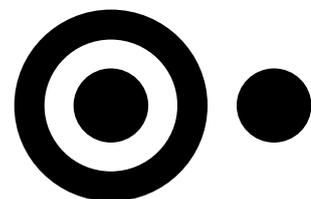


# Mobilising environmentalists

**A qualitative study of Swedish environmental  
social movements online.**

**By: Shawn Hedbom**

Supervisor: Daniel Fittante  
Södertörn University | Department of Social Sciences  
Master's dissertation 30 credits  
Sociology | Spring semester 2022  
Leadership for Sustainable Development Programme



**SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY** | STOCKHOLM  
sh.se

## **Abstract**

Many studies on social movements aim to understand a moment on an international level. This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of the Swedish environmental movement and the collective identity that can be found in these movements. In the effort to do this, the study aimed to answer research questions. The questions aimed at answering if collective identity is observable on social media, and to what degree, and how the collective identity online compares to what can be seen at a protest on the street. To answer these questions, the author took the help of two qualitative methods. The study looks at collective identity in observable activities. The netnographic method has been used to gain insight into ten different Facebook pages that belong to seven separate Swedish environmental organisations. The ethnographic method of participant observation has been used to gain insight into six protests that took place in Stockholm, Sweden, during the spring semester of 2022. The results suggest that collective identity is visible online, to a high degree, because all aspects of collective identity are observable. Also, comparing the results between Facebook pages and street protests the visible collective identities did not differ, they just manifested in different ways.

## **Popular science abstract**

Social movements have had a significant impact on how society looks and how people act in today's society. In this paper, the author has tried to contribute knowledge to the subject of the Swedish environmental social movement. To contribute to the subject, the paper has answered questions. These questions are focused on understanding if collective identity is visible on social media, and if is, to what degree. In addition, how does it compare to the collective identity visible at street protests organised by social movements. To gain this understanding, observations of social movement organisations Facebook pages and social movement street protests in Stockholm in Sweden have been conducted. The results suggest that collective identity is visible and that it is possible to study collective identity online. Also, the collective identity is visible at protests. In the same way as online, they just manifest in different ways. The most critical factors in collective identity communication online are active participation from members and responsible organisation.

**Table of contents**

- 1.0 Introduction ..... 1
- 1.1 Background ..... 1
- 1.2 Aims and research questions ..... 3
- 1.3 Delimitations ..... 3
- 1.4 Structure ..... 4
- 2.0 Previous research ..... 5
- 2.1 Social movements ..... 5
- 2.2 Information and communications technologies ..... 6
- 2.3 Social movements in Sweden ..... 8
- 3.0 Theory ..... 11
- 3.1 Collective identity ..... 11
- 3.2 Summary ..... 14
- 4.0 Method ..... 15
- 4.1 Netnography ..... 15
- 4.2 Ethnography ..... 18
- 4.3 Selection process ..... 20
- 4.4 Anonymisation ..... 22
- 4.5 Research ethics ..... 22
- 4.6 Data collection ..... 24
- 4.7 Netnographic data ..... 24
- 4.8 Ethnographic data ..... 25
- 4.9 Data analysis ..... 27
- 4.10 Limitations ..... 28
- 5.0 Results and analysis ..... 30
- 5.1 Boundary maintenance ..... 30
- 5.2 Political consciousness ..... 35
- 5.3 Negotiation ..... 39
- 6.0 Discussion ..... 44
- 7.0 Conclusion and suggestions for future research ..... 48
- 7.1 Conclusions ..... 48
- 7.2 Suggestions for future research ..... 49
- References ..... 51

## **1.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I will introduce the reader to the paper's subject. The chapter will contain four different sections. First, the background will be presented to put the issue in context. After that, research aims, objectives as well as research questions will be stated. Thereafter there will be a section dedicated to discussing delimitations of the study. In the fourth and final section, the structure of the paper will be explained to help orient the reader.

## **1.1 Background**

Social movements have been a fruitful and vital source of information for scholars during the last few decades. Researchers from different academic fields have studied the many movements that have come and gone. One of the movements that still exists today is the environmental social movement, and it will be the focus of this paper.

Walder (2009) discusses and explains social movements as a concept. Until the 1970s, social movements as a sociological concept were within a sociological tradition that looked at the relationship between social structure and political behaviour. The scholars dedicated to the subject were trying to understand variations in political orientations in social movements. Important issues during this time included movement propensities for violence, motivation, ideologies and aims. A breakaway field later redefined and narrowed down the field and central topics. The subject of interest became the process of mobilising the movements. To the field, it meant looking at how social groups marshalled resources, recruited members and navigated political environments to succeed as a movement. Critics later suggested that the construction of meaning, collective identities and amplification of emotion played a vital role in mobilisation. Social movement scholars are still trying to answer questions about how movements mobilise their members, and there are still important questions unanswered.

Touraine (2002) suggest an overwhelming need to understand social movements because of the critical role they play in the future of democracy. This means increasing knowledge on the subject to form new social movements. Social media is suggested to play an important role in social movements in today's society. According to Kidd and McIntosh (2016) platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have played key roles in social revolutions in Egypt, Spain, Iceland and Tunisia. This is because of the organisational capacity offered by social media

platforms. Activists can utilise the communication tools to mobilise their movements to protests. Therefore, playing an essential role in social change in the future.

Collective identities as a concept are often seen as an important base of political action and social movements. The construction of a shared identity is a precondition for collective action and a product thereof. Solidarity efforts by social movement organisations aim at influencing public decisions and have internal effects that make members feel like they are a part of a collective effort. Collective action requires that people who participate have a shared definition of themselves, others and the relation that connects them, or that they create one together. Interaction between social movement participants contributes to the construction of collective identity through boundaries between different actors involved in conflict (Berg-Schlusser, Badie & Morlino, 2020). Literature on the subject of identities takes various perspectives and is a very present and important subject right now. Some scholars have focused on identity's role in the dynamics of protests and how it can be seen in protest participants. Also, how identities influence protest participation and politicise and radicalise participants (Klandermans, 2013). Other scholars have examined the communication between movement organizations and their members. Specifically, how this communication can hinder the production of collective identity in the age of social media. This communication was found to be instrumental in creating collective identities and, therefore, the participation in collective action (Coretti & Pica, 2015).

Synthesising the mentioned traditions and already existing perspectives, this study will look at the Swedish environmental movement to add knowledge to the under-researched subject in a Swedish context. More specifically, the social media of the environmental movement's organisations and their social media activity. Firstly, I will look at collective identity that is visible on Facebook pages that social media organisations run and if it is visible, to what degree. The other point of interest in this paper is on the already big field of social movement's street protests, looking at the degree of visible collective identity and if it is comparable to what has been seen on social media. I will be examining the observable practices that can be seen in the different contexts and present my findings with the help of theory and already existing literature on the subject.

## **1.2 Aims and research questions**

This paper aims to add to the existing knowledge of the environmental social movement and the societal change they are working towards in Sweden specifically. With the help of participant observation and analysis of their social media content, gain insight into how social movement organisations (SMOs) mobilise their members. By studying the SMOs and their social media accounts and their street protests, I hope to contribute a more profound understanding to the already large field of social movement studies.

### **Research questions**

- Do the Swedish environmental SMOs have a visible collective identity online, and if so, how does it manifest it on their Facebook pages?
- How does the collective identity found on Facebook compare to the collective identity that can be seen at a street protest?

I aim to understand if SMOs communicate their own collective identity online and if there are any differences between them. Another aim of this paper is to understand how collective identity can be communicated online successfully.

## **1.3 Delimitations**

Firstly, social media accounts that are not active have not been taken into consideration in this paper. By saying this, I mean accounts that have not posted anything within the last year have been excluded from the study. Also, accounts that are not describing themselves as directly environmentally focused have not been considered. Then there is the geographical delimitation that is limited to Sweden. All of the social media pages part of this study are based in Sweden, with mostly posts in Swedish and discussions. This decision was made because I wanted to focus and gain insight into the Swedish environmental movement and to answer the research questions.

Social movement research is often focused strictly on the people that are taking part in protests or representing a movement in some way. So, clarification worth mentioning is that the people discussed in this paper are not necessarily the same people seen at protests in the street. This paper will focus on what happens on the internet, which is due to the purpose of the paper.

## 1.4 Structure

The introduction chapter is followed by chapter two, where previous research will be presented and discussed under specific themes that relate to the study somehow. After previous research, the theoretical frame will be discussed, where I explain the theory that has been chosen for this paper. The next chapter is about this study's methods. I lay out the methodological frame of the research that has led to the results of the paper. In the method chapter, methods of collecting data, data handling, coding, how the material will be used, ethical issues and limitations of the study are discussed.

A results and analysis chapter follows the method chapter. In this, I lay out the most important data that has been collected and processed. This analysis is done with the help of theoretical dimensions previously mentioned in the theory chapter. Following is the discussion, where I discuss the results that were previously explained and the discussion in relation to previous research and theory.

The last chapter is conclusions and recommendations for future research, in which I discuss the answers to the research questions previously formulated and give my suggestions for research I believe would be interesting to see in the future.

## **2.0 Previous research**

As previously stated, scholars have studied social movements to a great extent. In this chapter, I review existing literature that I believe to be the closest related to the topic of this paper. With the help of the literature as an illustrational tool, I explain the importance of the subject and explain how the gap in knowledge looks.

## **2.1 Social movements**

In the context of social movements, Charles Tilly worked with social movements through case studies and historical analysis. According to Tilly, social movements as efforts made by groups that share an identity and engage in activism (Tilly, Castañeda & Wood, 2020). He also defined them as “historically specific clusters of political performances” and argues that the leaders of social movements mobilise supporters through activities that foster group identity (Margadant, 1998). Another well-known sociological author that generated knowledge about social movements is Bert Klandermans. In one of his articles (Oegema & Klandermans, 1994), the authors examine active participation in social movements. With the help of quantitative methods, they look at why social movement sympathisers do not participate. Specifically, they look at two routes to what they call non-conversion, which is a movement’s failure to turn members into participants, and erosion, which is a loss of sympathisers. The authors conclude that several factors can affect participation. For example, a gradually more controversial tone that can arise in social movements can lead to erosion and thereby lead to a loss of sympathisers.

Grasso and Giugni, (2022) focus on international work of the environmental social movement studies. The authors explain how the state of the field with up-to-date knowledge. The book provides a comprehensive perspective of how the field has developed and a historical perspective. For example, the book goes over examples of social movements in different parts of the world and the generated knowledge that previous studies have contributed. One example is the development of anti-nuclear movements that started the second wave of environmental protests that developed in Europe. Also, key figures in movements are discussed and how they have contributed to a rise in concern for the environment. Different factors about social movements are also brought up. Like, social class, networks, collective action, political generations, and collective identity, among others. When discussing the future of environmental social movements, the authors conclude that climate justice activism is

likely to play an important role in the future. Also, it appears like environmental destruction is expected to continue in the coming years, and the outcome of crises is often determined by how people act.

Giugni and Grasso (2015) continue to focus on environmental social movements. The authors look at previous literature on the subject. Looking at aspects like social bases and values, resources supporting movements, political opportunities, political framing processes and how these aspects impact the mobilisation of environmental movements. The authors highlight three features of environmental social movements. Firstly, that environmental movements are highly heterogeneous, with the exception of anti-nuclear movements. The authors suggest that this heterogeneity can be seen as both a weakness and a strength. Because of their heterogeneity, it is hard for environmental movements to have a strong shared collective identity.

On the other hand, their heterogeneity gives them multiple options for mobilising. The second feature is that environmental movements have transformed themselves. As the article describes it, the transformation has happened in the shift from conservationism to more politically oriented. Also, through the emergence of new actors, issues and a new way of framing environmental problems. The author suggests that the movement's capability to transform has contributed to its survival. As indicated by previous studies, the third feature is the institutionalisation of the environmental movement. One of the reasons behind the institutionalisation could be the general public and policymakers are more interested in environmental issues today.

## **2.2 Information and communications technologies**

One topic related to this paper's subject is information and communications technologies (ICTs). Previous authors (Sassen, 2002; Kelly Garrett, 2006) argue that social media and digital networks offer communities an opportunity to build and strengthen bonds with other people. It also provides activists a unique opportunity to develop their networks and share information that was not available before. The same opportunity makes it possible for people that are non-formal political actors, who are often excluded or marginalized, to be a part of the political scene. ICTs have evolved activist communication beyond face-to-face interaction and developed their collaboration.

Scholars have also studied online movements using a multitude of methods and perspectives. For example, some have chosen to look at specific SMOs. We can read about the Black Lives Matter movement on Facebook in one article by Mundt, Ross and Burnett (2018). With the help of qualitative methods, the authors conclude that the BLM movement provides an example of how social movements can strengthen and scale with the use of social media. Also, a movement is more likely to succeed if it chooses to have a social media presence. Other scholars have decided to take the help of quantitative methods when studying social movements online.

An example of this is an article by Hwang and Kim (2015) that looks at how social movements can use ICTs as a tool to make participants partake in collective action. The study showed that social media could increase people's social capital by actively participating in social media. Also, people who are more active in social media are more likely to participate in collective action outside of the internet.

Scholars have also looked at specific ways of communicating with the help of ICTs. For example, an article by Wall (2007) looks at e-mails sent out by SMOs to their members and how successful they are at communicating their collective identity. The paper concludes that SMOs level of success in communicating their collective identity depends on whether they have other organisations connected to their activity. Organisations that can be connected in this manner are other SMOs, NGOs or companies for example. The connected organisations fill a function for the movement, and therefore make the movement more successful. Wall also suggests that SMOs have different processes to choose from when communicating their collective identity. For example, emotional investment, is aimed at getting members to participate and complete various tasks. Another example is setting boundaries, where SMOs communicate precisely who is and who is not part of the movement. Another related article (Gerbaudo, 2015) looks at social movement members profile pictures and how they construct collective identity within movements. Some movements have their members use avatars which relates to what they are protesting to communicate their connection to the movement. Other scholars (Wånggren, 2016; Diamond, et al., 2013) have looked at storytelling as a tool for SMOs to generate attention for their movement and strengthen bonds between members. Adding to this, some studies show how movements have mobilised and used the internet as a tool. One article (Harlow, 2011) looks at how a Guatemalan social justice movement mobilised its members. This was done by looking at Facebook comments and conducting interviews with members. The author concludes that the

internet has the capacity to create political activism in Latin America. Another conclusion is the movement was born online before thousands of online members were mobilised.

These articles have laid a good foundation for this paper regarding the use of ICTs. The research highlights the importance of social media for SMOs and shows how vital these types of studies are. The findings about SMOs and ICTs are in line with what has been said in the book *The Oxford handbook of social movements* (Della Porta & Diani, 2017). This book has shown what to look for when trying to understand how collective identity can be communicated on social media. It has given some understanding of what successive collective identity communication can look like.

To add to these previous findings, I will be contributing with a new perspective to the field. Firstly, the collective identity in the Swedish context. Secondly, examining observable actions that is visible in Facebook posts.

## **2.3 Social movements in Sweden**

A case study of social movements in Sweden adds to the existing scholarship. In Boström's book *Miljörörelsens mångfald* (2001) the author studies five environmental organisations in Sweden. The cases chosen by the authors are Naturskyddsföreningen (SNF), Världsnaturfonden WWF, Miljöförbundet Jordens Vänner (MJV), Greenpeace and Det Naturliga Steget (DNS). When working with these five case studies the author looked at documents and conducted interviews. Boström comes up with four themes in his collected data. One of the themes is concerned with the diversity in environmental movements. In contrast to the previously mentioned literature, the author suggests that the movements are not heterogeneous. It is also suggested that environmental movements often are seen as heterogeneous because of the researcher's unwillingness to look at the diversity and internal variations of the different organisations.

In a later study, Boström (2004) continues to work with the material he used to write the previously mentioned book. The author suggests that it is essential to note the specific nature of the environmental movement when it is being studied. Boström comes up with four points that are important to take into consideration when exploring identities and cognitive practices. The first thing is the nature of the issue that the organisation works with. Secondly, the structural resources that the organisation has at their disposal (symbolic and material resources), because it can influence the cognitive dimension. The third point is the local

context, like interaction with other organisations, for example. Time horizon is the fourth and final point brought up. This point includes earlier movement actors and their success in framing their cases. Boström (2004) concludes that it is crucial to look at organisations' cognitive practices because they are influenced by the organisations' form, interaction with other actors and collective identity. Also, it is essential to differentiate between the multitude of green identities that can be found in environmental SMOs, instead of seeing one collective identity. An excellent example of this is the *Eco-standards, product labelling and green consumerism* book by Boström and Klintman (2011), where the authors discuss green consumerism. The authors explain the differences in how people consume and how companies make us consume what they want. This thought is closely related to the discussion about differences in the specific green identities Boström has had in previous work. So, it is essential to look at differences even though it is a green identity connecting the organisations.

Thörn and Svenberg (2016) look at the relationship between the Swedish environmental movement and institutionalisation. The authors argue that the environmental movement in Sweden is under-researched. Furthermore, the authors say that the environmental movement changed its strategies during the 2000s should be viewed in relation to global and national processes. Firstly, the Swedish policy level was influenced by a neoliberal discourse. Secondly, the international developments, like the discourse on sustainable development and Agenda 21, as well as the emergence of the dominant climate change issue globally. The authors define institutionalisation as a process of professionalisation and formalisation, and the process is completed when a movement has become a part of society's organisational structure. Another fundamental notion in the article is neoliberal responsabilisation, which they define as encouraging or offering collective involvement in resolving issues hitherto held to be the responsibility of government agencies. The authors contribute to the discussion of responsabilisation by looking at how social movements are involved in conflict negotiation around the subject. The authors suggest that environmental movement organisations (EMOs) partake in policy networks to establish environmental codes and standards for businesses. Thörn and Svedberg argue that responsabilisation is a result of movement efforts to be a part of policymaking. They also suggest that Swedish EMOs emphasise the moral responsibility of consumers and partner with organisations that they deem environmentally responsible. They conclude that their findings indicate that the de-politicisation of environmental issues that happens in the process of responsabilisation will engage actors in problem-solving.

Peterson, Wahlström & Wennerhag (2018) discuss the LGBT movement in Sweden and explains how the movement has become institutionalised. They suggest that participating in Pride parades no longer equates to coming out as LGBT. Also, Pride parades are performances and construction of temporary collective identities by people that partake. From a historical perspective, the authors explain how the collective identity of the LGBT movement has gone through phases and changed with time. Furthermore, they explain how people who partake in the movement do so to express their identity and mobilise when they identify with others involved. In connection to this, they use the term identity convergence to conceptualise the relationship between individual and collective identities that lead to mobilisation.

The previous literature about social movements has given the paper a solid background in social movement studies and highlighted the importance of studies like this one. The articles and books have explained what to consider when studying the subject, what to avoid and how one can approach similar problems. When looking at the previous research, the gaps are visible. As the scholars have pointed out, social movements in Sweden are under-researched.

To refer to what will be contributed in this study, again, I will be contributing with knowledge about the Swedish context and the environmental point of view. This paper will also contribute more knowledge regarding collective identity that is visible on the social media of Swedish environmental social movements. This paper is also different from earlier research because it has a qualitative method and has focus on collective identity.

The previous literature will make it possible for me to put my own research into context at the later stages of this paper. Also, it will aid me during the data gathering and coding process with providing a reference point.

### **3.0 Theory**

In this chapter, I will be presenting the theoretical framework of this study. This will include a presentation and explanation of already developed theories that are most relevant to the aim of this study. The chapter will also explain how this study will use chosen theories since they are used as a basis for interpreting the results later in later chapters of the paper. I have chosen to separate the collective identity from the previous research because it plays a more central role in this paper as a theoretical frame.

### **3.1 Collective identity**

Collective identity is studied by a multitude of academic fields. This paper will present already existing perspectives that are the most relevant to the study. Despite the debates that exist around the subject of collective identity and its usefulness, engaging with literature shows that the concept can yield rich insights and understanding of social movements according to Flesher Fominaya (2010).

Della Porta and Diani (2017) argue that identity is something that permeates many aspects of social movements, and that it is a central social psychological dynamic of mobilisation as well as being able to both sustain and demobilise social movements. Collective identity can be seen as a shared definition of a group that is determined by members and generated through shared interests, solidarity and experiences. Furthermore, scholars suggest that there are three dimensions of collective identity developed by Taylor and Whittier (1992). Della Porta and Diani (2017) explains and discusses the three dimensions. Dimension one is boundary maintenance. This dimension manifests in the process of framing of group and dominant groups in society. So, the boundaries mark social territories by highlighting differences between group members and others in the social world. The groups that are often used in this process are usually dominant groups and the movements erect boundaries to show differences between them. However, this process also puts pressure on the group to define who they are. These boundary markers set by the groups are suggested to be central to the formation of collective identity.

The second dimension (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) is political consciousness. This dimension manifests in the processes of framing as the groups try to define and advance their interests. Consciousness is used to realise the members' common

interests in a opposition to dominant groups. The collective actors have to attribute their discontent to cultural, structural or systemic causes instead of individual failings.

The third dimension is negotiation (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). This dimension manifests in groups efforts to transform symbols and engage in strategic actions that can challenge the status quo. Negotiation is an important dimension because activists have to resist the negative social definitions and demand that others treat and value oppositional groups in a different way. Taylor and Whittier (1992) provide an explanation of two settings where this dimension can be visible. Firstly, the private setting, where they interact with other members of the group. Secondly, the public setting where the groups interact and communicate with a wider audience. The negotiation process of negotiation can be explicit, with direct and open attempts at freeing the group from dominant representations. It can also be implicit, which is symbols that undermine the status quo.

Johnston and Klandermans (1995) argue that social movements' collective identity should be studied by looking at observable practices like appearances, gestures, speeches, symbols and texts. This means that the scholar looks at how activists enact their activist identities. The authors also go further into a discussion about the three dimensions that were mentioned previously. The construction of group boundaries establishes differences between challenging groups and dominant groups. Consciousness or interpretive frameworks come from challenging a group's struggle to express its interests. The politicisation of everyday life is seen in the use of symbols and actions to resist and restructure existing systems in society. The authors explain that we can learn about social movements' collective identity by asking members about the meaning of cultural symbols and labels. However, the most powerful collective identities are able to link the participants' sense of self with that of the movement and organisation. This also seems to be the case for online movements. According to Pickerill (2010), ICTs play an important role in shaping collective identity and working against established political interests in today's society. This is further motivated by the notion that ICTs have increased the ability of people to communicate with like-minded individuals. In an article by Siegel (2021), the author discusses how members' collective identity can lead to a feeling of mutual obligation to each other. Thereby social movement participation can lead to feelings of one-ness of we-ness.

Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995) states that collective identity previously has been seen as a side effect of basic social structures. However, the authors suggest a seven-point model for

analysing and understanding collective identity and applying it to two case studies. These case studies are the collective identity of Germany and Japan. The author goes through historical events that have had an impact on the two countries' collective identities. Later concluding that political and religious changes, among other things, have contributed to collective identity within the countries. In a book (Sinai, 2020) based on an analysis of Eisenstadt sociology, the author continues the conversation about collective identity on a national level. The author argues that Eisenstadt's work on collective identity in Israel has affected how the country has been sociologically perceived in later research. Continuing on the argument Eisenstadt had in his work, Sinai (2020) argues that the difference in history has resulted in a difference in collective identity when compared to other countries. Some components are close to Western European collective identity, but due to the Zionist movement, among other things, the similarities are only partial.

In a book by Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002), the authors talk about how social movements maintain their collective identity. They argue that activities that sustain activists' networks will strengthen collective identity as well as generate emotional energy. Also, that interaction between members in a movement context generates collective identity. Melucci (1996) also thinks that a collective identity is something that is actively produced by members. The author argues that the process of collective identity is a network of active relationships between members who communicate, influence, negotiate, interact and make decisions. Furthermore, Melucci suggests that technologies, organisational models and communicative channels used by movements are vital for movements to create their collective identity. This creation entails continuous investment from the movements if they want members to participate in collective action. Staying on the subject of how and where SMOs communicate with members, Gongaware (2010) argues that collective identity is created interactively. When definitions of their ends, their means, and the environment where their actions take place are being communicated in the networks of their relationships, their collective identity is being created. Furthermore, it is argued that collective identity plays a vital role in all social movement organisations (Vijayakumar, 2018).

There are some examples of already existing literature when it comes to a collective identity online. One article (Törnberg & Wahström, 2018) argues that social media groups are free social spaces for movements. Through studying a politically right-wing Facebook group, they conclude that their collective identity is visible when looking at the page. Also, it is suggested that social media pages should not be viewed as movement bubbles but rather as gateways

where movements spread their views to the public sphere. Other scholars that have used collective identity theory have studied things like differences between movements that meet face-to-face and the SMOs online, as well as what types of collective identity that are visible online (Mccaughey & Ayers, 2003; Treré, 2015)

### **3.2 Summary**

The literature about collective identity has a lot to contribute to this paper. It is a well-developed field in terms of collective identity in social movements. However, that is not the case when it comes to social movements and ICTs. The theoretical frame presented has provided this paper a sufficient background on the history of the subject, its developments and how it is used in scientific work today. It has also illustrated what aspects are essential to consider when studying collective identity and showing how the theory can be used when analysing results.

In this paper, I have considered all of the literature presented when collecting material. Furthermore, the work done by previous scholars has guided this study and helped when generating research questions and what can be done with the help of theory in the subject. The theory is used by looking at the things that collective identities are comprised of and see if it is visible on the Facebook pages. Then look at the visible appearances on the pages and how they construct, maintain and interact with each other before concluding about their collective identity. This will be done by looking at observable practices, like Klandermans (1995) has suggested.

The boundary maintenance, consciousness and negotiation dimensions brought up by Della Porta and Diani (2017) is especially important to this study. The three dimensions play an important role in unpacking and analysing the collected data in later chapters.

## **4.0 Method**

This chapter contains a presentation of the paper's methodological point of departure and use of the method. It will explain what and how data has been collected through chosen methods. Furthermore, how the collected data has been handled, coded and used will be presented. Also, discussions around validity, methodological critique, and ethical aspects will be presented.

### **4.1 Netnography**

The netnography or digital ethnographical method was one of the new methods that emerged together with virtual methods when researchers found an interest in internet uses.

Netnography is developed from basic principles of ethnographic traditions and has become a modified and upgraded version of ethnography. For studying communities during the digital age, netnography is a leading method. Because the method is relatively new, it has not been used by scholars until recent years, and therefore it is still developing (Kaoukaou, 2021).

Pink et al., (2016) explain what this method entails. Netnography makes it possible for scholars to do ethnographical research in the contemporary world. It enables the researcher's ability to research how people live in a digital, sensory and material environment. Social worlds are something that can be explored with the help of netnography. The focus of this paper is Swedish environmental social movements and their Facebook pages and therefore the insights offered by the authors has been instrumental in the process.

Pink et al., (2016) go through five principles of netnography. The first one is multiplicity, which means that there is always more than one way to engage with the digital. The following principle is non-digital-centric-ness, which means that the digital aspect is de-centred in netnography. Meaning that researchers should not be biased with the idea of needing to use digital methods. Instead, the method should be developed around the research questions. This is what happened in this paper. Developing the research questions came before choosing the appropriate method.

The third principle mentioned by Pink et al., (2016) is openness, which signifies the collaborative process that netnographical research entails. This does not mean more collaborative than other research methods, but collaborative in a different way because of where it takes place. The fourth principle is reflexivity, which refers to the researcher's ability

to be reflexive. Reflexivity here means that the researcher has to be able to ask themselves how they produce knowledge in a material-sensory environment. Finally, the fifth principle is unorthodox, implying that netnography requires attention to alternative forms of communication. This knowledge provided by the book will permeate this paper since the principles are essential to pay attention to. The principles mentioned are of value to this paper because they have provided me with an understanding of what is expected from netnographical research and what it should include.

In the book *Digital sociology* by Lupton (2015), the author expands on the subject of digital sociology. One of the main subjects in the book is the principle of reflexivity, which was previously mentioned, which highlights the importance of the ability to be reflexive when conducting netnographical research. The author also brings up, like the other authors, that digital sociology contains more conventional aspects of research. Also, explaining that these new methods present a new way of generating knowledge about society. Being able to be aware of my own reflexivity has been important throughout writing this paper. Understanding what my own relationship to the social media platform was important before finding appropriate Facebook pages. What I knew about the functions on pages played a role in my ability to find the pages used in this paper.

The choice of social media platform to use was made with the help of what Hjorth et al., (2017) has said. The authors go through the meaning and application of netnographical methods and illustrate good examples of how digital ethnography researchers generate knowledge. One example of this is when the authors explain how people use digital media, like microblogs, to form networks online. These microblogs create opportunities for users to connect with like-minded people to start collective action. In this paper, the focus is on Facebook, which is a microblogging platform. This was important for this study because it offered insight into what platforms offer an opportunity for members to interact with each other.

In the book *Netnography: Redefined* by Kozinets (2015) provides a guide to researching with netnographical methods. The book explains the entire process of netnographic research, from the preparation stages to the analysis and interpretation of data. The author describes how netnography needs interpretation of human communication when the communication studied is shaped by new technologies. What the author explained to be important in preparing for netnographic research has contributed to the generation of this paper's research questions. The

next step defined by the author is data collection. The author discusses how to gather netnographical data, where to find it, and what data to choose. The points mentioned by the authors were taken into consideration when collecting data for this paper and will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter. For example, the author explains how netnographic data can be gathered with the help of screenshots. This is also what has been done for this paper when it was necessary.

The next part Kozinets (2015) explains that is of interest to this paper is reflective field notes. Field notes are suggested to be taken by the researcher to record their observations when gathering netnographic data. These notes can help the researcher to understand languages, rituals and pretexts, for example. Kozinets also explains that these field notes can be valuable resources when analysing data, to provide more understanding of some situations in later stages of the process. Notes were taken by hand when collecting data for this paper and provided the author with insights that would otherwise be lost. For example, when certain news stories were being shared it was possible to take note of a pattern that showed that certain types of information shared lead to more reactions.

The next part of the process that Kozinets (2015) mentions is the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. In this part of the book, the author explains and illustrates different ways of analysing and interpreting netnographical data. One thing mentioned by the author that is of interest to this paper is the seven netnographic qualitative analysis techniques. These techniques are imagining, re-memorying, abduction, visual abstraction, artifying, cultural decoding and tournament play. A researcher uses the methods to increase their academic understanding. In the construction of this paper, the author took the help of these techniques to gain further understanding of the data that was collected before writing anything in the results and analysis chapter. Using this approach helped the researcher to pick from the data as well as answer the research question. However, since this paper has two methods to answer the research questions, this approach was used to pick the most crucial information from the data with the help of coding, rather than being the focus of the analysis. The coding process will be discussed later in this chapter. Kozinets also explains how the researcher can code the data that has been collected and how the different approaches have advantages and disadvantages. It is suggested that coding can happen by hand with pen and paper or with the help of software. In the construction of this paper, I did coding work by hand which will be discussed further later in this chapter.

In another book about the netnographic method, Kozinets and Gambetti (2020) provide examples of netnographical studies and guides on what to do and what to avoid. The book explains how researchers can work with qualitative methods in social media research. It explains what data can be used and what possibilities the methods offer the researcher. Furthermore, they talk about the need for netnographical research because of its impact on today's society. They also take up examples of academic studies using netnographic methods and discuss their own relevant expertise in the field. In the book, we can also read about the critique that has been directed against netnography as a method. One of the critical views on netnography is that it can be very narrow in its view and that scholars that work with the method should take on a broader perspective in their research. As an answer to this, the authors explain that the method is not narrow and that netnographic research often uses a mix of other methods. Another example lifted by the authors is that netnography is a new method that has not developed the traditions and standards and quality like the more traditional methods have. In response, the authors argue that the method's connection to the netnographic approach has resulted in a methodological rigour that benefits theory construction and generates opportunities for scholars who choose to work with the method. Also, that netnography is still developing and gaining recognition with time.

The available literature on the netnographic method has provided the author and paper with sufficient background knowledge on the approach. It has also provided the paper with a methodological starting point and motivation to why this study is important. Also, it has provided the author with relevant tools and perspectives to use throughout the entire process of making this paper. The literature has also shown that technological advancements can and should be followed by methodologic academic advances. Specifically, the books by Kozinets have been of exceptionally high value due to their explanatory nature and the guides they provide. They have given the author enough knowledge from the beginning to the end of the process of writing this paper because of the instructions they provide.

## **4.2 Ethnography**

The second method used in this paper is ethnography. This method has been in existence for a much longer time than netnography and has been used in more previous academic research. Ethnography has also provided netnography with principles, methodological perspective and academic traditions, among other things. In this case, the choice to work with two methods

was made to widen the view of the study and get another perspective. Also, to help answer the second research question of the paper and not only rely on previous literature.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) tell us that ethnography is one of the most used methods in social research. According to the authors, ethnography refers to both first-hand empirical investigations and comparative theoretical interpretations of social organization. When it comes to data collection, the authors suggest that researchers participate in people's daily lives, looking and listening to what happens for an extended period of time. When observing, the researcher gathers whatever data that is available and relevant to the issue they are trying to throw light on. Also, the observations are often generally small scale of a group of people or a single setting, to facilitate an in-depth study. The analysis of the data collected involves interpretation of what human actions, meanings and functions that have been observed. This study has taken the Hammersley and Atkinson's explanations into consideration when deciding on using ethnography as a method of data collection. Their thorough explanations provided an upstanding of how ethnographic studies can be structured and how they fit together with other methods. For example, the understanding provided by the authors about studying observable practices was an important component to the choice of using the ethnographic method in this paper.

Taking one step closer and explaining what approaches are available, Khan and Jerolmack (2018) provide an overview. One aspect brought up by the authors that is of particular interest to this study is participant observation. The authors emphasize the importance of being prepared before carrying out the observations. If the observer does not prepare before carrying out the observations, there is a high risk of being overwhelmed by the amount of potential data. They also bring up the strengths of ethnographic methods. The strength is how close the researcher gets to the actual lived life experiences of the people they study. Being there and capturing the meanings, behaviours, and interactions that other more distant methods can gloss over is a basic justification of the ethnographic method. However, this strength can also be seen as a weakness of the method since there are things the researcher cannot see. The insight provided by the authors has provided this study with an explanation of what approaches are available as well as essential insights to take into consideration. It has also provided me with information that was important to take into consideration when structuring the entire observation process. For example, preparing a observation template beforehand proved to be fruitful.

Della Porta (2014) suggests that participant observations in social movement research provide a unique first-hand perspective that can be lost with other methods. Also suggesting that the interaction between first-hand data and already existing theory can generate important knowledge. The author also provides the reader with an explanation of what ethnographic research has done for social movement research thus far and discusses the positive and negative opinions that exist in the field. During the entire writing process, the information contributed by Della Porta (2014) was very helpful, especially the background information on the field.

The methodological literature about ethnography has proven to be instrumental for this study and has provided a lot of knowledge. It has also provided the author with many tips and tools to use when the participant observations took place. Della Porta (2014) was especially instrumental when choosing to use the method because of the information the author provides. The book has provided this paper and author with important information about the method and how it can be used in social movement research and will be discussed further later in this chapter when discussing data collection.

### **4.3 Selection process**

In this study, Swedish environmental social movements online are of interest. To study this, the author made a choice to focus on social movement organisations' Facebook pages. This choice was taken to narrow down the study. The choice to focus on one social media platform was made after looking at several and discovering the overwhelming number of pages that existed. Facebook offers the observer a multitude of important functions that other platforms don't have. For example, the information that is available on each page is vastly superior to its competitors. Being able to look at the information tab on each page helped through the selection process because it was a quick process to find out if the page was environmentally focused or not, thereby saving time as well as a lot of effort in finding out something of importance to the study. Other platforms that the environmental movements use, like Instagram or Twitter, also lack the availability of knowledge and functions that can be seen on Facebook. For example, the observer can see each page and, in this case, organisation's events in their schedule. In this study, it made it possible to find out what events the movements had planned. This was how I found out about the protests that I later observed.

The Facebook groups were chosen because of their relevance to this study. They were found with the help of search words that were significant to the topic. To find movements, I typed in words like environment, Sweden, ecology, and emissions, for example. Words used were in Swedish as well as movements I already know of were also typed into the search bar. Another way that Facebook pages were selected for this paper is through a snowball selection. Going into a page and seeing related pages and pages that were being advertised yielded some more pages to consider.

Another step in the selection process was making sure that the pages were big enough and could generate knowledge. These requirements were reached after seeing that many of the environmental movement pages had been disbanded or just did not contain anything. An example of this was a Facebook page that had hundreds of posts in a couple of months, and at the beginning of 2019, the posts had stopped entirely. Other pages were taken out of consideration if they were not a Swedish movement, if they weren't active, or if they did not have enough members, among other things.

The selection process that has been used in this paper generated seven social movement organisations. Plus, an additional three pages were connected to one of the movements. So, 10 Facebook pages were selected. However, I have chosen to combine the extra three pages to their connected movement. The choice was made for clarity purposes and to be able to separate what has been said by who during the analysis process. The pages have between 1000-20000 members. The sample was pulled from 18 Swedish environmental movement pages, and eight of them were not used because of member count, activity or connection to the subject. I have made a choice to call people that follow the page's members because they are the ones that take part in the discussions and see the information that is posted. To contribute to more safety of the individuals within the movement, I will also abstain from using the names of the movements. There was no way of me gauging the social impact of each page on a surface level. Some of the pages had clearer levels of social impact, like the ones that were actively advertising events and had long discussion threads.

The protests that were observed for this paper were connected to two of the movements. Five of them were related to one movement, and the last one was connected to another. Selecting these protests was only motivated by their availability. All of them happened after I had gathered the netnographic data and happened over a one-week period in Stockholm, where I

live. The process of data selection will be discussed further in the data collection part of this chapter.

#### **4.4 Anonymisation**

All of the movements that are mentioned in this paper have been anonymised to protect the people in them. This anonymisation process has been done to the highest personal ability of the author, and there have been several anonymisation measures taken. The anonymisation is motivated by the fact that they might not want their identity disclosed to a broad public. So, no individual or movement is mentioned by name to make identification harder and to protect members of the movements. To make it clearer to myself when working with the collected data, I marked each page with the page they came from. These markings were done before printing out the documents and the markings that were visible on the pages were g1, g2, g3, g4, g5, g6, g7a, g7b, g7c and g7d.

Some further anonymisation measures that have taken place are the translations of posts that have been done in the analysis. When quoting a social media post or banner at the protests, the author has translated and somewhat modified what is being said in Swedish to English to make it hard to trace back to an individual user. It is also worth mentioning that I don't believe that it will affect the results of the study negatively since the focus of the analysis is on a broad pattern for the most part.

There might however be a slight chance that a person can find the movements that have been a part of this study or be able to recognize what has been said and connect it to someone. For example, if a person that is a member of one of the mentioned movements or have written the post themselves. However, the translation to English and the anonymisation of individuals and movements, has made this identification harder. I am confident that enough measures have been taken to ensure individual anonymity in this paper and that people who have chosen to participate in protests and internet discussion will not come to harm because of this study.

#### **4.5 Research ethics**

Starting with the netnographical part of this study, there are some ethical thoughts and aspects to take into consideration. Kozinets (2015) brings up ethical considerations in netnography. One crucial aspect brought up by the author when studying internet communities is to not do

any harm to the people who are a part of them. This means showing consideration for privacy concerns, confidentiality and appropriation like you would do with any other method. Also adding fundamental human rights of human dignity, safety, protection, maximisation of human benefit and minimisation of harm. The author also brings up the ethical aspects of naming sources, saying that when it is possible to disguise the place that is being studied, to make it harder for people to find out who has said something. Other things brought up by the Kozinets include honesty, properly citing, and anonymising, among other things. The thoughts and arguments about ethics has been instrumental in how this study has been conducted. It has been vital for me when gathering data to show respect for all the ethical concerns that exist as well as being respectful of the rights of the groups of people that are being studied. Always making sure that no one can be identified, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, along with being honest when interacting with the movement. For example, when finding out about the protests I would later observe, a link to another communication app was provided. When accessing the app, I was honest about my intentions and explained exactly what I was doing and then got a time and place for the events. Continuing on the measures taken in regard to the observations that has been done in connection to this paper, I also told everyone that I talked to what I was doing and why I was there to make sure that they knew why someone was there taking notes.

Edlund et al. (2022) explains how Sweden is one of the few countries in the world where ethics is regulated by law. The authors also have a discussion regarding the problems with how ethics are viewed in Sweden as well as the positive aspects. The most crucial element brought up in the article is not to negatively impact anyone when conducting research. This important aspect is something that frequently comes up when there are discussions of ethics in research. The Swedish Research Council (2017) agree with the previously mentioned authors. Still, they argue that there is much more to consider when conducting research to protect the research subject's physical, mental and social integrity. They explain how every part and aspect of research should happen as well as how a researcher should behave and think when conducting academic work. For example, the importance of making sure that the collected data is stored with a respect to the research subject's integrity. In this study, all of the collected information has been deleted after it is no longer needed. Also, the coding that has been done by hand and the handwritten field notes from both netnographical and observational observations have been held in my personal possession in a place where no one

else has access to it. These notes have been destroyed and discarded after filling their purpose for the study.

Other examples of other ethical measures that have been taken in connection with this study are making sure to not chose a subject that could lead to vulnerable groups of people being involved or hurt. Also, being organised in the research to make sure no documentation gets misplaced. The last example of measures that have been taken is being aware of the various rules, laws, morals and perspectives that exist within research to make sure that nothing goes wrong with the ethics in the study.

## **4.6 Data collection**

After finding the Facebook pages the study focuses on, the data collection started. This collection process happened in two ways. First, the data was collected from the internet with the help of screenshots, copying bodies of text and field notes. Secondly, the data was collected from my observations at six protests with the use of pictures and field notes.

## **4.7 Netnographic data**

When entering each movement page, it was the interactions that were of interest to me. I wanted to find out if collective identity is visible, and to what degree is it visible. How they interacted with each other and the information they shared. Since the amount of potential data on each page was utterly overwhelming, I had to use a sampling method that fitted the study. The sampling method that was chosen is purposeful sampling. Koerber and McMichael (2008) explain how purposeful sampling looks for samples with certain qualities. The researcher looks at the aim of the research and selects samples accordingly. A guiding principle for this sampling method is to get maximum variation and include a wide variety of perspectives within the range of the researcher's purpose. The authors also explain the pitfalls a researcher can fall into when using the method. One being getting a sample that does not have enough variety. Another one is ending up with a sample that the researcher has crafted to achieve the results they want. Yet another pitfall is researchers that do not describe their sampling method in enough detail.

To avoid some of the pitfalls mentioned, I will now describe the selection of samples. As previously stated, the aim of this study is to gain insight into the Swedish environmental movement. Also, to understand how they communicate their collective identity online. To

reach this aim, I found a variety of Facebook pages of social movement organisations that showed communication in Swedish movements. The level of variety was solely determined by the amount of movements that fitted with the selection criteria that existed on the platform. If there were more pages available, the study would have adapted and included more. There are of course differences between the groups and their pages as well. These differences are visible in the number of members, aims, shared information, political association, and the interaction on the pages. Some of the movements had very active communications between members and the organisation, and others only had communication between members, and some only had the organisation sharing news articles and did not respond to members at all.

To reach the aim of the study and avoid another pitfall of creating a sample that has not been too crafted, the choice was made to collect 50 posts from each page. These posts were taken from the pages from the same date and varied in time between first and last post taken. One post in this case was a text, video, picture, event, invitation or article that was posted by a member or organisation, along with comments to the post. The posts were taken with the help of copying text or taking screenshots depending on what seemed the most appropriate way to capture the post. They were later posted into a document that was later coded. The document with all the posts was later gone through to take field notes. The choice to take the 50 latest posts from each page was made to avoid the pitfalls that have been described. And the reason for taking that number of posts was to make sure the same amount of information was taken as well as to make sure I did not end up with an overwhelming amount of data to work with. However, it meant that I had a set of 500 posts to go through, take notes of, and code. Since I did not go in and pick the posts I wanted one by one, some of the posts were of no use because of what they contained. For example, invitations to other movements or events that were not connected to the environment. However, even though some of the posts had low levels of usefulness, the data set I ended up with allowed me to gain a lot of knowledge about patterns I might not have seen if the posts had been picked out based on first glance appearances. It was also clear that I reached a high level of saturation, because the data became very repetitive relatively quickly in the process.

## **4.8 Ethnographic data**

The second part of the data collection process was collecting data from active participation observations. As previously mentioned, I found out about the protests taking place when looking at the different organisations' Facebook pages. It gave me a unique opportunity to

follow one of the movements through several full days of protesting as well as one protest with another organisation. All of the data that was collected from protests was done after the netnographic data had been collected and observed. This made it possible to know what to look for beforehand. Collecting the data after collecting the data online, has impeded the ability to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, because I already know what to look for when entering the field. Doing this has affected the end result, because I gathered data that I otherwise would not have thought about gathering. Also, I did not collect some data that I deemed to not be of interest to the subject. This also made my data gathering process a deductive one.

Since I found out about the protests on the organisation's Facebook pages, the sampling has been seen as a convenience, or accidental sampling. Koerber and McMichael (2008) explain this sampling technique as being opportunistic. It is called opportunistic because it is seen as convenient for the researcher. Also, the data is readily available and easy to gather. The authors also explain that even though the sampling is convenient, it is likely that the researcher will have to put in some amount of effort. Since I found out about the protests on a platform where I had easy access, along with them taking place in the city I live, it was easily accessible and convenient. Since the organisations advertised their process in advance, it also gave me an opportunity to prepare beforehand.

Before the observational studies were carried out, it was clear that the observations would be theory-driven observations. According to Della Porta (2014), theory-driven observations happen when the observer wants to see if a theory works in the field. Della Porta explains that an observation template can be necessary for the researcher when conducting observations. Before going to the protests and conducting the observations, I made sure to make an observation template with themes and specific things to observe in the notepad I used for my field notes at all the protests. This was an important tool to remember what I had found in the netnographical material as well as what to look for in my observations. Making the template proved to be very important to the information that was gathered and later compared to what was found in the netnographical data. For example, the language used on the movements Facebook pages was also found at the protests, in the form of songs and on their painted banners.

The five protests that were organised by the same organisation mostly took place centrally in Stockholm and lasted for around 8 hours a day at some capacity. The demonstrations moved

around in the city and had different aims depending on the time of day. I actively observed them for 25 hours in total. The single protest organised by another organisation took place at one spot in central Stockholm and lasted for 2 hours in total, which I actively observed for the entire time. When observing the protests, I took the role that Della Porta (2014) calls observer-as-participant, where I watched the movement for a brief period of time when they were actively protesting, and then I left the group. This choice was taken due to the nature of the protests that was arranged by the same movement. Since I was not a part of the group I was not provided with transportation when the group was moving to a different location. Also, since I was not a part of the group, I was not given the information about where they were going. To not make the observations differ from the first five protests I observed, I chose to take the same role at the sixth protest that data was collected from.

The data gathered from the observations mainly were field notes that were later written in a document and coded. The field notes contained descriptions of things that had been observed and thoughts that had surfaced. At the end of each protest, the field notes were written into a word document and got developed when I could still remember the situations. Also, pictures were taken of specific observations if they could not be conveyed efficiently in text at the moment. These pictures were deleted after each day when the situations they depicted could be written out in text with the rest of the data. Della Porta (2014) discusses how the researcher can know it is time to leave the field. The author explains that finding saturation in observational data comes when it is hard to find new information when entering the field. The data saturation regarding the observational studies connected to this paper also reached quite high levels when looking at the field notes since they got shorter after each protest that was observed. During the last two protests that was observed, it was hard finding something that was new. However, this is my own interpretation and it could have been affected by the method I chose. Also, the number of hours spent is quite low and if I would have continued to observe more protests, it is likely that more new data would have been collected. During the time of year the data collection took place, there were no more protests that were available to me and that has also affected the amount of data.

## **4.9 Data analysis**

As previously mentioned, I gathered all of the material in documents. The two different documents I worked with were one for the data that I collected the data from Facebook pages and one where I gathered all of the data from the protests. The data collected from the

Facebook pages mainly were text conversations between members, some screenshotted pictures as well as roughly six transcribed videos that had been posted by the organisation. The data collected and gathered from the protests were only field notes from each protest. These documents were later printed on paper and coded manually. This was a long process, as suggested by Kozinets (2015) that said postings over 100 would be a tedious task.

Saldaña (2013) explains that a code is a word or phrase that is summative, essence-capturing, salient or evocative attribute of a portion of text. The author also suggests that there is a difference between a code and a theme. The theme is an outcome of the coding, a categorisation, or a reflection. Adu (2019) adds to this by saying that qualitative researchers should also develop categories after the coding process. So, what was done in this study was going through the data several times and coding everything and after that themes and categories were developed. These themes were mostly related to the theory and previous literature presented earlier in this paper.

After breaking down the data and going through the coding process, the themes is presented and analysed in the coming results and analysis chapter. In that part of the paper, the themes and categories will be analysed with the help of theory and already existing knowledge on the subject.

#### **4.10 Limitations**

Even though I have had quite a lot of data to work with in this study, there are still some things I will not be able to conclude on with this study. For example, as Koerber and McMichael (2008) suggest, the generalisability of qualitative studies is an ongoing tension. This is a relevant subject for this study as well. Especially since the data collected from the protests only was taken from two organisations' protests. However, the generalisability of this study is considerably better due to the amount of data I collected from Facebook pages.

Also, there were constraints when doing this study. One is the amount of Facebook pages that were dedicated to the subject of the environment when beginning this study. It was a big task to find the movements that the study is talking about, and some of the existing ones did not let me get access to their potential data. For example, there were a few movements that required approval before getting access. These movements did not let me into their pages at all when I explained why I was interested. Also, there was a problem with a lot of pages that had “died” and therefore were unusable. There were quite a few pages that were completely without

communication after the start of the covid pandemic in 2020 and others that were dedicated to subjects that no longer had any interest and therefore had no activity. Another constraint during this study is the translations that have been done. All of the information mentioned from the data collected has been translated from Swedish to English. However, I am confident that I have been able to translate well enough and make sure the meaning behind what is being said remains.

## **5.0 Results and analysis**

In this part of the paper, I will be presenting the results of my study as well as analysing these results. This analysis will be performed using the collective identity theory dimensions previously mentioned in the theory chapter in the paper.

### **5.1 Boundary maintenance**

The first theme to bring up is connected to one of Della Porta and Diani's (2017) dimensions of collective identity. This dimension is boundary maintenance and entails nurturing a unique culture separate from the dominant society and establishing group membership. Looking at the results of this study, the process of boundary maintenance is straightforward to see online. All of the Facebook pages had some type of boundary maintenance, either shown by the organisation itself or by its members. This maintenance showed itself in many different ways and had different meanings depending on the group. It is also worth mentioning that the degree of boundary maintenance differed.

One very clear example of boundary maintenance shown on all of the pages was in the news articles they shared with each other. The news articles often contained information on how to behave as an environmentalist. For example, what to eat, where your food should come from, what energy to use, and acceptable behaviour toward things that can affect the environment, among other things. This information shows a boundary that the environmentalist should follow, and if they do not, they are not within their boundary. Relating back to what was said in the theory, it shows how the movement frame their way of behaving and erect a boundary between the activists and people that do not live in the same way that they do. Also, it defines who the people in the movements are and how they should behave to be a member of the group.

Another example of this found in the data is an article about charter flights shared on two of the movement's pages. This article discussed the airline industry and how much money they would be spending on charter flights in Sweden this coming summer. The response to this was mostly people explaining what they as a movement should be doing. They discussed what they believed to be wrong behaviour (going on charter flights) and saying that the group should do something to make the companies take responsibility. This again shows how the organisations members erect a boundary between themselves and other groups of society that

chose to take charter flights in Sweden. It could also relate to the political consciousness dimension of collective identity, where groups realise their common interests by sharing information that aligns with their common goals.

This is further backed up in several cases when looking at the comments relating to the articles. For example, as a reaction to articles containing information that does not align with the aims of the movement, there are often insults written in the comments. When an article about politician's reaction to environmental problems, a common reaction by members is to use the word "reptile brain". This clearly shows a boundary set by members, and in this case, an intellectual separation between them and popular society. Once again, the data shows an example of how the group builds a boundary between themselves and another group. In the case of politicians, it shows how members of the movement want to erect a boundary between politician (with the wrong views) in the dominant group and themselves as an opposition to that. The fact that movement members online insult politicians' intellectual capabilities could be interpreted as them trying to highlight the differences between the groups of politicians and activists as well. To relate it to Johnston and Klandermans (1995), the act of insults toward another group in society could also be activist enacting their activist identities and establishing differences between them.

An example of how the movements nurture a culture that separates them from the rest of society is the protests that they organise and advertise on their Facebook pages. One example of this is a news article that was shared on five of the pages in question. This news article is about a political party that wants Sweden to have stricter laws against activists. As a reaction to this article, the members have a lot to say. Some of the reactions to this article by members on some of the pages are:

They should be working on their environmental policy's instead of shooting the messenger.

Don't shoot the pianist, he is doing the best he can.

We're crying, begging and getting arrested.

These reactions show the nurturing of a unique culture, where behaviour that is seen as criminal by dominant society is nurtured by the movements. On three of the Facebook pages, there were discussions around climate activists that had been arrested connected to different

protests. These discussions happened connected to news articles or videos uploaded by the movement that was associated with the protest. On every occasion of content being shared, the arrested activists were praised by the online environmentalists. The words used to describe the actions that had gotten the activists into police custody were inspiring, important, and fantastic, among many others. The praising of activists shows clearly how boundary maintenance happens on social media. A field note taken by me regarding this topic said that it felt like they were encouraging people to partake in actions that would lead to their arrest to gain more attention. Along with being in line with what Dela Porta and Diani (2017) has said about groups nurturing their unique culture, it also shows a sense of we-ness that Siegel (2021) suggests arises in a feeling of mutual obligation. This we-ness and one-ness can be seen when the activists show this type of empathy for other activists that have been arrested for their actions. This also is visible in them calling fellow activists' messengers. This example also relates to what has been said by Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002). The activities, in this case committing crimes, is used to strengthen the group network and generate emotional energy.

When it comes to establishing group membership, it was a bit harder to see on the Facebook pages. One example of clear membership was seen in the profile pictures of both members and organisations that were posted on the pages. A profile picture is what is seen beside each post and refers to the source of the post. On six of the pages, there were at least one post made by a member that had a profile picture that showed symbols or texts indicating that they were environmentally interested. Examples of this include environmental organisation symbols, and texts that read "oil fuels war & climate collapse", among others. These profile pictures show how members establish group membership and solidarity. Having members that show their support to the specific movement through using the organisation's slogan or logo in their profile picture also shows another layer of how they nurture their unique culture. Johnston and Klandermans (1995) discussed how collective identity can be seen in movement symbols. The fact that some movement members choose to connect their online identity to an organisation is a good example of how collective identity is observable online, like it has been suggested by previous authors (McCaughy & Ayers, 2003; Treré, 2015; Törnberg & Wahström, 2018).

The boundary maintenance was also visible at the protests that were observed. The most visible during the protests was the established group membership in contrast to what was visible online. An example of this was the banners and placards that the participating environmentalists were holding. Holding one of these clearly establishes a participant's

membership in the protest and organisation. It also sets a boundary between the holders of these objects and the people surrounding them. This establishes that people that are not in the protest are outside of their boundary. It is also worth mentioning the differences in placards and banners that were held during the protests. Some of them were big, others were small, and some had the organisation's logo on them, whilst others had more powerful messages on them. In my field notes, I wrote that the people furthest ahead in the mass of people, had the biggest banners when the protest was moving positions. This could be interpreted as the people seen more at protests having a higher level of membership than other participants. Connecting to what has been said by Johnston and Klandermans (1995), this is an example of how collective identity can be seen in cultural symbols and slogans. Again, referring back to Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002), this also shows how social movements use activities as opportunities to strengthen their collective identity and generate emotional energy. It also suggests that banners and placards are important for collective identity in protests because it defines the group and separates them from the people outside who are not holding any banners or placards.

Another observation at the protests relating to establishing membership is what protest participants were wearing. When observing the protests, most of the people signalled that they were a part of the protests in what they wear during the protests. The degree of this was different depending on both protests and individual participants. Some wore reflexive vests with the movement organisation's logo and were very visible to people observing them. Another example is pins and stickers that depicted the movement logo. All of the things mentioned show how people established their membership in the movement by what they chose to wear. However, some of the things that people choose to wear could also indicate a function in the organisation of that member in that specific context, which establishes their membership further. Relating back to what was said earlier in relation to Della Porta and Diani (2017), what is being worn, builds a boundary between group and people that are outside the group. Having a sticker with a symbol relating to the organisation, distinguishes the difference between participants and non-participants.

Another example of how boundary maintenance comes from how they get treated by people that are outside the movement. This is especially obvious on their Facebook pages. On three of the movements pages there are insults, threats and negative comments directed toward the members of the movements. There is a review function on Facebook, where people can voice

their opinions on the pages. Some of the more negative comments clearly show the hostile opinions that some people hold against environmental movements. One Facebook user says:

Criminals who also happens to be stupid beyond belief. Put them all in prison and forget about them until they die.

This comment shows how some other members of society think that activists should be kept away from the rest of society. Thereby enforcing the boundary between environmental activists and their unique culture. Referring back to Della Porta and Diani (2017), the boundary maintenance is in this case being done from the other way instead. The people outside the movement are trying to separate themselves from activists and erect a boundary between them.

This is also visible at the observed protests, where people that pass by the protests do not agree with their message and choose to voice their opinions loudly. Some of the quotes that were heard yelling at the protests are:

Long live fossil fuels!

Get a job!

Leftist terrorists!

This enforces the negative opinions that exist online and highlights the boundary maintenance in the organisations. However, there are not only negative opinions voiced online and at the protests. Some share positive views on Facebook, and some show positive reactions to the protests. For example, at one of the protests, I observed someone that was passing by clapping and loudly whistling when the activists were chanting. This could suggest that people outside the movements have a role in boundary maintenance and fostering the movement's unique culture. This suggests that reviews of organisations on Facebook and opinions voiced at protests is a part of boundary maintenance and the construction of collective identity in social movements if we connect it to earlier research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Gongaware, 2010). Also, that it can have an impact on how groups are sociologically perceived if we look back at what Sinai (2020) has said about collective identity studies impact on sociological perception.

## 5.2 Political consciousness

Another one of Della Porta and Diani's (2017) three dimensions of collective identity is political consciousness. This dimension differs a bit from the previously mentioned dimension and entails framing as groups work toward defining and advancing their interests. This process is visible online as well as at the protests. All of the Facebook pages show framing and working toward defining and advance their interests. It is, however, a little less evident than the previous dimension.

The first example I would like to mention is the negative stereotypes that are visible on Facebook. Politicians are perhaps some of the most obvious stereotypes that can be found online. As previously mentioned, they are called lizard brains frequently, and other words that can be viewed as a negative stereotype of their intellectual capacity. Other negative descriptive words and phrases used to describe politicians online are dumb, clueless, unable to think, ineffective, and incompetent, among many others. This clearly shows how the members build stereotypes of politicians on the organisation's Facebook pages. However, these negative stereotypes are most often directed toward right-wing politicians. This discourse that they use online shows how they define their interest by showing and ridiculing opinions that do not align with their own. The politicians mentioned on the pages are not only Swedish, this example connects to what previously has been said by Thörn and Svenberg (2016). More specifically what they have said about the Swedish environmental movement and how it has previously reacted to global environmental issues. Suggesting that the Swedish movement is interested in the environment globally. To unpack this further, I will refer back to the theory (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). The stereotypes visible on the Facebook pages show how the groups frame other groups, in this case politicians, in order to advance their own interest as a group. This suggests that the environmental movement has a negative perspective on right-wing politics, since it was visible on most of the Facebook pages. It also shows how environmental organisations attribute environmental failures to structural and systemic causes, like suggested by previous research. Also, that the groups use stereotypes to define and advance their interests.

There are however two organisations that do not use negative stereotyping of politicians on their Facebook pages. Both of these pages define themselves as politically independent in their descriptions on Facebook. The method used by these two movements is slightly different from the rest. Instead of using examples of people, they do not align with politically, they

show and discuss people and actions they do agree with. For example, they show interviews and articles with people that have been prosecuted for the actions they have taken to protect the environment. These people are seen and explained to be heroic figures that have done something for their cause. This shows an example of how movement organisations and their members can use negative or positive examples of individuals that align or do not align with their visions to advance their interests. This is slightly different from what has been said by previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Instead of using their discontent in realising their common interests, they are instead using positive examples of other groups of people. These people that are explained as positive examples of how advancing their interests can happen in the movement. However, even though it differs slightly to what previously has been said, it still aligns with being politically conscious. It is just missing the component of discontent. This is also a part of boundary maintenance, as they use positive examples of behaviour for the environmental cause.

Another example of how this happens online is the discussions that appear on three of the pages regarding civil disobedience. There are several occasions where civil disobedience is discussed and viewed as the only way of saving human life in climate change. Facebook users use words and phrases like valuable effort, important, and the only solution, among other words of encouragement. Also, when protests are being advertised on the pages, they are only met with positivity. For example, when the protests I observed were being advertised weeks in advance on four of the pages, they were met with the same response on every occasion. These posts were all met with phrases like “it is going to be epic”, “it is going to be historical” and “time to step up”. This suggests that SMOs advance their interests on social media. To refer back to the theory again (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) this serves as a great example of consciousness. The groups define their interests, by showing examples of how their interests can be met. Also, they frame the behaviour that is seen as positive. This example also connects to the dimension of boundary maintenance, where they show what behaviour is seen as good. It could also be suggested that people that can’t partake in what is seen as good behaviour, protesting for example, won’t be a part of advancing their interests.

Another way of defining their interests visible on Facebook is in the information they share. This information is shared in event advertisements, environmental reports and news articles. Defining interests in this way was visible on every Facebook page. However, the information shared differed depending on the page. An example of this is aligning their movements with

other movements. The feminist movement was a reoccurring theme in the material, and three movements directly aligned themselves with the feminist movements in their posts. This was done by sharing news articles about feminist activists that talked about the similar struggles the two movements work against. The example of the feminist movement is also brought by Taylor and Whittier (1992) in their study about collective identity. The authors explain that the feminist movement has been especially good at defining and advancing their interests. The fact that the feminist movement has been good at defining their interests could be a reason to why environmental SMOs are aligning themselves with them. However, this is just a speculation. Also, it could also be a reason to why similar groups of people are seen as oppositional groups in both movements, and therefore also be another reason to why the two movements are connected to each other today. Connecting to previous research again, Wall (2007) explains how connected organisations can be vital in a movement's ability to communicate their collective identity. The example suggests that information sharing about other connected organisations and movements communicates and defines their own issues. Showing what other organisations and movements have done, serves as a tool to make their own members take part in action that could advance the organisation's interest.

Another example is the anti-war movement, which was especially big when the data was collected. They aligned themselves with the movement through sharing videos and news articles relating to specific wars, as well as reports that showed the effect wars have on the environment. This suggests that the organisations define their own interests by connecting them to other movements. It could also be viewed as a way of advancing their own interests and recruiting more members. The connection to the anti-war movement also serves as an example of how the environmental movement connects and defines their own interest with the help of other movements. It also connects to what Boström (2004) has said about important points to consider when studying identities. Boström suggests that interaction with other movements is important to look at when studying collective identities. The data I have gathered shows themes of interaction with other organisations on every Facebook page that have been observed.

The observed protests also showed examples of how organisations align themselves with other movements. This was especially obvious in their banners and placards at the five protests that were organised by the same movement. Every day there were new slogans and phrases shown on the banners held by activists. An example of this was a banner that read "no food on a dead planet" that also featured a depiction of Vladimir Putin. Another example was

a banner that said, “stop financing war,” and this banner was seen on all five days of protests. This enforces the argument that the organisations align themselves with other movements as a way of framing and defining their issues. It is also worth mentioning that the movements that they choose to align themselves with are well-established movements that have been around for a long time. This supports previous claims made by Thörn and Svenberg (2016). They suggest that Swedish environmental organisations only interact with other organisations that act in a way that they deem responsible. This suggests that the organisations that organised the protests see the anti-war movement as morally responsible and therefore has connected their own issues to the already defined issues of another movement.

Another clear part of this dimension visible at the protests is what was being said to them. What was being said through megaphones, singing and chanting clearly illustrated how they defined and tried to advance their interests. This clearly connects to what has been said by Johnston and Klandermans (1995) and collective identity being visible in what movements say. There were words and phrases that came up at all six days of observations. Examples of these words is important, radical, action, crisis, us, we, them, among many others. The phrases that reoccurred are the world is on fire, my house is on fire, one earth one chance, we are all to blame, another world is possible, and we have to make a change among others. This suggests that two Swedish environmental movements are using the language they use at protests as a way of defining and trying to advance their interests. An example of how language was used was the words spoken through megaphones throughout the five protests organised by the same movement. They used these megaphones to convey messages to both activists and the people that were observing the event. One thing that was said on several occasions was:

We are financing the war in Ukraine through buying fossil fuels.

This shows how powerful messages are used to communicate their issues. The things being said often put societal behaviour in focus as well as questioning consumer habits. They also conveyed what they wanted to happen through the language used. It was very clear during the observations that both organisations are using their slogans and valued phrases to define their issues at protests. The language is also a tool for them to show their political consciousness to people that participate and those who are observing them from the outside. When observing the protests for the amount of time I did, it was clear what the issue behind the protests was as well as what the activists wanted to be the outcome of their active participation. What they

said during the protests connect to Siegel (2021) and what has been said in regard to movements generating a feeling of mutual obligation and we-ness through collective action. Using words to connect them as a group and words with strong meanings to generate a sense of mutual obligation toward the common issue. Also connecting to Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002) conclusion about interaction between members that generate emotional energy. Connecting environmental issues as a source of war very clearly defines the protests issue. Also, attributing war to issues connected to the movement also show how the movement shows their discontent for structural failures and use it to advance their interests and also connects to the symbolism of the negotiation dimension (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

### **5.3 Negotiation**

The third dimension that Della Porta and Diani's (2017) mention is negotiation. This dimension is visible in movements' efforts to transform symbols and strategic actions that challenge the status quo. Also, visible in many parts of the collected data in this study. To start with what is visible in the data gathered on Facebook, the transformation of symbols is the most visible. The symbols that can be seen are mostly the symbols that the movements have chosen to symbolise their organisation, as well as symbols that are linked to the environmental movement as a whole. This connects clearly to Johnston and Klandermans (1995), that suggests that one of the ways that movements communicate their collective identity is through symbols.

The most used symbol that is visible on every one of the Facebook pages is a tree. There are several uses of trees as a symbol visible in the material. Some of the uses show pictures of trees and forests in articles that are shared on their pages. Another example that was found in the posts was one of the interviews that was posted on one of the organisation's pages. This interview was conducted with a member of the movement. During the interview, the only thing visible in the background was a forest. So, the location of the interview was a symbol of the movement. This was also a theme that reoccurred in the material. This shows that trees are important symbols for environmental movements. It also serves as a good example of how the negotiation dimension brought up by previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) is visible on organisations Facebook pages. The previous scholars suggest that activists have to resist negative social definitions. Using a tree as a symbol serves as a good example of this dimension, since a tree does not have a negative social definition. Looking at

the data, since it is such a recurrent symbol used by the movement, it is a good example of how the movement uses symbolism and negotiation. Since it is seen so often in the data, it also suggested that it is a shared definition of the Swedish movement.

An example of symbols being changed by movements are planes. Planes were a reoccurring theme in the material. Pictures of planes in the air, planes on the runway, and cartoon planes are symbols that appeared on the Facebook pages on eight occasions. These pictures were posted along with news articles or information relating to plane emissions. This shows how they transformed a plane from a vehicle to a symbol of their movements. The same thing was also visible regarding cars. However, it did not appear as often as planes. This means that environmental movements use things they want to change as an opportunity to make a for their movement. This is especially visible in vehicles that use fossil fuel. It also shows how organisations with the help of the symbols they use, encourage members to take part in collective action toward something. The previous research on this dimension (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) suggests that it manifests through efforts to transform symbols. The transformation of planes to a symbol suggests that the movement is trying to use symbolism to resist negative social definitions. The movements have explicitly used the object and transformed it into a symbol. It is also an implicit action that undermine the status quo.

The strategic action was also visible on the organisations' Facebook pages. With the help of advertising, the protests on their pages show how they use pictures of symbols to promote their events. For example, in the promotional image of one of the protests, there was a picture of a dove holding a branch. In my field notes, as a reaction to this picture, I wrote that it has to be a peaceful protest. This is due to doves holding a branch being a well-known symbol of peace. Connecting it to previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992), it is an effort from the organisation to free themselves from negative definitions that could be associated with the movement's protests.

Another example of the symbols they make is the use of the colour green. Using the colour green on a symbol or a text was a frequent occurrence in the material collected. A green planet was seen over fifty times, a green tree or plant was seen over eighty times in the material. The use of this colour was frequent in the material when movements are using symbols in their communication with each other. Connecting this to previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) it suggests that the use of the green colour is

an explicit attempt from the movements to connect something to the environmental movement. It also connects to Boström (2004), that suggests symbolic resources being important in social movements because it influences their cognitive dimension.

When looking at the protests, a similar trend appeared. At every protest observed, there were several green symbols visible on placards and banners as well as green letters. Again, in the language used there were symbols that was frequently used. The earth, for example, was used as either a symbol or a part of a statement made on a banner or placard at all of the protests observed. Phrases like “one earth, one chance”, “the earth is on fire”, and “the earth doesn’t have 25 years” were visible at the protests. So, these symbols are a part of their strategic action to challenge the status quo. This example also connects to previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) because of their symbolic nature. They use the earth as a symbol to free themselves from negative associations and to put their actions in a positive light. It also connects to the previous dimensions because it illustrates how they act differently from the rest of society by participating in collective action for the benefit of the earth and frame and further their collective issues with the help of symbolism.

Another part of the negotiation dimension visible at the protest was the actions that were carried out. There are several things that happened at the protests that were very strategically planned out to challenge the status quo. For example, the five protests organised by the same organisation had organised efforts to stop traffic on busy roads. Every day of their protests, they had so-called swarming protests, where activists in smaller groups sat down in intersections and sat there until they were removed by police. This shows how social movement members are willing to be arrested for their cause and to challenge the status quo. Relating to the previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) there are some connections to the negotiation dimension. Using the act of stopping traffic at a protest where they are trying to stop the economic investment in fossil fuels, is symbolic. Getting arrested for doing this would also be symbolic, because they would be seen as model members of the organisations for their actions. This is further strengthened online, where people that have been arrested for the movements cause will be seen as heroes. It also suggests that the actions that take place at the organisation’s protests are done to challenge the status quo. Also, that the swarming protests are a way of demanding a change in a explicit, direct and open attempts.

During the protests, it was apparent that it was very strategic and done to create change. The participants did seem to have a problem with being arrested by police or sitting in busy intersections with traffic going on around them. Connecting this to previous research (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992), the movements use the crime as a symbolic ritual to further the movements issues. They were also actions that showed they were defending the actions of their movement as well as generating as much interest for their movement as possible. One example of this was heard by someone in a megaphone saying:

Small crime to call attention to the big crime of climate subventions.

This means that the organisations are organising protests as well as planning how they will gather as much attention as possible through their actions. It also connects to the previous dimensions of boundary maintenance and consciousness mentioned by previous scholars (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). This is due to the movement's efforts trying to erect boundaries of perceived good crime that they are carrying out and the worse crime of climate subventions, carried out by politicians. It also separates the activists from the rest of society because crime is something that is not socially acceptable by other social groups. By stopping traffic, the members also gather attention and define their issues of using fossil fuels. Carrying out these acts are also frame their discontent for their perceived systemic failures caused by the government who continues to buy fossil fuels.

Other actions included singing, playing music and chanting during the protests. The protests had musicians playing at the protests, which generated a lot of attention and made a lot of noise. This music seemed to lift the spirits of the activists and encouraged bystanders to join in. The music played connects to Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002) and their suggestion regarding the maintenance of collective identity. They suggest that activities that generate emotional energy sustain the collective identity of the movement. Every time music or singing started, more people joined the protest at some capacity. Some stopped and clapped along, and others stopped and took pictures. The songs and chants were not that difficult so more people could join in, which made the protest louder. An example of these chants is:

We are unstoppable, another world is possible.

This chant is an indication of what the organisation is trying to achieve in their movement and suggests that they believe that they are not going to be stopped in their challenge of the status quo. Also, it suggests that singing, chanting and making as much noise as possible is a part of

the Swedish environmental movement's strategic actions to create change. Connecting it to the previous research on collective identity dimensions (Della Porta & Diani, 2017; Taylor & Whittier, 1992) the singing is symbolic of the change they want to happen. Also, the protest organisers clearly wanted to be heard and the music generated emotional energy, feelings of mutual obligation and a feeling of we-ness through the words the songs contained (Meyer, Whittier & Robnett, 2002). Previous research suggest that collective identity is something that has to be actively produced by members of the movement (Melucci, 1996; Gongaware, 2010; Pickerill, 2010). The actions carried out by the members at the protests serve as examples of how collective identity is created at street protests, like previous scholars have previously concluded.

## 6.0 Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the meaning of the results in relation to the research questions and earlier research presented in earlier chapters. I will also discuss my interpretations of my results and alternative interpretations.

In this study I decided to follow the thoughts offered by Johnston and Klandermans (1995), which suggest that collective identity can be studied by looking at observable practices. This approach has generated the results that have been presented. When collecting the data, it was clear that the collective identity of the different movements permeated many aspects of social movements like Della Porta and Diani (2017) have explained. The collective identity of the Swedish environmental movement was visible in all of the pages that were a part of the study. However, the degree differed depending on what organisation's Facebook page that was looked at. My interpretation of the material suggests that a page's popularity will have an impact on how visible the collective identity is. This is primarily due to how many responses a post gets. With low frequencies of communication within the movements, it is hard to find certain aspects of the collective identity. For example, the boundary work is hard to find if the members do not interact with the organisation. Looking at the Swedish perspective, my results are somewhat strengthened by Svenberg (2016). For example, Svenberg concluded that the Swedish movement are concerned with the environmental issue on a global scale. This was seen online and at the protests when the movements framed their issues on a global scale. However, I believe it needs to be further researched to conclude if these results can be seen as strictly Swedish and not just depending on the movements that have been a part of this study.

Another aspect that was observed in the material was the strength of the collective identity. It seems like the two organisations that organised the protest I attended also had the most visible collective identity online. This could be due to what Meyer, Whittier and Robnett (2002) suggested in their study. Meaning that the activities that the movements organise would have an impact on the bond between the movement's members. Also, that the collective identity that is generated and strengthened through interaction between members. The interaction would be what happens at protests, and therefore they could also be more likely to interact with both organisation and fellow members online. As previously mentioned in the analysis, the data has told me that all of the interactions that was seen online and at the protests are a part of the dimensions of collective identity.

This would also be strengthened and actively worked on by members, according to Melucci (1996), which suggests that collective identity is actively produced and strengthened through interaction. Vijayakumar (2018) suggests that collective identity is essential to the organisation it is connected to. Speculating about the gathered that could be a valid argument suggestion since the more visible collective identity also showed stronger organisational communication.

Going through the movements Facebook pages showed that there is indeed a space for like-minded people to communicate with each other on the internet, as suggested by previous authors (Pickerill, 2010). This, along with the thoughts offered by Siegel (2021), would suggest that Facebook pages are an important aspect of a social movement in today's society. Looking back to the beginning of this study, I did not think that collective identity would be so visible on social media and that it could hold such an instrumental role in creating it as well.

Talking about the importance of ICTs and websites like Facebook, I want to look back at what was said in previous research and communication technologies and evolving interactions in movements (Sassen, 2002; Kelly Garrett, 2006). I would say that this study strengthens that argument because of the interaction that has been seen online. The results suggest that ICTs have made it possible to interact, communicate, and strategize online without having any face-to-face interaction. Thereby, ICTs have evolved the interactions in social movements beyond face-to-face interactions.

Talking about the strength of bonds between members, I would like to mention the previously mentioned study about another movement. Mundt, Ross and Burnett (2018) suggest that movements that use social media as a tool are more likely to succeed in reaching their goals. Another value that ICTs generates is social capital, as suggested by Hwang and Kim (2015). Solely relying on the statements made in previous research, this could provide an explanation for why the movements that organised the protests also had the most members on Facebook. Further speculating on this perspective suggests that ICTs also could have negative impact on social movements and societal change. Moving the interactions away from face-to-face interactions could lead to less active participation in street protests, since micro blogs and other social media platforms providing a space to express feelings of discontent.

As Margadant (1998) suggested, the movements use their collective identity to mobilise their members. This could also be an explanation for why the organisations that also had protests that were observed also had the strongest collective identity on their Facebook pages. However, it was clear that there were not many visible environmental organisations with active Swedish Facebook pages. This could be explained by what Grasso and Giugni (2022) said regarding environmental movements being bigger in the future, as the climate gets worse. It could also be explained by causes outside of this paper reach. For example, since Sweden is seen as one of the front runners of sustainable development, there isn't a need for a bigger environmental movement.

In regard to more of the previous literature, like the ones on the Swedish environmental movement in particular (Boström, 2001; Boström, 2004; Thörn & Svenberg, 2016) this paper has not disapproved any of their conclusions. This is due to the difference in subjects between this study and previous research. I can, however, agree with the fact that Swedish environmental movements are under-researched. There were so many gaps in the available literature and issues lacking answers. It would be fascinating to see similar studies conducted by previous authors on organisational structure and function with an online focus. Even though the previous research is lacking on the Swedish context, it provided fruitful insight and perspectives.

My expectations when starting this study were to gain insight into how collective identity looked online. Also, to see if there would be any differences between my results and what has been reached by previous researchers. It has been shown that collective identity can be seen online and that it does not differ from the results achieved in previous studies of movements online. However, it is more visible in some ways and less visible in other ways. For example, the different aspects of collective identity are more visible online than outside of the social media sphere. Like symbols that there are a lot more of online than what can be seen at a protest. Also, the communication between members and the organisation is easier to see online because of the amount of data that is available online compared to at a protest.

There are as previously mentioned some limitations to the data that has been used in this study. Firstly, because my data from the protests are only from 25 hours of observation and represent two movements, the results from that is hardly generalisable to all of the movements. It was, however, not the point to gather generalisable data from the protests. I wanted to know how the collective identity online compared to what could be seen at protests.

This choice was made due to a want for more information about Swedish environmental movements as well as give another dimension and perspective to what had been found about the movements online. This might mean that different conclusions are reached in the future about similar subjects and that the study's replicability is not the best.

Another limitation in the study is the qualitative method, which often is criticised for not being as strong as its quantitative counterpart. Even though some people are of this opinion, I believe that I did the best I possibly could to ensure validity and reliability in the claims made because of all the steps that were taken in the process. Also, the amount of data collected from the Facebook pages should help the strength and quality of the study. The sorting process that was done to find the correct movements should also strengthen the findings.

Yet another weakness of this study was the amount of knowledge I had of the netnographic method before the study was started. This resulted in a large period of time dedicated to finding the relevant literature on the subject and educating myself on a topic that otherwise could go into another part of the process if I had picked another more used method. However, I am confident that the methods used in this paper were best suited to answer the research questions and reach the study's aims.

Because of the lack of research on social movements online, the study also managed to generate some unexpected results. Firstly, I did not know that some social movement organisations used social media so diligently. It was fascinating looking at how an environmental organisation interacted with members as well as with other movements online. This again supports the claims that social media is an important tool for building networks. Another unexpected result is finding out that the language used online and the one used in protests were so like each other. If speculating, this could hint at a possibility that movements' presence online is a representation of how they are at protests as well.

## **7.0 Conclusion and suggestions for future research**

In this chapter of the paper I will be giving a concise answer to the research questions and discuss the contributions of the study. Also, provide suggestions for future research on the subject.

### **7.1 Conclusions**

With the help of Della Porta and Diani's dimensions of collective identity approach as well as Johnston and Klandermans view of how you can observe collective identities, the study has come to its conclusions. In regard to the first research question, if Swedish environmental SMOs have a collective identity that can be seen on their Facebook pages, the simple answer is yes. It is possible to see movements' collective identity on their Facebook pages if you know what you are looking for.

In the other part of the question that asks to what degree it is visible, the results suggest that a high degree of collective identity is visible online. This is because the results suggest that every aspect of their identities is observable online. However, the degree that is observable differs depending on which movement that is the focus. This is dependent on the amount of interaction that is happening on the platform between members and the organisation. The Facebook pages that had more members, more discussions, more conflict and more information sharing also made it easier to observe the different aspects of collective identity. So, if an organisation had a Facebook page without any members, information or interaction, the movement's collective identity would be impossible to see online.

The available literature on viewing collective identity concerning use online is lacking. In my opinion, the methods and theory behind it would do good with some modernisation if the field is to keep up with the technological advances that are happening. This study has made clear that collective identity is visible in many aspects of the modern Swedish environmental movement and that it can be seen at protests as well. However, the generalisability of this information is weak and would require more research to back it up.

When it comes to the second research question, it is also possible to view the different dimensions of collective identity on the social media pages. However, nearly all of the dimensions are easier to find on social media than at the protests. This could be due to the amount of data collected at the protests. However, I had to look closer and for longer periods

of time when using the ethnographic method compared to the netnographic method. So, when looking at the two data sets side-by-side, the main takeaways are that certain things stick out online, and others stick out at protests. Examples of this are symbols online, that was visible in nearly every post through actual symbols for the movement, related movements, in videos, profile pictures and in emoji usage. This may be due to local culture, language, symbolism and sounds not being global when comparing the two contexts.

In the other part of the data at the protests, the interaction between the movement's members as well as the interaction between the movement and the society outside the protest was more visible. Being able to stop traffic, sing, chant, play music and make as much noise as possible is more effective at protests, as real life has no volume button. Consequently, the answer to the question is when compared to each other certain dimensions are more visible at the protests whilst others are more visible online. With a bigger sample of observations of different protests, the results might look different. However, since both movements that are represented in data collected at the protests also were the ones with the largest number observable collective identity dimensions online, more data may not have lead to a different results.

## **7.2 Suggestions for future research**

Since the available literature about the Swedish environmental movement is lacking, conducting this study has left me with loads of unanswered questions and thoughts that could be answered in future research. For example, the relation between the environmental movement and other movements that exist in society. This was shown in their successful attempts to align themselves with other established movements at protests as well as at their protests. It would be of great interest to know more about the connections and differences between movements in today's society, in their identities and other aspects of social movements. There is no doubt a lot more to learn about Swedish environmental movements on every level. Especially when looking at what is known about other movements in the country. Like the L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ , alt-right, feminist and anti-war movements are highly researched subjects compared to the environmental movement.

Examples of studies I would like to see could be focused on the Swedish movements compared to other places in the world, since other geographical areas of the world are well researched. They suggest that geographical location has an impact. So, it would be interesting

to see how Scandinavia compares. Another subject that I think would be very interesting to find out more about is said about environmental movements in media, since I noticed trends in the articles posted on the movements' Facebook pages.

Overall the study also highlights the need for further research on collective identity online. There is an obvious gap in the literature about collective identity online, especially in-depth qualitative studies that can tackle the subject along with other theories that can lead to more knowledge creation. It is obvious, simply because of the year when the theoretical framework was developed, that the theory is not made for use on social media. This is not saying that it wasn't applicable online, but several aspects were not considered in the data because they didn't have any connection to the theory. It would be interesting to develop a working method applicable online that would allow easy comparison of different pages and movements.

## References

- Adu, P. (2019). *A step-by-step guide to qualitative data coding*. New York: Routledge.
- Aronoff, M., Gould, K.A., Schnaiberg, A. & Weinberg, A.S. (1998). Local Environmental Struggles: Citizen Activism in the Treadmill of Production. *Contemporary Sociology*, 27(1), pp.83–85.
- Berberoglu, B. (2019). *The Palgrave handbook of social movements, revolution, and social transformation*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berg-Schlosser, D., Badie, B. & Morlino, L. (2020). *The SAGE handbook of political science*. California: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Boström, M. (2001). *Miljörelsens mångfald*. Lund: Arkiv Förlag.
- Boström, M. (2004). Cognitive practices and collective identities within a heterogeneous social movement: the Swedish environmental movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 3(1), pp.73–88.
- Boström, M. & Klintman, M. (2011). *Eco-standards, product labelling and green consumerism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coretti, L. & Pica, D. (2015). The rise and fall of collective identity in networked movements: communication protocols, Facebook, and the anti-Berlusconi protest. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(8), pp.951–967.
- Della Porta, D. (2014). *Methodological practices in social movement research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Della Porta, D. & Diani, M. (2017). *The Oxford handbook of social movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dimond, J., Dye, M., LaRose, D., & Bruckman, A. (2013). Hollaback! The role of storytelling online in a social movement organisation. In *Proceedings of the 2013 conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 477-490).
- Edlund, J., Eldén, S., Wästerfors, D. and Sohl, L. (2022). Att bedriva sociologisk forskning i en tid av byråkratiserad etikprövning. *Sociologisk Forskning*, 58(4), pp.455-456.

- Eisenstadt, S.N. & Giesen, B. (1995). The construction of collective identity. *European Journal of Sociology*, 36(1), pp.72–102.
- Flesher Fominaya, C. (2010). Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates. *Sociology Compass*, 4(6), pp.393–404.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2015). Protest avatars as memetic signifiers: political profile pictures and the construction of collective identity on social media in the 2011 protest wave. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(8), pp.916–929.
- Gongaware, T.B. (2010). Collective Memory Anchors: Collective Identity and Continuity in Social Movements. *Sociological Focus*, 43(3), pp.214–239.
- Grasso, M.T. & Giugni, M. (2015). Environmental Movements in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Heterogeneity, Transformation, and Institutionalization. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 40(1), pp.337–361.
- Grasso, M.T. & Giugni, M. (2022). *The Routledge handbook of environmental movements*. New York: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: principles and practice*. London: Routledge.
- Harlow, S. (2011). Social media and social movements: Facebook and an online Guatemalan justice movement that moved offline. *New Media & Society*, 14(2), pp.225–243.
- Hjorth, L., Horst, H.A., Galloway, A. & Bell, G. (2017). *The Routledge companion to digital ethnography*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hwang, H. & Kim, K.-O. (2015). Social media as a tool for social movements: the effect of social media use and social capital on intention to participate in social movements. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39(5), pp.478–488.
- Johnston, H. & Klandermans, B. (1995). *Social Movements and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kaoukaou, M. (2021). Netnography: towards a new sociological approach of qualitative research in the digital age. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 119, pp.1–7.

- Kelly Garrett, R. (2006). Protest in an Information Society: a review of literature on social movements and new ICTs. *Information, Communication & Society*, 9(2), pp.202–224.
- Khan, S. & Jerolmack, C. (2018). *Approaches to Ethnography: analysis and representation in participant observation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kidd, D. & McIntosh, K. (2016). Social Media and Social Movements. *Sociology Compass*, 10(9), pp.785–794.
- Klandermans, P.G. (2013). Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest. *Political Psychology*, 35(1), pp.1–22.
- Koerber, A. and McMichael, L. (2008). Qualitative Sampling Methods. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 22(4), pp.454–473.
- Kozinets, R.V. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Kozinets, R.V. & Gambetti, R. (2020). *Netnography Unlimited: Understanding Technoculture using Qualitative Social Media Research*. London: Routledge.
- Lupton, D. (2015). *Digital sociology*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Mccaughey, M. and Ayers, M.D. (2003). *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Margadant, T. (1998). Commentary on Charles Tilly's "Social movements". *Theory and Society*, 27(4), pp.481–488.
- Melucci, A. (1996). *Challenging Codes: Collective action in the information age*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, D., Whittier, N. & Robnett, B. (2002). *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mundt, M., Ross, K. & Burnett, C.M. (2018). Scaling Social Movements Through Social Media: The Case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media + Society*, 4(4), pp.1–14.

Oegema, D. and Klandermans, B. (1994). Why Social Movement Sympathizers Don't Participate: Erosion and Nonconversion of Support. *American Sociological Review*, 59(5), pp.703–722.

Peterson, A., Wahlström, M. & Wennerhag, M. (2018). *Pride parades and LGBT movements political participation in an international comparative perspective*. New York & London: Routledge.

Pickerill, J. (2010). *Cyberprotest: Environmental Activism Online*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Pink, S., Horst, H.A., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T. & Tacchi, J. (2016). *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice*. California: Sage Publications.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Sassen, S. (2002). Towards a Sociology of Information Technology. *Current Sociology*, 50(3), pp.365–388.

Siegel, D.P. (2021). Wanting a 'Feminist Abortion Experience': Emotion Work, Collective Identity, and Pro-Choice Discourse 1. *Sociological Forum*, 36(2), pp.471–490.

Sinai, S. (2020). *Sociological Knowledge and Collective Identity: S.N. Eisenstadt and Israeli Society*. New York & London: Routledge.

Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good research practice*. Stockholm: Swedish Research Council.

Taylor, V. & Whittier, N. (1992). Collective identity in social movement communities: Lesbian feminist mobilization. In A. D. Morris & C. M. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in social movement theory* (pp. 104–129). Yale University Press.

Thörn, H., & Svenberg, S. (2016). 'We feel the responsibility that you shirk': Movement institutionalisation, the politics of responsibility and the case of the Swedish environmental movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 15(6), pp.593–609.

Touraine, A. (2002). The Importance of Social Movements. *Social Movement Studies*, 1(1), pp.89–95.

Treré, E. (2015). Reclaiming, proclaiming, and maintaining collective identity in the #YoSoy132 movement in Mexico: an examination of digital frontstage and backstage activism through social media and instant messaging platforms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(8), pp.901–915.

Tilly, C. (2004). *Social movements, 1768-2004*. New York: Routledge.

Tilly, C., Castañeda, E. & Wood, L.J. (2020). *Social movements, 1768-2018*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Törnberg, A. & Wahström, M. (2018). Unveiling the radical right online: Exploring framing and identity in an online anti-immigrant discussion group. *Sociologisk Forskning*, 55(2/3), pp.267–292.

Vijayakumar, G. (2018). Is Sex Work Sex or Work? Forming Collective Identity in Bangalore. *Qualitative Sociology*, 41(3), pp.337–360.

Walder, A.G. (2009). Political Sociology and Social Movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(1), pp.393–412.

Wall, M.A. (2007). Social movements and e-mail: expressions of online identity in the globalisation protests. *New Media & Society*, 9(2), pp.258–277.

Wångren, L. (2016). Our stories matter: storytelling and social justice in the Hollaback! movement. *Gender and Education*, 28(3), pp.401–415.