOs split from CAN, rejecting its rather cooperative and institutionalist positions, and formed *Climate Justice Now!* (CJN!)\(^{22}\) (Cassegård and Thörn 2017). Essentially, CAN embracing the sustainable development discourse and its “closeness to the official process” (Cassegård and Thörn 2017, p. 35) and “hierarchical, reformist” structure (Reitan & Gibson 2012, p. 396) were opposed which came to a head around the issue of carbon markets (Chatterton et al. 2013). From that point onwards, CJN! represented a more radically anti-systemic flank of the climate justice movement seeking explicitly politicize international climate change governance.

### 3.3 Environmental social movements in the ‘post-political’ era

Social movement and political science scholars studying environmental social movements operating in the depoliticized field of climate politics have recognized the tensions that social

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\(^{20}\) Notable examples of this include the declaration of the Bali principles at Earth Summit 2002 in Johannesburg, the 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change as well as the Rights of the Mother Earth in Cochabamba and the climate summit in Bali (COP13) (Reitan & Gibson 2012).

\(^{21}\) Members include, for example, Greenpeace International, WWF International, Global Witness & Rainforest Alliance (Climate Action Network International n.d.)

\(^{22}\) Members included La Via Campesina, 350.org, Friends of the Earth International and Attac (Climate Justice Now! 2012).
movements face when reconciling radical political ambitions with more pragmatic organizational goals (Schlosberg and Craven 2019). De Moor, Catney and Doherty (2019) describe how two UK organizations in sustainable materialism show different ways to balance between critique- and solution-oriented approaches and decide when to “expand their reach and when to increase the volume on their political messaging” (De Moor, Catney and Doherty 2019, p. 14). Other areas of tension have been found in balancing environmental and their social agendas– which often include navigating between dissensus and consensus on multiple organizational levels of the movement. A widely studied case in UK’s climate movement has been the Camp for Climate Action in the UK, a network of activists between 2006 and 2010 (Saunders 2008; Saunders and Price 2009; Schlembach 2011; Schlembach, Lear and Bowman 2012). For example, it found itself negotiating its opposition to coal-fired power and airport expansion with the interests and values embodied by the labor movement and class struggle activists (Schlembach 2011; Saunders and Price 2009) and generally balancing radical and reformist ideas (Saunders 2012). These dynamics have been studied explicitly looking at how knowledge claims and movement strategies were ‘scientized’ and increasingly informed by an ethical framework (Schlembach, Lear and Bowman 2012).
4. Case Study: Extinction Rebellion UK

The decision to carry out this study with XR UK and a particular focus on London was based on my observation that, having started in the UK, it has the largest pool of active members and the most dynamic public actions in terms of activist turnout and vibrant public engagement with high media coverage – thus I could assume a relatively high level of heterogeneity in climate change frames. Although XR looks at climate change and global biodiversity loss as both being part of the same double-edged sword, or rather ‘double-edged chainsaw’, as the speaker at an XR talk called it (HFX), I made the conscious decision to focus on XR UK’s framing of climate change to narrow the scope of this study.

In 2018, Extinction Rebellion first became known to the wider public through an open letter published in The Guardian (Green et al. 2018) on October 26 signed by 94 academics in which the government was called out for having failed to take “robust and emergency action in respect of the worsening ecological crisis”. The signatories voiced their support for the upcoming launch of a new mass environmental movement: Extinction Rebellion. On October 31st, XR was formally launched through its declaration of rebellion in Parliament Square in London23.

Extinction Rebellion was set up as a project by the environmental campaigning group Rising Up! which had been around since 2016 and consisted of 15 long-time campaigners, academics and activists, of which Roger Hallam and Gail Bradbrook are most commonly ascribed with the role as XR co-founders in the public (Taylor 2020). According to its self-description, XR was founded in response to the IPCC’s special report from 2018 and is an “international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimize the risk of social collapse” (Extinction Rebellion UK n.d. a). Since its formation, the movement has spread both nationally and internationally with XR UK counting more than 130 groups on regional and local levels (Extinction Rebellion UK n.d. b).

The preferred tactics to pressure the government is mass non-violent civil disobedience, also referred to as non-violent direct action (NVDA). This entails XR activists using their own bodies to cause either 1) civil disruption to raise awareness, e.g., disrupting public infrastructure

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23 Besides the reading aloud of the declaration of rebellion (Extinction Rebellion 2019a), the event featured speeches by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, environmental activist and writer George Monbiot, Green Party MPs Caroline Lucas & Molly Scott Cato. It ended with non-violent disruption of traffic and drew over 1000 people (Richard 2018)
by blocking roads or occupying public spaces, or 2) economic disruption to directly pressure the political system, e.g., specifically targeting the business operations of a particular company in a non-violent way (Extinction Rebellion n.d. a). Since its formation, XR UK has staged multiple series of protests, of which the three most large-scale gaining high national and international publicity have been the ‘Rebellion Day’ in November 2018, the April Rebellion of 2019 and the ‘International Rebellion’ in October the same year. Basing their tactics in the historical studies of non-violent resistance, particularly that of Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)\textsuperscript{24}, XR UK has been guided by the premise that it requires the active engagement of 3.5\% of the population to participate in NVDA to be successful (principle 2).

### 4.1 Three demands and ten principles & values

The three demands as well as the ten values and principles (see Appendix E) initially formulated by the founding members act in a binding way throughout XR UK. Anyone acting on behalf of three demands and follows the ten principles and values can join XR UK (Extinction Rebellion n.d. a), a notion engrained in the 10th principle and echoed by several activists (I #1, I #5, I #7, I #8, I #10). This helps support XR UK’s organizational structure and XR’s rapid spreading around the world (de Moor et al. 2020): XR UK is made up of a complex web of relatively autonomous working groups that operate on UK-wide, regional, and local levels and has contributed to. Decision-making power is decentralized in what XR calls their ‘Self-Organizing Structure’ (SOS)\textsuperscript{25} allowing for XR UK to “harness group wisdom while remaining agile and able to respond quickly to emerging situations” (Extinction Rebellion UK 2019b). An interesting theme which emerged through the interviews was the relevance of XR UK’s organizational structure. Several activists voiced their frustration over how the decentralized system functioned in reality, with a disconnect between the local and the national level in terms

\textsuperscript{24} Stephan & Chenoweth (2011) compare over 300 cases of non-violent and violent resistance against authoritarian regimes and dictatorships in different geographical contexts in the time frame 1900-2006. Ultimately, they conclude that non-violent resistance has been statistically more likely to bring about transformative changes.

\textsuperscript{25} For example, XR UK consists of nine regional groups, one of them XR London which in turn consists of 32 local groups, one in each borough (XR UK Rebel Hive n.d.)
of decision-making power and invisible hierarchies (I #4, I #6, I #7, I #10). In their view, the messaging and communication is rather centralized at the national level.

4.2 A new wave of activism

De Moor et al. (2020) have examined the rapid rise of XR UK and FFF as a part of a new wave of climate activism and looked at novelties and discontinuities with previous climate activism. They did this by looking at who participates, which tactics they employ and the motivational grounding for taking action, gathering data through protest surveys with XR UK activists in 2019. One of the key findings relevant to this thesis is that XR UK to some degree breaks with previous years climate activism – which had been characterized by direct action and localized grassroots activism – in four ways: By 1) mostly employing ‘politically neutral framing’ instead of oppositional framing, 2) returning to national governments to compel its demands towards, instead of focusing on individual change or pressing transnational companies or a particular industry, 3) emphasizing the need for a democratization of political processes through more direct democracy approaches and a ‘listen to the science’ narrative, instead of proposing specific policy goals, 4) the widespread use of apocalyptic future imaginaries. In their analysis based on the same survey data, Saunders, Doherty and Hayes (2020) closely examined XR UK group composition, finding that the movement is made up of mostly highly educated and predominantly middle-class people. Furthermore, they found that in terms of motivations, ”raising awareness of the climate emergency”, “pressuring politicians to act” and “acting out of a sense of civic duty and moral responsibility” were most prevalent alongside a strong sense for an intergenerational perspective. The main emotions XR activists felt towards climate change included frustration, worry, and anger, followed by anxiety and fear whereas powerlessness and hopelessness were the least felt emotions. The importance to allow space for an emotional responses to the climate crisis was examined by Westwell and Bunting (2020).

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26 I #4, who is part of the national Political Circle illustrated this point like this: “I realized that in one meeting in the UK-wide political circle, me opening my mouth for five minutes has more power than anybody in the [local] Hackney group screaming at the top their lungs”.

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5. Methods

The methods section gives a detailed overview of what kind of data I collected, the reasoning behind that decision, how I conducted the analysis and which limitations are important to bear in mind.

5.1 Data collection

Frame analyses typically have been built on a selection of movement documents and/or transcribed ethnographic interviews with movement activists (Johnston 2002). Movement documents considered suitable range from movement websites, movement communiques, press releases, media statements and records to flyers, brochures, placards, slogans, field notes, pictures and videos (Lindekilde 2014; Snow 2004).

Within framing theory in social movement studies, there have basically been two main strands of analytical approaches, either locating frames primarily at the individual-cognitive or primarily at the collective-linguistic level (Gillan 2008; Noakes and Johnston 2005; Snow 2004). The level of analysis chosen is informed by the research interest and question and informs the data type selected for analysis (Snow 2004). Although most research designs treat frames as constructs of meaning that are precisely configured by social interaction in the space between people’s minds and collective social organization, they tend to focus their level of analysis either on the micro-, meso- or macro-level. Fitting the purpose of mapping out, contextualizing and discussing frames of XR UK, I will analyze frames at the macro-level. This means that I look at meta themes which transcend the movement and not at framings at the local level which might differ due to the specific context. For this reason, my primary source of data consists of movement texts and secondarily on a collection of ten transcribed semi-structured interviews – a combination of data sources commonly suggested for the conduct of a frame analysis (Johnston 2002; Snow 2004).

I conducted my fieldwork in London, UK, over the course of two weeks in January 2020. During the fieldwork, I was most involved with the local XR group in Southwark as this was the borough in which I stayed for the duration of my fieldwork. I attended several public meetings and 3 out of 10 interviewees were active in the Southwark group (among others, in
some cases). Several activists were active on a local level and the regional (XR London) or national level (XR UK).

In addition to these two main data sources, I included transcripts, slides and field work notes from the attendance of several XR-related events as supplementary data to allow for triangulation of data sources (Blee and Taylor 2002). The events which I attended all took place in and around London (See Appendix C).

5.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have long been a central method within social movement research, particularly for gathering data about people’s motives for participating in movement activity and the activities of social movement networks and organizations in general (Blee and Taylor 2002). Combining characteristics of both structured and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews are typically guided by an interview guide consisting of a consistent set of questions that reflect the researcher’s interest, thereby involving a degree of structure (Bryman 2012). However, the interviewer is left with some leeway to digress and probe based on interactions in the interview, adding flexibility to the process (Blee and Taylor 2002).

Particularly relevant to this study, semi-structured interviews are useful because they:

1) allow me to access a broader segment of XR activists which goes beyond the leadership circle responsible for most of officially published documents,
2) provide a wider social context to the public statements and messages made by XR,
3) reveal not only information, but also themes and categories of analysis that emerge from activists’ responses,
4) shift focus from my pre-conceived ideas to the voice and the everyday world of the activist and
5) allow me to understand the activists’ unique perception of their social world and, specifically, of discourses that exist in XR.

My decision to be on-site for the interviews, instead of conducting them remotely, was informed by Brinkmann (2014, p. 290) assessment that face-to-face interviews offer the richest source of data, since “people are present not only as conversing minds, but as flesh-and-blood creatures who may laugh, cry, smile, tremble, and otherwise give away much information in terms of gestures, body language, and facial expressions.”
The sampling methods for this study consisted of two variants of purposeful sampling: *snowball* and *convenience sampling* (Guest, Namey and Mitchell 2013). Following the common procedure for snowball sampling, initial contact with two XR UK activists was made via personal relationships prior to entering the field. These two activists could be considered ‘gatekeepers’, as they used their social network to refer me to further activists, of which three ended up participating in my study (Bryman 2012). On several occasions, interviewees helped with establishing contact with further activists (‘chain referral’). Given that XR UK exhibits relatively low levels of institutionalization, aiming to be organized in a decentralized manner, XR activists could be considered to form a ‘hard-to-reach-population’ in the words of Handcock and Gile (2011, p. 2). For this reason, snowball sampling was deemed particularly useful and represented the primary method for sampling interviewees (Blee 2013). There were two selection criteria to specify activists’ movement experience and level of activism, as suggested by Blee and Taylor (2002, p. 1). The person was an XR UK member who had been active with the movement for at least six months; 2) the overall interviewee pool composition reflected a relative heterogeneity in the sense that interviewees had been engaged in local, regional and national level discourses and thus could reflect different framings. The time period of six months was chosen to reflect a medium to high level of experience and engagement on which basis I could assume an in-depth level of knowledge of XR actions and discourses. Activists that met that criterion would have actively experienced the preparatory, carry-out and reflection phase of the October Rebellion in 2019, two weeks of vibrant UK-wide public action.

Over the course of the fieldwork, it became clear that snowball sampling alone was not going to bring about the number of interviewees I had sought, ten; perhaps due to my relative inexperience in sampling methods as well as factors commonly found in activist spheres: limitations of time and energy and in some cases an explicit skepticism towards academic methods and institutions. In the face of my own time limitations for the fieldwork, I decided to resort to convenience sampling. Upon the recommendation made by one of my ‘gatekeepers’, I signed up to the communication platform that the local Southwark XR group used, discord.com, introduced myself and the research project, and asked whether there were people willing to participate.

The interview guide consisted of a main block of questions regarding XR’s principles and demands, specifically the 1st and 7th principle and the 3rd demand (see Appendix E) as well as internal discussions about the drivers of climate change and different visions of change and which understandings of politics existed within the movement. In these questions, the objective
was for the interviewees to relate to the meta themes I am interested in both through their own personal involvement and experience - meaning their personal opinions, ideas, worldviews – as well as their more distant observations and reflections.

The main block of questions was preceded by an introductory part during which we talked about their experience within the climate movement in general and their assessment of XR’s role herein. It was succeeded by more general questions regarding the interviewees’ hope and vision for XR’s development in 2020 (see Appendix A for the complete interview guide).

In mid-December I conducted a pilot interview with an XR activist of the Stockholm group for the sake of testing the questions and becoming familiar with the researcher-activist interview setting. The most important modification to the interview guide, following this interview, was the reformulation of some questions with the aim to make them less abstract and more relatable to activists’ everyday experiences. Throughout the fieldwork, I became sensitive to the significance of the way in which I phrased a question. As I talked to some activists who had mainly been engaged in local activities and others who had been active in national strategy groups, it was important for me make slight adjustments in my language accordingly.

5.1.2 Movement documents

The selection of movement documents was made based on three criteria: influence, topic(s), and author(s). Based on my assessment and supported by the assessments of interviewees in multiple cases, all documents played a central function in either reflecting or shaping XR’s climate change framing and/or theory of change. They were written by an individual or a group of individuals positioned more at the center than at the fringes of the movement in my interpretation, thus providing a necessary degree of influence. Furthermore, I tried to include both official documents targeted mostly at people outside of the movement or possibly at the very beginning of their involvement – and documents which I could assume were more directed internally. Most documents were chosen prior to the fieldwork, while others were selected as direct recommendation from activists interviewed. An overview of the selected documents can be found in Appendix D.
5.1.3 Additional data

Since XR UK has been around for less than four years, only a limited amount of academic research has examined the movement. On top academic literature, online newspaper and blog articles XR UK have been consulted to discuss and contextualize some of the findings as well as introduce specific events and provide background information.

5.2 Analysis

All interviews were transcribed using the software F4transkript and, together with the movement documents selected for analysis, were coded in two cycles using the CAQDAS software NVivo v12.

The first cycle of coding involved structural and descriptive coding (Saldaña 2009). Combining a deductive with an inductive approach, the data material was coded using the following codes (written in italics and capitals):

- the three core framing tasks, DIAGNOSIS, PROGNOSIS and MOTIVATION and their respective sub-components (detailed in the theoretical framework): This would form the basis of the frame analysis;
- the three DEMANDS as well as the PRINCIPLES AND VALUES: Knowing that they function a binding force in Extinction Rebellion, coding them could show different interpretations thereof.

However, I allowed for themes to emerge which did not fit the preconceived structure through descriptive coding which would support the contextualization of the frames. For example, after the first cycle of coding was completed, further categories emerged:

- ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: This code captured the significance of XR UK’s distinct organizational features for its framing;
- STRATEGIC FRAMING: This code captured the text segments in which a strategic intention for a particular way of framing was explicitly mentioned;
- ROLE IN THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT: The role of XR UK within the wider climate movement was an emerging theme.
The second round of coding consisted of pattern coding with the purpose of the “development of major themes from the data” (Saldaña 2009, p. 152) – in other words, the identification of distinct frames. While theming the data, I treated text as a ‘holistic construct’, as suggested by Johnston (1995). This means that I, iteratively, changed perspective between the sentence(s) or paragraph that I coded and the text in its complete form to not lose sight of the context and provide further clarification when needed. It was an emergent process in the sense that the boundaries of what constituted a distinct frame were not preconceived but changed throughout the iterative process of refining and reformulation. At different stages in the process there were five collective action frames, but in the end were merged/reduced to three collective action frames. For example, Local activism was initially thought of as a separate frame which translated the universal/global climate crisis into local concerns. Ultimately, it became clear that it was not a distinct frame, but an element which was part of each frame.

I draw on some methodological guidelines from Matthes and Kohring's (2008) approach to frame analysis which they call ‘cluster analysis’. In their understanding, each frame is made up of frame elements and each of these elements consists of multiple analytical variables. Variables that stick together in a systematic fashion and form patterns (clusters) across multiple sources of data can be considered a frame. Consistent with a hermeneutic approach to interpretation, I did not identify the frames beforehand or code with a single variable. The clusters were distinguished from one another by seeking out low differences within and high differences between the clusters. Frames were identified and distinguished from one another on the premise that they were significantly different from one another in one of the three core framing tasks, i.e., they were identified content through the content of interviews and movement documents. In some cases, the interviewees pointed towards disagreements within the movement regarding what climate change messaging XR UK should employ to mobilize supporters - which guided me towards identifying boundary lines around a frame. Some activists would then suggest either people to talk to or XR(-affiliated) groups which they assumed would offer a different perspective or which could provide complementary information about a particular frame. For example, several interviewees pointed me towards the Global Justice Rebellion, as an activist network which diverged from some commonly held views in XR UK.

27 For example, several activists pointed directly towards disagreements about whether climate change should be framed narrowly as a mostly “environmental” or as an inherently “socio-political issue”.
Due to time constraints of the fieldwork and the thesis in general, I have focused on treating frames mostly as structural rather than processual. However, the discussion will include key concepts of frame analysis introduced in the theoretical framework to discuss the development, generation and elaboration of frames.

These findings are based on an analysis of XR UK frames. On the one hand, XR UK assumes a frontrunner role in developing the trajectory for the global XR movement and the significance of the demands as well as principles and values for the global movement which is why the findings may to some degree reflect the framing of the wider global XR movement. However, it must be kept in mind that there are notable examples of national XR groups which have diverged from XR UK’s framing.

5.3 Limitations of methods and data sources

Framing approaches have been developed across different research fields apart from social movement studies, leading to a broad range of conceptualizations and methodological approaches informed by different theoretical assumptions and research contexts. Frame analyses, as qualitative studies in general, face scrutiny regarding subjectivity of the analysis (Hope 2010; Lindekilde 2014) and verification and proof (Johnston 2002; Lindekilde 2014). In the course of this work, I will address these challenges by offering clear accounts of the concepts I use, transparency and acknowledgement of the inherent subjectivity of my analysis as well as a clear and systematic coding procedure.

An overarching limitation of this work is related to the ever-changing dynamics of social movements. The interviews were conducted in January 2019 and the main bulk of data was collected through April 2019. Hence the findings of this thesis may only offer a snapshot in time as several documents (e.g., SV; STR) point towards processes of transformation and learning in XR UK.
6. Findings

This chapter will begin with the presentation of XR UK’s master frame, the reasoning for its characterization as such and the introduction of the three collective action frames connected under the master frame. Following that, I take a closer look at the master frame and its three collective action frames on diagnostic and prognostic levels of framing and – in each sub-chapter – presenting how the respective collective action frame in positioned or relates to the master frame. As the motivational level, the analysis showed no clear differences between all four frames, but rather a wide spectrum of motives for engagement in the GCE and an emphasis on emotional processing and engagement in the WL frame.

6.1 The master frame: The Global Climate Emergency

The core diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational levels of XR UK’s climate change framing together reveal a new master frame within the climate movement which I call the Global Climate Emergency (GCE). The basis for this master frame is formed by XR UK’s three demands together with its core values and principles. They run through all documents analyzed and – as it was established in chapter 4.1 – are essential in holding the movement together across its decentralized organizational structure. This master frame is linked to a new ‘cycle of protest’ (Tarrow 1983) which has emerged within the climate movement since 2018 and can also be found – albeit differences in strategy - in the global Fridays for Future (FFF) movement and the Sunrise Movement in the United States (de Moor et al. 2020; Stuart, Gunderson and Petersen 2020). In XR UK’s interpretation of it, the main features include that

(1) the climate crisis poses an existential threat to humankind which requires immediate reductions in GHG emissions,
(2) the national government is the main actor to press for effective and meaningful action, informed by citizens’ assemblies and
(3) intergenerational justice and a moral duty to act
Given the movement’s dynamism and heterogeneity, the GCE master frame offers a large interpretative scope. It is thus broad enough to harbor different sub-frames\(^{28}\) which either show a distinct emphasis or elaborate on at least one of the three functional levels of the GCE frame. I call them the *Climate Breakdown* (CB) frame, the *Web of Life* (WL) frame and the *Global Justice* (GJ) frame. They are closely linked to the GCE frame and are not autonomous and self-contained collective action frames. All in all, the frames partly overlap and are compatible with each other for the most part, meaning that activists or groups within XR UK might tap into and employ elements from different frames. At the same time, subtle frictions and larger tensions exist between the sub-frames, emerging from differing orientations towards either antagonistic or consensus-based politics.

The CB frame takes a natural-scientific perspective which focuses first and foremost on the bio-geo-physical processes of climate change on a planetary scale. The WL frame promotes a universalist perspective that emphasizes the inter-connectedness in social-ecological relationships and the role of human values, emotions, and spirituality. In the GJ frame climate change is represented in antagonistic terms, emphasizing a socio-political perspective which shines a light on unequal power relations and conflict (See Table 1).

\(^{28}\) In relation to the master frame, I refer to the collective action frames as *sub-frames.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic</th>
<th>Global climate emergency (GCE)</th>
<th>Climate Breakdown (CB)</th>
<th>Global Justice (GJ)</th>
<th>Web of Life (WL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The climate emergency is an existential threat to humanity</td>
<td>Climate change is bio-geo-physical and the threat it poses overshadows everything</td>
<td>Global capitalism and colonialism</td>
<td>‘Life’ itself is under threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The economic system is based unsustainable resource use and is set up to the benefit of the few</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asymmetric power relations based on class, race and gender</td>
<td>Alienation from life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The political system is unfit, the government has failed the people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Toxic’ systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognostic</td>
<td>Citizens’ Assemblies</td>
<td>‘Listen to the science’</td>
<td>Global network of solidarity with resisting frontline communities</td>
<td>Restore broken relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Beyond politics’</td>
<td>Cut GHG emissions</td>
<td>Make their struggles visible, listening and co-learning</td>
<td>Healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zero net-carbon by 2025</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regenerative cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivational</td>
<td>intergenerational justice, moral duty, grief/mourning, fear, hope</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: A summarized table that shows the main elements for each of the three functional levels of frames (diagnostic, prognostic and motivational) for the master frame (GCE) and its three subframes (CB, GJ and WL)
6.1.1 Diagnosis

The diagnostic side of framing consists and characterizing climate change as a problem as well as identifying who or what is to blame.

6.1.1.1 Global Climate Emergency (GCE) frame: Climate disaster caused by flawed politics and economics

“Humanity itself is on the brink of the abyss: our potential extinction. We face a breakdown of all life, the tragedy of tragedies: the unhallowed horror” (WWR)

It is central to the GCE frame that the climate crisis poses an existential threat to all life on earth which, if no immediate and radical action is taken, may lead to ‘climate breakdown’ (SV; TE; Hallam 2019; Lucas 2019) and ‘social collapse’ (RS; TE) – and ultimately the end of human civilization. The magnitude and scope of the crisis is a constitutive element of the diagnostic framing which permeates all documents analyzed, using vivid imagery and a language of superlatives (e.g., Extinction Rebellion 2019; HFX; TE; WWR). A sense for the extreme severity and urgency of the crisis is evoked by describing the present as an ‘unprecedented global emergency’ (RS; TE), a ‘life or death’ situation (TE; WWR) and the future as potentially devastating. The climate crisis is a universal crisis, as “Mother Nature is making us all one” (SV).

The diagnosis is situated within the scientific consensus on climate change formed in the global science community and supported with references to research conducted at renowned institutions in the field of climate science, including the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, as well as quotes from associated scientists and high-ranking public officials declaring a global climate emergency which requires emergency action29 (HFX; TE). In this sense, the credibility of the claim maker is enhanced by referring to science experts. The climate scientific evidence is portrayed in systemic terms, using the concepts ‘tipping points’ and ‘feedback loops’ (e.g., HFX; Hallam 2019; TE) and taking the complexity and non-linearity of what is referred to as the ‘natural world’ into account.

29 For example, Prof. James Hansen, former Director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies; Prof. Hans-Joachim Schellnhuber, founder of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research; Prof. Hugh Montgomery, director of the University College London Institute for Human Health and Performance, Lancet Commission Co-Chair and Ban Ki-Moon, former UN Secretary General.
Within XR UK academics are driving discussions about the inevitability of near-term social collapse (Bendell 2018; Read 2018). According to documents and several activists interviewed in this study, the ‘deep adaptation’ framework proposed by Bendell (2018) has become a widespread perspective (I #4; I #6; SV; WWR). In the GCE frame, the scientific findings are incontrovertible (‘the science is clear’) and referred to as the “truth” (Extinction Rebellion 2019; HFX; RS; TE). The speaker at the HFX talk puts it this way:

“The reason why I’m here, by the way, is to tell the truth. Not my truth, that’s important, but the scientific truth. And then to encourage you to act as though that truth is real. Because sadly, it is.” (HFX)

In January 2020, extreme weather events around the world were used as examples to show the actuality of climate change, including the wildfires in Australia (I #1, #3, #4, HFX) and California, the Arctic and Greece in 2019 (HFX), the heatwave in UK and across Europe or the increase of intensity and frequency of hurricanes (HFX). Referring to examples like these can help boost the empirical credibility of the frame.

Climate science is the fundament on which the GCE master frame rests. However, there are variations between GCE and the sub-frames in terms of the ways in which they complement climate scientific consensus with socio-political analysis.

“Climate breakdown is inseparable from politics. The melting ice caps, the scorching heatwaves and the staggering declines in animal and insect populations are the direct result of failures by people in power” (Lucas, 2019 p. 141).

In general, the GCE frame places blame on the political and economic systems as the drivers of the climate crisis. In the political sphere, UK’s ‘broken parliamentary democracy’ (ABP) is in part responsible for the climate crisis and therefore unable to effectively address it (Lucas 2019). Main flaws that make it undemocratic are ‘vested interests’, ‘corruption of the elites’, unrepresentativeness due to majority-rule and the two-party system (I #3; I #5, I #7, I #9; Lucas 2019; Raworth 2019; Yamin 2019) and short-termism in the electoral system (HFX).

While most interviewees stated that they believed strongly that the power structures and inequalities of the capitalist economy were directly tied to climate change (I #1, I #3, I #4, I #6-10), almost all interviewees (I #1, I #3, I #4, I #6-10) stated that there are strategic intentions by XR UK not to come across as ‘political’. For some this was specifically based on historical lack of success by anti-capitalist struggles to bring about change (I #1, #3), while others noted that that kind of rhetoric is not conducive to mass mobilization which XR UK seeks that the public has negative associations with it; that the public do not know what capitalism means (I
Another factor which affects framing processes in XR UK is the constant to counter-framing from outside, specifically in the media and from the government (I #2; I #4; I #5; I #9). For example, in January 2020 the UK counter-terrorism police has listed XR UK as holding “extremist ideologies” (I #4).

In terms of boundary framing, the main culprits - the antagonists - typically identified are the central government, ‘elites and politicians’ (SV), fossil fuel companies and particular carbon-intense industries such as oil, gas and mining (RS). XR UK’s focus on pressuring the government is a central theme in its three demands – either directly addressing the government (d1, 2) or calling for a more participatory form of democracy (d3). The central government is responsible and to be held accountable for political inaction (Extinction Rebellion 2019, RS; STR) which is why XR UK has “declare[d] […] rebellion against [the UK] government and the corrupted, inept institutions that threaten our future” (Extinction Rebellion 2019, p. 2).

However, the GCE frame also shows some ambivalence towards the role of national governments in rapid transformative change. There is an understanding that the government is bound by power (Principle 10). At the same time the insufficient action is in some cases attributed to politicians’ ‘unwillingness’ (Hallam 2019), ‘refusal’ to act (STR) and described as a ‘failure to protect’ (RS) or ‘willful complicity’ (Extinction Rebellion 2019, p. 2) – suggesting that governments are theoretically capable of delivering the necessary changes.

In the GCE frame, the flawed political system is directly tied to an economic system which, at its core, (1) runs on the fundamentally unsustainable use of natural resources and (2) is responsible for the inequitable distribution of burdens and benefits.

6.1.1.2 Climate Breakdown (CB) frame: Climate change is a purely physical phenomenon

In the case of the CB frame, the primary focus is on the inevitability of an apocalyptic future if GHG emissions are not drastically reduced (I #3; I #5; I #6; I #9). On XR UK’s website, the section titled ‘The emergency’ outlines a history of “humanity not listening to the scientific warnings” and details the effects of the climate crisis on ecosystems and people.30

30 Accordingly, the effects are severe and widespread and include global biodiversity loss, sea level rise, desertification, droughts, wildfires, ocean acidification, freshwater shortage, extreme weather events, soil degradation. This in turn, will have devastating widespread effects on humans, including the displacement of
“We must immediately begin improving carbon absorption, drawing it down and locking it up again, while also reducing emissions. We must stop the harm we are causing the natural world that is pushing other species to the point of extinction”. (TE)

Importantly, the underlying social factors in terms of a deeper socio-political analysis that looks beyond the bio-geo-physical side of climate change, stay on the sidelines. Therefore, this sub-frame stays with a singular conception of climate change. The natural-scientific argument in the CB frame’s diagnosis is illustrated by Hallam (2019, p. 5) in the following way:

“It is time to grow up and see the world as it is. There are some things which are undeniably real, there are some things we cannot change and one of those is the laws of physics. Ice melts when the temperature rises. Crops die in a drought. Trees burn in forest fires. Because these things are real, we can also be certain about what the future holds […] This is not a matter of ideology, but of simple maths and physics.”

In this sense, the sub-frame does not specify a broad element of the master frame but emphasizes a particular element of it and comes into existence through contrast to the GJ frame (see Chapter 6.1.1.4)

6.1.1.3 Web of Life (WL): Alienation from life

“Time is broken and buckled, and seasons are out of step so even the plants are confused. Ancient wisdoms are being betrayed: to everything there was a season, a time to be born and a time to be a child, protected and cared for, but the young are facing a world of chaos and harrowing cruelty. In the delicate web of life, everything depends on everything else: we are nature and it is us, and the extinction of the living world is our suicide. Not one sparrow can now be beneath notice, not one bee”. (WWR)

An underlying element in the GCE frame relates to the relationships that we as individuals, and collectively as a society, have with the world around us, animals, and plants, with each other and with ourselves – both in material and non-material ways (p3, 8; SV; WWR). This is reflected in the core movement texts, specific public actions and general movement activities and together forms the Web of Life frame: the climate crisis and its economic and political drivers are, on a deeper level, a symptom of a societal alienation from the living world, a “symptom of far wider kinds of malaise and corruption in the human imagination” (Williams 2019, p. 183). A recurring theme that captures human entanglement within its environment is the fragile ‘web of life’ which is being ruptured by human actions (Shiva 2019; OV; TE; WWR). Relationships are ‘unhealthy’ (p8; Williams 2019; TE) and “people [are] estranged millions of people, spread of diseases, increased risk of wars and conflicts, impacts on human rights food insecurity crop failure (TE).
from each other and sundered from the living world” (WWR). The social systems are described as ‘toxic’ (p8), “warped and spiritually desolate” and “contemptuous of humanity and the living world” (WWR). They are

“held in place by a toxic media (power without truth); by toxic finance (power without compassion); and toxic politics (power without principle)”. (XR Why rebel?)

Ultimately, the situation is equated with ‘ecocide’ (Yamin 2019, Shiva 2019, WWR, OV) and ‘genocide’ (Hallam 2019, Shiva 2019).

In the WL frame, the economic system is not framed based on a critical analysis of power, trade-offs, and conflict, but takes a universalist nature- and human-focused perspective. The starting point is the detrimental effects on the environment and life on earth in general, referring to the economy as waging “a third world war of profit versus life” (WWR), a “war against the planet, the people and our future” (Shiva 2019, p. 5), an “interconnected war against life” (Ibid., p. 6).

In universalist terms, the economy is operating beyond its ecological limits (Lucas 2019; Shiva 2019; SV) and is characterized as a ‘brute force’ whose ‘violence and carelessness’ has driven the extinction of millions of species and is “destroying our home” (Shiva 2019, p. 5).

“The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth we plant in, the food we eat, and the beauty and diversity of nature that nourishes our psychological well-being – our very health – all are being corrupted and compromised by the human values behind our political and economic systems and consumer-focused lifestyles.” (TE)

The underlying social processes are rather framed in terms of human values and conditions, such as the “limitless greed of the 1 per cent” (Shiva 2019: 5), a “pathological obsession with money and profit” (WWR) or ‘addiction’ to unsustainable industries such as the cattle industry (HFX).

“So this is the work of economic rebels: to create thriving, regenerative and distributive economies that can meet the needs of all people within the lifesupporting systems of this unique living planet. Now that’s what I call a plan for managing the planetary household in the interests of all its inhabitants. Who’s up for joining the team?” (Raworth 2019, p. 154)

On a performative level, this sub-frame is perhaps best captured by the ‘Red Rebel Brigade’, an international performance arts group created for the 2019 spring rebellion in London, and which since has spread to many different countries as well as towns and cities all over the world and throughout the UK. As self-described, it is “dedicated to illuminating the global environmental crisis and supporting groups and organisations fighting to save humanity and all species from mass extinction” (Red Rebel Brigade n.d.). The members typically are dressed in
all-red robes, wear white face paint, red lipstick and black eye make-up. They move slowly with expressive gestures and mimics. A public statement on their website explains the symbolism of its show and its function for the movement. Central are the universalist framing of environmental subjects which are bound together by a ‘oneness’ of life and expressing grief and mourning for the losses connected to the climate crises:

“Red Rebel Brigade symbolises the common blood we share with all species, that unifies us and makes us one. As such we move as one, act as one and more importantly feel as one. […] We are who the people have forgotten to be!” (Red Rebel Brigade n.d.)

Balancing a reliance on climate experts, scientific data, and concepts to understand climate change, several documents showed how climate change is turned into a tangible issue of the present by making the connection to extreme weather events around the world and by appealing to people’s ability to feel the climate crisis and cognitively make sense of it:

“I want to talk about temperature, of course. I want to talk about feedback loops and I want to talk about something called "tipping points". Now, the temperature, the global temperature now, currently, is 1.1 degree Celsius against pre-industrial levels. But you know that, don't you? You know that weather is weird, you know that the climate is changing. You know the world is warming up, you know it, not because you're necessarily a climate scientist, you might be. No, you know it, because you are human beings alive today, experiencing this world”. (HFX)

In a similar fashion, the Why rebel? flyer suggests that while people rely on expert information regarding the specificities of climate change, everyone can link the increase of extreme weather events to the broader phenomenon of climate change.

“People are not stupid: people feel a pervasive uneasiness at the extremes of weather, the floods, droughts and hurricanes, but they have the legal and moral right to be fully informed of the speed and scale of the crisis.” (WWR)

6.1.1.4 Global Justice (GJ) frame: Power structures and injustice

The GJ sub-frame differs from the GCE in terms of the socio-economic conditions that are considered primarily for flawed political and economic systems. There is an acute awareness that power structures in society are shaped along factors such as race, class, gender and sexuality (p2, 6 and 7). The climate crisis is inextricably linked to current and historical power dynamics, deep global inequality, capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy (EJB; GJRE; XRISN). Emphasis is placed on the fact that, in particular, communities of the Global South continue to be those most immediately and severely affected while bearing least historical responsibility (Ross 2019, Yamin 2019, TC, WWR).
“Worldwide, the heaviest emissions have been produced by the richest nations, while the heaviest consequences are being felt by the poorest. The few have sown the wind, and are forcing the many to reap the whirlwind. Reparation is needed. So is recognition: that Europe stole its wealth through its imperialism, colonialism and slavery. So is respect: that the global South has resisted for hundreds of years, knowing that a shining kind of courage can end centuries of wrong.” (WWR)

Furthermore, fundamental neo-liberal economic axioms such as ‘growth’, ‘wealth’ and ‘progress’ are questioned (RS; Raworth 2019; Ross 2019).

In counterpoint to Hallam’s quote from chapter 6.1.1.2, Yamin (2019) exemplarily states that “we can’t just fixate on the maths and science of climate change and leave people and fairness out of the equation” (Yamin 2019, p. 23). Several of the documents framed the climate crisis as multiple rather than singular on a social level. This is particularly prominent in the essays compiled in This is not a drill, particularly by Knights (2019), Shiva (2019), Yamin (2019) and Chatterton (2019). For example, in the introductory chapter, Knights (2019, p. 12) states that “[…] the problem, unfortunately, is not just the climate. The problem is ecology. The problem is the environment. The problem is biodiversity. The problem is capitalism. The problem is colonialism. The problem is power. The problem is inequality. The problem is greed, and corruption, and money, and this tired, broken system. The problem is our complete and utter failure to imagine any meaningful alternative.”

Several XR UK groups were mentioned by interviewees (I #3, #6, #8, #10) as examples for driving the GJ frame, such as London-based XR Slough, XR Scotland, XR Youth and the Global Justice Rebellion (GJR). In their own words, the GJR is a “collective of activists who believe that economic and social justice cannot be separated from the climate movement” (Global Justice Rebellion n.d.)31. Telling ‘the truth’, in this framing, goes beyond declaring a climate emergency:

“Yes, we must tell the truth. But we cannot pick and choose which truths we tell. Let’s be truthful. Let’s be truthful with ourselves and recognise that Britain has a history of colonisation and exploitation which is central to the creation of the climate crisis. Britain cannot run away from its colonial legacy.”

In contrast to the CB frame, here the climate crisis is by no means a threat of the distant future, it is already experienced. Climate scientists are not the main source of credibility in this case, 

31 The GJR is a collective of various XR-related groups - the XR Internationalist Solidarity Network, the Environmental Justice Bloc, XR Youth, XR Doctors and health professionals, XR Disabled Rebels and XR Universities - which first emerged to the public eye in the two-week long “October Rebellion” in 2019 during which it created the “Global Justice Rebellion site” in central London.
but rather more pointing towards the communities, particularly in the Global South which are
in resistance to extractive industries (XRISN; EJB) and actively “protect[ing] and preserv[ing]
our natural world” (GJR).

The frame dispute between the antagonistic GJ frame and the rest of the GCE master frame can
be observed, according to several activists, in the lively ongoing debate whether XR UK should
follow XR US and adopt a fourth demand which places climate justice at the center. In the
ongoing debate within XR UK circles concerning the level of social differentiation with which
the drivers of climate change are framed. Several interviewees noted a tension between framing
the drivers of climate change in explicit political terms and XR UK’s ambitions to draw support
from a wide range of people. This has crystalized in debates about whether to tightly link the
climate crisis to ‘capitalism’ and ‘colonialism’.

6.1.2 Prognosis

The prognostic side of framing consists of the proposition of solutions and strategies to address
climate change based on the diagnosis.

6.1.2.1 Global Climate Emergency (GCE) frame: Citizens’ assemblies and ‘beyond politics’

The GCE frame is relatively uniform on its prognostic side, i.e., the three sub-frames do not
deviate strongly from the master frame. This is since the pillars of the GCE frame - the demands,
values, and principles – are more concrete in formulating prognostic rather than diagnostic or
motivational claims.

The solutions and strategies that XR UK proposes to address climate change can be
differentiated into broad demands for transformational change in the political, economic, and
cultural spheres of society at large, strategies for the wider climate movement to achieve a

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32 “We demand a just transition that prioritizes the most vulnerable people and indigenous sovereignty;
establishes reparations and remediation led by and for Black people, Indigenous people, people of color and poor
communities for years of environmental injustice, establishes legal rights for ecosystems to thrive and regenerate
in perpetuity, and repairs the effects of ongoing ecocide to prevent extinction of human and all species, in order
to maintain a livable, just planet for all” (Extinction Rebellion US n.d.)

33 I will not further elaborate on the activists’ understanding of the contested terms capitalism and colonialism
and arrive at a definition of what is meant with these terms. The important point is that linking climate change
has the effect of framing social and socio-economic relationships in antagonistic terms based on unequal power
relations and conflict.
maximum impact within society as well as XR-specific tactics. Loosely put, the ten principles could be understood as internal principles guiding XR UK’s organization and tactics that define it as a movement, while the three demands are directed towards the government and society at large. Both the values and principles as well as the demands rest on a universalist perspective in the sense that political change is not driven by conflict, but by being maximally inclusive.

On a society-wide level, the universalist approach of XR UK’s prognostic framing is characterized by making broad appeals to the government to act upon the scientific consensus on climate change and reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions in correspondence with citizens’ assemblies. On the level of the wider climate movement, the framing reflects an understanding that solving the climate crisis with its sheer magnitude, scale and complexity requires unprecedented cooperation across broad coalitions of societal actors – a ‘movement-of-movements’. For XR UK as a movement, the preferred tactic has been highly visible events marches, rallies, and large-scale actions of non-violent civil disobedience (OSTRA).

Following from the immediacy and urgency which is highlighted in the GCE frame, XR UK’s call on the UK government to “act now to […] reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025” in its second demand is the most clearly stated and widespread substantive prognostic claim made by XR UK (d3).

The GCE frame, however, does not provide more specific substantive demands in terms of concrete policies, as it should be left to citizens’ assemblies (CAs) to negotiate between alternative visions of the future and decide on solutions. In practice, the way put forward in XR UK’s third demand is for the government to create and be led by the decisions of so-called citizens’ assemblies. Likened to jury service, the members are randomly selected from across the country in a way to represent the whole country’s population with regards to characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography (HFX, Extinction Rebellion UK

34 It should be noted that XR UK members have co-developed the Climate and Ecological Emergency bill in collaboration with other activists, scientists and policy experts which currently is supported by 107 MPs across seven parties in the UK (Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill Alliance n.d). The main objectives include setting up citizens’ assemblies and for the UK to develop a strategy to fulfill its part in the Paris climate agreement. As Harris (2020) notes, it mainly serves the purpose of exposing politicians’ defiance of the urgency and making “the prospect of radical action eminently imaginable”.

49
Based on objective knowledge from experts and accounts from those communities most affected by climate change, the CAs would discuss and make recommendations on how to respond to climate change\(^{35}\). Building deliberative democracy models which “give the power back to the people”, will help avoid “counter-reaction and […] the tedious and superficial paradigm of confrontational politics” (Ross 2019, p. 176). In this way, XR does not primarily introduce solutions and does not make clear prognostic claims, but rather more calls for a more fair, transparent and inclusive process of finding them – ‘real democracy’, “by the people for the people” (XRCA). In other words, whereas the substantive claim side of the prognostic frame remains rather vague, the procedural claim side is more elaborated.

The call for citizens’ assemblies is part of XR UK’s third demand, ‘Beyond Politics’. In plain words, due to the universality of the climate emergency threat and the efforts towards change having been fractured and divided in the past, XR UK calls for the solutions not to be driven by ideological conviction or any other elements that might divide the cause.

“GO BEYOND PARTY POLITICS
GO BEYOND PERSONAL POLITICS
GO BEYOND OPPOSITIONAL POLITICS
GO BEYOND IDENTITY POLITICS
GO BEYOND WESTMINSTER POLITICS”

(ABP)

A primary goal is to effectively mobilize a large and diverse pool of supporters on the grounds of framing the prognosis as maximally inclusive and not alienating to potential supporters (I #1, I #2, I #5, I #7, I #10). In principle, anyone is welcomed to join XR UK and become a ‘rebel’. Several documents (WWR; STR, RS) explicitly stated that the movement is made up with people from all walks of life: “young, old, black, white, indigenous, of all faiths and none, of all genders and sexualities and none: being alive on earth now is all the qualification required” (WWR). As Hallam (2019) puts it, XR UK must strive to include people which historically speaking have been underrepresented in the UK’s environmental movement related to, be that because of ideology, social class, culture, religion or race (Hallam 2019).

\(^{35}\) Successful examples stated by XR UK include Ireland, Canada or Australia – or even domestic examples in which policy initiatives were facilitated by a citizens’ assembly (Extinction Rebellion 2019c).
The way forward for XR UK and the climate movement is to go ‘beyond politics’ and send a message of unity and collaboration rather than connect climate change to a politics marked by division:

“We must move beyond traditional attritional debate, so loved by business-as-usual – where somebody has to win (and therefore someone loses) – into a world where everyone prospers. We must move beyond ideology, to unity; beyond division to collaboration. The challenges we face and the decisions that need to be made are simply too big for our broken parliamentary democracy.” (ABP)

This starts with the rejection of conventional party politics – ‘politics as usual’ – deemed unable to effectively address climate change. Overcoming conventional party politics and the division between ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ politics (HFX) is considered a key step in overcoming the division and gridlock and, essentially, political standstill on the issue of climate change due to, as some interviewees exemplified, ‘tribalism’ (I 9) and ‘dogma’ (I 4). An example for XR UK’s withdrawal from conventional means of political participation has been their avoidance to express affiliation with political parties. To illustrate this, several interviewees (I #1, #3-8, I #10) mentioned XR UK’s positioning during the UK general elections in 2019. As they described, the official guidelines offered by the XR UK strategy circle was not to affiliate with a particular political party, but to build up public pressure for all political parties equally to support and implement effective climate change policies.

Regarding XR UK’s rejection of political ideologies, an ample number of discussions has been taking place, for example, on social media. On Sep. 1st, 2020, the official XR UK twitter account posted:

“Just to be clear we are not a socialist movement. We do not trust any single ideology, we trust the people, chosen by sortition (like jury service) to find the best future for us all through a #CitizensAssembly A banner saying ‘socialism or extinction’ does not represent us” (Extinction Rebellion 2020b).

Similarly, Hallam (2019, p. 9) describes it as a universalist struggle which involves “appealing to people in a diversity of political, cultural and religious groups” by framing climate change as universal threat against which only unity in action can succeed. This should be done by using ‘culturally neutral language’, “ditch[ing] environmentalist language and adopt[ing] the language of traditional liberal universalism”. This should implicitly leave space for a ‘left-wing’ interpretation, or at least not explicitly exclude it. For example, he advises for XR UK to tap into notions of honor, duty tradition, nation, and legacy and thereby gain access to both the left-wing and right-wing, politically speaking.
Correspondingly, there are several other documents which explain how there are no particular pathways of change baked into XR UK’s prognostic framing, as XR UK’s “shared vision of change” (p1; OV) relates to a future state of the world which “is fit for the next 7 generations to live in”:

“It [the vision of change] is sufficiently broad that it can contain a variety of opinions on how best to work towards that change: A healthy, beautiful world, where individuality and creativity are supported, and where people work together, solving problems and finding meaning, with courage, power and love. This will be underpinned by cultures rooted in respect for nature, genuine freedoms and justice” (p1).

Regarding the rejection of identity politics, this quote by (Todd 2019, p. 70) reflects the position that the climate emergency requires to the (temporary) subordination of fights for social justice:

“We [who are concerned with social justice and identity politics] have not given any thought to how the express train of ecological breakdown will smash through this delicate diversity we have spent so much time building brick by brick. We have forgotten that all of these important issues – in fact, every issue – resides within the most important issue bar none: ‘the planet’. With a broken planet, we will have no gay rights, no feminism, no respect for trans people, no attempt at fairness and justice for people of colour. What we will have is a fight to survive and a lot of violence.”

In its opposition of conventional politics, XR UK also draws distinctions between itself and what is referred to as “conventional environmental activism” of recent decades (AN; RS). It is deemed ineffective and essentially ‘reformist’ on the grand scheme of things, offering ‘gradualist solutions’ instead of radical challenges to the system (Hallam 2019). The failure of conventional campaigning becomes evident with the rise of global CO2 emissions by 60% since 1990 (RS; Hallam 2019). The key tactic which XR UK as a movement has agreed upon to use to pressure the government into implementing CAs has been mass non-violent civil disobedience. This way, it seeks to, on the one hand, cause massive economic disruption and thus shake the political system and on the other hand raise awareness in the public (STR). XR UK’s prognostic framing outlines a rejection of, for example, petitions and ‘online activism’ (AN; DNAW) and contrasts the movement’s strategies and tactics. For example, some interviewees claimed that well-established environmental activist groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth had limited ambitions when it came to radical systemic change and were confined by what was deemed ‘possible’ within the current neoliberal system (I #3, I #6, I #10). Others pointed out that XR UK, being a new movement to the climate movement, did not carry the historical baggage that these more established groups did in terms of a fixed public reputation and path dependency (I #5, I#8).
“Conventional approaches of voting, lobbying, petitions and protest have failed because powerful political and economic interests prevent change. Our strategy is therefore one of non-violent, disruptive civil disobedience – a rebellion. Historical evidence shows that we need the involvement of 3.5% of the population to succeed – in the UK that’s about 2 million people” (AN)

In contrast with other current environmental campaigns, XR UK pushes for political transformation instead of a change of individual lifestyle and consumption choices, although they may be welcomed (RS). This is reflected in p8: “We avoid blaming and shaming. We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.” XR UK’s aim is to change ‘hearts and minds’, not habits (DNAW; OSTRA; STR). This was illustrated during the HFX talk:

“So then, what can you do? It's easy. All you have to do - it's easy - is stop drinking from Costa cups. You know about throw away stuff, don't do that anymore. And you know, those plastic straws - yes, stop that as well. And if you think those changes are going change climate change, really, you need to change your mind. Because we've gone way beyond that. Of course, you should do that stuff. That's really important. But what's at stake has gone way beyond that. So, stand up, take part, join in.” (HFX)

6.1.2.2 Climate Breakdown (CB) frame: Standing in unity against a universal threat

“Believing that there is no Them and Us, only all of us together, Extinction Rebellion seeks alliances wherever they can be found. We are fighting for our lives and if we do not link arms, we will fail because the forces we are up against are simply too powerful. We need you.” (Why rebel)

The CB frame follows the master frame in its universalist prognostic framing which seeks to overcome divisions and confrontations in ‘traditional’ politics at all costs and emphasizes the idea of ‘beyond politics’. The entry point for making sense of the climate emergency and in the CB frame is first and foremost the existential threat of climate breakdown which subordinates all other crises. This is illustrated by the authors of the 2020 vision paper:

“If you’re a believer in social justice, and deeply concerned by the real threat of climate breakdown, be part of XR. If you would like capitalism to evolve beyond its destructive tendencies, and are deeply concerned by the real threat of climate breakdown, be part of XR. But you don’t have to be either, or anything else. You just have to believe in non-violence and the need to act now because of the climate emergency. The ambition is for us as a society to really feel this emergency at last. If the polluter elite go on as they are, then it’s curtains for humanity. That is not ideology. It is plain and simple fact. This is what the somewhat misleading slogan ‘beyond politics’ really means: that very radical action is now needed in order to enable us to hold on to any of what we got. That action will involve the creation of a more equal society - not for reasons of ideology, but for reasons of survival.”

The essence of this frame is further captured in the SV document:
“XR’s aim is not to induct a discriminated-against group into full citizenship (as per 20th Century struggles for civil rights and suffrage) but to realise system change so that all of humanity can live peacefully within planetary boundaries.” (Story and Vision)

As I #4 put it, if the Citizens’ Assemblies were fully informed by scientific knowledge, they would fundamentally restructure the political and societal systems of consumerism, mass extraction and the financial system, which would actually end up being anti-capitalist. Furthermore, I #4 and I #7 expressed that they perceived activists around them, including themselves, to hold anti-capitalist viewpoints, but not focusing on them in XR’s messaging, as they believed for them to be implicit in XR’s actions and demands anyways. Similarly, I #7 expressed that she generally perceived three positions regarding activists’ positioning towards anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism. According to her, the spectrum generally reached from tacit agreement coupled with the stance that it is not what XR UK should focus on to agreement and the stance that it is implied in everything XR UK does to the belief that it should take the front seat in XR UK’s messaging.

At the DNA workshop, a presentation by one of the workshop instructors contained a slide to illustrate how XR activists were advised to talk about the climate crisis in a public setting. It showed a picture frame with terms, concepts and strategies written inside and outside of a frame. The inside of the frame contained strategies and tactics, including ‘non-violence’, ‘respectful and bold’, ‘needs all of us’, ‘emergency messaging’, others touched more upon what to bring to the ‘rebellion’, ‘emotions’, ‘community values’ and larger themes involved such as ‘protect nature’, ‘democracy’, ‘climate justice’ and ‘system change’. On the outside of the frame were strategies and tactics, such as the use of ‘leftie language’, ‘anarchists’ or the call for ‘personal change’ and ‘lifestyle changes’, the use of ‘blaming and shaming’ as well as focusing on ‘solutioneers (ecovillages)’ issues ‘animal rights’. Pertinent to the question of antagonistic vs. consensual political approaches, this slide visually illustrated the strategic framing choices made by XR UK, aiming for universal, inclusive framing over individualistic, antagonistic framing. As a result of the strategic framing, several activists expressed their concern that it was somewhat counter-productive, since by aiming to appeal to a broad audience, this radical inclusive approach produced exclusions as it alienated activists which approached climate change from a social justice perspective (I # 4, I #6, I #7, I #8, I #10).

There have been notable incidents in which XR actions and statements have sparked discussion both publicly, but also internally within XR UK, and which are based on the universality of XR UK’s framing. In 2019, there were numerous infamous incidents in which the rift between the
justice focused GJ frame and the radically inclusive CB frame came to life. They garnered plenty of media coverage and stirred internal debates around privilege, class and race and I will briefly outline each.

In October 2019, XR activists disrupted commuter transportation at the Canning town tube station in London during rush hour (Gayle & Quinn 2019). The action received backlash in the media and from the communities affected, which criticized for targeting public transportation in a diverse working-class neighborhood. By some parts of the movement, it was praised for raising public attention and justified in the face of the emergency. However, vast parts of XR UK, various groups and spokespeople, have rejected the action and distanced themselves from it on the grounds of it being divisive and targeting the wrong parts of society (Townsend 2019). In a similar fashion, four interviewees (I #6, #7, #9, #10) have denounced the action for being alienating towards the communities XR should strive to include better. Although driven by good intentions, they considered it to be insensitive towards race and class and possibly conveying a confusing picture by targeting public transportation instead of fossil fuel infrastructure. In the same month, an XR arrestee sent flowers to the Brixton police station and left a note thanking the officers “for all they have done with decency and professionalism” (Greenwood 2019). In the eyes of critics, this was reflective of XR UK’s troubled relationship with the police and complete lack of “empathy for communities who experience racist policing” and acting blatantly racist by “choosing to not ‘see’ race” (Blowe 2019). Besides, that particular station has played a “part in Britain’s ugly history with deaths of black people in police custody” (Shand-Baptiste 2019).

One of the more controversial voices in the framing of climate change has been Roger Hallam. In an interview (Knuth 2019), he has drawn comparisons between the climate crisis and the Holocaust, stating that the "fact of the matter is, millions of people have been killed in vicious circumstances on a regular basis throughout history". In the context of other genocides in recent centuries, he referred to the Holocaust as “almost a normal event ... just another fuckery in human history” (Connolly and Taylor 2019). As he clarified, the intention was to make a point about the severity of the climate crisis:

“[…] it is happening again, on a far greater scale and in plain sight. The global north is pumping lethal levels of CO2 into the atmosphere and simultaneously erecting ever greater barriers to immigration, turning whole regions of the world into death zones. That is the grim reality.”
He further added: “We are allowing our governments to willingly, and in full knowledge of the science, engage in genocide of our young people and those in the global south by refusing to take emergency action to reduce carbon emissions.”

6.1.2.3 Web of Life (WL) frame: ‘Regenerative culture’

The prognostic side of WL frame does not promote particular solution of strategy for political change in strictly antagonistic or consensual terms. Rather, it takes a step back and expresses the need to treat the emotional health and relational disconnect underlying the climate.

A central element in XR UK’s prognostic is the call to build a ‘regenerative culture’, which is ‘healthy, resilient and adaptable’, both inside the movement and in society at large (p2, 3; SV; STR; TC; WWR) – and ultimately “[restore] the intricate web of life” (OV). This is driven by the need for us “to reconnect with our love for ourselves, our country and our people alongside wider neighbours; people and the natural world” (p3). Accordingly, different levels of care ranging from the individual level to the planetary level are distinguished: ‘self care’, ‘action care’, ‘interpersonal care’, ‘community care’ and ‘people and planet care’ (p3). Apart from care, another important element is personal and collective ‘healing’ of the broken relationships (p3; p7; GJRE; Williams 2019). Several activists expressed the importance it had for them that this side of XR UK’s framing to be strongly embedded in movement practices and every-day affairs (I #5, I #7, I #9, I#10).

6.1.2.4 Global Justice (GJ) frame: International solidarity

Political change in the GJ frame is underpinned by a strong antagonistic orientation, challenging the power structures manifested in capitalism, colonialism and racism (EJB; XRISN).

Diverging from the GCE master frame, the GJ frame does not stress the central role of citizens’ assemblies, but for XR UK to link with and strengthen the efforts of indigenous and other communities in resistance on the frontlines of the environmental crisis (EJB; GJRE; XRISN). The showing and practicing of collaborative solidarity should be done by making the struggles of those communities visible and their voices heard in XR UK actions (CM; EJB; GJRE; XRISN). XR UK should “listen and learn” from their struggles (GJRE) and ultimately, an international network of “mutually respectful, co-operative and beneficial connections” between XR UK and communities in resistance should be built (XRISN). Importance is placed on the relationships in the network to be based on equality, with respect to self-determination.
of the diverse independent movements and groups involved and mutual learning from each other in the pursuit of ‘collective liberation’.

6.1.3 Motivation

The crises “can no longer be ignored, denied or go unanswered by any beings of sound rational mind, ethical conscience, moral concern or spiritual belief” (Extinction Rebellion 2019, p. 2, my emphasis). This short excerpt from the Declaration of Rebellion shows that there are different levels on which activists connect to the climate emergency and are inspired to become engaged.

The GCE frame includes a broad ‘vocabulary of motive’ which engages activists and sustains their involvement with XR UK in framing theory (Section 2.3), this motivational side of framing relates to the severity of the problem, the urgency to act, the probable efficacy of joining others in the cause, the moral priority of doing so, and the enhancement or elevation of one’s status.

6.1.3.1 Global Climate Emergency (GCE) frame: Intergenerational justice, moral duty and emotional connection

The severity and urgency of the climate crisis are often emphasized together and articulated at maximum level – the stakes could not be higher. The message is clear: There is no issue more pressing, no issue more devastating - climate change is the ultimate challenge and immediate action is required:

“This is the time. Wherever we are standing is the place. We have just this one flickering instant to hold the winds of worlds in our hands, to vouchsafe the future. This is what destiny feels like.” (WWR).

XR UK urges to take up in the ‘fight for survival’ (RS; SV; TC), an all-enveloping ‘rebellion for life’ (RS; WWR) and is acting ‘on behalf of life’ (Extinction Rebellion 2019; STR). Quite literally, it seeks a rebellion against the extinction of life on planet earth and there is no alternative to joining XR UK:

“Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars, and they are lining up now to write rebellion across the skies. There is no choice” (WWR).

It is emphasized that climate change action will only be successful when all act together and that everyone can have an impact, everyone can find a place within the movement (WWR; STR;
TC; STR). The feeling of empowerment through acting collectively was a sentiment that resonated strongly with several of the interviewees (I #1, I #5-7, I #9, I #10) with one activist explaining:

“You are part of something that is literally bigger than yourself. You can contribute, you have meaning, you are in a community of people who are also shit-scared like you are. And just by being there you realize ‘Okay, maybe this is not all so fucked. If we all genuinely try’ (I #5).

In this context, several interviewees outlined the importance of the welcoming, respectful, and constructive space for their sustained activism. In their experience, XR spaces are some in which people are urged to participate in whichever way they choose, and everyone’s opinion is accepted (I #6) innovative ways of communicating and working together (I #7), good support network for people overwhelmed by the crisis (I #6).

A strong component of the motivational aspects of the GCE frame is inter-generational justice and a moral responsibility towards future generations (p6) as “history […] is calling from the future” and there is a responsibility towards all life on earth (OV; WWR). It is described as a ‘sacred duty’ (Extinction Rebellion, p. 2; Yamin 2019), a ‘transcultural duty’ (Hallam 2019), a ‘moral imperative’, a ‘survival imperative’ (Shiva 2019, p. 7) - ultimately the “highest duty as Earth citizens” (Shiva 2019, p. 8) and a “universalist struggle […] to save all human beings” and “fulfil our transcultural duty to create a world safe for our children” (Hallam 2019, p. 8).

At the HFX talk, the speaker ended by asking three questions which express the moral gravity of the climate crisis:

“Here's question one: What does it mean to be a good human being? Question two: What does it mean to die without regrets? Question three: Will you be able to look your grandchildren in the eye and say, you did what you could? If not you, who? If not now, when? Stand up, take part, join in.”

As much as the motivation to act In the GJ frame is based on the needs and interests of future generations, in this frame it is equally important to act in solidarity with frontline communities in resistance particularly in the Global South, seeking justice.

In the GCE frame, engaging in climate activism is connected to fundamental questions about human life on planet earth and is considered a ‘service to life’. It expresses the longing

“to live a meaningful life, to be in unity with each other and with the life-source, call it the spirit, call it the divine, call it the still small voice, it doesn’t matter what it is called or how it is spelled if it guides us in service to life.” (WWR)
In several instances, joining XR UK is connected to aspiration of highest of human values, building “a new world of love, respect and regeneration” (OV), “a politics of kindness rendered consistently and unapologetically” (WWR), “an economy that maximises happiness and minimises harm” (WWR). The campaign by XR UK and henceforth the activists driving it are framed as the antidote to the ‘toxic’ systems and healing the broken, unhealthy relationships. XR UK’s actions are based “human decency, dignity, responsibility, fairness, duty, honesty, morality and care” and the rebellion creates communities “rooted in radical compassion, trust, reverence and respect” (WWR).

Many activists said in interviews that one of the most important ways in which XR UK strikes a chord with activists, is by appealing to a variety of emotions and creating space for acknowledging, processing, and supporting each other’s emotional reactions to the damages and losses caused by climate change (I #1-3; I #6-10). This is explicitly mentioned in p8 and p10, SV, WWR, Hallam (2019). As I #10 put it, citing the HFX talks as an example, “XR […] has really succeeded in connecting emotionally to what the science says. Yeah, I think that's a real strength”. For him, XR helped him open up emotionally to climate change: “Suddenly, emotionally, it just all hit me. Just the loss and, there were people around me here [at the HFX talk] in tears and, it just hits you on such a deep level. This weight that you've been carrying, perhaps your whole life, not realizing, it just comes to the surface” (I 10). Several interviews stressed the importance of inviting grief and mourning (I #6-10) – for “what’s already happening and what’s to come” (I #10). Different emotional responses are channeled into a call for action:

“I said to you that you might generate a number of emotions, things like perhaps panic or fear or being scared. A sense of frustration, sense of anger, sense of rage, maybe a sense of loss and sadness or grief. If you felt any of those experiences […], could you put your hand up so I get a sense of that? I think that's every hand, actually. And then, can I ask this follow-up question: ‘Who would like to do something about it then?’” (HFX)

I #8 shared her impression that grief is “very rarely about people currently dying from climate change”, but rather about biodiversity loss predominantly. The XR UK documents highlighted fear of the future with climate change as an important emotion in the movement (SV; WWR; Hallam 2019) and several interviewees mentioned the role of fear in motivating people to act and keep the movement together (I #3, I #5, I #6, I #8).
7. Discussion

The climate crisis is many things. It is caused by elevated levels of greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere and therefore measurable and quantifiable. It causes an increase of severe weather events, threatening livelihoods. It is a symptom of the human-nature disconnect. It is an exacerbation of global power dynamics and inequalities. It is tightly linked to an economic model that fetishizes growth. It is an existential burden to future generations.

The analysis has shown that XR UK’s climate crisis framing and the relation to political change is dynamic and complex. Shared understandings and meanings of the climate crisis are, for the most part, compatible with each other. They are interwoven and together form a rich array of interpretations and different levels on which activists relate to and engage with the climate crisis. The main source of friction stems from the question: To what extent should the underlying social drivers be addressed to understand this complex phenomenon which on the surface might appear as one of hard science, graphs, and figures.

The following quote aptly illustrates the triad of collective action frames that are linked together by the overarching Global Climate Emergency master frame: The Web of Life frame, the Global Justice frame, and the Climate Breakdown frame.

“We can and now must redesign human societies based on love, justice and planetary boundaries so that no person or society is left to face devastating consequences and we learn to restore nature together” (Yamin 2019, p. 27, my emphasis)

The analysis has also shown that the master frame and its three sub-frames exhibit differences with regard to portraying climate change as singular or multiple event and political change as consensus- or antagonism-based (see Figure 2).
Figure 2: This schematic diagram illustrates how the master frame (Global Climate Emergency) and its three sub-frames (Climate Breakdown, Web of Life, Global Justice) are positioned with relation to its climate change conception being either singular or multiple (X-axis) and political change based on consensus or antagonism (Y-axis).

7.1 The ‘Global Climate Emergency’ master frame: (de-) politicization in the bigger picture

A key finding concerns XR UK’s departure from previous years of climate activism which have embraced Climate Justice as a binding master frame after the failure of COP15 (Chapter 3.2). Instead, the GCE master frame emphasizes the severity and urgency of the climate crisis as its starting point. Climate justice is still an element of this framing in the shape of the GJ frame, but the explicit politicization, which is at the heart of climate justice, is not the main driver of movement mobilization. There is the wide-spread notion in XR UK that the radical demand to reach net-zero Carbon emissions by 2025 coupled with democratic decision-making processes that remedy the flaws of the current political system (i.e., ‘vested interests’, ‘corruption’ and ‘short-termism’) will either coincide or necessarily lead to anti-capitalist solutions that promote social justice. I suggest that this initial shift in master frame from climate justice to menacing meta-frames is directly tied to the fact that, relatively speaking, the activists of XR UK and their target audience have a relatively low level of direct climate change experience which can be linked to: (1) The UK context (compared to the Global South), (2) the predominance of middle-class activists (as opposed to working-class) and (3) the mostly urban setting (as opposed to
rural and/or coastal). This may play a role for the GCE to frame climate change more as an apocalyptic future instead of a catastrophe in the present.

However, there are several factors that suggest that the GJ has been gaining importance over time. The extension of the GJ frame is hinted at both in the XR UK’s Story and Vision document and in the XR UK’s Strategy for 2020 document. In the former, the authors reflect that XR UK’s characterization of the climate crisis has been primarily ‘environmental’ and reliant on quite linearly communicating the climate science to the public. The authors therefore advocate for a shift towards a more ‘human-centric story’ which puts emphasis on collective vulnerabilities related to climate change. In the latter, indications include XR UK’s aspiration to “lead the conversation about the underlying causes of the crisis” as well as to “stand alongside and learn from other communities, particularly indigenous, marginalised and those suffering from the climate and ecological crisis the most right now.” This shift towards a stronger influence of the GJ frame (frame extension) could be seen throughout 2020, captured by the slogan ‘climate justice = social justice’ or ‘climate justice = racial justice’. An important point in this development was XR UK’s interaction with Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests over the summer of 2020 (Nugent 2020; Shand-Baptiste 2019).

The two previous paragraphs illustrate two opposing dynamics in the navigation between singular and multiple ways of understanding the climate crisis: (1) the subsumption of all concerns, grievances and social conflicts under the all-encompassing umbrella of the climate apocalypse as an act of depoliticization and (2), the emergence of radical system critiques brought to the fore by previously marginalized voices in an act of repoliticization.

This ‘re-introduction’ of climate justice through the GJ frame demonstrates the tensions in the movement over what strategy is best to create transformative change. Frictions like these between primarily ‘environmental’ (CB frame) and primarily ‘social’ (GJ frame) representations of the problem have been found in other environmental social movements, such as the Camp for Climate Action in UK (e.g. Schlembach, Lear and Bowman 2012; Saunders, 2012) or in the climate movement at the COP15 in Copenhagen (Cassegård and Thörn 2017; Chatterton et al. 2013). What stands out in the case of XR UK are two things: First, the GCE includes a third perspective with the WL frame which actively gives space to an emotional and spiritual engagement with the climate crisis. From that perspective, one could also argue that XR UK’s strong focus on giving space to emotions in their framing could be understood as a
‘political’ act, since it brings to the fore a previously marginalized way of for activists to connect to the climate crisis.

7.2 Climate change: multiple or single?

There is an inherent multiplicity in XR UK’s climate change framing, as it is a part of an interlinked ‘climate and ecological emergency’. Although the scope of this study excluded the ecological side to the emergency, it is worthy of mentioning, not least because the dominant climate change discourses have been criticized in the past for marginalizing the significance of biodiversity loss as an equally urgent crisis (Crist 2007). The broad emergency framing allows for climate change to be represented in multiple different ways in terms of causes, showing that XR UK’s framing does not per se imply Swyngedouw’s (2010) idea of being ‘CO2 fetishist’.

The GCE master frame and the collective action frames are compatible for the most part, which could be because their vehicle, the demands, values and principles were conceived by the relatively small founders’ group.

7.3 Political change: consensus-based or antagonism-based

An essential element in the GCE master frame is rejection of conventional means of the need to transform the conventional political processes by which policies are made – the ‘politics’, in Mouffe’s terms - to address the climate crisis. The call for the installation of Citizen’s assemblies – which are envisioned more transparent inclusive and representative. Coming back Rancière’s and Mouffe’s conceptualization of politicization, political change through the lens of XR UK’s GCE frame could be considered an act of repoliticization in Rancièrian terms. His understanding of politicization is rooted in the present and does not involve building an alternative socio-political project that stands in contrast to the current order (e.g., a Green New Deal)(Kenis and Lievens 2015; Ranciere et al. 2001), as this inevitably leads to new exclusions – a dynamic XR UK is acutely aware of. Rather, in his view, the ‘political’ arises when excluded people and positions become visible when activists not just demand treatment as equals but act as if they were equal. This could be achieved through the installment of citizen’s assemblies.
There certainly are elements in its framing, which contribute to the *universalization of the human subject* as well as the *universalization of the environmental object*. The GCE master frame and the CB frame, in particular, rest firmly on the climate scientific consensus and are underpinned by apocalyptic imaginary which locates climate change more in the future than in the present.

XR UK’s universalist approach in the GCE frame could be read as being depoliticized. However, it is important to note that the strategic intention behind universal framing is to create a large consensus for urgent action across the population and *not* to paint a picture of equitable green growth which could be seen as implying techno-managerial solutions. Just as a transnational company might advocate for the inevitability of green growth solutions at the World Economic Forum to improve its position in the global market (WEC 2013), XR UK seeks to stay clear of oppositional and confrontational messages for the sake of movement building. Regarding the concern that not putting forward an alternative socio-political project while at the same time ‘raising the alarm’ risks ‘emergency mode’ governance, i.e. strictly technical solutions, an XR UK response on their website points towards citizens’ assemblies, “the way we frame the question for the Citizens Assembly will mitigate against narrow solutions that are ineffective for dealing with the wider contact and system-wide issues” (Extinction Rebellion n.d. b). Interestingly, there are references made to ‘technological’ solutions to draw down carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in terms of nature-based solutions, “an ancient piece of technology – it’s called a tree” (HFX) and the “finest technology we have is love” (WR).

For a more holistic examination of the dynamics of (de-)politicization in XR UK’s framing, it could be fruitful to consider two factors: temporal scale and the position and role of XR UK within the wider climate movement. Regarding the first factor, XR UK as a movement deliberately leaves the process of crafting solutions and imagining alternative socio-political pathways to citizens’ assemblies. In other words, there is acknowledgement of the inherent political nature of climate change and the existence of antagonistic relationships which require to be ‘tamed’ into agonistic relationships by the shared agreement on the rules of the assemblies. Hence, the confrontation of ideas could be seen as temporally ‘outsourced’ to a later phase of transformation in which the citizens’ assemblies have been set up. Refraining from divisive or confrontational framing for the time being could therefore be considered not post-political, but what could be called ‘pre-political’, preparing the way towards political contestation. Regarding the 2nd factor, I agree with de Moor *et al.* (2019) that it is important to understand XR UK in
the context of a larger climate with a diverse spectrum of strategies and tactics. Most activists regarded XR UK’s role within the wider climate movement to contribute to creating urgency and raising awareness, putting climate change on the public agenda and ultimately to mobilize people to get involved in climate activism regardless of previous experience. As described in several texts (I #1, I #3, I #9, Hallam 2019, SV), XR UK has been successfully shifting the ‘overton window’, meaning that it is becoming more socially acceptable to talk about the climate and ecological crisis. In a sense, this widening of the discursive space political space for the exchange of ideas could be considered a political act in itself.

7.4 Different interpretations of transformation

Coming back to Few et al.’s (2017) typology of transformations, differences between the framings can be linked to different interpretations of transformations.

First, XR UK’s framings may be based on different conceptions of what Few et al. (2017) refer to as ‘target outcomes’ – which corresponds to singularity vs. multiplicity in climate change conceptions. The GCE frame in general, and the CB in particular, define the target outcome in ‘instrumental’ terms, meaning that the risk of climate change is primarily understood from an environmental perspective, i.e., indicators of success are measured in quantifiable terms (e.g., a reduction of CO2 emissions). In contrast, the target outcome in the GJ frame defines the target outcome in radical terms, as it addresses the “underlying causes of social vulnerability” (Few et al. 2017, p. 5). Looking at the mechanisms of change – which can be linked to the prognostic level in framing – in the GCE frame transformative change is pursued through means of ‘re-organization’, given that the major prognostic claim relates to installment of citizens’ assemblies, i.e., a “change in the governance structure” (Few et al. 2017, p. 4). This is coupled with a second mechanism of change, ‘re-orientation’, and which is proposed most clearly in the GJ and in the WL, whereby this “reconfiguration” relates mostly to the social power relations in the case of the former and mostly to human-nature relations and human values in the latter case.
8. Conclusion

Extinction Rebellion UK has emerged as one of the loudest voices in the contested field of climate politics and has developed various climate change framings which are linked to different interpretations of sustainability transformations. Rooted firmly in climate science, the broad *Global Climate Emergency* master frame is characterized by its focus on climate change as existential threat to humanity, the need to overcome the divisions of conventional politics and a strong emphasis on the moral imperative to act. This master frame offers space for different interpretations and emphases which are articulated through the Climate Breakdown (CB), the Web of Life (WL) frame and the Global Justice (GJ) frame. The CB frame emphasizes the urgency to prevent a devastating, apocalyptic future and therefore narrowly emphasizes the climate change as a purely bio-geo-physical phenomenon. The WL frame sees the climate crisis as a symptom of a broken human-nature relationship and emphasizes and emotional engagement with climate change. The GJ frame understands climate change is tightly linked to the underlying social drivers and power relations which uphold the status quo. The CB frame shows the narrowest conception of climate change, whereas the WL and GJ frame are broader in scope. In terms of political change, only the GJ frame is radically antagonist. A possible avenue for feature research could include a detailed study of the effects that different framings have on the discourses of climate change.
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APPENDIX A: Interview guide

#1: General

- How did you become interested in environment/climate issues?
- Which do you consider to be XR’s core strengths?
  - To you, what makes it stand out from other environmental action groups?
- What do you think is XR’s role in addressing the ecological and climate crisis?

#2: Core Values in text and action

- How would you describe discussions about the direction of XR given the different group flavors on national/regional/local level as well as the decentralized organizational structure?
- The 1. principle states “We have a shared vision of change - Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.” Can you describe what that shared vision looks like from your perspective? And for the people around you?
- Which documents/texts do you consider to be central for the group’s development, core goals and principles?

#3: Science and truth

- What kind of knowledge does XR build their demands and actions on?
  - How is complexity and uncertainty regarding the climate and ecological crisis addressed?
- What is ‘the truth’? (➔ principle ‘tell the truth’)

#4: Social drivers

- How would you describe discussions within XR about the drivers of the crises? What are dominant views?
- When XR speaks of ‘system change’, which system(s) are at the core of the critique?
  - Which systems need to change?
  - Prompt: Do you think there are strategic considerations not to frame the climate and ecological crisis in certain ways?
- What are the strongest forces preventing change from happening?
  - What significance does climate denialism have as a main barrier for change?
- Which are the leverage points that XR focuses on? Where does XR seek change?
- How has XR worked together with other resistance groups involved in the direct fight for environmental and social justice (in your experience)?
- Can you tell me about how XR groups (e.g., the one you are involved with) engage with local issues? How has it been working for XR to engage with local concerns and people that are not necessarily drawn towards climate activism?
There have been calls for XR to diversify, both coming from inside and outside. How do you think that relates to mobilizing people to join?

#5: Politics

- What does ‘beyond politics’ mean and why is it important for XR?
  - Can you describe discussions within XR about that?
- What are the benefits of being apolitical and what are the disadvantages?

#6: Involvement

- What is your hope for XR’s development in 2020?
- Active since when? Which XR groups? Level of engagement?
## APPENDIX B: Interview schedule

<table>
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<th>No</th>
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<th>Duration (in minutes)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1.2020</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>XR Deptford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.1.2020</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>XR Southwark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.1.2020</td>
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36 For a detailed overview of XR UK’s organizational structure, see *XR UK Rebel Hive* (n.d.).
APPENDIX C: Events

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<th>Event title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Date and location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Abbr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demand Action on Australian Fires</td>
<td>protest</td>
<td>January 10(^{th}), 2020 in London</td>
<td>This XR London protest happened at the Australian embassy in London on. It happened in solidarity with a mass protest in Sydney cohosted by Australian Uni Students for Climate Justice and Extinction Rebellion (Extinction Rebellion 2020 XYZ). The visible and audible part of the protest consisted of blocking the road in phases, chants, chalk paintings, a performance by the red rebel brigade (see chapter 6. Findings) and more than ten speeches by XR activists. I use the fieldwork notes I took during the protest.</td>
<td>DAAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community meeting with the XR Southwark social justice group and a member of the XR internationalist solidarity network</td>
<td>community meeting</td>
<td>January 12(^{th}), 2020 in London</td>
<td>This meeting took place in a café in London with the objective of exploring opportunities for collaboration and discussing inclusion and participation in XR. I took notes after the meeting and include some general themes in the analysis.</td>
<td>CM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading for Extinction (and what to do about it)</td>
<td>talk</td>
<td>January 15th, 2020 in London</td>
<td>HFX</td>
<td>This talk has been given across the UK and has become central way of presenting XR UK to the public, reaching people interested and educating about climate change (I #3, I #9, I #10). It introduces ‘the reality of the climate &amp; ecological crisis, and the rationale and ethos behind the Extinction Rebellion movement’. According to a self-description, it is “the XR talk and is recommended for everyone” (Extinction Rebellion 2020, emphasis in original) and several of the interviewees mentioned having been to one. The full transcription and slides were used from an HFX talk in a community center in London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XR DNA workshop</td>
<td>workshop</td>
<td>January 18th, 2020 in London</td>
<td>DNAW</td>
<td>This 7h-workshop explores “the history, future and nature of Extinction Rebellion” and is divided into three sections story, strategy and structure (Extinction Rebellion XYZ). Like the HFX talk, the DNA workshop is carried out in communities across the UK to solidify shared understandings and visions in unity and autonomy (XR Strategy 2020). I attended one of them on at a community center in London and include the notes I took.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX D: List of materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Source type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Only specific section(s)?</th>
<th>Abbr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XR UK website</td>
<td>website</td>
<td>The XR UK website(^{37}) provides an introduction and extensive overview of the movement and has been described by several interviewees as first contact point for people interested in getting involved.</td>
<td>- The emergency(^{38})</td>
<td>TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Why we rebel?(^{39})</td>
<td>WWR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Our vision(^{40})</td>
<td>OV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Our story(^{41})</td>
<td>OSTO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Our strategy(^{42})</td>
<td>OSTRU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Our structure(^{43})</td>
<td>TC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Our theory of change (^{44})</td>
<td>ABP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- About beyond politics(^{45})</td>
<td>SOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Solutions(^{46})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Justice Rebellion</td>
<td>event</td>
<td>The Global Justice Rebellion is a network of XR-related groups which first</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>GJRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{37}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. d)  
\(^{38}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. e)  
\(^{39}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. a)  
\(^{40}\) Ibid.  
\(^{41}\) Ibid.  
\(^{42}\) Ibid.  
\(^{43}\) Ibid.  
\(^{44}\) Ibid.  
\(^{45}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. f)  
\(^{46}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. c)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>XR Internationalist Solidarity Network</strong></th>
<th>website</th>
<th>The XR Internationalist Solidarity Network’s website</th>
<th>- About</th>
<th><strong>XRISN</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Justice Bloc</strong></td>
<td>website</td>
<td>Website description of the Environmental Justice Bloc</td>
<td>/</td>
<td><strong>EJB</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rushing the Emergency, Rushing the Rebellion? Story and Vision for XR in 2020</strong></td>
<td>strategy paper</td>
<td>An assessment of XR UK’s story, strategy and vision written by Marc Lopatin (volunteer communications strategist for Media &amp; Messaging), Skeena Rathor (co-founder of the XRUKEJB Vision Sensing Circle and a member of the Political Circle), Rupert Read (co-convenor of XR Political Liaison and a national spokesperson for XR). Published in January 2020.</td>
<td>/</td>
<td><strong>SV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Together: XR UK Strategy 2020</strong></td>
<td>strategy paper</td>
<td>A strategy paper detailing movement goals and focus of strategy for XR UK in 2020. Contributing working groups and signatories include: Actions circle, Arts,</td>
<td>/</td>
<td><strong>STR</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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47 Lopatin, Rathor and Read (2020)
48 Extinction Rebellion UK (2020a)
| Rebel Starterpack | flyer | A flyer[^49] which “a brief introduction to Extinction Rebellion, along with links to more detailed information about the movement and suggestions for how you can get involved. Published October 28th, 2019 | / | RS |
| This is not a drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook | anthology | A collection of 29 essays by XR activists, described in the following way on the book cover: “This book contains everything you need to know how to do it [rebel]. By time you finish it, you will have become an Extinction Rebellion activist.” | - Declaration of Rebellion (Extinction Rebellion)  
- Foreword (Shiva 2019)  
- Introduction (Knights 2019)  
- Die, Survive or Thrive (Yamin 2019)  
- The Climate Emergency and the End of Diversity (Todd 2019)  
- A Political View (Lucas 2019)  
- A New Economic (Raworth 2019) | / |

[^49]: Extinction Rebellion UK (2019d)
| Common Sense for the 21st Century: Only Nonviolent Rebellion can now stop Climate Breakdown and Social Collapse | monograph | A monograph\(^{50}\) written by XR co-founder Roger Hallam. Published in September 2019. | - The time is now (Ross 2019)  
- Afterword (Williams 2019)  
- Framing and Messaging  
- Why a rebellion?  
- Reformism vs. Revolution  
- Accepting the truth is the first step |

\(^{50}\) Hallam (2019)
APPENDIX E: XR UK demands\(^{51}\), values & principles\(^{52}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>demands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Tell the truth</em>. Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Act now</em>. Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Beyond politics</em>. Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens’ Assembly on climate and ecological justice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>values &amp; principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>We have a shared vision of change</em>. Creating a world that is fit for the next 7 generations to live in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>We set our mission on what is necessary</em>. Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change – such as “momentum-driven organising” to achieve this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>We need a regenerative culture</em>. Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>We openly challenge ourselves and this toxic system</em>. Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>We value reflecting and learning</em>. Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>We welcome everyone and every part of everyone</em>. Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <em>We actively mitigate for power</em>. Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <em>We avoid blaming and shaming</em>. We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>We are a nonviolent network</em>. Using nonviolent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <em>We are based on autonomy and decentralization</em>. We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in our name.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{51}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. c)  
\(^{52}\) Extinction Rebellion UK (n.d. b)
APPENDIX F: Reflections on ethics and positionality during the research process

Social movement research raises a variety of ethical challenges that require critical and reflexive consideration during different phases of the research process – from the initial selection of research questions to the choice of methods, data collection and analysis/interpretation to the dissemination of research findings (Chesters, 2012; Milan, 2014). Interacting as part of a broader relationship between activism and academia, these ethical questions reflect epistemological and ontological commitments in knowledge production and the constant tensions of the researcher between objectivity and subjectivity, closeness, and distance (K. Blee, 2013; Milan, 2014). In the following, I will reflect briefly upon and discuss some of the most pressing ethical issues that arose prior to and during fieldwork. Informed by Chesters (2012), (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012) and Milan (2014), I will structure them along the topic’s *relevance of the research, power in the researcher-activist relationship* and *accountability*.53

(1) Relevance of the research
Conducting research in the realm of collective action for social change as an academic ‘outsider’ to the social movement holds the risk of studying social movements as “objects of knowledge for academics, rather than as knowledge-producers in their own right” (Chesters 2012, p. 145). Does the researcher do research about or with the social movement activists? How can the activist be recognized as a research subject rather than a research object? To whom should the research matter?
In order to not only serve my personal research interest of pursuing a master’s degree, I tried to formulate a research question which considered what XR activists could find useful for the advancement of their goals. Discussions and reflections on social media and XR strategy papers (e.g. Lopatin, Rathor and Read 2020) indicated that looking at how XR’s climate change framings intersect ideas for political change was a general field of inquiry which brings together tensions and opportunities pertinent to the movement. Although my interest is more theoretically than practically oriented, I expect the findings to be capable of making a valuable

53 An elaborate set of reflections and practices undertaken prior to entering the field can be found in the Research Ethics Review Form (see Appendix G).
contribution to reflections within XR as they relate to the central movement objective of mobilization. XR activists may think about different ways in which climate change is framed XR in everyday activities more consciously. By choosing to do semi-structured interviews, this allowed the activist to gain greater agency during the conversation. At times, however, I did not manage well to steer the interview with a good balance between staying with the interview guide and giving space to the emergent thoughts and reflections by that particular activist – leaning towards the latter of the two. Several activists expressed their appreciation for the interview, stating that the questions were thought-provoking and engaging and that it was useful for their own reflections on XR to sharing with an outsider to the movement. Moreover, several interviewees showed curiosity in what other activists had responded to my questions. In the analysis I tried, whenever possible, to let the activist speak in their words using quotations, in order to counter the tendency that often “voice and identity of individual activists is subsumed into a broader narrative and the nuances and complexities of their journey are lost” (Gillan and Pickerill, p. 141).

(2) Power in the researcher-activist relationship
I recognized that the motivations and investments in this research project would be vastly different for me as the researcher and the activists I interviewed. What both of us ‘gained’ from the interview and the ‘labor’ we put into it meant different things to both of us (Milan 2014). Understanding that limits of time and energy typically are crucial features of political activists’ daily lives. Thus, I made a conscious effort to not pressure the activists when I approached them and, when possible, took up activists on their offer to establish the initial contact with another activists (during snowball sampling). Needless to say, I sough to be mindful of time during the interview. I committed to providing each interviewee with the final thesis upon completion and with a shorter summary version covering the most important findings and discussion points.

(3) Identity and positionality
I entered the field primarily as a master’s student driven by my interest in gaining a better understanding of climate change framings within XR. Whenever I engaged in a conversation with an activist or participated in a meeting, I made clear at the beginning that I was primarily present as a researcher. At the same time, however, I consider myself to be a politically engaged individual and have been actively involved in climate activism on numerous occasions over the past years, for example in a direct-action civil disobedience campaign with Ende Gelände in Germany in 2018. Prior to this research project, however, I had only observed XR from afar
and engaged in discussions with sympathizers or members, not partaking in any XR actions. I was and am aware of my support of their overall goals and ambitions and therefore aimed at engaging with the participants as „distant but not neutral” (Blee 2013). Throughout my time in the field, I realized, however, that the tension between my different identities was far more complex than I had initially imagined. Combined with the decentralized, self-organizing structure of XR, it led to one tricky situation in particular. In advance of a XR Southwark community meeting I had asked an attending member for permission to join. I did this assuming that the person would either ask the other people planning to attend if it were okay for a researcher to join or that the person — based on their active presence on the online platform — had a degree of authority to make that decision. However, I had not comprehended that, as it was kindly explained to me later “everyone in the group is their own gate-keeper”. Consequently, it would require for me to obtain consent from each attending group member. Not knowing in advance who would attend made it impossible for me to obtain consent prior to the meeting, which is why I should have decided not to participate at all. Once I arrived at the meeting and the situation became clear, it was suggested to do a group ‘temperature check’ to decide whether I could stay at the meeting. I was aware that it was not an anonymous decision amongst the members, but since all promptly welcomed the idea, it appeared to be the best way of handling the situation. I decided to close my eyes during this, so that members would not feel pressured or judged by me seeing their reaction. After I re-opened my eyes, I was welcomed to remain at the meeting and the overall handling of the situation was appreciated. Then I introduced myself and the research project once more in more depth and clarified my motivation and interest in attending the meeting and that I would ensure full anonymity for all participants. After this experience I realized I had to always be as explicit as possible about my role in the interaction with activists and to not attend any internal meetings that had not been publicly announced.

54 This is a common tool used in group meetings (not exclusively by XR) to assess how individuals feel regarding a particular situation or decision. Typically, group members raise or lower their hand(s) to indicate support (raised) or skepticism/refusal (lowered).