

**The Climate Crisis and the Media:  
Examining the Representation of Extinction Rebellion in the UK**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research examines the impact of media perceptions and portrayal of environmental activism in the UK. News outlets and the way they portray environmental activism were examined, primarily using the environmental civil disobedience movement Extinction Rebellion ("XR") as a case study. The bulk of the data corpus includes media data from the "Top 10 News Outlets" (as defined by Ofcom in 2019) and XR press releases over the period of October 2018 to May 2020. Supplementary data from interviews with individuals that self-identify as members of XR, as well as transcripts from Television programmes, and some news coverage outside of the primary data collection period were also analysed. Findings include the contrast between news organisations and levels of reporting, that news organisations tend to be more favourable towards individual stories and more critical of mass protest and that their political affiliation / editorial stance has an impact on the narrative generated. The media focus from the sampling period is often on what the activist groups are doing as opposed to why they are doing it, however this is countered somewhat by the apparent more recent upward trend in news coverage of environmental issues in general. This leads to discussion around the value of news coverage and the impact on wider society. The findings have implications for not only environmental movements but for the wider presentation of activism in the UK media.



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## **PREFACE**

I came to undertaking this research as a somewhat disenfranchised environmental professional, after several years working both in environmental consultancy and education. It felt like "environmental management" was not taken particularly seriously, with a lot of box-ticking and slow development and implementation of real-world solutions. Talking to students it was clear that they cared about the environment but either felt powerless to do anything or not willing to sacrifice life's luxuries in order to make a difference. I developed a blog as a hobby, specifically writing about the debate around tackling environmental issues. Not only did the process of writing a blog re-ignite my interest in environmental issues but also my passion for the process of writing, not just the creativity of it, but the research, the fact checking, I wanted to ensure that what I was putting out into the ether was informative, funny and of course, factually correct.

This was about the time where the single use plastic (SUP) issue was at peak mention in the media. After the success of the various campaigns and the documentary Blue Planet II, I became fascinated by the way environmental issues are communicated, re-reading pivotal texts and watching the media attention given to SUPs and the subsequent changes in policy and pro-environmental behaviour with keen interest.

Seeing the success of the "Blue Planet Effect" I started to question if this approach could be applied to the complex and less tangible of environmental issues, with Climate Change specifically in mind. As I began my PhD in autumn of 2018, a new movement was beginning to emerge, whose focus was exactly those complex issues I'd been wondering about - climate change and biodiversity loss. That movement is the now widely known Extinction Rebellion (XR).

Extinction Rebellion as a movement provided an excellent case study due to the media attention given to the civil disobedience element of the group. And the

unexpected challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic (and subsequent adaptations to my original research questions) cemented the movement and their interrelation with the UK media as my primary research focus.

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Finally to my husband, Daniel, thank you for always being supportive and enthusiastic, for helping with my technical ineptitudes, for the motivating gentle wind-up whenever I procrastinate too long, for discussing my ideas, sitting through copious amounts of news coverage and documentaries (especially when I know you'd rather be watching *Salvage Hunters*). Thank you for the provision of much-needed cups of tea (and glasses of wine!). And a huge thank you for your faith in my ability, and always telling me how proud you are.



## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

***I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.***





# **1 The Environment and The Media: An Introduction**

## **1.1 Rationale**

The late 2010s and early 2020s are a decisive period for environmentalism and social change, with an ever-increasing awareness and change in discourse around environmental issues. At the core of this is the now unequivocal consensus amongst scientists that climate change and biodiversity loss are real and present issues as opposed to previous framing of them as issues to be faced "in the future".

Climate change has become, almost symbolic of the need to act as a collective (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014). Biodiversity loss has also come to be linked increasingly with climate change, as the effects of global heating on wildlife becomes apparent (Hansen, et al., 2016). The media of course is one of the actors that bring these issues into social consciousness and as such has an important role in the dissemination of information.

The relationship between the media and the environment is not a new phenomenon, after all it has been a topic that has captured the attention of the media since the mid-twentieth century. Environmentalism has existed in some form since the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the beginnings of regulation of industry but management of industry up until the 1950s was almost solely focused on profit (Simmons, 2008). However, since the 1950s and 1960s there have been increasing reports regarding the state of the environment and our impact upon it, with key pieces of literature and popular science, such as Rachel Carson's 1959 book *Silent Spring*, being hugely influential to the modern environmental movement.

*Silent Spring* was a galvanising agent in the environmental movement and was penned in 1959, bringing about change in a variety of arenas, however the debate about environmental issues is still ever present. Lear (1993) claims that *Silent Spring* polarised people and organisations, forcing people to see the world in a new way "There are very few books that can be said to have changed the course of history,

but this was one of them". Kroll's (2001) essay describes *Silent Spring* as laying out the fundamentals of modern-day environmentalism but goes further in to assessing the impact of the book, particularly focusing on the increase of the public's understanding of science. There were of course contemporaries of Carson and in general a growing consciousness about the environment in the 1960s (Humphrey and Lewis, 2006) but Carson's audience was wider, in effect she communicated what scientists and environmental organisations already knew and as Gottlieb (1993) states, set out to "create a new environmental consciousness". Carson was a "bridge builder who could communicate science to the public" (Humphrey and Lewis, 2006).

Reception to Carson's text in the mainstream media was extremely complex, influenced not only by the content of the book but also Carson's gender and the vested interests of companies the book discusses (the environmental and health impacts of pesticide use in particular). The relationship between science and public information is no less complex now, the issues have become increasingly globalised, nuanced and debated, with environmental campaigns increasingly becoming part of the mainstream, receiving heightened levels of attention in both public and policy communications (Davis, et al., 2018).

The environmental movement is one of the most successful social movements since the second half of the 20th century and encompasses not only the new, but has its roots in older elements, such as conservationism that dates back more than a century (Mertig and Dunlap, 2001). And the roots of the modern environmental movement also go deeper than the work and growing consciousness in the 1960s. With worldwide attention spreading rapidly in the 1970s with key works and issues, such as the depletion of the Ozone layer coming to light (Melis, Elliot and Shryane, 2014). This indicates that the effects of environmental activism are not instant, but cumulative (Saunders, 2013). Environmental awareness was also linked to increased understanding of the earth as a global system, and the need to recognise that environmental campaigning needs a global frame (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014).

This study will explore how environmental activism interacts with the media, focusing on the relationship between media outlets and Extinction Rebellion (XR), taking into account the complexities of the representation of activism in the media, by analysing data from a variety of sources.

The rationale behind this study is to build on the existing literature about media effects and their interrelation with other spheres of influence. Specifically by examining an environmental protest movement to create an in-depth case study on a how the movement and its tactics are represented by the UK media and how well (if at all) it reflects the messages and aims the movement seeks to convey. Are these campaigns making any real long-term difference or only leading to short-term responses? Are the media representing the movement in a particular way and does that differ from how the movement themselves seek to be seen? This study aims to identify specific influences on their portrayal in the media including key issues and gaps, in order to inform how environmental movements (and campaigning organisations) can better make use of the media to affect policy and behavioural change.

The case study is the emerging protest movement Extinction Rebellion (XR), a decentralised movement who make use of both traditional media coverage, and "new" media, utilising apps like twitter and WhatsApp but also more "underground" messaging sources in order to facilitate an element of surprise for protest events.

There has been an increasing interest, and increasing consensus that climate change can be attributed to human activity (Boykoff, 2007; Gibson et al., 2015; Grundmann & Scott, 2014; Jang & Hart, 2015; Ruiu, 2020), however there are many complexities about the interaction between the media and science, and also the media and social movements (North, 1998, Newlands, 2018). This increase in media interest and ongoing narrative of an "existential crisis" facing our planet as a result of climate change and biodiversity loss provide a backdrop for the framing of this study. This chapter introduces the concept of media narratives relating to environmental campaigning, which move swiftly and often outpace academic study.

## **1.2 Definitions**

Although the concept of media is widely known, there is overlap between the "types" and how it relates to environmental campaigning is complex. This study utilises primarily news media from online and broadcast sources, with some supplementary

information from social media sources to examine the portrayal (and to a lesser extent the impact) of an activist movement involved in civil disobedience. The below table (1.1) sets out the definitions for the purposes of this study.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
The media	Any means of mass communication, including news media, publishing, broadcasting and social media.
News media	Any media reporting on current events to the general public or a subsection of the public
Publishing	Production and distribution of information, typically books, newspapers and magazines, both in print and available electronically (e-publishing)
Broadcasting	Distribution of information on television or radio
New media	Media available via electronic devices and the internet, i.e. social media, YouTube.
Traditional media	Media utilised prior to wide use of the internet, i.e. in-print and broadcast media.
Broadsheet	A newspaper (and online equivalent) containing lots of textual information, generally perceived to be more serious in nature than a tabloid, although many newspapers that were previously broadsheet now operate in a tabloid format.
Tabloid	A newspaper (and online equivalent) containing short textual reports and includes high numbers of pictures.

Social Media	Websites, programmes and apps that allow individuals and groups to share information via the internet, this media can be in a variety of formats.
Environmentalism	An interest in or study of the environment, in particular with a view to lessen the human impact on it.
The environmental movement	A group who share an interest in and / or study the environment. The movement has historical roots, with origins in the late 19th century and scholarship in the mid-20th giving rise to the contemporary movement.
Activism	The use of direct action with the aim of achieving a result.
Activist movements	A decentralised group of people who share a collective goal and take action in a variety of ways.
Civil Disobedience	Civil disobedience is the active, non-violent refusal to accept the dictates of governments. Opposition to unjust actions including illegal action.
Campaigning organisations	A group with formal organised governance that aims to raise awareness / take action on an issue(s).
The general public	The public as a collective irrespective of views or demographic.
Targeted public / target audience	A certain group or demographic that is targeted specifically by the media or activist movement.
Demographic	A group of people that share similar characteristics, i.e. age, social class, level of education etc.

Table 1.1 Definitions of types of media, campaign and their audience

### 1.3 The Role of the Media

The exact role of the media is notoriously difficult to quantify as the effects of the media are complex and do not exist in isolation from other actors. There are several well-known theories with regards to the effect of media, such as McQuail's Mass Communication Theory (1991), and theories such as Cohen's Moral Panic (1972) that relate to specific cases that see the media exert particular influence over a given issue, even when the relative severity of that issue is minor in comparison to the news coverage. As McQuail (1991) identifies:

*"The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that there are effects from the media, yet it seems to be the issue on which there is least certainty and least agreement"*

The term "effects" in itself is extremely broad. What exactly constitutes an effect, and how is this defined? At its core definition as a noun, "effect" means a "change which is a result or consequence of an action or other cause" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2019), this of course differs from "affect" which is primarily used as a verb meaning "to make a difference to". Affect differs from other modalities in that it is "qualified as it performs, and disrupts, space-times of experience" (Anderson, 2006, p736) For the purposes of this study, as is common in similar literature "effects" will be used when referring to the impact of campaigns on individual behaviour, although there may be specific instances where "affect" is more appropriate.

Studies into the effects of the media are far ranging, and its relation to environmental issues is probably best discussed in Anderson's 1997 book, *Media, Culture and the Environment*, which brings together key literature and Anderson's own research from the 1980s and early 1990s.

Anderson (1997) highlights the then relative inattention given to cultural influence (such as the social and media) by geographers, as highlighted by a number of contemporaries such as Beck, et al. (1992) and Burgen (1990) and argues that this

is a limiting factor towards our understanding of the perception of environmental issues and indeed their complexities.

The media often engage with serious subjects, including risk perception and taking action to prevent harm. Historically this has had positive and negative effects. The media effect and can amplify mass hysteria on certain issues, first developed by Cohen in the 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, "Moral Panic" was put forward as a theory that attributes a degree of mass hysteria caused by the media. Cohen's original theory uses the example of groups of youths with different cultural backgrounds (the mods and rockers) and series of disturbances caused in 1964, which was reported as being much more serious than they were. Cohen (1972) suggests that the media have an effect dubbed the "Deviancy Amplification Spiral" in which if they give a deviant act an undue amount of attention, resulting in public outcry and policy change. Cohen's theory stems from deviance but in theory could be applied to any issue that has the potential to cause widespread outrage, such as civil disobedience.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda in their 1994 paper on *Moral Panics* suggest that such phenomena are caused by a specific agent that causes a perceived threat. Moral panics are often short lived, but unlike fads (short-lived popularity) leave either an informal or institutional legacy. The terms moral panic and mass hysteria imply that the level of concern is higher than necessary around an issue, climate change however is a serious social problem and action needs to be taken quickly in order to prevent it from escalating. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) use the definition of a social problem from Manis (1994, 1996) in that it is anything that causes death, disease, shortens life expectancy or quality of life on a large scale. Thus large-scale environmental problems such as climate change certainly could be classified as a social problem.

Moral panic is a concern about a form of behaviour, whereas environmental concern generally starts with the effects and turns its attention to specific behaviours that cause these effects. In some cases certain visible environmental issues have been taken up as causes by the media, take the recent mass publication of the issue of single use plastics (SUPs) for example. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) argue that the very definition a social problem is logical and there is a very real danger of impending harm, therefore with the phenomenon is not a problem. The issue arises



when there is a disparity between objective harm and public concern. Therefore, we can assume that environmental issues (as a broad category) are a real and present danger to society. However the doom-laden messaging of some climate campaigns is actually counter-productive, with audiences being "turned-off" by "doom and gloom" (Vanderheiden, 2011, Boycoff in Arnold 2018, Razavi, 2019).

But do these traditional theories in media research apply to environmental issues? Anderson (1997) argues that such traditional theories does not apply in the same way to environmental issues as they do to issues such as women's rights or deviance, as environmental issues are vast and complex. Shanahan 1993's study on university students attitudes found a weak relationship between exposure to the media and levels of concern for the environment, suggesting there must be other factors at play. (Shanahan in Anderson, 1997).

There is a large body of work dedicated to agenda setting (the ability of the news media to define significant issues) and framing (used by the media strategically to shape interpretations) of issues by the media (e.g. Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson, 1992; Goffman, 1972 Iyengar and Simon, 1993; McCombs, 1997, 2005; McCombs and Reynolds, 2009 and Shaw, 1974, 1993; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 1997, 2014; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007).

Something Anderson's (1997) book and early studies on agenda setting and framing does not delve into of course, is the ease of access to the internet and the advent of new, fast and more interactive forms of media. Campaigning, news and all manner of social interactions are possible in the multiple and varied world of social media that is an ever-present fixture in our daily lives.

With the advent of social media, it seems pertinent to ask are the traditional theories applicable to an ever-developing media sphere of influence? Sergerberg and Bennett examined the role of social media and the organisation of collective action in their 2011 study which examines the wider context of social media and protest and examines case studies of Twitter and climate change protests. The authors recognise the need to avoid generalisations about the effect of social media on such politics and suggest there is a need to develop theory and analysis about the role of communication technologies.

The media itself has always been an object of persuasion (Soules, 2015) but it appears to be becoming increasingly partisan, particularly in the increase in technology as a way of spreading news and thus reinforcing existing bias (Feezell, 2018). New media differs significantly from traditional news media in that algorithms are used to display information that is of interest to that consumer, therefore individuals are only consuming information that is relevant to their worldview, reinforcing their existing beliefs, thus there is a lack of exposure to counter argument or nuance (Bail, et al., 2018, Kubin and Sikorski, 2021). Further to this, social media facilitates a “communications glut” (where gossip, misinformation and rumour are presented as equal to fact), which compounds the phenomenon of “backfire” where individuals reject opposing beliefs even when presented with evidence (Soules, 2015).

The traditional media outlets aren't without fault, there are often issues with ethics in journalism particularly where there is management interference that is partisan or inflammatory and occurs over a sustained period (Soules, 2015).

#### **1.4 Recent Media Narratives**

Some of these issues present in recent media narratives evidently have a tangible impact, take single-use plastics (SUPs) for example. The issue of SUPs has become increasingly evident over the last few years. Visceral, and relatable, the issue is extensive, and has gained traction as it has been made visible by campaigns and on the surface (micro-plastics are more complex) has relatively simple solutions.

The issue became part of the public consciousness because of the mainstream (and social) media, like the so called "Blue Planet Effect" and later the "Attenborough Effect" (As defined in Table 1.2) in the wake of documentaries and education campaigns. These included; Planet II, Our Planet and Perfect Planet and education campaigns run by several media outlets and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). Many measures have also been taken by both the government and industry to reduce SUPs, from extensions to carrier bag charges (DEFRA 2018), to banning microbeads (DEFRA, 2018), to companies banning or phasing out specific SUPs (BBC, 2018).

There have also been a series of other high-profile programmes and films that have contributed to the increasing visibility of environmental issues, these include *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) an educational film about climate change from the then Vice President of the USA, Al Gore, *The Age of Stupid* (2009) a fiction-documentary hybrid that depicts a man living in a future devastated by climate change, interspersed with real footage and *Before the Flood* (2016) a documentary spearheaded by actor Leonardo DiCaprio. Conversely, "Climategate" was a high-profile pseudo scandal in 2009 where contrarians used leaked personal *emails* between climate researchers that were published in order to discredit their work (Holliman 2011), it is thought that the result was a delay to measures that would have cut levels of man-made CO<sub>2</sub> in the environment (McKie, 2019).

The last several years has seen an increase in media attention towards environmental issues, and particularly the attention given to environmental movements, with several emerging since the early 2010s, such as fossil fuel divestment campaigners 350.org (350.org, n.d.) and more recently, Extinction Rebellion, School Strike for Climate and contemporaries.

With the increase in attention to the climate crisis, the language used is constantly evolving, with *The Guardian* (Carrington, 2019) declaring a change in the use of terms in order to reflect the severity and urgency of the climate crisis in spring 2019, and most recently, the Oxford English Dictionary adding a series of environmental terms (Hampson, 2021). Table 1.2 below outlines the key terms used in media reporting around climate and environmental issues.

<b>Terms coined by the media</b>	<b>Definition</b>
The Blue Planet Effect	A term coined by the media ( <i>BBC</i> , 2018; <i>Guardian</i> , 2019) to refer to the behaviour, industry and policy changes in response to the TV programme <i>Blue Planet II</i> and its depiction of environmental issues, particularly the use of single use plastics (SUPs).

The Attenborough Effect	Similar to the Blue Planet Effect, a term coined by the media (particularly <i>The Guardian</i> (Gell, 2019; Pozniak, 2018), but used to mean changes in behaviour, industry and policy associated with sustainability in more general terms, in response to programming and campaigning by the veteran broadcaster.
The Greta Thunberg Effect	Again similar to the above, a term coined by the media (Laville, 2019; Watts, 2019; Sabherwal and van der Linden, 2019) but relating to the influence of the teenage campaigner Greta Thunberg and the School Strike for Climate movement
Existential Threat	Generally, refers to a threat to existence, used in the media to reflect the reality and urgency of the climate crisis for society.
Eco-anxiety	Anxiety caused by threats to the environment, such as pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.
<b>Technical/Dictionary Defined Terms</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Climate Change / Crisis / Emergency / Breakdown / Catastrophe	Climate change is a term that has long been in circulation, defined as “an alteration in the regional or global climate; esp. the change in global climate patterns increasingly apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and linked largely with

	<p>increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by human activity” (Oxford English Dictionaries, 2021a). It has been suggested by leaders, academics and news outlets that climate change is too passive and that climate crisis (or other variations that reflect the urgency of the issues) is a more appropriate term (Carrington, 2019). The climate crisis is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2021a) as “the increasing risk of hazardous, irreversible changes to the climate, resulting from global warming; the environmental crisis arising from this risk.”</p>
Global Heating / Global Warming	<p>Global warming is also a well-known phrase, it refers to the heating of the planet as a result of the greenhouse effect (gasses in the atmosphere trapping heat from <i>The Sun</i> ). The term global heating is now often used in preference in order to convey the seriousness of the issues (Hampson, 2021).</p>
Climate change denier / climate denialism / climate sceptic	<p>The rejection of the idea / evidence that climate change caused by human activity is occurring, or represents a significant threat to the environment and society (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021a).</p>
Climate action	<p>This term can refer to any action to</p>

	mitigate the effects of climate change, including political activism demanding change (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021a)
Climate refugee	A person who moves to a place where the climate is more beneficial; a person forced to move to a different home, region, or country because of the effects of climate change (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021a).
Climate justice	Action or activism intended not only mitigate the effects of climate change but also address related social justice, including the disproportionate projected impact of climate change. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021a)
Climate strike	A form of public protest (i.e. School Strike for Climate) intended to draw attention to climate change and the need for urgent action (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021a)
Wildlife / Biodiversity	<i>The Guardian</i> suggested wildlife as an alternative term to biodiversity as part of their changing language towards environmental issues (Carrington, 2019). Biodiversity is a term used to describe all aspects of biological diversity especially with reference to the complexity of ecosystems, species richness and genetic diversity (Allaby, 2004). Wildlife is defined as any undomesticated organism, although

	this may not be an appropriate substitution for biodiversity despite its definition, as it is also often used to mean just animals (excluding the other kingdoms) (Allaby, 2004).
Net-zero	There is no agreed definition of net-zero and it has different connotations at worldwide, country and city levels. It generally means deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and remaining sources being offset by greenhouse gas removal. (Carbon Trust, n.d.)

*Table 1.2: Definitions of Terms used in the media to refer to environmental issues and media effects*

Studies around people’s attitudes to Climate Change like Howell et al. (2016) and Helm et al. (2017) suggest that individual behaviour change messages appear to engage those who exhibit pre-existing concern, whereas those who report low concern for climate change may be more resistant to these measures. Climate Change is often framed as a complex, abstract problem, that is something to face in the future.

It would seem that there are a number of key lessons that can be learned from the recent drive towards the reduction of SUP usage globally, and can these lessons be applied to other campaigns relating to more complex or problematic environmental issues, such as climate change? Particularly making the issue of SUPs visible (and applicable to daily life) in a number of arenas, leading to both economic and policy change. Could re-framing climate change as a very real and present issue, concentrating on the very real impacts people are currently experiencing (extreme weather, flooding, bush fires etc), be more successful than the presentation of it as a huge, yet uncertain future issue?

The recent effects of the Schools Strike for Climate, Extinction Rebellion protests and so called “Blue Planet effect” and more recently the “Attenborough effect” are

gaining momentum in the mainstream media. With the latter effects coming from within the media themselves, potentially suggesting that the effects of plastic pollution have gained legitimacy, thus allowing the media to present it as an issue to tackle. The School Strike movement and Extinction Rebellion are civil movements, presenting the altogether more complex issues of climate change. Could the combined effect of multiple agencies working together and mobilising the masses to take action have an unprecedented effect and successfully demand systemic change on complex and/or large-scale environmental issues such as the climate crisis?

In a pre-pandemic world, climate protests had been increasing on a global scale, most notably the Schools Strike for Climate, spearheaded by Swedish teen Greta Thunberg. The school strikes have gained momentum since Thunberg began striking outside the Swedish Parliament since 2018 (Kramer, 2021). In addition, the more extreme campaigning movement, Extinction Rebellion has been conducting protests such as blockades and sit-downs across the UK (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a). Both movements have seemingly been both applauded and deplored in the media.

## **1.5 Extinction Rebellion As a Case Study**

There are a number of different ways of carrying out environmental activism, these include campaigns run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and campaigns led by the media which often take a soft, educational approach. Environmental activism can also be carried out in a more direct (and in some cases extreme) manner. These more direct methods include protest and civil disobedience, methods utilised by Extinction Rebellion, the movement used as a case study in this work.

Extinction Rebellion (“XR”) are an international movement of people seeking to halt mass extinction and minimise social impacts via non-violent demonstrations. Initially mobilizing support in 2018, the movement declared rebellion on the 31st of October that year and has continued an often-high profile (and disruptive) series of non-violent protests.

The movement has 3 core demands:



*"1. Tell the truth*

*Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.*

*2. Act Now*

*Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.*

*3. Go Beyond Politics*

*Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice."*

(Extinction Rebellion, n.d.b)

Structured around small, localised groups, the movement aims to be participatory, decentralised, and inclusive based around ten core values (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a) which are discussed in the sections below. Anyone who agrees with the 3 demands and 10 core values (see section 1.5.1) can use the Extinction Rebellion (XR) name. Recently, it has taken this movement of civil disobedience (along with other instances of activism and strategic campaigns) for the "existential threat" message of climate change and biodiversity loss to gain traction in the public eye.

Climate change and biodiversity loss is undoubtedly something everyone has to live with, with a need for actions and response to such environmental issues to become the norm (Briggs, 2021), not some abstract future prospect of apocalyptic proportions. This poses the question is Extinction Rebellion's save the world message effective or is it overridden by its spirit of carnival and calamity?

### **1.5.1 The Theory and Modus Operandi**

As a de-centralised movement, XR's decisions are made based on a model of organising called a "self-organising system" where people contribute the time and skills they can offer (Extinction Rebellion n.d.b). Action is formed around 10 key principles that set out the values and mission of the movement:

- "1. We have a shared vision of change*
- 2. We set our mission on what is necessary*
- 3. We need a regenerative culture*
- 4. We openly challenge ourselves and our toxic system*
- 5. We value reflecting and learning*
- 6. We welcome everyone and every part of everyone*
- 7. We actively mitigate for power*
- 8. We avoid blaming and shaming*
- 9. We are a non-violent network*
- 10. We are based on autonomy and decentralisation."*

(Extinction Rebellion 2019a)

The following sections outline these key principles in more detail, demonstrating how the movement see themselves, indeed the detail within the principles includes some profound and interesting claims.

### **1.5.2 A shared vision of change**

The movement's key focus on civil disobedience rejects traditional means of lobbying such as petitions or letters to MPs in favour of more extreme action including active disruption of day-to-day life in many cases, and indeed the possibility (or intention) of arrest (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

XR have made a point of undertaking activism in full view of the public, and as such have largely taken the strategic decision to communicate with the police. Although police in London recently banned protests in central areas, something to which XR mounted a legal challenge and successfully overturned (Cruse, 2019, Gayle and Dodd, 2019).

XR has roots in both academic research and mass engagement. Founded by Dr Roger Hallam and Dr Gail Bradbrook in consultation with others, a key focus has been talking to people, primarily directly and through social media and messaging

channels, with founders such as Robin Boardman visiting various locations across the UK (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.c). The movement is funded by external donors, including billionaire Sir Chris Hohn (Neate, 2021).

### **1.5.3 What is necessary - mobilising 3.5%**

One of the key aims of the movement was a “momentum driven organising” (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a) in order to mobilise 3.5% of the population, or approximately 2 million people in the UK. An aim based on research by American political scientist Erica Chenoweth who put forward the idea of the “3.5% rule”, essentially that non-violent action involving 3.5% of the population never fails to get a government to accommodate or (in extreme cases) disintegrate the movement (Chenoweth, 2013). XR also frequently cite the work of Gene Sharp, chiefly the 1990 paper *The Role of Power in Non-violent Struggle*. XR draw from the work of Sharp, whose work *Dictatorship to Democracy* outlines a variety of tools that could be put to use by social movements and indeed had been historically used by movements such as the Arab Spring (Kinniburgh, 2020).

Chenoweth looked specifically at the incidence of historic non-violent and violent action and their successes with regards to overthrowing governments or territorial liberation in making her conclusions about the 3.5% rule (historic research indicated it was 5%). Her findings suggested it was not only a lower number (3.5% as opposed to 5%) but also that non-violence tended to be more successful than violent action (Chenoweth, 2013).

### **1.5.4 Creating regenerative culture**

The movement states they aim to foster change year on year on an individual, community and environmental level including anything that helps create a culture that is healthy, resilient and adaptable. This includes relationships and an element of the spiritual (Extinction Rebellion n.da).

### **1.5.5 Challenging a Toxic System**

XR state that they are non-violent and reluctant law-breakers, following in the footsteps of non-violent civil disobedience movements such as the Civil Rights movement (Extinction Rebellion n.d.c).

XR take the stance that “above ground” actions that may result in arrest and criminal charges are essential to facilitate change, citing *CounterPower* by Tim Gee and *This is an Uprising* by Engler & Engler as evidence for this claim (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

XR has its roots in Rising Up! A group that has been involved in many campaigns since 2016 and started XR as a project (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.c). XR also has ties to Compassionate Revolution, originally an online platform for mass civil disobedience, now a campaigning organisation that deals with the financial aspects of supporting movements (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.c, n.d.d).

XR claim that traditional methods for driving change, such as lobbying, marching, voting and consumer and shareholder activism have all failed to strike a chord with world leaders citing civil disobedience as the only remaining option (Extinction Rebellion n.d.c).

### **1.5.6 Reflecting and learning**

XR state that they follow a cycle of action, reflection, learning and planning, influenced both by other movements as well as their own experiences, recognising that it is an ongoing process requiring time and input. They also state that they do not know how things will change, and like the rest of UK society unexpected change occurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. How the movement continue to adapt to this going forward is a topic for discussion later in the study (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

### **1.5.7 Welcoming everyone**

XR state that they welcome everyone regardless of their background or identity, and intend for it to be safe, including for the most marginalised (Extinction Rebellion, 2 n.d.a). Conversely, XR acknowledge that they may be alienating to some people, stating that there is less awareness than is needed amongst the general public regarding the severity of the situation although they recognise that this is now improving swiftly XR also recognise that social movements are unpopular, but they create conversations about key issues. (Extinction Rebellion n.d.c).

XR also states it is not accepting of violence, incitement of violence and discrimination or oppression whilst at the same time recognising that people are complex and may struggle with different parts of themselves. The movement encourages people to approach each other with compassion and to increase their own self-awareness (Extinction Rebellion n.d.a).

### **1.5.8 Mitigating for Power**

The movement states that it recognises the world is structured based on hierarchies and that each person's experience is shaped by their position within them. XR state their aim is to live in a world where these hierarchies do not exist but recognise that they do - even within their own network. They also state that they aim to give a platform to the normally most marginalised and encouraging those who wouldn't usually take leadership positions to do so (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

One of the core elements of XR is that it is a decentralised movement, however they state that there is a centralising of some power inevitably with needing to use technology and organise funding. XR state that they mitigate this by having a so-called "Anchor Circle" which is transparent and allows people to rotate in and out (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

### **1.5.9 No Blame**

The movement's starting point is that the toxic system in which we live has damaged everybody, and as such do not see the value of apportioning blame in the long run,

despite targeting institutions or individuals as part of specific campaigns. XR state that they will point out and do not tolerate poor behaviour however they "do not hand away our love by blaming and shaming" (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

#### **1.5.10 No violence**

XR state that they are a non-violent movement and that the theory that grounds the movement demonstrates that non-violence is an effective tool in mass mobilisations (see section 1.4.3 above). XR also state that they will not condemn those who used force in circumstances around the world where it is necessary. They state that the fact that they recognise their privilege keeps them safe and that they stand in solidarity with those who do not have such privilege, understanding in some cases that violence may be justified. They also state that they do not condemn other social and environmental movements that may choose to cause damage to property, although that they as a movement will not undertake significant property damage themselves (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a.).

#### **1.5.11 Autonomy and decentralisation**

The movement allows any person or group to organise themselves autonomously around the issues that are most pressing for them and take action in the name and spirit of Extinction Rebellion as long as it fits with their principles and values. This means power is decentralised - there is no need for these people or groups to ask for permission.

XR promote the idea of "holocracy" over consensus, i.e. it is agreed for individuals in a group to do something specific, they are fully empowered to do the task and should seek advice but need not seek permission, they are fully responsible and if anything goes wrong should help to put it right (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

There is also an element of organisation within the movement, including for training, education, accessibility and working together (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

### **1.5.12 The 2020 Action Strategy and a Global Pandemic**

On the 1st of January 2020 XR released their 2020 strategy update which drives their strategic plan. The strategy update includes a summary of the decisions made in late 2019 and a plan and timescale for action in 2020, with the final UK Action Strategy for 2020 launching at the end of January following meetings of working groups to ensure strategies are aligned (Extinction Rebellion 2020a).

The forward to the announcement of the strategy acknowledges that the movement has “made mistakes” and recognises the need to grow the movement (Extinction rebellion 2020a). One of the first proposed elements of the new strategy is a “People's demand of the new government” which involves consulting experts in addition to listening to the wider public.

The timeline and plan as outlined in the strategy update, focuses on the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, which was due to be held in Glasgow in November 2020 but subsequently cancelled and rearranged for October 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. XR state that various actions were planned in the run up to the conference, including the finalization of strategies, lobbying of councils and another “rebellion” or large-scale protest event, which was due to be held during the summer of 2020 (Extinction Rebellion 2020a).

In a message sent to the movement by the Strategy Stewardship Team (SST) further details were issued around the development of the strategy, including how the SST facilitates the local working groups to bring together a “movement-wide strategy” stating that following the Rebellion event in October 2019 there was a need to align different perspectives (Extinction Rebellion 2020b).

Workshops around the theories of change on which the movement is based were conducted, resulting in the production of a document *XR UK Theories of Change: Towards and Antifragile Ecology of Theories of Change* (Extinction Rebellion 2020c). The message from SST highlights some interesting issues and conflicts within the organisation that are of note, including the conflicts between theories of

change and how best to apply those to different sets of actions, concluding that a level of strategic coordination is needed between working groups (Extinction Rebellion 2020b).

Finally the SST document outlines what they are doing to address potential conflicts including making the “strategy more concrete”, training and fostering a “widely shared understanding” of the theories, actions and lessons learned from previous protest events (Extinction Rebellion 2020b).

The XR UK *Theories of Change* document outlines the concepts of global environmental issues as being non-linear, and thus the concept of needing to affect change that is also non-linear by utilising the complexity and hostility to their advantage. In particular the notion of being “antifragile” is put forward, i.e. becoming resilient and gaining from change, conflict and pressure (Extinction Rebellion, 2020c). The main mechanism for this is combining theories of change into an “Ecology of Theories of Change” (Extinction Rebellion 2020c).

The movement, along with seemingly most of the planet, had to face an unprecedented challenge in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the UK entering the first of several national lockdowns in March of 2020, resulting in “stay at home” orders for all but the most essential of services and large scale cancellations of anything involving a mass gathering of people, meaning planned action by the movement in much of 2020 (and continuing into early 2021) all but ground to a halt. It is interesting to note that the movement obeyed the law and followed lockdown rules, perhaps at odds with their revolutionary ideology, this was likely in the interests of safety when faced with a very immediate threat to life. Although Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-violence against women protest did carry out some civil disobedience during lockdowns, going against the restrictions, as did a number of anti-lockdown demonstrations (BBC, 2021a). Chapter 5 discusses the effect of Covid-19, particularly how it relates to interview participants in more detail.

Restriction on the movement of people is evidently a huge issue for a movement whose action is largely based on in-person civil disobedience. The implications of the



pandemic on the movement and action on climate change going forward are discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

### **1.5.13 Extinction Rebellion and the news media**

The controversy that surrounds XR in the news media is the very reason the movement was chosen as a primary case study, having been the recipients of much media attention (both positive and negative) since their formation in autumn of 2018. Much of the news coverage has been positive and the movement has been supported by high-profile individuals. But conversely, there has also been a great deal of negative attention attributed to the movement, including a brief listing as a terrorist organisation by the government (Cruse, 2019).

Without a doubt, many of the actions taken by XR have proved controversial, and on the surface media narratives have focused on the perceived extreme nature of the action taken, the hypocrisy involved in both action taken and celebrity support, and the sometimes misguided action taken by some groups within the movement. Some news outlets who may be expected to support the movement, based on their traditional politics or editorial stance, appear to do so, and vice versa.

However, by delving a little deeper it becomes evident that reporting on the movement is more nuanced than it first appears and develops over time, and that is what this study aims to explore, shedding light not only on the debate around the media's effect on attitudes to the environment, but also more widely on activism, and the development of culture and activism in a social media age.

## **1.6 Aims of this Study**

This study examines the relationship between Extinction Rebellion (XR) and the media. In particular the way XR frame themselves and want to be perceived, the way they are framed by the media, and XR's reaction to the media coverage of their actions. This study goes on to make recommendations for XR, the media and for

further investigation both in an ever-changing media landscape and in the shadow of a global pandemic.

The questions that guide the research are the following:

- How do different news organisations (with a particular focus on political affiliation/editorial stance) frame Extinction Rebellion and their actions?
- How does that differ from the way Extinction Rebellion frame themselves?
- How do the media and Extinction Rebellion interact and how does this impact directly upon activists?

The study uses a mixed-methods approach, initially a literature review was carried out, the findings of which are detailed in Chapter 2. The primary case study for this investigation is Extinction Rebellion as detailed above, although data and discussion includes other groups or “idols” (celebrity or figurehead) where appropriate. In order to address the questions guiding this research, a number of elements of data has been gathered, as detailed in Chapter 3, making mixed methods possible for analysis, including both some surface quantitative data, with initial results detailed in Chapter 3, and qualitative elements, with the analysis of news, data captured from XR press releases and supplementary interviews in Chapters 4 and 5, discussion of these results as well as some more recent news coverage is detailed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents conclusions, further discussion, and recommendations for future research.



## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study examines the representation of environmental activism in the media and the relationship between the mass media and environmental protest movements, the following chapter details the way in which the media has previously been studied with regard to environment-related activism. Because environmental activist movements draw upon the successes and lessons learned from the environmental movement and activism more broadly, this review will also examine work on other key activist movements and their relationship with the press.

### **2.1 Activism in the media**

*“It is imperative for activists to understand media not as merely neutral tools but also as centrally world building.” (DeLuca, 2021 p.217)*

Both activism and the media are broad terms, and this section discusses literature that relates to these terms broadly, as well as examining specific work on instances of their interrelation. In its broadest sense, for the purposes of this study, activism is defined as direct action with the aim of achieving a result, usually socially or politically. Media is defined as any means of mass communication, including news media, publishing, broadcasting and social media. Specific definitions with regards to sub-types are detailed in Chapter 1 (Table 1.1.).

The media are at the forefront of processes of political negotiation and provide the frames by which we receive and order information about social problems. Study of the media is a comparatively new area of research, commencing in the early 20th century (Anderson 1997). Activism is a complex entity with a rich history with a complicated relationship with the media in the United Kingdom, with various movements seeking to bring about societal change via a range of methods, both traditional media and new media practices play a key role in the debate (Newlands 2018).

Interest in the environment increased in the 1960s and the first specific environmental journalist was appointed by the New York Times. Lester (2010) suggests the media discovery of the "environment" happened in 1969 swiftly followed by formation of the environment as a social problem and media issue (Lester 2010, cited in Newlands, 2018).

The exact role of the media is difficult to quantify. The effects of the media are complex and do not exist in isolation from other cultural influences, economics and governance. There are several prominent theories surrounding the effect of media with regards to the environment, it is generally accepted that there are effects, but there is less agreement about the actual impact (McQuail 1991) identifies.

The effect of the media obviously depends on how the word "effects" is defined. There are also a number of variables when dealing with effects resulting from media coverage. They could be temporary or permanent, short term or long term, intended or unintended, they could be direct in terms of people's behaviour or more subtle in terms of their impact. (Anderson, 1997).

Studies into the effects of the media are far ranging, and its relation to environmental issues is probably best discussed in Anderson's 1997 book, *Media, Culture and the Environment*, which brings together key literature and Anderson's own research from the 1980s and early 1990s. And of course the new millennium and ease of access to the internet brought about the advent of new, fast and more interactive forms of media, in the guise of the multiple and varied social media that is an ever-present fixture in the world today.

Rucht (2004), in a study of media strategies of protest movements since the 1960s, suggests that the movements are wrong to dismiss mass media as a sounding board or potential ally however they should also not assume they can rely on or exert any form of control over mass media as their logic is markedly different from that of social movements, in that they are inherently part of the status quo and driven by profit (Rucht, 2004).

Anderson (1997) highlights the then relative inattention given to cultural influence by geographers, as highlighted by a number of contemporaries such as Beck et al. (1992) and Burgen (1990) and argues that this is a limiting factor towards our

understanding of the perception of environmental issues and indeed their complexities. Allan (2004) describes the study of the media being fraught with 'messy complexities, and troublesome contradictions, which otherwise tend to be neatly swept under the conceptual carpet'. Anderson (1997) suggests that in order to appropriately research the media, there is a need to look more holistically at not only the news material but observation or interviews for a full assessment of their influence.

In the studies looking at media and power relations, the media are both a space for fighting public battles (Wolfsfeld, 1997 cited in Lester 2009) and a force in themselves via access, circulation, pushing messages and competition for control (Lester, 2009). Modern environmental issues present a complex and multi-faceted problem, and to some degree a level of uncertainty, i.e. the true impacts of climate change, thus they present an unprecedented challenge for the media to cover. However the media does have an important influence in the construction of widespread consensus around the issue of climate change (Carvalho, 2000).

Newlands (2018) makes an important distinction between "Environmentalism" and "Environmental Activism":

*“Environmentalism is the interaction between people and planet in a socio-political context affected by social, political and cultural relations. Another way of looking at it is climate change and global warming often refers to scientific based terminology; environmentalism is a social science term. Environmental activists focus on the social and rely on the science to prove the argument.”* (Newlands, 2018)

The media also paints environmentalism and environmental activism in very different lights. In some cases certain visible environmental issues have been taken up as Campaigns by the media, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) argue that by the very definition of the social problem is logical and there is a very real danger of impending harm - environmental issues then present a real danger to society.

Due to their complexity, Anderson (1997) argues that studies of the media, does not apply in the same way to environmental issues as they do to issues such as women's rights or deviance. Shanahan's (1993) study on university students' attitudes found a weak relationship between exposure to the media and levels of concern for the environment, suggesting there must be other factors at play. (Shanahan in Anderson, 1997 p 29).

Evidently to become mobilised into taking action on the environment people need to have concern for it. Studies around people's attitudes to Climate Change like Howell et al. (2016) and Helm et al. (2017) suggest that individual behaviour change messages appear to engage those who exhibit pre-existing concern, whereas those who report low concern for climate change may be more resistant to these measures.

The development of social media has also allowed environmental issues to move beyond specialised NGOs and lobby groups and increasingly broad domain of contemporary citizenship (Miller, 2006 cited in Lester, 2009). The growing awareness of environmental issues suggests a reduced reliance on mainstream media, with concerned citizens able to seek out information that is free of state and media interest (Lester, 2009).

Conversely, the media of course can perpetuate notions of climate denial, in fact some news outlets actively give climate sceptics and deniers opportunities, including sponsorship, marketing and opinion pieces, to make their voices heard. Climate sceptics can also attempt to influence public opinion by painting activists as criminal and/or using the environment as a cover for socialist views (Newlands, 2018).

XR operate differently from environmental movements of the past, drawing from the civil rights movements of the 1960s opting for sustained civil disobedience, shutting down cities for long periods of time (Gilding in Gunningham, 2019). This, whilst effective, also provides material for the "deviant" narrative within certain media organisations.

Social movements can be defined as a "rational attempt by excluded groups to mobilize sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through noninstitutionalized means" (McAdam, 1999, p.36-7) and further expanded by Tilly

and Tarrow (2015) as “sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities” (p.11) although these definitions are complex, as the nature of what constitutes organisations, networks etc is subjective and made further complex by being "sustained" over time (Kolers, 2016).

In addition there is often a focus on specific issues at the expense of other issues in the mainstream media, which may affect people's perceptions of, and likelihood of taking up pro-environmental actions. Anderson (1997) postulates that it is problematic to isolate the effect of the media from other social and cultural influences like education or religion, and that it becomes even more complicated when the particular issues result in contention or deeply emotional responses.

## **2.2 Complexity of The Climate Crisis**

The issue of complexity is a key one with regards to the way the media deals with the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. Historically the media have run with campaigns, that were single-issue or perhaps (at a surface level at least) an "easy fix", this is not so easy with a complex global problem.

Armiero and Sedrez (2014) unpack some of the complexities around environmental issues by approaching both the local and global perspectives. Stating that “it must be framed in a planetary scale because it affects everywhere and everybody on earth” but it also discusses the issues with such a global perspective, in that not everyone is responsible or impacted in the same way. Responsibility in fact is often situated far from the impact, and the notion of a "collective battle" may obscure the unequal effects on different locations and demographics (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014).

Armiero and Sedrez's (2014) book examines local stories of environmental conflict in the context of the global history of environmentalism, specifically focusing on 9 particular case studies from around the world. Environmentalism is defined by Armiero and Sedrez (2014) as “an all-encompassing word covering different ideas of



nature and society, as well as different forms of activism". In reality it is complex and not an overarching movement with a common goal, but in fact a collection of different approaches, traditionally neglecting the element of social justice within environmental problems.

In addition, journalists, somewhat ideologically, are supposed to report the truth in a fair and balanced way (Soules, 2015), this is complicated given that the "opposing" side in the climate debate are climate change deniers. Relying on this traditional norm, journalists have historically presented a "false balance" introducing the views of a climate sceptic in order to counter the scientific viewpoint (Arnold, 2018), thus downplaying the certainty and severity of climate issues presented in the mainstream.

### **2.3 Agenda Setting**

There is a large volume of literature on the theoretical background that shapes the understanding of agenda setting by the traditional mass media (e.g. Iyengar and Simon, 1993; McCombs, 1997, 2005; McCombs McCombs and Reynolds, 2009 and Shaw, 1974, 1993; McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 1997, 2014; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007)

Agenda setting is loosely defined as the "ability of the news media to define the significant issues of the day" (Iyengar and Simon, 1993), it has been studied for more than fifty years and is a broadly developed theory, with seven distinct areas of research (McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014). Although agenda setting is generally regarded as "the transfer of issue salience from the news media to the public agenda" (McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 2014, p. 787) it can also be applied to other channels of communication.

Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) examined the role of agenda setting in the "new" media, by comparing people's perceptions and individual agenda setting when exposed to online news versus traditional print newspapers, something largely absent in literature prior to the study. The study concluded that there were significant differences in those that consumed the news in print compared with those exposed to only online versions, with those consuming in-print more likely to be exposed to a

broader range of reports and more likely to display concern for international issues. This raises an important point for the future of news consumption, in that the findings demonstrate that online exposure to news facilitates greater control by the individual thus those individuals will develop different perceptions than those who consume broadly focused print media (Althaus and Tewksbury, 2002).

This rise in the tailoring of news for the individual could curtail the ability of the mass media to shape the public agenda (Feezell, 2018), with consequences for collective action, in that if the population does not share a common agenda, they are less likely to take action.

Feezell (2018) examines agenda setting in a social media context, particularly how the mainstream media can affect the public agenda via social media, using political information via the Facebook platform as a case study. The study found that agenda setting can occur via incidental exposure to political information via social media, and the effect is strongest among those who are least politically interested, demonstrating the ability of social media to "subvert selective avoidance" (Feezell, 2018).

## **2.4 The Media and Framing Climate Change**

Framing is closely linked to agenda setting (McCombs, Shaw and Weaver, 1997) and likewise there is a large volume of work on the theoretical background of framing (e.g. Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson, 1992; Goffman, 1972; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar and Simon, 1993; Tuchman, 1973 and 1978; Scheufele, 1999 and 2000; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). While there is no one single definition of framing, those employed in the vast literature all have similar characteristics (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000). Framing offers a consistent way to "describe the power" of a text (Entman, 1993), it is a way of interpreting communicated information and is used by the media strategically to shape the way issues are interpreted (Nisbet, 2009, in Feldman and Hart, 2021).

Frames are unconscious structures that are used when thinking and talking, these frames have semantic roles, relationships between these roles, as well as relationships with other frames (Lakoff, 2010). Brüggeman (2014) defines frames as "patterns of interpretation" which stem from culture, but can also be expressed by the individual, stating it is a useful approach for examining journalism, as journalists have an interpretive role, that is they apply both the criteria of newsworthiness but also their own value judgements. In addition, Brüggeman (2014) argues that framing is also useful for investigating journalistic practice, particularly the relationship between journalists conveying their own frames versus conveying the frames of a particular source of news. Language and imagery are the way in which frames are communicated, and according to Lackoff (2010) "the right language is absolutely necessary" (p74) for communication of the climate crisis.

Scheufele (1999) puts forward a process model for framing, including four elements; frame building, frame setting, individual level process and a feedback loop. Frames are constructed by journalists and are moderated by their ideology, attitudes and professional norms, but they are also influenced by the type or political orientation of the news medium and by external influences, who journalists tend to incorporate via "sound bites" in their coverage (Scheufele, 1999). Scheufele (1999) also describes how journalists are also audiences and that they are "equally susceptible to the very frames that they use to describe events and issues" (p.117).

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) argue that both the systems interact with one another, i.e. media discourse does not cause changes in public opinion and vice versa but there is a feedback loop, "media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists and other cultural entrepreneurs develop and crystallise meaning in the public discourse" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p.2).

Schufele (2000) also discusses how framing influences the way the public think about issues, by providing means of interpretation for the incoming information. Schufele (2000) argues that the selection of issues and agenda setting need to be conscious decisions, however framing is generally unconscious and is affected by

various subtleties, including nuances in wording and syntax. Thus, the effect of framing is often unintentional or hard to predict / control.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) conducted a study into the types of frames used by media outlets, finding that both the topic and type of outlet determined the frames used. Interestingly Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that the most significant difference was between "serious" and "sensationalist" types of media outlets. The study serves as an extension of the work of Neuman et al. (1992), examining existing frames from the literature when applied to the example of European Politics. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) conclude that serious news outlets use frames of conflict and responsibility, whereas those that are sensationalist tend to use human interest frames. The human interest frame typically brings a "human face or emotional angle" to the news story (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p95).

Spence and Pidgeon (2010) examined the framing of climate change as either gain or loss on both a local and distant level effects perceptions. Finding that gain frames were more likely to increase positive attitudes and perceptions of severity and that framing climate change as distant also increases perceptions of severity. Spence and Pidgeon (2010) also discussed the ways framing environmental issues could be made more tangible, and thus encourage pro-environmental behaviours. This includes the use of iconography and imagery, something that has been utilised by environmental groups successful in the past as a way of "bearing witness to environmental damage" (Hulme, 2009, p283, in Spence and Pidgeon, 2010). Highlighting the local impacts of climate change is also underlined by Spence and Pidgeon (2010) as a way of enhancing the tangibility of the issue.

Shehata and Hopmann, (2012) studied the agenda and frame building of Climate Change in the US and Sweden, particularly with regards to whether it is influenced by the globalisation of information flows and shared journalistic norms, or whether domestic politics is an influencing factor. In contrast to previous research (e.g. Boycoff), Shehata and Hopmann (2012) found that there was a lack of scepticism in the American news, and that coverage was similar in both countries.

Cooper (2002) examines the relationship between mobilisation of social movements and media discourse, using German peace movements as an example. Cooper (2002) suggests that the observed variation in mobilisation of the peace movement can be partially explained by the congruence or divergence of framing by the movement and the media, arguing that congruence facilitates mobilisation, whereas divergence hinders it.

*"Media attention is indispensable in helping a movement communicate with the broad public" (Cooper, 2002)*

Cooper (2002) also highlights that the tactics employed by movements in order to attract media attention can both lead to coverage, but can also hamper the movement, with coverage of the drama often at the expense of the movements message (Molotch 1977; Rochon 1988, in Cooper 2002)

Feldman and Hart (2021) examined the move towards increasing the severity of languages used in the media to frame the climate crisis. Feldman and Hart (2021) examined people's responses to *The Standard* language versus the more extreme vocabulary and also investigated whether there were differences between the focus of the story, i.e. impacts or solutions as well as political affiliation. The study found that terminology did not have an effect on public engagement with climate change but did find that the emergency framing did reduce the perception of news credibility and newsworthiness. the study also found no relationship between political ideology and the effects of news terminology, in contrast with other similar studies (e.g. Carvalho and Burgess, 2005, Brüggeman and Engesser, 2017)

Feldman and Hart (2021) argue that in discussing climate change as an emergency or crisis, a new frame is introduced, where people are encouraged to understand climate change within this frame. As described by Anderson (2017) the term "emergency" is typically imbued with a sense that something of value is at risk and that this is a time-limit in which to address this harm.

*"Declaring ongoing conditions to be emergencies is a hopeful act in that it aims to interrupt those conditions by making what has become ordinary into an exception."* (Anderson, 2017)

But on the contrary, if the credibility or trustworthiness of news about climate change is called into question this decreases the public's interest and thus minimises its impact and influence (Feldman and Hart, 2021). It has previously been shown that news coverage differs according to the legitimacy of climate change, however Matthew's (2017) study examines the importance of politicisation and mediation of climate change in the UK news, the study finds that there is a "clear and straightforward representation" of climate change in the UK, that is it is represented as a legitimate and urgent issue that builds across the temporal focus of the study.

Morton et al. (2010) explore the ways in which framing can change response to uncertainty around climate change, finding that uncertainty combined with negativity result in decreased pro-environmental behaviour, whereas uncertainty combined with a positive frame increased intentions to act. The study found that feelings of uncertainty were moderated by feelings of efficacy, suggesting that uncertainty is not a barrier to environmental action, provided the messages are framed in a certain way. There is often a disparity between what scientists can communicate and the public expectation, as people tend to be uncertainty averse, i.e. uncertainty hinders the authority of scientists, yet being explicit about confidence levels and doubt is good scientific practice, therefore managing uncertainty is of utmost importance for climate change communicators (Morton, et al., 2010).

*"Communicating climate change in ways that inspire people to take action is complicated."* (Morton, et al., 2010)

There have been several recent studies (e.g. Brüggeman, 2014; Brüggeman and Engesser 2014; 2017; Ruiu, 2021) that examine the role of the media on the framing of climate change, particularly how the scientific consensus regarding climate change is not always reflected in the media. Brüggeman's (2014) work on journalist's contribution to news frames offers an interesting perspective, examining the degree to which the journalistic practice utilises frame sending in relation to frame setting,

i.e. under which conditions do journalists use their own frames, or those of other actors.

Brüggeman and Engesser (2014) define climate journalists as *“the authors of news items that focus on climate change and are published in leading national news outlets”* (p2.) this can include scientists and activists if they publish in these established forms of media (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2014).

The tendency in career journalism to present “balance” by giving voice to those who oppose the notion of anthropogenic climate change can mean journalists may sometimes unwillingly foster climate scepticism (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2014).

Boycoff and Boycoff (2004) found that 53% of articles sampled in a 4-year period “balanced” the scientists statements with disputes of that evidence, despite the certainty of the scientific community. Brüggeman and Engesser (2014) states that climate denial is less of an issue in Europe than the UK, but climate perceptions both vary over time and are seen as a “distant problem”.

Brüggeman and Engesser’s (2014) study focuses on climate journalists as mediators between science and the public, focusing on how interpretations of climate change vary across different contexts. Brüggeman and Engesser (2014) conclude that journalists broadly tend to be in consensus about climate change, but also that climate sceptics should be given voice due to the norm of “balanced reporting”.

Although it can be argued that “false balance” and representing the views of climate sceptics and deniers is something that has largely declined in recent years, there is still a tendency towards giving voice to those who Brüggeman and Engesser (2017) call “contrarians”, with a mention of such voices every fifth article in the study. This is particularly evident in the British press with 25% of the sample quoting contrarians and 16% contesting the notion of a warming climate. Rather than being about false balance however, Brüggeman and Engesser (2017) suggest this is due to a shift towards interpretive journalism.

In this context, political leaning can also be used to examine the attention given to contrarians, for example in Brüggeman and Engesser’s (2017) study both left-

leaning and right-leaning newspapers quote contrarians. However, the way in which this is presented by the newspapers indicates that move towards the interpretive, the right-leaning papers challenge climate change more frequently, but those that are left leaning are critical of the contrarians they quote. Essentially, the right construct contrarianism as editorial opinion and the left construct it as an external viewpoint, and then present a negative evaluation of those sources, this creates conflict and thus attracts attention (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2017).

## **2.5 Political ideology**

Generally speaking, it is to be expected that those right-leaning newspapers give more credence to, or present the views of the contrarians as their own. Conservative ideology takes a number of stances that are in direct opposition to environmentalism, whereas progressive ideology lends itself more towards being pro-environmental. Carvalho and Burgess (2005) hypothesised that different ideological stances governed the amount of attention a particular outlet gave to a given issue. Lackoff's (2010) article discusses how the fundamental values of the conservative and progressive ideologies relate to that of the environment, but highlights that most people fall somewhere on a continuum, holding conservative values in some arenas and progressive ones in others. Lackoff (2010) postulates that this "swing" can be utilised to simultaneously inhibit conservative frames whilst activating progressive frames, and that this can be achieved through language and experience.

Because environmental issues are not just about the environment, they are intertwined with a number of other areas, Lackoff (2010) argues that it is difficult for people to "*capture the reality of the situation*" (p76) because they lack the frames to do so.

Previously successful social movements have had straightforward, simple and coherent framing, and despite its complexities, Lackoff (2010) argues that the environmental movement should adopt the same approach, suggesting the following:

*"Environmentalism: The natural world is being destroyed and it is a moral imperative to preserve and reconstitute as much of it as possible as soon as possible."* (Lackoff, 2010, p80).



Ruiu (2020) conducted a study on 9 British newspapers examining the reasons behind the shift from the norm of balance, finding that centre-right reporting was more likely to adopt sceptical frames over consensus in comparison with other newspapers, with sceptical or partly sceptical frames occurring in 30% of the sample. Ruiu (2020) suggests a number of factors feed-in to this, including an attempt to confuse the public's understanding and the overrepresentation of climate scepticism, given the amount of consensus in the scientific community.

Ruiu (2021) explores the framing and evolution of narratives around climate change in the media, finding that there is an increase in coverage and in the severity of the framing of climate change over time.

As the present study examines XR and its relationship with the media, a distinction should be made here regarding the difference between criticality of climate change and of social movements and their tactics. As previous studies (Ruiu, 2020; Brüggeman and Engesser, 2014; 2017) show, despite the disproportionate amount of contrarianism in the conservative media, there is a movement towards consensus, and in those instances where scepticism prevails there are variations on this scepticism, i.e. those that are completely sceptical, those that are sceptical about the anthropogenic cause and those that are sceptical about the effects of climate change and our ability to mitigate against it. This movement towards consensus generally is interesting to note, as articles that are critical of XR, may very well be due to the tactics of XR, rather than the wider issue for which the movement campaigns, i.e. the journalist/editorial stance is critical of civil disobedience as opposed to sceptical about the climate crisis overall.

## **2.6 "Traditional" Versus "New" Media**

As Chapter 1 details the media has had an established relationship with environmentalism since the publication of seminal works on conservation and the advent of the modern environmental movement since the 1960s. However, since the turn of the 21st century and at an ever-increasing rate, the media is moving away from in-print physical forms and toward virtual new media in the form of online news and social media apps (see Table 1.1 for a full list of definitions). This presents both a challenge and opportunity for environmental activists. DeLuca (2021) suggests that

activists need to “confront the mediascape” and not rely too heavily on techniques that have previously been successful prior to the widespread use of new media.

Lester’s (2009) paper examines the relationship between online new media and traditional media has developed with regards to environmental activism, by developing a conceptual approach connecting digital activity with traditional forms of news media and detailing the relationship using the Tasmanian environmental conflict as a case study. With the focus being on the practices of environmentalists and journalists alike.

Lester (2009) found that while “new” media was increasingly visible, it does not provide a new or alternative model of media power, it can be interrupted briefly by environmentalists, however, is regained quickly by the media, triggering environmental activists to adapt their strategies (Lester, 2007, Hutchins and Lester 2006).

Lester draws from (Garcia and Lovink, 1997) "tactical media", a concept used in various ways by media activists that is made possible by "do it yourself" media facilitated by access to the internet. Tactical media can be used by anyone, particularly those that feel excluded from mainstream culture. These forms of tactical media are participatory, never impartial, separating them from mainstream media (Lester 2009). This seems to make the distinction that the mainstream media is impartial, whereas social media isn't. And while social media may reinforce partisan ideas in a more obvious way, as algorithms ensure people are only shown content that fit with their existing consumption (Sphor, 2017), i.e. confirming their existing values and beliefs, the mainstream news is also often far from impartial. Newspapers in particular are often very outwardly affiliated with a political party and any article is always written with an element of bias from the journalist and editor, and may even reflect an outwardly political or otherwise specific editorial stance.

Although Lovink's (1997) concept of "tactical media" underpins the study, Lester disagrees that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) impose a “regressive hegemony over social movement’s politics” and sees the likes of Greenpeace as a valuable tool for activism because of their underpinning values. Concluding that

although most NGOs lack “the capacity or the philosophical vision to transform the market system” they are at least committed to the preservation of the natural environment (Lester, 2009). Lester previously found that some groups were able to gain access to the elite and institutionalised "heart of political and media power" but that this access is not a given, nor is it consistent, some groups in fact remain excluded altogether regardless of level of support and formal structures (Lester 2007).

Lester (2009) observes that it is the relationship and understanding between activists and journalists that is of critical importance, building on the body of work that emerged from the late 1990s and early 2000s focussing on media-activist relations with notions of power at its core. The study examines a range of media texts, including newspaper and TV news, media releases, activist websites, semi-structured interviews with both journalists and activists and observation of protest events in order to address the complexities of studying media practices (Lester 2009).

In line with their previous findings (Hutchins and Lester, 2006) Lester concludes that there is a common notion that without the traditional news media environmental activism and values lose their legitimacy, impact and are not given credence by mainstream political and cultural arenas. Thus highlighting a key issue that causes that are not given airtime or column inches in mainstream media have "no hope" of attracting widespread support (Lester, 2009). Lester also comes to an ambivalent conclusion with respect to media power in that the data analyses display the intelligence and effectiveness at pursuing news coverage but fail to effect genuine transformation. The interview data from the case study lacks focus on use of new media for ongoing representation, suggesting that everyday news media provides a real opportunity for environmental movements into the future (Lester, 2009).

Lester (2009) also concludes that the news media retains its position at the core of environmental discourse and likely to give less credence to protest action as time passes, reverting back to the framing provided by government and industry. Online communication thus provides a means of avoiding these media cycles creating a mechanism for incremental, sustainable self-representation. Thus, there is a need for

ongoing longitudinal research into the subtleties and changes of communications technologies, practices and relations and for the environmental movement to re-evaluate its strategies so as to tap into the potential of "new" media (Lester 2009).

Weir (2005) suggests that communication via technology has increased for the purposes of facilitating dialogue, with the ability to share widely across "infinite networks of like-minded people". Weir's study applies Fairclough's (1995) model of inter-discursive analysis to computer-mediated communication, specifically in relation to interpersonal discussions as opposed to media texts, providing insight into social change and how this change is driven by discourse.

Weir builds on earlier research into virtual communities, with the emerging idea that the internet, making communication improvements, would "make the community better" (Jones, 1997, cited in Weir, 2005). With the sense of ownership in the group solidifying a sense of belonging, recognising the existence of like-minds (Weir, 2005).

Weir (2005) found that the computer-mediated communication studies demonstrate attributes of online text that had significant implications for critical discourse analysis, for example the ability to archive leading to accretive information with layered meaning.

XR have quite successfully established communication networks in new media, particularly the messaging app WhatsApp and social media platforms, DeLuca (2021) states that they are adept at "staging events" for dissemination on social and traditional media.

## **2.7 Individual Behaviour Change**

*"Altering consumption patterns is one of humanity's greatest challenges in the quest for environmentally sound and sustainable development"* (Sitarz, 1994)

The media are mediators between science and the general public (Brüggeman and Engesser 2014), therefore they have a role to play in the drive and regulation of environmental behaviour. XR, as those that seek to bring about action on the environment, could utilise the media as a means to influence pro-environmental behaviour.

There is a general consensus among scientists that much of the world's environmental problems are attributed to human behaviour, they are the result of human choices that are made consciously and that all can be solved (or mitigated) by altering behaviour and making sustained pro-environmental choices (Pickett et al. 1993).

Behavioural theories have been applied to the solving of environmental problems since the 1970s, particularly studies around the prevention of environmentally damaging behaviours and the promotion of pro-environmental behaviours (Geller 1992). However, driving behaviour change is complex, and there have been many studies examining the role of behaviour as a facilitator for environmental change, and a tendency to neglect the need for other drivers, such as economic and political change, in order to enact systemic change.

Environmental behaviours can refer to a wide range of actions, both positive and negative. Pro-environmental behaviour refers to positive actions, of which there are many. Much of the literature refers to pro-environmental behaviour in the context of a specific example where the outcome is known to be positive, like recycling for example. And defining pro-environmental behaviour and specifically making distinctions between pro-environmental behaviour and other forms of environmental action, like environmental activism is not clear cut (Dono, et al., 2009).

Definitions of pro-environmental behaviour range from the holistic, like “intentionally reducing the negative impact that an action can have on the environment” (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002 in Dono, et al., 2009) to specific references to “everyday environmental behaviour” (Tindall, et al., 2003, in Dono, et al., 2009) including things like consumption of resources, recycling and energy use. Steg, et al. in their 2014 paper provide a holistic, if simplistic, definition of pro-environmental behaviour that could apply across countries and populations, they define pro-environmental

behaviour as: “Any action that enhances the quality of the environment”. Kolmuss and Agyeman (2002) define pro-environmental behaviour as “behaviour that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one’s actions on the natural and built world (e.g. minimize resource and energy consumption, use of non-toxic substances, reduce waste production)”.

Early models of pro-environmental behaviour tended to focus on education and assume that educating people on environmental issues would lead to pro-environmental behaviour, and it is also though likely that an existing relationship with nature or the environment may predispose an individual to pro-environmental behaviour (Babaro and Pickett, 2016). This is not always the case, and the gap is complex, several studies have attempted to account for this disparity (Kolmuss and Agyeman 2002).

Previous research indicates that social norms impact a wide range of behaviours and how others behave and think has a large impact on individuals, and important implications for society as a whole (Farrow, et al., 2017). Thus environmental behaviours both positive and negative may differ according to the social norms experienced by the individual. Pro-environmental behaviour can differ significantly across countries (Cuilberg and Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016), specifically there is also a distinct lack of literature from developing countries, indeed those more at risk of experiencing environmental degradation (Farrow, et al., 2017). While there are some differences and further distinctions in the literature, social norms can be loosely defined as “the unwritten codes and informal understandings that define what we expect of others and what others expect of us” (Young, 2015 in Farrow, et al 2017). The local focus of environmental movements has become more prominent, particularly in the last few decades, and these are connected to resistance and awareness globally (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014)

Stern, et al. in their 1999 paper highlight that all environmental discourses have common elements, in short, that human action can negatively affect the environment and steps should be taken to avoid adverse effects. Although the line may be blurry in where to draw the distinction, Stern, et al. (1999) also make two clear distinctions about those involved in environmental movements, firstly there are committed activists - those at the core whose role in the movement becomes a part in their life

and identity. And secondly, movement supporters - those who agree with the movement and are willing to take some action and burdensome cost. Indeed behaviour change, as a practical solution, is likely to be more important than consciousness of environmental issues towards solving environmental problems (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1981).

In order to make significant changes then, a movement needs to appeal to not only those with staunch environmental beliefs but the majority who may not be particularly conscious of their impact on the environment. Newlands (2018) claims that those seeking to distribute a particular message should do so to the so-called "moveable middle" i.e. those who can either become more committed or step back. The "moveable middle" are those not aligned to a particular cause. Activists target this group to "build a groundswell of support from the bottom up". At the same time as strengthening a movement however they can also break it by stepping back due to fear of the consequences of direct action, such as arrest (Newlands, 2018).

## **2.8 The Value-Action Gap**

Motivating behaviour change is complex and often needs to be driven by a variety of actors in a system that supports it. Previous research has suggested that people's environmental concern alone does not always translate into pro-environmental behaviour (Tam, et al., 2018). Skinner (1987, 1990) states that human behaviour is selected or determined based on its consequences, however Geller (1992) argues that this is difficult when the consequences are unclear or remote, as is the case with large scale environmental issues.

Steg, et al., in their 2014 paper, suggest that pro-environmental behaviour is motivated by either hedonic, gain or normative reasons. Hedonic being how they feel, gain being related to a specific change in personal resources and normative being the appropriateness of actions. In other words, people will be motivated to engage in pro-environmental behaviour because it makes them feel good, saves them money, or they view it as the right thing to do (or indeed a combination of those factors). Steg et al. (2014), also outline that there may be a conflict between these

reasons, citing examples such as organic produce, considered to be better for the environment than non-organic, but is typically more expensive, and public transport, again seen as better for the environment than say a single occupancy car but seen as less convenient.

The conflict between these goals also presents us with a challenge as a wider society. As outlined by Dawes and Messick in their 2000 paper on Social Dilemmas, individuals receive a higher payoff if they “defect” whereas all are better off if they cooperate.

*“Social dilemmas are situations in which each member of the group has a clear and unambiguous incentive to make a choice that when made by all members provides poorer outcomes for all than they would have received if none had made the choice. Thus, by doing what seems individually reasonable and rational, people end up doing less well than they would have done if they had acted unreasonably or irrationally.”*

(Dawes and Messick, 2000).

Abrahamse and Steg (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to compare the effectiveness of different social influence approaches to encourage resource conservation. They found that across the 29 studies sampled that social influence approaches were effective and that levels of effectiveness were different across different social influence approaches and target groups.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) argue that a person’s attitude towards something influences the overall pattern or responses but it does not necessarily predict a given action. Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1980) theory of planned behaviour states that “behavioural intention results from interactions between their individual attitude and what others think about the behaviour (subjective norm) and their perceived level of control over the behaviour (perceived behavioural control)”. A sense of agency is an important factor in determining whether people will carry out pro-environmental behaviour, i.e. people need to believe that it is within their capacity to do something about a problem and that that something is worth doing (Howell, 2011). Anderson (1997) states that some groups in society are more likely to *Express* concern for and as a result engage in pro-environmental behaviour, for example women were more likely to engage than men.



The apparent gap in concern for the environment versus actual behaviour and the factors that influence this is something that has been widely studied. Kolmuss and Agyeman discuss this in their 2002 article *Mind the Gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behaviour?* In the article they discuss the commonalities and disparities between the early linear models, altruism, empathy and pro-social behaviour models and sociological models to conclude that influences on pro-environmental behaviour are vast and cannot be explained by a single framework in isolation.

Vainio and Paloniemi in their 2014 paper on attitudes toward science and pro-environmentalism in Nordic countries also highlights further complexities in the attitudes of people towards behaving in a pro-environmental manner. Vainio and Paloniemi's research looked at the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data from 5 countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, countries that not only have a positive attitude towards science but also towards engaging in pro-environmental behaviour (European Commission 2011 in Vainio and Paloniemi 2014).

The study findings were as might be expected; that a positive attitude to science increased concern for the environment and increases sustainable consumption. Yet at the same time belief that science resolves issues decreases knowledge and sustainable consumption. The study seems to suggest that belief in science can have a tendency to absolve individuals of responsibility, something also suggested by Kellstedt et al. (2008).

Vainio and Paloniemi (2014) conclude that the most likely the link between environmental concern and values is an emotional link that causes people to be personally concerned and involved, and that the very nature and complexity of global environmental problems can be challenging for individuals to comprehend. Science itself may also contribute to uncertainty, and in learning to communicate complex scientific information to the layperson, may decrease levels of uncertainty.

Kolmuss and Agyeman (2002) highlight that in much of the research, increased education does not in itself bring about pro-environmental behaviour. Yet despite this education programmes are still a mainstay of non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) campaigns. Whilst an understanding is required in order for people to take

action (Howell, 2011), information alone as a mechanism for behaviour change has been widely criticised and the gap between environmental attitudes and behaviour well-documented (Kolmuss and Agyeman 2002). Kempston, Boster and Hartley (1995) found that understanding of environmental science or pro-environmental behaviour do not act as motivators for pro-environmental behaviour (Kempston, Boster and Hartley 1995, in Newlands 2018).

Anderson (1997) concludes that social problems can be defined when a significant number of people are sufficiently concerned to call for action, yet this does not always reflect the “objective” seriousness of the problem (Goode & Ben-Yehuda in Anderson 1997).

Of course, the ability of an individual to actually take action, Hines, et al., (1986-87) include economic constraints and social pressures under “situational factors” that affect behaviour. No matter how powerful a person’s intention, it is determined to some degree by their capabilities and constraints and indeed real and perceived efficacy (Stern, et al., 1999).

It is also claimed that those in less privileged countries care less about the environment, but Diekmann and Franzen (1999) as noted in Kolmuss and Agyeman (2002) found that although when asked to rank the most pressing problems people in poorer countries scored environmental issues lower yet always ranked the severity of environmental issues as high.

Stern et al.’s 1999 paper sets out a value-belief-norm (VBN) theory for support of social movements, specifically using environmentalism as a case study. Stern et al. (1999) suggests that while social movement academics have acknowledged that public support is important, there has been little theory related to the explanation of public support and offers up the VBN theory as a theoretical approach. The paper aims to link literature on social psychology with social movements. Within the study 3 dimensions of support are identified and examined by a national survey of 420 US citizens. Stern et al. (1999) concluded that the VBN theory offers the best account for explaining support in the case of environmentalism, in comparison with contending theories. Stern et al. (1999) argue that movement success depends on activists and organisations building public support by reshaping personal norms to create feelings of obligation.

In addition to the promotion of certain pro-environmental behaviours, there may also be “spillover” effects, that is, unintended changes (both positive and negative) to people’s behaviours in other areas (Thomas, et al., 2016). Thomas et al. looked at the potential for monetary cost to cause behavioural spillover, using the specific case of single use carrier bag charges in Wales in comparison with England and Scotland.

One of the potential explanations of behavioural spillover is cognitive dissonance theory, a theory originally put forward by Festinger in 1962 following a series of experiments. It states that natural human behaviour is to seek consistency amongst thoughts, beliefs and attitudes, therefore cognitive dissonance is when an individual holds two “cognitions” that are at odds with one another (Booth & Davenport, 2017). This theory then can be utilised to drive individuals to alter their thoughts, beliefs and attitudes in order to make them more consistent, something identified as a potential catalyst for strengthening environmental lifestyles (DEFRA, 2008, p22, In Thomas, et al., 2016). Conversely, Nyhan (2010) introduced the theory of “backfire” where in an attempt to avoid cognitive dissonance, individuals do not change their beliefs, or become more entrenched their beliefs even when provided with contradictory evidence (Nyhan, 2010, in Soules, 2015).

Thøgersen (2004) examined consistency, or lack of, in environmentally responsible behaviours in light of social-psychological theories, finding that generally most people desire to behave in a consistent manner. Several experimental studies had demonstrated that cognitive dissonance can drive pro-environmental behaviour where individuals have been promoted to examine the discrepancy in the behaviour (Thøgersen, 2004). This study also alludes to the reasons why people often does not act consistently across behaviours – at a basic level, it was lack of perception that the behaviours were similar thus no perceived inconsistency. The study also found that those who do not consider environmental issues as morally important are more likely to act inconsistently (Thøgersen, 2004). Thøgersen has repeatedly called for increased education about the significance of pro-environmental behaviours, from the advertising sector, education system and general media alike (Ölander & Thøgersen, 1995; Thøgersen, 2000, Thøgersen, 2004). Thøgersen goes further to say that promotion strategies should be based on clear understanding that what matters is the individual’s subjective perception rather than the objective reality

(Thøgersen, 2004). Pickett et al. (1993) put forward the case that pro-environmental choices are often not related to some overall pro-environmental stance, but are in fact made on a case-by-case basis. Steg et al. in their 2014 Paper on The Integrated Framework for Encouraging Pro-Environmental Behaviour (IFEP) suggest two key strategies for engagement, by changing both the perceived costs and the perceived outcomes of pro-environmental behaviour.

Swim and Bloodheart (2013) looked at the interpersonal mechanisms for promoting pro-environmental behaviour. Personal relationships are one way in which social norms are conveyed, and previous research indicates that interpersonal feedback can have an impact on maintaining and encouraging pro-environmental behaviour as socially desirable behaviour (Griskevicius et al., 2010 in Swim and Bloodheart, 2013). Comparative feedback ('individuals' behaviour in comparison to others) has also previously been proven to have an impact on pro-environmental behaviour by impersonal means (Nolan, et al., 2008; Schultz, et al., 2007 in Swim and Bloodheart, 2013).

Swim and Bloodheart (2013) used comparative feedback to examine the effects of interpersonal communications and found that across two studies admonishment increased pro-environmental behaviour and praise was also found to have some effect in one of the studies. They found that praising is effective for the maintenance of pro environmental behaviours, whereas admonishing anti-environmental behaviour may be reflective due to negative self-reflecting emotions, however this can backfire, especially in the cases of those who are less likely to care about being pro-environmental.

A recent study (Dunn and Mills, 2020) found that while watching the documentary Blue Planet II did increase awareness of environmental issue, it didn't actually directly lead to people making alternative choices about single-use plastics, it did however increase the conversation and visibility of the issue, leading to it becoming more "politically palatable" (Dunning, 2020).

Protest movements in themselves perhaps cannot achieve change alone, a much more concerted approach is necessary with focused action from a variety of arenas. The SUP debate is a much simpler concept than climate change yet Dunn and Mills'

(2020) study found that it has challenges with regards to action, but the multi-agency approach did see successes, including legislative change. This suggests that the future for movements around the climate crisis may be more successful in achieving real change if they work collaboratively with other actors.

What many of the studies discussed above lack is that collective action can be driven from the top-down as well as the bottom up, and whilst human behaviour is undoubtedly a large contributor to solving (or mitigating) complex environmental issues, it is clear that the approach to pro-environmental behaviour needs to be consistent, grounded in objective seriousness and allows people to engage regardless of situation. This is something that can only be gained completely via systemic change, an overall aim of XR as a movement.

## **2.9 Action as a Collective**

The solving of environmental issues requires collective action, therefore engagement with individuals needs to highlight the effectiveness of behaving as a collective (Dawes and Messick, 2000), and individual behaviour and mobilising individuals into movements are an important factor in this, but in order to behave as a collective, the need for other actors cannot be ignored or side-lined. Recently in the UK, policy has embraced the need for pro-environmental behaviour and sustainable consumption, a key part of this debate being whether individuals have the agency to bring this about, or whether a more fundamental change in society is necessary (Hargreaves, 2011).

It is possible that this historical focus on the individual as a catalyst for change absolves those more powerful in society to some degree. For example, there needs to be a concrete political commitment to decarbonisation as there are many constraints on long term and widespread action; the fossil fuel industry is powerful and at the core of consumerist society, political and financial markets function in the short-term, media outlets are often uneducated and/or bias, and climate denial campaigns are often well-funded and sophisticated (Gunningham, 2019)

Environmental activism in itself is made possible by living in a capitalist society, DeLuca (2021) suggests that environmentalism is a paradox, underlining the

hypocrisy of activism, after all it exists because of the very system that it criticizes, its participants, broadly speaking are privileged and from consumerist societies, living lives that are impossible for billions of others around the world.

Behaviour is a function of both internal and external influences, and this can be a problem for policymakers as depending on which of these influences is given credence, the measures that are employed can only be of a limited value due to the lack of insight from the alternative perspective (Guagnano, Stern and Dietz 1995) The power of Legislation should not be overlooked, as they leverage or incentives individual actions (Schurr, et al., 2018).

As discussed in the above section, the nature of pro-environmental behaviour is multifaceted and complex, with variations between individuals and demographics alike. It would seem then, and has been suggested in much of the literature that a whole society approach is needed to spur on pro-environmental behaviour across a population. That is, input from policy makers, the education system, marketers and the media alike.

A holistic approach to an environmental issue is one that can be demonstrated in the case of SUPs. Schurr et al. (2018) reviewed recent (since 2017) legislative and non-legislative interventions and found that not only legislative action to reduce SUPs was increasing but also that non-legislative (bottom-up) actions, such as behaviour change, are on the increase and that the combination of these actions are particularly effective. Of course, SUPs are perhaps a simpler issue to both grasp and tackle than the climate crisis, but the collective approach has had some measure of success in this case.

Schurr et al. (2018) looks at interventions around SUPs on a global scale, but makes specific references to the legislative and non-legislative interventions in the UK, including government legislation on the elimination of avoidable plastic waste by 2042 as part of the 25-year plan (Gov.uk, 2018) various bans on SUPs by councils and businesses alike. The study alludes to the “Blue Planet Effect” being one of the major drivers of these changes (Schurr, et al., 2018).

Despite the proven effectiveness of legislative interventions, lack of consistency across the globe means that alone they may not effectively eliminate plastic

pollution, however non-legislative approaches including individual behaviour and actions from NGOs and the private sector can drive tangible changes and further legislative interventions (Schurr, et al., 2018). The study goes on to suggest that further improvements away from SUP usage will require “a multi-faceted and integrated suite of interventions from various stakeholders working in tandem with each other to address widespread and universal SUP consumption” (Schurr, et al., 2018).

That's not to say that interventions against SUPs are not without their criticisms. One notable example being what Schurr et al. (2018) dub as “anti-anti-straw” rhetoric, for example from people with disabilities etc. in a wider context, switching certain products for another, might simply shift the environmental problem somewhere else, i.e. the use of paper bags instead of plastic bags, whilst reducing the impact of SUPs may lead to more GHG emissions and pollution as a result of production, and thus more environmental harm (Stephenson, 2018).

## **2.10 A Historical Example: 1990's Road Protests**

One of the most widely covered movements in the UK in recent decades was the anti-road protests in the mid-1990s. UK road protests emerged as a response to the government's road-building programme and only waned when the funding for the programme was cut by three quarters (Drury et al. 2003). The road protests occurred throughout the UK with a number of key campaigns at Twyford Down, Oxleas Wood and Wanstead, London, Bath, Blackburn, Glasgow Pollock, and Newbury, (North, 1998). The road protest movement included people with two different, but related, agendas; those who opposed the building of a given road, and those who fundamentally opposed “car culture” (North 1998).

North's 1998 paper on the anti-road protests focussed mainly on the protest action taken at Solsbury Hill in 1994, where protesters somewhat colourfully and regularly conducted action for a number of months, including obstructing bulldozers, building tree houses, occupying trees, and various public engagement tactics alongside traditional lobbying. North (1998) found that the level of interest from the media was intense and the protesters were particularly adept at using the media to facilitate

support for their cause (North, 1998). North's research examines the Solsbury Hill protests via contrasting analyses of Social Movement Theory and the protest is interesting because it examines a movement of seemingly disparate groups, i.e. the "Not in My Back Yard" (NIMBY) campaigners and those interested in wider social change (North 1998).

North (1998) examined the media coverage of the protests, notably the alliance between the middle class and those more typically inclined towards protest. The movement was described by the Roads Minister Robert Key as "a weird alliance between the rich and famous and those opposed to just about everything" (North 1998). But in reality, although North (1998) found that there was an alliance of sorts between the locals and "Dongas" there was also some conflict as the protests continued, particularly noting the contradictory nature of direct action and appearing moderate so as to not alienate locals and win legal cases. The Dongas were an ecological social movement, displaying art around their encampments and fostering a social scene. North (1998) describes the Dongas actions as "playfulness" highlighting such actions as dancing, drum banging, face painting, tree living, and a deep concern with individual freedom and personal growth.

The contradictory elements began to emerge, with the Save our Solsbury (SOS) local group feeling like the legal action they were taking was undermined by the presence of the Dongas, eventually leading to them being forced off the land by court order. North (1998) describes this as being less of a united social movement and more of a temporary alliance. It was also found that both sides used contrasting frames of risk. The point of view of the Dongas being eco-centric, i.e. they opposed all road building on ecological grounds, whereas SOS were anthropocentric in that they were not opposed to some development in terms of relief of congestion for local communities, but they were opposed to construction of a motorway that would impact on their use of the land for recreation and for the "tourist gaze". There was an observable link between the anti-roads protests and animal liberation discourse (North 1998).

North examines the politics of risk, particularly that of Beck (1992), including risk as a mobilising factor in green politics. What is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable



can quickly change, and an accepted part of life becomes a "Trojan Horse" of risks, thus particularly destabilising. Beck (1992) views radical groups communicating new risks as part of a new "risk society". North applies this to his case of SOS interpreting this as a struggle between science explaining risk and social movements challenging those claims. The debate is less about who is right about the facts but about a wider notion of how we want to live - in the case study there are several groups talking about a particular risk whereas the Dongas focus was much more about this cultural shift.

The Dongas' aim was much more about an alternative worldview built on deep ecological principles. They used risk, but not in the same way as the less extreme voices in the protests. They used risk to advertise the need for their new society without the facts and figures of the science. The Dongas' goal, like many social movements was not to achieve one specific end but to show society what the movement thinks it should be. The message however couldn't be reconciled with sustainable development and transport policy and their lifestyle was not attractive / not possible for the majority. Consequently, they had no effective strategy to achieve their vision of society (North, 1998).

Essentially, revolutionary socialism is not possible on a permanent basis under capitalism, history provides us many examples of where movements have tried and failed, the socialists of the 19th century, the hippy communes of the 1960s and the worker's cooperatives of the 1970s (Molineux, 1994). Alternative communities, such as the Dongas in the 1990s road protests, are simply not a practical option for the majority of the working class, nor are they viable long-term for the minority that do get involved (Molineux, 1994). Although, the contribution of such movements is more in the production of mobilising discourse than something right or wrong, but provides a vision of a good society that mobilises (Harvey, 1993).

It is clear that engaging with and motivating most of the population or the "moveable middle" is both a challenge in terms of the complexities of human behaviour, but also in terms of a fast-paced and often fickle mass media. Activists need to be strategic to keep their position within media discourse, with power relations being a constant challenge and lots of competing narratives around climate change and

environmental issues. It is vital then those activists find innovative ways to ensure they have a voice in the mainstream media (Newlands 2018). However the media is unlikely to participate in the mobilisation of activist messages forcing environmental groups to strategize continually in order to circulate their preferred frames (Lester 2009).

## **2.11 The Hostile Media Effect**

As with most divisive issues, people will form opinions based on previous knowledge, experience or personal bias. The Hostile Media Effect as defined by Vallone, Ross and Lepper (1985) is where individuals who feel strongly about a subject view media coverage as bias against their point of view, irrespective of the objectivity of the media coverage content.

Various studies have shown the concept of the Hostile Media Effect is robust across a range of disciplines and subjects (Feldman, et al., 2015). However much of this has been about the conditions in which it occurs, and the psychology underpinning the perceptions as opposed to any direct impact on behaviour (Feldman, et al., 2015).

Feldman et al.'s (2015) study found that the Hostile Media Effect can motivate some groups and dissuade others from activism, particularly linking this to political affiliation, finding that amongst liberals hostile media perceptions increase activism, whereas in conservative's activism decreases. This is potentially problematic as this may lead to only limited messaging and may also contribute to extremism and uncooperative behaviour towards those with opposing views

Important in these findings is how high internal versus external political efficacy is. Craig, Niemi and Silver (1990) describe internal political efficacy as "beliefs about one's own competence to understand and participate effectively in politics" and external political efficacy as "beliefs about the responsiveness of government authorities and institutions to citizens demands". Feldman et al.'s 2015 study found that generally where internal political efficacy was high, activism tended to be high, irrespective of external political efficacy. And that when external political efficacy was

low, this was likely to drive activism in a move to make governments more aware of a given topic.

People's perception of public opinion on a specific issue has also been shown to have an impact on their subsequent participation in activism. David's (2021) study examines public opinion and involvement in activism and how this is influenced by their use of media, using the 2011 summer protests in Israel as a case study. David (2021) found that public perceptions of media use did have an impact on participation in this case, in particular the notion of "majority support" was found to be a driving factor in participation. David argues that there is a difference between "individual" and "public" opinion and that publicity is necessary for the transformation of collective individual opinions to that of the public.

David (2021) argues that the perceptions of public opinion affect both the emergence and legitimisation of social movements and that mass media coverage of protest events are necessary for public perception of majority support. Previous studies have concluded that the development of social movements and collective action is related to the amount of news coverage they receive. Davison (1983) states that media coverage is necessary to move towards collective individual opinions aligning with that of the perceived public opinion. In contrast media coverage is often not favourable.

The concept of extremism as the facilitator of change is an interesting one, and Feldman et al's (2015) study, as discussed in the previous section, suggests different ideologies can have very different reactions to controversial issues. Alarmism and use of catastrophism, is utilised by the mainstream media, and fear is often used as an engine for social change, however due to the nature of environmental issues, and their perceptions as complex, this message is often vague or framed as some kind of future problem.

As Lemarchand (2017) discusses, the risks associated with environmental degradation are imperceptible and often indeterminate, combined with the sheer vastness of the problems, such as climate change, these issues literally exceed the capacity of human imagination. Is the solution therefore to ensure that these issues

are treated with certainty rather than as a possibility? (Lemarchand, 2017). For this to occur it is possible that a change in the way language is used to describe environmental problems is a key factor. In 2019 *The Guardian*, a prominent British newspaper issued an article declaring the publication's intention to change the language it uses about climate change, influenced by the UN and scholars alike. It proclaims the need for more urgent and serious language underlining the real and present threat of the issues, this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Jones et al. (2019) have recently criticised the lack of extreme visuals with regards to the anthropogenic effects on the natural world in nature documentaries, stating that "nature is still mostly shown as pristine" and arguing that this may lead to a false impression of the state of nature. The article puts across points for both sides, in that it recognises that by not addressing the anthropogenic environmental effects filmmakers are being "disingenuous", but also that the presence of hope is also important in mobilising concern for the environment.

Howell (2011) studied the altered attitudes and behaviour of people in response to the film "The Age of Stupid" which depicts a future world devastated by climate change interspersed by snippets of documentary film outlining current problems. The study conducted a three-stage survey of UK viewers.

It should be noted that it may be the case that viewers of nature documentaries and films related to environmental issues are pre-disposed to *Expressing* concern, it could be argued here that in many cases there could be a real danger of "preaching to the converted". Howell (2011) notes that filmgoers in the 2011 study of "The Age of Stupid" were not representative of the general public as they exhibited high levels of concern about environmental issues.

Howell's (2011) study considers that level of emotive imagery in line with actual solutions that it covers, and whether the disparity between the two raises questions of whether the film would actually promote or decrease the agency of the viewer to take pro-environmental action. Howell (2011) interestingly raises the question of whether so-called "disaster framing" is actually at odds with effective promotion of environmental action.

Previous research has indicated that the utilisation for images and stories could be effective at inspiring environmental action, but are emotions alone enough or does a campaign have to spell out action that can be taken? Is the causal viewer likely to conduct additional research into or join in with action, such as lobbying of their own volition?

## **2.12 Journalists as Activists**

One example of journalism contributing to activism is that of so-called "citizen journalists" i.e. members of the public who are not trained as journalists but are able to contribute to "reporting" on issues via social media, blogs and alike (Robinson and Deshano, 2011). For many spending time online can contribute to and increase in offline civil engagement, Robinson and Deshano (2011) found that those that contributed regularly found that it "presented opportunities of self-therapy, identity *Expression* and community participation" (p.649) and that "as they contributed more often, their goals shifted from the individual to the collective" (p.651).

In Barnes' (2014) study, it was found that participants attributed value to being able to comment and to read others comments on articles online as they felt like they were "part of a conversation", even when just reading comments and not making them themselves.

Annany (2018) argues that press freedom should be less about journalists and more about the "public's right to hear" (p.3.) thus moving away from a traditional journalistic model towards being "makers and defenders" of networks as well as creators of "listening environments".

Dutta and Gangopadhyay (2019) report that there is a "paradigm shift with readers and viewers now becoming a part of the news making process" (p.713) supported by Sabaté-Gauxachs, Micó-Sanz, and Díez-Bosch (2019) who investigated digital journalism through the lens of a social movement. Sabaté-Gauxachs, Micó-Sanz, and Díez-Bosch (2019) examine whether "new journalism" is activism, finding that the emergence of narrative journalism in digital forms is that it is given social context,

i.e. it relates temporally to social and economic crises, whereas this was not addressed in the general mass media.

This is further supported by Robinson, Lewis and Carlson (2019) who examine digital journalism and transformation, stating that future studies should examine the "socio-cultural, spatial-temporal environment [...] objects and artifacts, actors and processes" so that, "we understand their significant transformative properties holistically" (p.376).

*"As agenda setting is not about reality but the reality filtered and shaped by media, digital journalism can construct reality and use the interactive space to build a public narrative. This has its advantages when there is a social change involved"* (Dutta and Gangopadhyay, 2019, p. 721).

Novak (2018) concludes that it is possible to include participation within the news without losing control and that development in this areas is vital to address issues of disinformation, security and credibility.

Papacharissi, and Oliveira's (2012) study examines the use of Twitter for news reporting during the Egyptian uprising, finding that the news streams on the social media platform were affective. The feeds "blended opinion, fact and emotion" (p279) and because the nature of social media is networked instantaneous and "always on" the messages themselves encourage and uphold connection and unity.

*"The affective rhythms of news storytelling on #egypt produced feelings of community for an existing community of indignant citizens [...] aided by further connections to global and diasporic publics, sustained via an always-on affective news feed"* (Papacharissi, and Oliveira 2012, p.280).

Powers (2015) study examines the relationships between NGOs and journalists, an emerging areas of research with a small but growing body of literature. Whilst as a decentralised movement, XR is not strictly an NGO, it does loosely fit Powers (2015) definition in that it is independent of the government, not-for-profit, voluntary and for the common good.

Powers (2015) discusses normative frameworks of journalism, i.e. what journalists ought to do. Highlighting three particular frameworks; the elite liberal theory, the democratic participatory framework, and the radical constructionist perspective. The elite liberal theory of discourse effectively sees journalist as mediators of the elite, conveying their debates without favouring any party, but also holding them to account when they "shirk" their duties. The democratic participatory frame work is debate across a wide range of social groups, facilitated by journalists. NGOs have played a key role in bringing environmental and human rights issues to the media previously and this framework if more fully realised would see NGO involvement without adoption of news norms. The radical constructionist perspective is based on the belief that discourse should include those on the social periphery and aim to challenge the status quo. (Powers, 2015).

Powers (2015) concludes that at present the relationship between journalism and NGOs is rooted in the elite liberal ideology, Journalists are generally "uninterested in using NGOs to mobilize broad public debate or to include voices and viewpoints from the margins of society" (p. 434) with those that do achieve access to news do so because of convenience and a tendency to follow journalistic norms. NGOs also appear to be using new media to become news providers in their own right (powers, 2015).

Bennett and Sergerberg (2013) examine the use of digital technology by social movements, concluding that digital media fosters inclusivity and individuality in connective action that is in contrast to traditional forms of action as a collective. Individuals contribute to movements personally and in flexible ways and the communication itself becomes the way in which the movements organised as opposed to formal structures and figure heads.

Bennett and Sergerberg (2013) also make a distinction between networks that are enabled by the public and those that are enabled by organisations, in that the "crowd-enabled" draw from a wide range of resources where as those led by organisations are typically constrained by relying on mass media.

Russell (2017) examines the role of digital journalism and activism, discussing how conventional boundaries between issue advocacy and activism are blurred by all of the many actors in the new space. Arguing that no single "media logic" rules over this space, Russell (2017) concludes that there is more of a loose sensibility that governs practice and provides challenge to journalistic norms.

### **2.13 Working with social movements**

Saunders' (2013) work on Environmental Networks and Social Movement Theory examines research that took place in London, as the location of most of the UK's environmental organisations. The book examines networking in environmental organisations in order to address a gap with regards to networking.

Della Porta and Rucht (2002) suggest there are 3 phases that movements encounter as they develop; 1 the emergence of new values, 2, the taming of many organisations as they grow and develop formal structures, and become part of the system. 3. Emergence of conflict and opposition (della Porta and Rucht, 2002).

Saunders (2013) work is critical of their potentially "broad-brush" approach and attempts to address this by looking at groups campaigning widely and exploring the interactions between different types of organisations, as opposed to focusing on a social movement. The book reinforces that organisations do play an important role in environmental stewardship, despite being considered by some academics as not part of a social movement.

Gillan and Pickerill (2012) address the complexities of working on or with social movements, highlighting that the process of ethical review by academic institutions is not appropriate for some forms of research into activism. This is particularly evident when the academics take the role of activist themselves.

The term 'activist scholar' is potentially difficult to reconcile, an ethical minefield with both risk and reward. For the social movement, there are advantages in giving their messages validity. For the academic involvement with a social movement can be used to further their career and there has been a tendency to work with movements



that are palatable, i.e. it is easy to form relationships with liberal movements, it is more difficult however to have reciprocation with more difficult groups (Gillan and Pickerill, 2012). This potentially skews the amount of research undertaken on social movements, and while this is valuable in that it amplifies the voices of the activists, it is perhaps limited in the amount of value to social movement research. There is also challenge in collaborative working, particularly presenting the activists analyses, simply repeating these to an academic community is of little value (Gillan and Pickerill, 2012). An element of independent research is needed, which could be difficult to balance and this poses complex questions regarding ethics and bias.

## **2.14 Existing Literature on XR**

At the time of writing (2021) there is limited scholarly material on XR as a movement, with a limited number of peer-reviewed articles published in the last 3 years as well as a book by Burglund (2021). There is however a wealth of material in the public domain, chiefly in the form of opinion pieces in periodicals, along with news reports and online discourse regarding the movement. This section will discuss the existing literature on the movement and situate this study within it.

Gunningham (2019) examines grassroots organisations, comparing and contrasting XR and 350.org (a divestment movement), framed in terms of governance the study postulates that a tipping point may be reached when non-state actors “webs of influence” become strong enough. Gunningham (2019) finds that while so far XR have had success, the movement is still in its infancy and pressure must also come from other non-state factors, stating multiple non-state factors acting in conjunction with one another have “enormous capacity” to bring about change. The idea being once that critical mass accepts decarbonisation as the new norm, the social “tipping point” would be reached, in turn instigating the required systemic change. In fact, (Chenoweth, 2013a) suggests that this may be possible by mobilising just 3.5% of the population.

Gunningham (2019) found that XR operate differently from environmental movements of the past, drawing from the civil rights movements of the 1960s XR

operate on the basis that sustained very public civil disobedience is more effective than shorter, targeted campaigns. The aim is to shut down cities for days in order to raise the number of participants (Gilding in Gunningham, 2019).

Writing in *Dissent* magazine in late 2020, Kinniburgh discussed the potential longevity of the movement, discussing their aim to transcend politics, but stating that “politics has a stubborn way of catching up with those who disavow it. XR has proven no exception”. And XR have gained some political traction, winning support from leading figures in the Labour party (Kinniburgh, 2020) and successfully bringing about the declaration of a climate emergency by the UK parliament and the introduction of a Citizen’s Assembly. Historically governments only take radical action if there is pressure on them to do so (Gunningham,2019).

Potentially a more difficult task for XR to achieve is their vision of overhauling the political system, seeking to mobilise people along trans-partisan lines (Kinniburgh, 2020) there are limits to having an apolitical stance, such as rejection of class politics including those that may be more likely to support a movement such as the left (Feinberg and Willer, 2012). With the "all welcome" message comes a reluctance to "name enemies" as Kinniburgh (2020) phrases it, there have been some instances of direct action on companies but the main mode of action is mass disruption in order to encourage a response from the government.

The vague "how" of confronting the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss has gained traction and been effective at mobilising people in the short term, however long term, and politically offers very few answers (Kinniburgh, 2020). There have been several offshoots from XR, including Global Justice Rebellion, the U.S. addition of a fourth demand for reparations and remediation (Kinniburgh, 2020) and most recently Insulate Britain (King, 2021) with criticism from some that XR are afraid of being too radical in order to attract those who do not share radical views (Kinniburgh, 2020).

DeLuca (2021) states that XR are particularly adept at the established tactic of environmental movements “staging image events for social/media dissemination”. DeLuca (2021) also reports that such events are so common they have also become “part of the urban fabric” and that this trivializes such events. DeLuca (2021) postulates that this isn’t so much to do with the actual events but the media itself as

it evolves and the bombardment of images across various platforms. DeLuca (2021) claims that the events choreographed by XR were overshadowed by other concerns circulated by the media, particularly Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter.

Writing about XR and Fridays for Future Lohman (2021) postulates that the movements “*continue to be constrained by misunderstandings of what the climate crisis is and what is needed to organise politically around it.*” Particularly when it comes to the notions of race and culture, Lohman (2021) argues that the movements themselves are predominantly white, as are the concepts of climate and energy. Lohman (2021) suggests that bringing the practices of opposing climates and energies into a “less hierarchical dialogue” may bring about stronger global climate movements.

When this study commenced XR was in its infancy, therefore much of the literature discussed above occurred concurrently with the planning and collecting of results for this work. Thus, the findings (as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) in many ways echo the above and provide support for the theories postulated.

### **3 Methods**

#### **3.1 Background**

This examines XR's protest action and civil disobedience and their interactions with the media, particularly looking at discourse around XR in the British media. Utilising a combination of data sources had allowed for mixed methods to be utilised, with elements of quantitative (how many articles, when etc.) and qualitative information analysed (using both Thematic Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis from the data corpus).

The questions that guide the research are the following:

- How do different news organisations (with a particular focus on political affiliation/editorial stance) frame Extinction Rebellion and their actions?
- How does that differ from the way Extinction Rebellion frame themselves?
- How do the media and Extinction Rebellion interact and how does this impact directly upon activists?

The primary case study for this investigation is Extinction Rebellion (XR), the environmental movement founded in 2018 as introduced in Chapter 1, although data and discussion may include other groups or "idols" (the use of a celebrity or figurehead) where appropriate. In order to address the questions guiding this research, a number of elements of data has been gathered, making mixed methods possible for analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative elements.

Qualitative research is naturalistic and interpretive and assumes that humans use the tangible in order to draw meaning from social phenomena (Rossman and Rallis 2017). Qualitative research is research that represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex social arrangements (Rogers, 2000). Qualitative analysis is a broad term that is used for analysis of any data that has "quality" in the

case of this research the data was primarily text-based media discourse with some supplementary interviews and social media data.

The very nature of this type of research is complex and interactive, therefore it was concluded that the most appropriate course for developing the methods detailed here was to begin with a relatively broad approach before narrowing the focus to examine the data in a much closer focus. This was an important strategy to reinforce the process of undertaking an in-depth analysis in this manner and in order to engage with the data in a way that is rich and complex, going beyond the initial themes (Clarke and Braun 2013). As a result, this study utilizes both Thematic Analysis (TA) and some specific elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), where appropriate, for the qualitative elements of the analysis. Information from media data has also provided a basis for some quantitative analysis and a temporal focus.

### **3.2 Initial Approach: Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis (TA) is one of the most flexible forms of qualitative analysis where patterns and data can be identified and analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006), provides an important insight into data obtained from media discourse. Although not without pitfalls, thematic analysis provides an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). There are a number of ways in which TA can be carried out.

Thematic analysis is theoretically flexible, in that it does not require the analyst to adhere to specific sets of rules as per other methodologies, and as such it can be applied within a number of theoretical frameworks (Clarke and Braun 2013).

In the same way that TA is flexible, it could also be criticised for lack of criticality in the method itself (Lawless and Chen 2018). It could be argued that in the simplification of Braun and Clarke's six step method (see figure 3.1), there is a lack of methodological rigour in this particular form of qualitative analysis (Lawless and Chen 2018). However, for the purposes of this study, especially in its initial stages, the six-step method as put forward by Braun and Clarke offered a simple and flexible

approach to lead with, before exploring the information gathered in more depth with elements of other more theoretically grounded methods that add depth and rigour, using Critical Discourse Analysis to further examine a subset of the data.

TA is flexible when compared to other analytical approaches. Until fairly recently, the concept of TA often wasn't seen as particularly robust despite being widely used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, since developments of the method have been made in the mid-2000s, TA has increasingly been used as a method in its own right (Joffe, 2012).

As TA is not tied into a particular theoretical framework, that means it can be undertaken in many different ways. TA allows for a degree of active engagement in development of methods for research. For the purposes of this project, an inductive thematic analysis has been carried out using NVivo

TA has been applied to headlines across the entire data set, looking specifically at the overarching themes that have emerged from the data corpus.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description</b>
Familiarisation	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading, noting down initial coding.
Generating Initial Codes	Systematically coding interesting features across the whole data set. collating relevant data.
Searching for Themes	Collating codes into themes, collating relevant data.
Reviewing Themes	Checking if themes work in relation to codes, generate a thematic map
Defining and Naming Themes	Refine the specifics for each theme, generate clear names.

Producing the Report	Final analysis, select appropriate extracts, discuss, relate to research questions and/or literature.
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*Table 3.1 Six step method for Thematic Analysis (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)*

The process for capturing data and developing Thematic Analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step method is detailed in Figure 3.1 below. the final themes with example codes and in-text examples are detailed in table 3.2 below and a full version of all of the developed codes is included in Chapter 4.

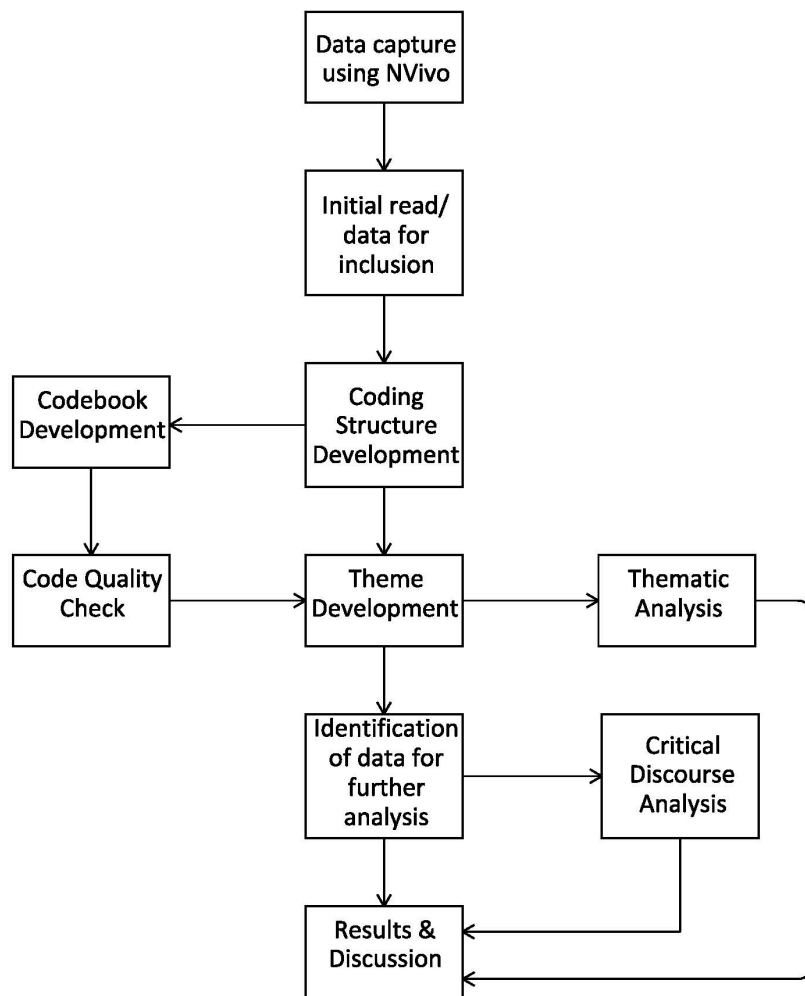


Figure 3.1: The process of data capture, quality review and analysis.



Theme	Example code(s)	In-article example
Forms of Protest	Protest Demonstration Blockade Civil disobedience	<p>“The protesters used bike locks around their necks to attach themselves to the facade of the Scottish Parliament building, near the public entrance.</p> <p>They sent the keys for the locks to senior MSPs from each of Holyrood's parties, along with a note calling for "radical cuts in emissions"”</p>
Wrongdoing	Criminality	<p>“So there was general astonishment on Monday when a scrofulous mob of Extinction Rebellion (XR) protesters were allowed to dig up the lawn. After hideously defacing the emerald sward, they carried the earth in wheelbarrows to Barclays Bank, where they deposited it in the foyer.”</p>
Systemic Change	We We are/have Humanity	<p>“We are the dead canaries” "we are scared"</p>
Individual quest	Individual stories “I’m doing this for” Motivations	<p>“The brave eco-warrior pensioner who was let off by police after protesting alongside Extinction Rebellion has said she feels sadness when she looks at her grandchildren due to the mess the planet has been left in.”</p>
Ridicule	Mocking Hypocrisy	<p>“You can't moan about the impact of travelling on the environment and then swan around the world by plane. It's rank hypocrisy.”</p>
Privilege	Celebrity criticism	<p>“Left-wing actress Dame Emma Thompson was branded a ‘first-class hypocrite’ last night after jetting to New York just days after backing climate protests that brought chaos to London.”</p>
Extreme Narrative	Terrorism List Protest Arrests	<p>“Priti Patel has defended a decision to flag Extinction Rebellion’s beliefs to the Government’s terror watchdog, after criticism from MPs and a former head of the programme. Police added the protest group’s beliefs onto the list of ideologies that warrant reporting someone to the Prevent programme, which seeks to stop terror attacks.”</p>

Crisis	Climate Emergency Climate Crisis Urgency	“MPs have passed a motion making the UK parliament the first in the world to declare an “environment and climate emergency”. The symbolic move – recognising the urgency needed to combat the climate crisis – follows a wave of protests launched by the Extinction Rebellion strikers in recent weeks.”
Idols	David Attenborough Celebrity endorsement (of which there are many)	“And here is Sir David Attenborough on 3rd December 2018 :  “Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years. Climate change. If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.””
Saving the world	Right to protest Solutions Humanity	“This is a critical juncture in the future of humanity. We have a moral responsibility to stand up and be counted, hold businesses and governments to account and demand and inspire transformative change.”
Well-being	Eco-Anxiety Climate-Anxiety Protecting future generations	“She says the fact her fears are grounded upon scientific fact sets her anxieties apart from other psychological conditions or the usual fears that afflict new parents about their offspring's future. For starters, she says, there is no medical treatment for the eco-anxiety she is experiencing.”
Lessons learned	Reflection Self-doubt Improvement	“We are gathering to reflect the raw journey we have been through and to take a further step towards our vision of true reconciliation. We come together in humility and honesty, to share our achievements and also acknowledge what we need to learn from, and where we wish to go next.”
Not in my back Yard	Criticism of Methods Criticism of Disruption	“I'm trying to earn my money!" Angry lorry driver berates climate protesters”
Stagnation	Narrow Exclusive	"Its strange that its decentralised or trying to decentralise but then its all centralised, its all in the capital, [...] I think it there could be some reflection, I think it would be encouraging people to do as much locally as they can"

*Table 3.2 Examples of in-text coding.*

### 3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

*“the background linguistic system of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather itself the shaper of ideas” (Whorf, 1956 p212)*

In addition to the initial use of thematic analysis, it was useful to engage with the data in a more critical and in-depth manner. Discourse analysis (DA) was the primary method in which this was carried out. Media discourse analysis is not prescriptive, and a number of research methods and standpoints are encompassed within the umbrella of “discourse analysis” (Carvalho, 2000). Following the initial Thematic Analysis, some of the articles were examined in depth using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a form of discourse analysis used for media texts (Lawless and Chen 2018). It is the study of text and talk from a socio-politically conscious (a combination of social and political factors) and oppositional point of view (van Dijk, 1995).

CDA is an established area within the social sciences although it is not one distinct branch of study but a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, encompassing many different perspectives, theoretical models and research methods (Fairclough, et al., 2011). CDA is particularly appropriate to media discourse as it looks at the relationship between discourse and socio-politics. Notions of societal inequalities, power and dominance and how this is reflected in discourse can be examined.

Discursive practice is the production, distribution and consumption of text, and is shaped by social practice (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, cited in Ramanathan and Bee Hoon 2015). Discursive practice can be studied using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a relatively new discipline, emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the three most influential researchers in the field of critical discourse analysis being Tuen van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (Ramanathan and Bee Hoon, 2015).

Fairclough (1992) states that "language use in society is a form of social practice rather than an individual activity". Social practices are complex and to be fully understood they need a multi-methodical approach (Wodak and Meyer 2009). Language is a key factor in the establishment and maintenance of social groups, and society as a whole (Reah, 2000).

CDA is made up of multiple methods and can be applied across disciplines. CDA is less about focus on theory and more about practical application – it involves theory, methods and practical solutions to a problem (Van Dijk, 2009, Wodak and Meyer, 2009). CDA can be used to investigate the discursivity of text, along with interaction and social context, to examine how language relates to ideology and the power dynamics at play (Ramanathan and Bee Hoon, 2015).

Media discourse refers to any form of interaction that take place via a broadcast platform to a non-present audience. Media discourse is a deliberate, manufactured on-record form of communication, and as such it is important to consider how this comes about, particularly continually appraising the messages broadcast for public consumption (O’Keeffe, 2011).

Mass media has been shown to play a significant role in the production of belief and bias as well as dominating the social context, in some cases marginalising some and misconstruing true events (Ramanathan and Bee Hoon, 2015). O’Keeffe (2011) suggests that the 2010s are a time of huge change within media discourse, with increasing use of other forms of media providing challenge to traditional notions of media discourse.

Reah (2002) offers a comprehensive discussion of newspapers, particularly dealing with the manufacture of headlines, examining what is included, excluded and the order of the words used. Reah also examines the relationship between the media and their audience, stating that it is important to distinguish between the "reader" and the "implied reader" whom the text has been created for.

The relationship between the audience and the news centres around the creation of a system of shared values, reporting is designed to elicit a particular response or

establish values in opposition to another group. With one of the most evident examples being party politics (Reah, 2002).

There have been a number of substantial works of critical discourse analysis in the area of media discourse and as such CDA is an appropriate framework for analysis of media texts, that is particularly robust when coupled with other theoretical approaches. This is true of CDA coupled with corpus linguistics when examining how media texts frame topics over time (O’Keeffe, 2011).

Carvalho's (2000) critical reading of discourse methods and its applicability to media discourse around climate change, reviews the approaches of van Dijk’s pioneering and extensive work, frame analysis and narrative analysis. Carvalho demonstrates that while each of the approaches provide insight into her analysis of media data, that each one has limitations, and she goes on to suggest a new approach based on the analogy of various imaging techniques “X-ray machine, camera and video camera”. X-ray serving as an analogy for van Dijk’s notion of macrostructure, camera for the snapshot or fixed structures offered by frame analysis and video camera for the concept of story and narrative.

Carvalho also discusses the absence of a time frame in the approaches and argues that discourses continually build on or challenge existing discourses, and therefore the historical nature of discourse is one of its most fundamental characteristics. News is generally a "discursive re-construction" of reality, journalists very rarely actually have first-hand experience of the events, and their reality is mediated through others. There are other indirect and direct factors that provide the basis of a news story. Carvalho says of climate change coverage:

*"The majority of the articles are not about climate events but about reports, conferences and political summits. So, the media representation of this issue seems to be very much a function of the initiative of social factors to organize their claims and to project attention to the types of 'happenings'"(Carvalho, 2000)*

Thus, the majority of articles do not refer to climate events but to the social actors, 20 years on from Carvahlo's work it seems apparent that this is still the predominant way in which the media represents climate and environmental issues, i.e. attention is given to climate events and issues via the representation of protest movements, groups and political happenings.

Carvalho suggests that discourse analysis must account for these two levels, the social actors and the journalists, in order to be robust. A crucial indicator being the number of articles published by a news outlet relating to a particular event. The more articles produced; the more importance is awarded by the news outlet. Of course, the omission of a particular event or issue is also significant. Carvalho (2000) outlines a method for analysis that is underpinned by a temporal approach, first analysing some periods exhaustively and then focusing on "critical discourse moments" rather than other random or arbitrary methods. by analysing critical discourse moments, key moments, changes or continued arguments, the social construction of a particular issue can be identified.

O'Keeffe (2011) suggests that the 2010s are a time of huge change within media discourse, with increasing use of other forms of media providing challenge to traditional notions of media discourse. There have been a number of substantial works of critical discourse analysis in the area of media discourse and as such CDA is an appropriate framework for analysis of media texts that is particularly robust when coupled with other theoretical approaches. This is true of CDA coupled with corpus linguistics when examining how media texts frame topics over time (O'Keeffe, 2011).

In their 2014 article, Bednarek and Caple introduce a new framework for the application of CDA to news discourse, highlighting the lack of examination of news values (what makes something newsworthy) in existing CDA frameworks despite news values being deeply ideological. They suggest three potential reasons for this neglect of news values, firstly that linguists are unfamiliar with the concept, secondly that news values are seen as something outside the text, and thirdly that there is no readily available framework for their analysis (Bednarek & Caple, 2014).

Bednarek and Caple's (2014) approach is constructivist in that they assume it is difficult to identify inherent newsworthiness, and that events are given newsworthiness by the media via construction and prioritisation of news values.

Newlands 2018 book examines the media and political representation of environmental activism in shaping public knowledge about Climate Change. Previous grassroots groups such as Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd have expanded into multinational organisations and previous radical movements have different incarnations (Newlands 2018). Many political collaborations have led to climate solutions that focus on economics, whereas environmental activists challenge these neo-liberal approaches such as energy markets and emission trading schemes (Newlands 2018).

Newlands's book focuses on a series of movements from the 1990s up until 2017. Newlands uses media and political discourse theory to underpin a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of news from traditional media and interview and focus group data. (Newlands 2018). Newlands finds that the public understanding of environmental activism sees a shift towards governance and free-market economics underpinned by media discourse. Also finding that the discourse around the political and media framing of radical environmental activism is increasingly perpetuating a notion of threat to society and thus used as justification for surveillance and criminalisation.

Newlands (2018) uses CDA as a method and the tools it provides to contextualise theoretical positions for underpinning the context of a news story, stating that without contextualisation any story struggles to make sense and the combination of examining sentences structures, linguistic traits and the tools provided to examine both meaning and theoretical questions as rationale for using CDA. Newlands uses Fairclough's (1995) framework to analyse newspaper reports (Newlands, 2018).

There can be little doubt in modern societies about the reach and impact of the media on our everyday lives. Talbot (2007) states that the media has replaced many older institutions, such as religious organisations, as being many in society's primary source of understanding about the world. Media discourse analysis is a means for the study of media texts in order to make various inferences about the content.

Analysis of discourses in the mass media allow us to make sense of the processes, how they relate to social and structural systems and potential impacts on textual, discursive and social practices (Richardson and Burrige, 2008).

The present study draws from the work of Carvalho (2000) in identifying "critical discourse moments" that focuses the data selection for the articles to be analysed and also Fairclough's 2003 framework of guiding questions for critical discourse analysis of textual data. Fairclough's (2003) framework provides a "checklist" of questions that can be asked of a text in order to perform an analysis that combines different analytical categories and particularly allows the examination of discursive practice within social practice.

The guiding questions used for CDA are detailed in table 3.3 below. This includes examination of framing, language, tone and orientation. The present study examines these questions in selected texts (see section 3.11) from "critical discourse moments", specifically dates in 2019 when civil disobedience by XR was frequent and media attention was high.

A selection of individual data articles were re-selected for CDA based on the critical discourse moments identified (see section 3.11 below), across news organisations that posed a comparable political or editorial stance. The results of the CDA are discussed in Chapter 5.



<b>Aspect Of CDA and their Definition / Questions to ask of the text being analysed</b>			
Social Events	<p>What social event or chain of social events is the text part of?</p> <p>What social practise or network of social practise the events framed within?</p> <p>Is it part of a chain or network of texts?</p>	Exchanges speech functions and grammatical mood	<p>What are the predominant types of exchange on speech functions?</p> <p>What types of statement are there?</p> <p>Are there metaphorical relations between exchanges?</p> <p>What is the predominant grammatical mood?</p>
Genre	<p>A genre is a way of acting in its discourse aspect they can be linked together in genre chains and texts often mix or hybridise different genres.</p> <p>Is the text situated within a genre chain?</p> <p>Is it characterised by a mix of genres?</p> <p>What genres does it draw upon and what are their characteristics?</p>	Discourses	<p>What discourses are drawn in the text and how are they textured together?</p> <p>Is there significant mixing?</p> <p>What are the features that characterise the discourses?</p>
Difference	<p>Is there:</p> <p>An openness to acceptance of recognition of difference? Exploration of difference?</p>	Representation of social events	<p>Which elements are included or excluded, and which included elements the most salient?</p> <p>How abstractly or concretely are social events</p>

<p>accentuation of difference?</p> <p>Conflict? Struggle over meaning norms or power?</p> <p>An attempt to resolve or overcome difference?</p> <p>A bracketing of difference, focus on commonality solidarity?</p> <p>Consensus, a normalisation and acceptance of differences of power which brackets or suppresses differences of meaning and over norms?</p>	<p>represented?</p> <p>How process is represented and what are the predominant process types?</p> <p>Are there instances of grammatical metaphor in the representation of processes?</p> <p>How are space-time and the relation between space times represented?</p>
<p>Intertextuality</p> <p>Intertextuality is the presence within a text of elements of other texts (and therefore potentially other voices to authors own) which may be related in various ways the most common and pervasive form is reported speech.</p> <p>Which texts/voices are included or significantly excluded?</p> <p>Where included are they attributed and if so specifically or non-specifically?</p> <p>Are attributed voices quoted or indirectly</p>	<p>Styles</p> <p>What styles are drawn upon?</p> <p>How are they textured together?</p> <p>Is there a significant mixing?</p> <p>What are the features that characterise the styles?</p>

	<p>reported?</p> <p>How are the voices textured in relation to the authorial voice and in relation to each other?</p>		
Assumptions	<p>What existential, propositional or value assumptions are made?</p> <p>Is there a case for seeing any assumptions as ideological?</p>	Modality	<p>Modality of a clause or sentence is the relationship it sets up between the author and representations. What authors commit themselves to in terms of truth or in terms of obligation and necessity.</p> <p>To what extent are modalities categorical?</p> <p>To what extent are they modalized?</p> <p>What levels of commitment are there?</p> <p>What are the markers of modalization?</p>

<p>Semantic/ grammatical relations between sentences and clauses</p>	<p>Semantics it's a branch of linguistics which studies meaning in languages it is conventionally distinguished from grammar, which studies formal aspects of languages.</p> <p>What are the predominant semantic relations between sentences and clauses?</p> <p>Are there higher-level semantic relationships over large stretches of the text?</p> <p>Are grammatical relations between clauses predominantly paratactic, hypotactic or embedded?</p> <p>Are particularly significant relations of equivalence or difference set up?</p>	<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>to what values the office commit themselves?</p> <p>How are values realised as evaluative statements with deontic modality (of necessity and obligation) statements with effective mental processes or assumed values?</p>
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Table 3.3: Guiding questions for critical discourse analysis of text, adapted from Fairclough (2013).

### 3.4 Data Corpus and Timeframe

The bulk of the data corpus used for this study is secondary textual data (media data) obtained via news articles over a set period of time, supplemented with secondary data from TV programme transcripts and primary data from interviews.

This study has a temporal focus, in order to identify key periods in the discourse, where the focus intensifies or changes, so called “critical discourse moments”, events that lead to challenge to an existing discourse (Carvalho, 2000). Timeframe is important in discourse analysis, as texts often challenge or support discourse from previous texts, particularly in the media where journalists act as re-constructors of reality in a discursive manner (Carvalho, 2000).

In this case the temporal focus is used to cover the key events around the emergence of XR, subsequent periods of activism and ensuing legal action. Extinction Rebellion emerged in autumn of 2018, although there are relatively few media articles from that period, with more from news outlets who report on activism more widely, such as *The Guardian*. As such, the 1st of September 2018, coinciding with the emergence of Extinction Rebellion as a distinct movement was chosen as a starting point.

The onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic also provided a natural end point for the bulk of data collection from the media, as the lockdown period enforced in the UK meant that any face-to-face protest or widespread civil disobedience was virtually impossible. The end date selected for collection of media data was chosen as the 31st of May 2020, in order to capture reporting on XR’s reaction and / or strategy of dealing with the pandemic initially.

Thus, the period for data collection was a window of 21 months, from September 2018 until May 2020, during which two large scale “Rebellions” and a number of other smaller protest actions took place, as well as the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. From this data some key points in time have been identified and are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Data from beyond this window is also included

where there are specific relevant discussion points, including literature published about XR in 2020 and 2021.

### **3.5 Why the internet news media?**

The media act as mediators between issues and events and the general public. In the UK newspapers (either in print or online) reach the majority (90%) of the adult population (NRS, 2017).

As stated in Ofcom's News Consumption 2019 report, whilst TV remains the most used media format for consumption of news, with 77% of people surveyed reporting consuming news in this way, the internet is increasing in popularity. With 66% reporting they access news online, including stories shared on social media. The news media is moving increasingly towards online platforms and looking at online news (aside from social media - although social media often directs readers to the articles), reading online news stories is the most common way to access news (Ofcom, 2019).

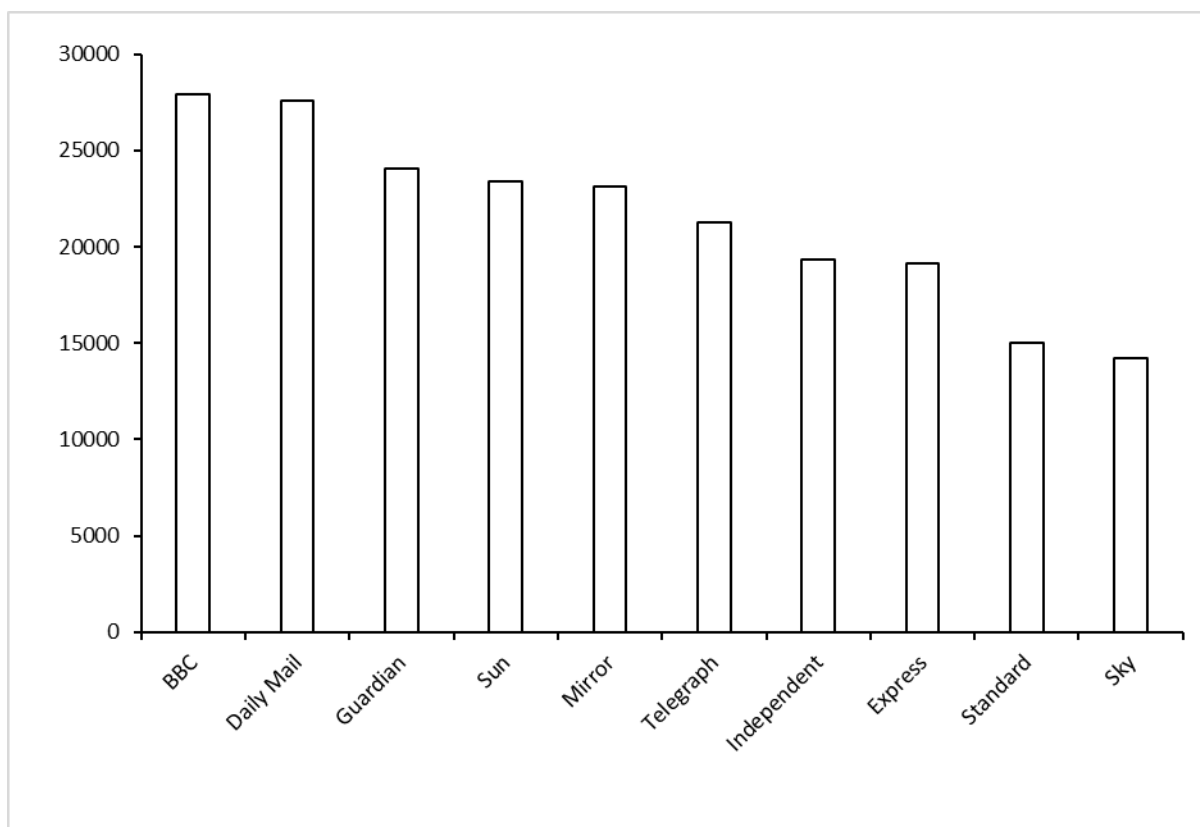


Figure 3.2: Top 10 news outlets in millions, March 2019 adapted from Ofcom (2019).

Using written news media was a useful and convenient way of obtaining a relatively large amount of data for discourse analysis, across a range of news outlets, with opposing bias and different demographics across readership. For example, both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* occupy 2 of the top 3 spots as listed by Ofcom's top 10 (after the *BBC* in the number 1 spot).

It is difficult to ascertain the exact political affiliation or editorial stance of the news media (Edwards & Cromwell, 2006) therefore as per previous similar studies (Ruiu, 2021) the 2017 classifications as laid out in a YouGov survey were used as a proxy. *The Daily Mail* has an editorial stance that is typically right of centre (Stoegner and Wodak, 2015), and in the YouGov, *The Daily Mail* polled as the most "right-wing" British newspaper, with 81% considering it so (Smith, 2017). Conversely, *The Guardian* polled as the most "left wing" newspaper in the same poll, and in other polls has also emerged as the most trusted (Bold 2018, Waterson 2018). The written news element is supplemented with in depth programmes (see section 3.11) from several channels, where a broader perspective is provided.

A 2020 study undertaken by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Oxford University examined how people accessed news about climate change globally. The findings reinforced the 2019 Ofcom report, finding that most people access news about Climate Change via television (35%), followed by internet-based news (15%) (Andi, n.d.).

Due to ease of access, and ease of capturing the data from the internet, a vast quantity of data can be accessed relatively swiftly and allows for a robust sampling plan and systematic retrieval of data. The supplementary data from TV transcripts is less robust as there is less diversity of production companies and broadcasting channels, however their inclusion is valuable due to the in-depth nature of the programming.

### **3.6 Media Data Collection Procedure**

The data corpus of media articles is drawn from over 1200 articles from various news organisations websites between 1st September 2018 and 31st May 2020 following lessons learned from the “rebellions” of 2019 and the strategy put forward for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and including XR’s initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

An initial reading of the data was carried out, with a view to identification of significant debates and questions that led to amendment / development of the initial research questions proposed. Following this a thematic analysis was carried out on textual data from the news media, XR press and transcripts of programming and interviews, using the computer programme NVivo to assist in coding the data and identifying themes.

News articles from the top 10 news media sources were imported to NVivo from the relevant news using the Google add-on N-capture which allows web pages, including text and images to be downloaded as PDFs which can then be analysed once imported (the process for this is detailed in Appendix 1). The “Top 10” news media sources provide a robust sample overall, as they encompass different types of media



(tabloid, broadsheet, broadcast) and they also provide representation across the political spectrum (when crossed referenced with the YouGov 2017 survey).

The “Top 10” internet news media sources are defined as per Ofcom’s News Consumption 2019 report and are as follows:

1. *BBC News*
2. *Daily Mail*
3. *The Guardian*
4. *The Sun*
5. *Mirror*
6. *Telegraph*
7. *Independent*
8. *Express*
9. *Standard*
10. *Sky News*

Due to the inconsistent nature of the search functions on these websites, Google advanced search was used in order to ensure the data was obtained in as robust, consistent and replicable manner possible. Supplementary data from TV programme transcripts were also obtained and utilised from Box of Broadcasts, as detailed in section below.

### **3.7 Capturing Media Data**

As mentioned above, there were some inconsistencies in the search functions within the individual news outlets, therefore Google Advanced Search was used, in conjunction with NCapture for NVivo. NCapture is an extension that can be added to Google Chrome in order to capture websites or their text and images as PDFs for use in NVivo. The full process of capturing media data is detailed in Appendix 1.

### **3.8 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Media Data**

Media data was gathered over the time frame using Google advanced search, using the search term “Extinction Rebellion”, then filtered further to include only news stories, and apply the specific dates. The full procedure for data collection and a list of search terms are detailed in Appendix 1.

The criteria for inclusion are:

1. News Articles (including opinion and analysis where XR are the main subject) in a text format from the top 10 news agencies (Ofcom 2019)
2. About events in / relevant to the UK
3. About XR campaigns and events following those campaigns
4. Primary story about XR or environmental issues where XR are mentioned or interviewed in a major capacity.

Some of the data obtained via the Google advanced search required some manual sorting as the Google advanced search results do include some articles that are not relevant, such as in-depth programming, videos (which often have brief text descriptions) and articles from other news agencies, particularly from the *Mail Online* which displays results from other agencies such as *Reuters* or the *Mail Australia*.

As such, several criteria for non-inclusion of the media data have been applied:

1. Video clips / programmes with text introductions (transcription data from programming is discussed below).
2. Articles where there is a passing mention to XR, i.e., political pieces from the 2019 general election, minor quotes from XR representatives on stories where the main focus is something other than XR or environmental issues.
3. Where the origin of the article is a news agency external to the publishing outlet.
4. Any world news (non-UK)
5. Where the news story is from a sub-platform of the news outlet, i.e., Newsround from the *BBC*.

### **3.9 Media Representation of Extinction Rebellion vs. How they wish to be perceived**

Data in the form of press-releases (XR data) was also periodically gathered from XR's website and social media, an overview of their strategies and long term aims / demands can be found in Chapter 1. An in-depth comparison is drawn in Chapter 4 between the claims and demands made by XR, their representation in the media and the perception of them as a movement and individual level, as reported by interviewees.

The XR data was analysed using the same coding structure as the media data from the news organisations as detailed in figure 4.1.

#### **3.9.14 Box of Broadcasts**

Box of Broadcasts (BOB) is an online service that provides programmes and their transcripts for educational and research purposes. Transcripts were obtained from BOB for a number of key programmes broadcast by the *BBC* and *Sky News* as the two broadcasters included in Ofcom's Top 10 List, which governed the selection of all other media content for the purposes of this study. A documentary from the broadcast channel, Channel 5 was also included. The following programmes were utilised:

- Extinction Rebellion: Last Chance to Save the World?, 02:05 10/08/2019, *BBC2* England, 45 mins.
- Inside Out, 10:30 08/09/2019, *BBC News 24*, 30 mins.
- Inside the Rebellion, 16:30 23/12/2019, *Sky News*, 30 mins.
- Inside Extinction Rebellion: Martyrs or Maniacs, 21:00 16/02/2020, Channel 5, 60 mins.
- The Media Show, Climate Change and the Challenge for Media, 15:30 24/10/2021, *BBC News 24*, 30 mins.

These programmes were selected due to their in-depth documentary nature, with multiple parties expressing their opinion on the movement and their actions,

including interviews with those who participate in civil disobedience as part of the movement, thus bolstering data with regards to the relationship between XR, the media and other actors.

Because transcripts were extracted from BOB as opposed to transcription being carried out, there is the potential that some of the meaning or nuance of the broadcast could be lost. Each of the broadcasts included were viewed and the validity, accuracy and system of transcription checked in order to ensure that the transcript provides an accurate representation of the broadcast programme. The transcripts were then coded using the same coding structure as the media data, XR data and the interview data (as displayed in figure 4.1).

### **3.10 Interviews**

Supplementary interviews were carried out with a number of participants who self-identify as being a participant in the XR movement, for the purposes of reviewing their perceptions of the movement and how that relates to the attention paid by the media. Supplementary interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner and were subject to ethical approval in line with the University of York's policy on Ethical Review. Ethical approval was granted on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

Initially, pilot interviews were carried out at an environmental charity, using the semi-structured questions as approved by ethical review (see Appendix 4 for the full information sheet as provided to participants). This was an important step in allowing this technique to be honed and also familiarisation with use of NVivo.

It was necessary to re-examine the level to which interviews could be conducted for the study due to the Covid-19 pandemic and access to interview participants. Initially interviews and public focus groups were going to form the majority of the data corpus for the study, including the organisations perceptions of their campaigns and the perceptions of the general public in relation to the campaigns. The bulk of the initial data subsequently became data that was obtained from media articles.

It was decided that interviews would still be utilised but as a supplementary source of information, building on the interpretations made in undertaking media discourse analysis, particularly when drawing comparisons between how XR is portrayed versus how they envisage their public image.

Interview participants were recruited using snowballing and purposive sampling, whereby they were recruited via social media and word of mouth and then selected based on their level of involvement/experience with and knowledge (Palinkas, et al. 2016) of XR. A total of 5 supplementary interviews were carried out.

Of the 5 interview participants selected, 4 identified as female and one as male, with a range of ages from early 20s to 60+. 3 had organisational "roles" within XR, in that they had been involved in coordinating protest action at a regional level, one was also involved in a number of high-profile actions in London and had been arrested for one of these protests. The remaining 2 participants were involved locally only.

Participant number	Gender identity	Age range	Location	Organisational "role"?
1	Female	40-49	Yorkshire	Yes, locally
2	Female	40-49	North East	Yes, locally
3	Female	60+	North East	No
4	Male	50-59	South West	Yes locally and London
5	Female	18-29	South West	No

*Table 3.4 Overview of interview participants demographics*

The interviews were semi-structured, and as well as introductory and demographic questions, they included (but were not limited to) the following guiding questions:

- Are you an active member of XR?
- If so, what is your level of participation?
- Were you previously active?
- If so, what was your level of participation?

- And what were your reasons for ceasing participation?
- Could you talk me through how XR wish to be portrayed in the media / perceived by the general public?
- Do you think that XR have been fairly and accurately represented by the media?
- Could you tell me about a success and a disappointment of previous actions?
- What are the lessons learned and how has that subsequently influenced future action?
- Would you be willing to share information about any upcoming campaigns/protest action?

Participants were given the opportunity to expand on these points as they saw fit, ask questions and include any additional information they felt was relevant to the interview. Interview data was then coded using the same coding structure as the media data and the transcripts of the TV programmes from Box of Broadcasts.

### **3.11 Quantitative Data**

Due to the vast amount of data captured quantitative information was gleaned with relative ease, including numbers of articles during specific time periods and regarding specific subjects or events, enabling the creation of a timeline and identification of "critical discourse moments". A full discussion of these findings is presented below.

### **3.12 Coding review and improvement**

A codebook was developed in order to undertake secondary coding to ensure the rigour of the coding applied. A codebook is a set of codes, definitions and examples used as a guide to help analyse data. The final codebook can be found in Appendix 2.

Prior to the main bulk of analysis on the data corpus, the coding was checked manually using the codebook. Two articles were manually checked and compared

with the NVivo coding of those articles, any gaps or glaring differences between the coding were then subsequently discussed and the code book adjusted accordingly.

### 3.13 Coding using NVivo

The media data was downloaded from the internet as a PDF document that can be imported into NVivo, via the add-on for Google Chrome. N-capture is straightforward to use and allows saving of either the article as a PDF or the webpages (including adverts and links). For this study, the saving of the article as a PDF was used. A full step-by-step of how articles were saved via N-capture can be found in Appendix 1.

The N-capture function also allows for coding of articles to specific nodes, thus enabling some coding structure to be assigned to the articles prior to import to the NVivo programme for full analysis. Because the data was saved as an article PDF, as opposed to the web page as a PDF, some of this pre-coding was essential, in order to attribute dates to each of the articles (as such information is often contained on the webpage but not the article itself), other auto coding was also utilised including, the month and year of publication and the news outlet. Initially it seemed that this function could be utilised for more in-depth coding, however as it simply assigns the whole saved article to a specific node, its functionality for the coding process was limited.

"Surface Level" Coding		
Node	Sub-nodes	Description
Year of publication	Month of publication	2018, 2019, 2020 and months of the year.
Publishing News Organisation	<i>BBC, Sky, Mail, Express, Sun, Guardian, Independent, Mirror, Telegraph, Standard, XR press release</i>	N/A

Location	London, other UK	
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Table 3.5: Codes applied using the “code to node” function in NCapture.

This auto-coding allowed for an initial basic analysis of the text, allowing some initial conclusions, particularly about the temporal, to be gleaned. Also, the who and where provides an interesting first impression of the data, for example the publishing news outlet or the author/editor themselves come with their own agendas, ideology and bias, which allows the text to be placed in a certain context.

Initially a reading and re-reading of the data was carried out. Items to be discounted from the overall data set were counted or discounted based on their relevance. For example, within the media data gathered for XR, there were many articles that had been saved where a mere passing mention of XR was made, particularly articles that related to the 2019 general election. Full criteria for inclusion and exclusion of media data are detailed in section 3.8 above.

This first pass of the media data allowed for the emergence of the initial focus, controversies and indeed, highlights what is not said. This allows for an initial coding of the data, results of which are discussed in the following sections. Table 3.2 below details the system of codes applied to the data set.

The sheer amount of media data initially generated (over 2000 individual articles) meant that an element of refining the data corpus had to be made prior to coding the data set. The quantity of individual articles gleaned from the N-capture process (as detailed above) presented both an opportunity and a challenge in that the data corpus is robust, however, given the timeframe, this method presented a huge amount of work. Resource was limited, thus the scope for multiple interpretation and interrogation of the codes was limited. However, a coding comparison was carried out using selected articles. Further discussion can be found in Chapter 5.

The reading of the media data also led to focusing or amending of the initial research questions, particularly as the study evolved from looking at a wide range of “environmental campaigns” to focusing on a specific movement as a primary case



study. The initial questions used to guide the research were much broader than the ones listed above, instead of broadly looking at environmental issues versus public perception and behaviour changes the study has evolved to looking more specifically at the relationship between XR and the media, the media narrative and its intention, including the levels at which these narratives affect public perception of the movement and to some degree, the wider environmental challenges they put forward.

A total of 50 initial individual codes were developed from the initial study of the media data corpus, many of these codes overlapped several of the resulting themes. The same coding structure was then applied to the interview transcript data and the Box of Broadcast Transcript data. Findings of the Thematic Analysis of the media, interview and programme data are discussed in detail by theme in Chapter 4.

### **3.14 Data Selection for CDA**

A subset of the media data was selected from the data corpus of news articles, XR press and interviews. With the corpus of news articles, these focused on data from the key moments in time, so called "critical discourse moments" where there was a high frequency of articles, or a particular change in the discourse. The data subset also included a focus on news organisations with differing political or editorial stances, as due to the way in which the media construct news around the climate crisis, the scientific frames also have political connotations (Berglez, 2011, in Ruiu, 2021) particularly in the construction of the norm of balance or contrarians versus consensus (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2014; 2017).

There were 4 articles selected for CDA, with a direct comparison between news organisations that were left of centre versus those on the right, with a comparison between those on the furthest end of the spectrum (*The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*) to those that are more centrist (*The Independent* and *The Telegraph*). the results of these findings are detailed in Chapter 5.

This study draws from Fairclough's 2003 model for CDA. The findings of the critical discourse analysis are discussed at length in Chapter 5.

### **3.15 Limitations**

The sample of media data is vast, yet was convenient to obtain, it could be that other sources of media data (i.e., social media analytics) could provide a greater understanding, particularly on the numbers and locations of readership, in addition to the assumptions informed by the Ofcom report. It is possible that this study may be limited in terms of demographics, for example excluding the primary forms of media used by different demographics (social media etc) by not examining the platforms used in more detail. Ways in which the links between sharing and consumption of media articles on social media is a potential future line of enquiry. The ways in which the public perceived the media reports was initially one of the drivers behind this study, this again could be a potential future line of enquiry as it was removed from the study as a result of adaptations made as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and UK lockdowns.

Although Google searching was utilised in order to create a replicable method, it is limited because the way organisations make their data available differs, some maybe more available than others i.e., paying for appearing higher up in a search, some data was also behind a pay wall, and accounts had to be set up to access the material. There was also an element of cross over with other articles, particularly those that had a focus that wasn't primarily XR or the climate crisis but mentioned it in passing. An element of judgment had to be made during the initial read as to whether some articles were relevant for inclusion on this basis. Due to the fast-paced and ongoing nature of the data collection (collection ran concurrently with the news) Google Advance Search was deemed to be the most appropriate way of capturing this data immediately. Studies looking at historical data may find advantages to using a database service.

Due to the sampling timeline, it is likely that there will be more articles from 2019 from each of the news outlets, as the timeline encompasses the entirety of that year,

and only a proportion of both 2018 and 2020. In addition, the primary “Rebellion” events occurred in April and October of 2019, thus it would be expected that more coverage would be present from those months, with subsequent coverage from prosecutions following. XR became active at the end of 2018 and the end of the sampling period covers the months at the beginning of the UK’s first lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when face to face civil disobedience was rendered virtually impossible due to restrictions on moving around in public.

Given the scale of the data corpus it would be impossible to code every single piece of data individually, although it has been possible to glean quantitative, temporal and some aspects of qualitative data (headlines) from the initial coding of the data. The limitations of the scale and methodologies used in this study are examined further in Chapter 6.

### **3.16 Initial findings**

As described above, “surface level” data, i.e., data that was easily extracted via N-capture for NVivo’s auto coding functions, that is, data about the publishing news organisation, date and year of publication was compiled, along with the themes that dominated the media headlines. The following sections outline this surface level data by news outlet and a discussion of what can be inferred from that data and the political leanings of each news outlet. This data identifies areas for a narrowing of focus for qualitative analysis, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

While XR claim to be an inclusive movement irrespective of background, inevitably the liberal ideologies proposed will align with some political viewpoints more than others, therefore it is likely that the editorial stance of the news outlets will have some bearing on the way the movement is represented by their organisation, this is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

The following sections detail a summary of total articles, their occurrence and particular points for discussion from each of the sampled news organisations. A variety of tools were used in NVivo, including word frequency queries, cluster

analysis, text search and word trees in order to identify the frequency words and how they interact. The use of language by the media institutions is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5. Full data tables and NVivo Code Hierarchies can be found in Appendix 2.

### 3.17 Overall Data and Timeline

Figure 3.4 below demonstrates the overall trend in the data of all 10 of the sampled news outlets. Although there are variations in the number of articles depending on the outlet, there is an overall trend of a peak in publication around those key "Rebellion" events in April and October 2019. Figure 3.4 also shows that the greatest attention to XR overall was given by *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, whilst *The Mirror* and *The Express* devoted much less column inches to the movement overall.

Figure 3.3 depicts a timeline of the key events throughout the main sampling period. The timeline displays key points where rebellion events and subsequent prosecutions took place. The timeline also shows where there is a key shift in the discourse, be it due to the increased media attention received by XR or specific changes in the discourse around climate change, these key points are what can be referred to as "critical discourse moments" (Carvalho, 2000) and show how the media discourse has been altered by events over time.

Figure 3.4 illustrates a small surge in interest in October 2018, following the launch of XR and declaration of emergency, before the first major peak in publications during the April 2019 "Rebellion", there remained some interest across the board, with articles about subsequent prosecutions and some outlets running "profile" articles about individuals or groups involved with the civil disobedience, along with the background of School Strike for Climate, and Global Climate Strikes. The second and largest peak of articles came during the October "Rebellion" at a time where attitudes were beginning to change, language around the crisis was being changed in the mainstream media, climate emergencies were being declared, other acts of protest had been a staple of the year's news stories. Figure 3.4 demonstrates interest was still present following the October peak but then tailed off with a drop in

almost all news coverage in March of 2020, due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the first UK lockdown.

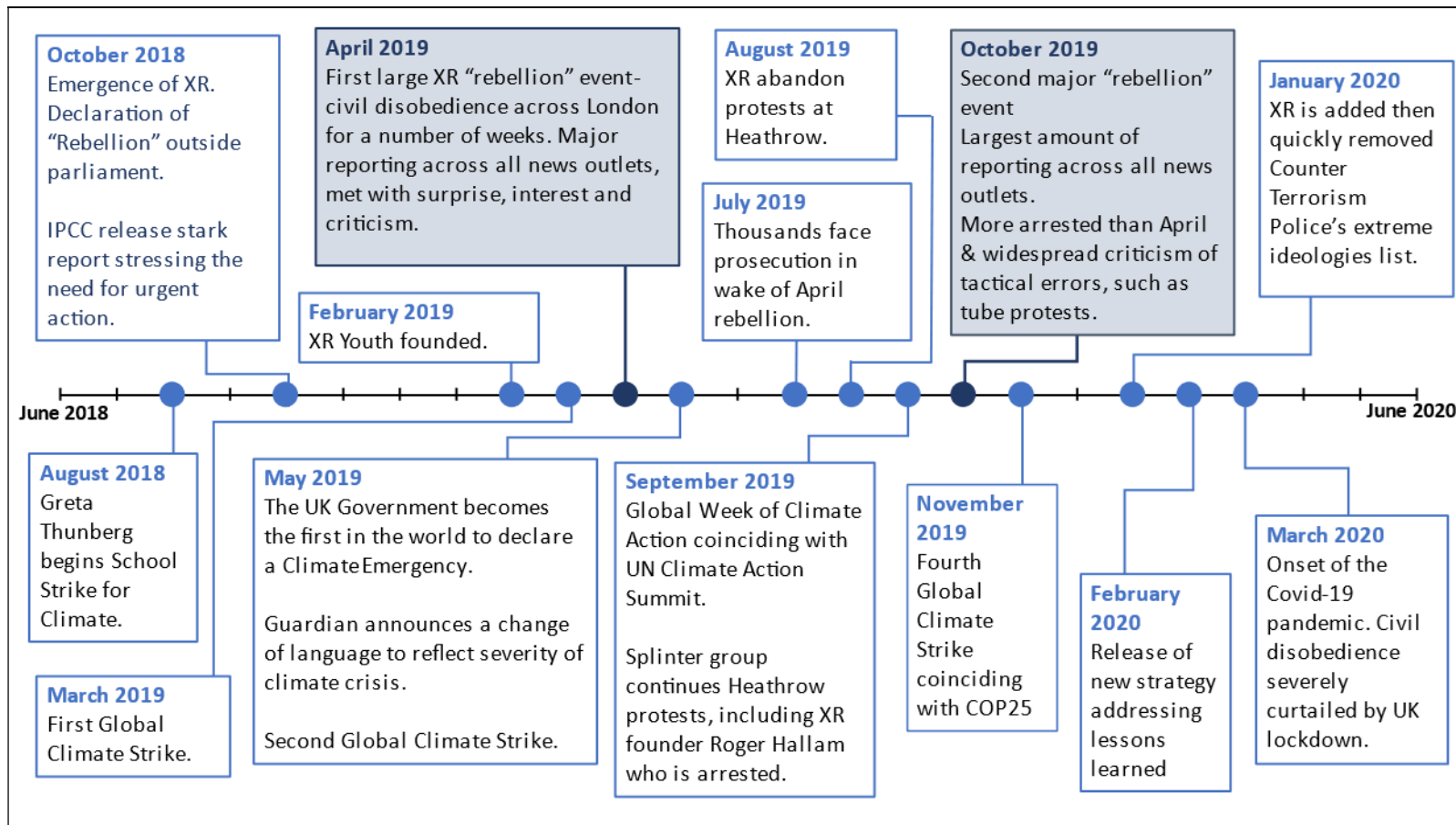


Figure 3.3 Timeline of the development of XR and other key events during the sampling period.

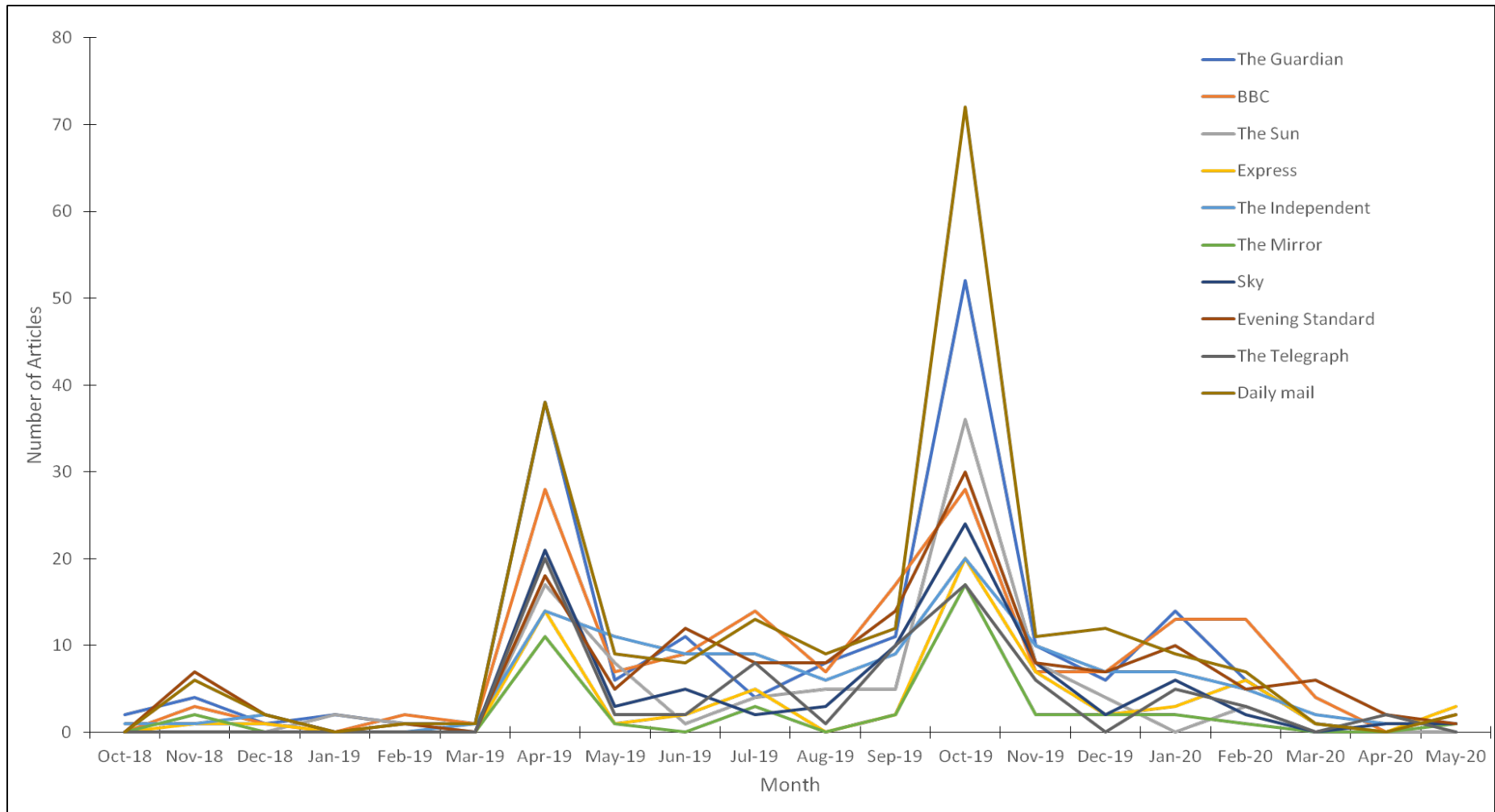


Figure 3.4 Comparison of coverage of XR by the top 10 news outlets during the sampling period.

Both figures 3.3 and 3.4 clearly indicate that the two key critical discourse moments surround the "Rebellion" events of 2019. Extinction Rebellion of course do not exist in isolation from other environmental movements or indeed UK/worldwide politics, therefore, Figure 3.3 also depicts other key moments during the sampling period.

Although articles related to Schools Strike for Climate, Global Climate Strikes and associated events were not examined in depth as part of this study, they also fit into the wider tapestry of awareness around the climate crisis and environmental issues as a whole, and along with XR have had an impact on the narrative around the urgency of these issues. Some overlap between the movements and instances of civil disobedience was observed in the data corpus, this will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.3 demonstrates the emergence of both XR and School Strike for Climate in the latter half of 2018, followed by sustained significant instances of civil disobedience leading to successes for XR including, observable changes in narrative in the media, policy change at local council and eventually whole government level with the declaration of a Climate Emergency in May of 2019. Later in 2019 saw some significant bad press and criticism for XR, with a series of tactical errors admitted by the movement, and the arrest of founder Roger Hallam for protests at Heathrow. Early 2020 saw a new strategy for XR and addressed these lessons learned, but any planned action was swiftly curtailed by lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **3.18 Politics, Editorial Stance and Stance on the Environment**

The exact stance in which a news outlet takes on the environment is difficult to quantify, however the following sections discuss the political and editorial stances of the sampled news organisations in order to give context to the way they frame environmental issues. Some, such as *The Guardian* and *Independent* have made their stance on the environment clear, therefore qualifying the real and urgent nature



of the problems. Others however have a decidedly vague stance, or no real mention of a stance on environment at all, this is also of note, as perhaps this is deliberate and, in an effort, to downplay the issue, or retain editorial freedom.

Political leaning is an important factor in the way environmental issues are presented, and the way in which they are perceived, with those identifying as left-leaning much more likely to think that climate is a serious issue. Ever since the 1970s the environmental movement has been compatible with socialism, but within this there are elements that are idealistic and those that are more materialist in their analysis (Pepper, 1985).

A 2020 study by Reuters and the University of Oxford found that many more people who self-identify as left-wing report serious concern about climate change, than those who self-identify as right-wing, this is particularly evident in data from the United States where the figures are 89% on the left, compared with just 18% on the right (Andi, n.d.).

### 3.19 BBC News

*BBC* news is a division of the British Broadcasting Corporation (*BBC*) a public service broadcaster funded by the T.V. License and operates under Royal Charter. The *BBC* is independent from the government and is regulated by the communications regulator Ofcom, thus is not expected to outwardly display an editorial stance or political affiliation as per British broadcasting regulations and the Broadcasting Code (Ofcom, 2020).

Table 3.6 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by the *BBC* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	7
Nov-18	3	Sep-19	17
Dec-18	1	Oct-19	28
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	7

Feb-19	2	Dec-19	7
Mar-19	1	Jan-20	13
Apr-19	28	Feb-20	13
May-19	7	Mar-20	4
Jun-19	9	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	14	May-20	2
		<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>

*Table 3.6 Summary of articles as reported by the BBC in the sampling period*

There were a total of 163 articles that met the criteria as defined in Chapter 3 (news articles, opinion pieces and analysis where XR is the lead story) retrieved from the *BBC*. Of these, the majority (127, 80%) were from 2019. Only 5 articles explicitly referenced solutions to climate change or environmental issues and 1 was an opinion piece.

### **3.20 Daily Mail**

*The Daily Mail* is a tabloid newspaper, which is owned privately, and thus has an editorial stance that is typically right of centre (Stoegner and Wodak, 2015), having previously *Expressed* support for both the Conservative and UK Independence Parties. In a 2017 survey by the data and analytics group YouGov, *The Daily Mail* polled as the most “right-wing” British newspaper, with 81% considering it so, and 44% considering it to be “very right-wing” (Smith, 2017).

Despite an editorial stance that does not necessarily align with the XR message, *The Daily Mail* has displayed a particular interest in the movement, with a total of 213 articles in the designated timeframe, more than any of the other 9 news outlets that were sampled. *The Daily Mail* was also a key figure in the anti-plastic campaigns of recent years, further demonstrating a pro-environmental editorial stance. Table 3.7 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by the *Daily Mail* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	9
Nov-18	6	Sep-19	12
Dec-18	2	Oct-19	72
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	11
Feb-19	1	Dec-19	12
Mar-19	1	Jan-20	9
Apr-19	38	Feb-20	7
May-19	9	Mar-20	1
Jun-19	8	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	13	May-20	2
		<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>

*Table 3.7 Summary of articles as reported by the Daily Mail in the sampling period.*

In *The Daily Mail* data there were only 2 strictly opinion pieces although the language used in the majority of headlines generally takes an anti-civil disobedience stance, this will be discussed further in Chapter 5. There were also no articles that explicitly referenced climate change solutions.

### **3.21 The Guardian**

*The Guardian* is a tabloid newspaper (GNM Press Office 2018), owned by the Scot Trust which was created in order to “secure the financial and editorial independence of *the Guardian* in perpetuity and to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of *the Guardian* free from commercial or political interference” (*The Guardian*, 2015). The paper has also been voted the “most trusted” news outlet in several recent polls (Bold 2018, Waterson 2018).

There is a general consensus that the newspaper is left of centre and that its readership are of a particular liberal stereotype, with the term “*Guardian* Reader” even defined in the dictionary as someone who is “liberal, left wing an politically

correct” (Collins 2020), YouGov’s 2017 survey *the Guardian* polled as the paper perceived to be most “left-wing” of the British newspapers.

It might be expected that *the Guardian’s* editorial stance aligns most with the principles of XR. The newspaper in fact suggested in an editorial that the language used to describe climate change and environmental issues needed to change in order for the enormity and urgency of the issues to be perceived (Carrington, 2019). Table 3.8 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by *the Guardian* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	2	Aug-19	8
Nov-18	4	Sep-19	11
Dec-18	1	Oct-19	52
Jan-19	2	Nov-19	10
Feb-19	1	Dec-19	6
Mar-19	1	Jan-20	14
Apr-19	38	Feb-20	6
May-19	6	Mar-20	1
Jun-19	11	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	4	May-20	0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>

*Table 3.8 Summary of articles as reported by the Guardian in the sampling period.*

*The Guardian* is second only to *The Daily Mail* in the amount of attention given to XR in published articles, with a total of 178 across the sampling period. *The Guardian’s* articles included 31 opinion pieces and only one article with explicit reference to climate change solutions, which is somewhat surprising given its historical pro-environmental stance.

### 3.22 The Sun

*The Sun* is a tabloid newspaper owned by News UK, a subsidiary of News Corp. A paper that has been notoriously plagued with a number of controversies, it was voted the least trusted of the newspapers in the 2018 Ipsos Mori poll, with only 39% saying they trusted what they read (Bold, 2018).

*The Sun*'s political stance has changed over time, changing from support of the Conservatives under Thatcher to Labour in the late 1990s to early 2000s and back to the Conservatives again in recent years (BBC, 2009). The current right-wing lean of the paper is reflected in the YouGov survey, with 68% of people surveyed considering them to be right of centre (Smith, 2017).

Table 3.9 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by *the Sun* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	5
Nov-18	0	Sep-19	5
Dec-18	0	Oct-19	36
Jan-19	2	Nov-19	8
Feb-19	1	Dec-19	4
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	0
Apr-19	17	Feb-20	3
May-19	8	Mar-20	0
Jun-19	1	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	4	May-20	0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

*Table 3.9 Summary of articles as reported by the Sun in the sampling period.*

*The Sun* published a total of 94 articles during the sampling period, with 96% of these occurring in 2019, again only 1 article explicitly referencing climate change

solutions, this article in particular mentions simple changes individuals could apply in their own homes. There were no opinion pieces included in this data.

### 3.23 Daily Mirror

*The Daily Mirror* is a tabloid newspaper owned by Reach Plc (BBC, 2009). *The Daily Mirror* is (and has been throughout its history) and overt supporter of the Labour party (BBC, 2009). This is reflected in the YouGov survey, with 67% considering the paper to be left of centre, this is less than *The Guardian*, and the paper is perceived to be less extreme than *The Guardian*, with just 11% describing it as “very left of centre”.

Table 3.10 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by the *Daily Mirror* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	0
Nov-18	2	Sep-19	2
Dec-18	0	Oct-19	17
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	2
Feb-19	0	Dec-19	2
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	2
Apr-19	11	Feb-20	1
May-19	1	Mar-20	0
Jun-19	0	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	3	May-20	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

*Table 3.10 Summary of articles as reported by the Mirror in the sampling period.*

*The Daily Mirror* gave comparatively little attention to XR, with just 44 articles across the sampling period, significantly less than any other outlet, with no opinion pieces or articles that reference climate change solutions.

### 3.24 Telegraph

*The Telegraph* is a broadsheet and equivalent online newspaper owned by *The Telegraph* Media Group (TMG) (TMG, 2020) which has in recent decades been a right-of-centre newspaper *Expressing* support for the conservative government (BBC, 2009). 73% of respondents to the YouGov poll perceive *The Telegraph* to be right wing (Smith, 2017).

Of the news outlets sampled, *The Telegraph* was the only company to not provide their news articles as free open access. Table 3.11 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by *the Telegraph* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	1
Nov-18	0	Sep-19	10
Dec-18	0	Oct-19	17
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	6
Feb-19	0	Dec-19	0
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	5
Apr-19	20	Feb-20	3
May-19	2	Mar-20	0
Jun-19	2	Apr-20	2
Jul-19	8	May-20	0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

*Table 3.11 Summary of articles as reported by the Telegraph in the sampling period.*

*The Telegraph* published 76 articles over the sampling period, including 11 opinion pieces and 3 articles with reference to climate change solutions.

### 3.25 Independent

*The Independent* is a tabloid (*The Independent*, 2003) (and now online only) newspaper. It is also one of the first to recognise Climate Change as an existential threat to life on earth (Boyle, 2020) and as such it could be expected to align with many of XR’s values.

*The independent’s* editorial stance is centre-left but it does not align with a political party (BBC, 2009). Table 3.12 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by *the Independent* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	1	Aug-19	6
Nov-18	1	Sep-19	9
Dec-18	2	Oct-19	20
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	10
Feb-19	0	Dec-19	7
Mar-19	1	Jan-20	7
Apr-19	14	Feb-20	5
May-19	11	Mar-20	2
Jun-19	9	Apr-20	1
Jul-19	9	May-20	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>

*Table 3.12 Summary of articles as reported by the Independent in the sampling period.*

*The Independent* published 116 articles in the sampling period, including a 11 opinion pieces and 5 articles with an explicit reference to climate change solutions.

### **3.26 Daily Express**

The Daily *Express* is a tabloid newspaper and equivalent online service, like *The Daily Mirror* it is owned and published by Reach plc (BBC, 2009).



Changes in ownership have resulted in mixed political alignment, in recent years it has been a supporter of the Conservatives (*BBC*, 2009). 81% of people surveyed by YouGov in 2017 perceived the paper to be right-wing (Smith, 2017).

Table 3.13 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by the *Daily Express* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	0
Nov-18	1	Sep-19	2
Dec-18	1	Oct-19	20
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	7
Feb-19	0	Dec-19	2
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	3
Apr-19	14	Feb-20	6
May-19	1	Mar-20	1
Jun-19	2	Apr-20	0
Jul-19	5	May-20	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

*Table 3.13 Summary of articles as reported by the Daily Express in the sampling period.*

The *Daily Express* published 68 articles related to XR in the sampling period, none of which were opinion pieces or contained references to climate change solutions.

### **3.27 The Evening Standard**

*The Evening Standard* is a free daily tabloid and online equivalent with a London focus. *The Evening Standard* is outwardly conservative having *Expressed* support for conservative candidates across recent general elections (*The Evening Standard*, 2010, 2015, 2019a) and Boris Johnson for Mayor of London (*The Evening Standard*, 2019a).

Table 3.14 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by the Evening Standard during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	8
Nov-18	7	Sep-19	14
Dec-18	2	Oct-19	30
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	8
Feb-19	1	Dec-19	7
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	10
Apr-19	18	Feb-20	5
May-19	5	Mar-20	6
Jun-19	12	Apr-20	2
Jul-19	8	May-20	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>

*Table 3.14 Summary of articles as reported by the Evening Standard in the sampling period.*

*The Evening Standard* published 144 articles during the sampling period, as the vast majority of civil disobedience took place in London it is somewhat expected that a newspaper with a London focus would devote column inches to issues that affect the capital. The data captured for *The Evening Standard* included 3 articles with explicit reference to climate change solutions and 4 opinion pieces.

### **3.28 Sky News**

*Sky News* is a television broadcaster and online equivalent owned by *Sky Group* (*Sky Group* 2020). As a broadcaster *Sky News* is also subject to British broadcasting regulations and the broadcasting code ensuring accuracy and impartiality of broadcast news (*Ofcom* 2020).

Table 3.15 (below) demonstrates the number of articles that meet the inclusion criteria, published by *Sky News* during the sampling period.

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	0	Aug-19	3
Nov-18	0	Sep-19	10
Dec-18	0	Oct-19	24
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	8
Feb-19	0	Dec-19	2
Mar-19	0	Jan-20	6
Apr-19	21	Feb-20	2
May-19	3	Mar-20	0
Jun-19	5	Apr-20	1
Jul-19	2	May-20	1
		<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>

*Table 3.15 Summary of articles as reported by Sky News in the sampling period.*

Sky published 88 articles during the sampling period with just under half in April and October of 2019, including 1 article with explicit reference to climate change solutions and 6 opinion pieces.

### **3.29 Box of Broadcast TV Programme Data**

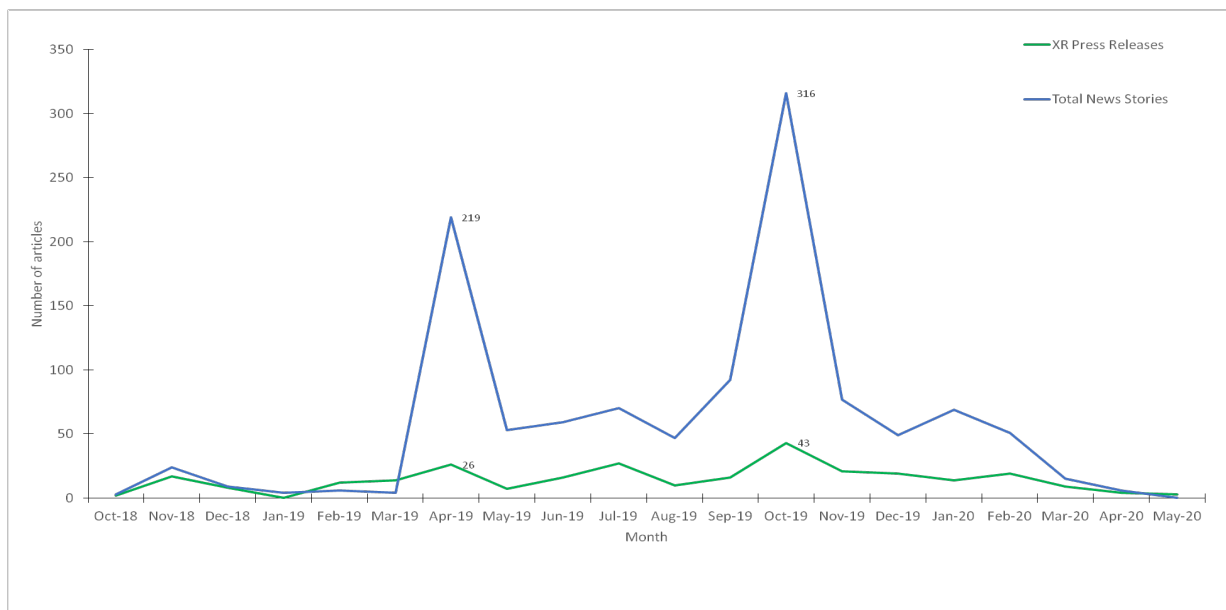
Data from BOB was treated slightly differently, as rather than having a volume of headlines, several transcripts of TV programmes were analysed. These programmes provided in depth accounts of the actions of XR and thus the data examined from these was purely qualitative and is discussed further in Chapter 5.

### **3.30 XR Press Releases**

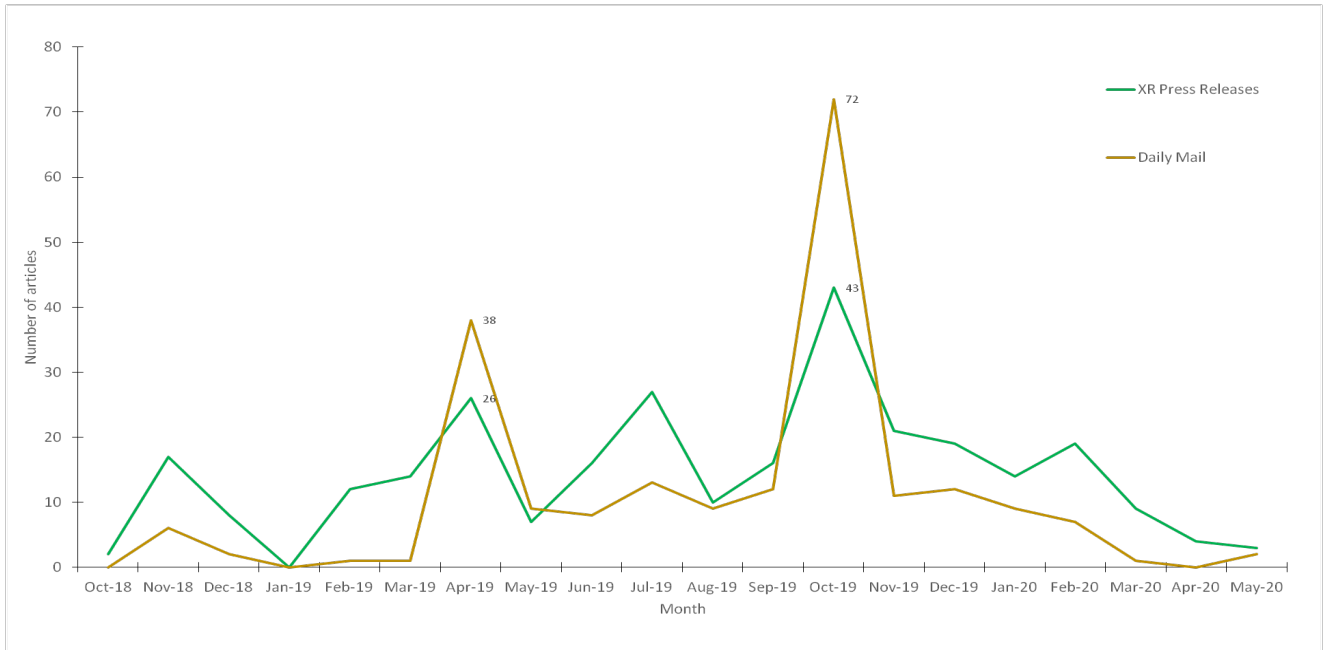
The media data from the XR website (XR data) was captured from the “press” tab of the website which contains news from the UK, press releases, updates, images and videos from the movement themselves. The data was captured over roughly the same time period as the media news articles, although the first entry is dated

October 26, 2018, as opposed to the September date used as the start date for the media article search.

The amount of press releases from XR is greater than that of articles released singularly by any of the news outlets, and although the data also peaks in April and October of 2019, the peaks of press releases are more constant throughout the time frame, with a number of other smaller peaks occurring in months where headline grabbing "Rebellion" events did not occur. Figures 3.5 and 3.6 provide comparison of XR data and media data numbers. Figure 3.5 compares the XR data with the entire data corpus of media data and Figure 3.6 highlights the differences in consistency in comparison with the *Daily Mail*, the news outlet that published the most articles regarding XR in the timeframe. Figure 3.6 demonstrates that in addition to the peaks during April and October of 2019, XR also released more articles/statements during their launch (October 2018), during summer of 2019 and then in February of 2020.



**Figure 3.5 Comparison of total media coverage and XR press releases from the same period.**



*Figure 3.6 A comparison of XR press releases and articles from the Daily Mail across the sampling period.*

Month	No. of Articles	Month	No. of Articles
Oct-18	2	Aug-19	10
Nov-18	17	Sep-19	16
Dec-18	8	Oct-19	43
Jan-19	0	Nov-19	21
Feb-19	12	Dec-19	19
Mar-19	14	Jan-20	14
Apr-19	26	Feb-20	19
May-19	7	Mar-20	9
Jun-19	16	Apr-20	4
Jul-19	27	May-20	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>

*Table 3.16 Summary of XR press releases across the sampling period*

### 3.31 Discussion of initial findings

As anticipated, the majority of the reports occurred in 2019, the year within the criteria when there was most activity by XR. The majority of news outlets coverage increased in April 2019 and October 2019, somewhat expectedly coinciding with the large-scale national “Rebellion” events organised by XR. These periods in time can be considered "critical discourse moments" (Carvalho, 200) in that they are particular moments where there was an increase in media interest or a change in the media discourse. These events are also followed up by media attention around the subsequent prosecutions of those involved in protest action, but also in many cases regarding the "shock value" stories, both in a negative and positive manner, for example Figure 3.4 clearly shows that there was a small spike in media interest around XR in January and February of 2020 when they were briefly listed as having "extreme ideologies" by UK anti-terrorism police.

There is also a much greater media coverage of civil disobedience by XR than the coverage generated by the XR press releases, although the press releases follow roughly the same peaks and troughs as observed in the media data, see Figure 3.3.

These "critical discourse moments" were used to inform some of the in-depth analysis as detailed in Chapter 5. Some other key points for discussion were also identified in the quantitative data, for example, while XR itself does not profess to dictate what should be done about environmental issues, it is interesting to note that there are very few articles that have picked up on solutions to the environmental crisis. The media narrative during the sampling period tends to focus more on who the movement are, and civil disobedience in general but not as to why the movement feel the need to take action as they do. This will be further discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought an abrupt halt to planned civil disobedience by the movement and as depicted in Figure 3.1 a vast slowdown in reporting about the movement, however some important questions have arisen with regards to the future of research into environmental movements. As the vast body of the research conducted for this study comes from a period pre-May 2020, data for articles around

environmental issues related to the pandemic, and indeed for other concurrent organisations or movements, are not included here. Likewise, the trend towards increased representation and framing of environmental issues in recent months has not been examined in depth, however these developments will be discussed further in Chapter 7 and may inform future research topics in the area.

## 4 Thematic Analysis

In order to analyse and answer the research questions from a vast amount of media data a multi-level, multifaceted approach was required. This includes an element of quantitative analysis (Chapter 3), thematic analysis (TA) of headlines and an article subset, and a critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Chapter 5) of a subset of articles. The following chapter explores the various themes within the media discourse, critically reading and analysis of the data in order to ascertain the meaning, development of the narrative around XR and the overall image portrayed by different news outlets.

### 4.1 Thematic Analysis

As detailed in Chapter 3 an inductive thematic analysis was carried out and a first reading of the data allowed for the development of codes, and development of a codebook (Chapter 3, Appendix 1). Development of the codebook allowed for ongoing standardisation of the codes which could then be applied across articles, news outlets and digital content published by XR themselves. It also allowed for coding comparison for quality check purposes.

Due to the sheer volume of data in the data corpus, it wasn't possible to carry out analysis on every article, therefore a subset for comparison was chosen. The subset includes analysis of articles from “critical discourse moments” and comparison between different news outlets. Take *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* for example, polar opposites in terms of their political leanings, and thus likely readership, however reporting from both showed an overall interest and willingness to give column inches to both XR as a movement and the climate crisis and environmental issues more broadly.



Forms of Protest	Protest Demonstration Blockade Carnival Festival Speech Symbolic disruption Civil disobedience	Crisis	Climate Emergency Climate Crisis Urgency Climate Targets Climate Demands Biodiversity Loss Animal Welfare
Wrongdoing	Unethical practice “Criminal” / “illegal” Criticism of companies / government Media unfairness Lack of media coverage Climate denial  Criminality Police Arrests Court Criminal Charges Protest Ban Violence	Idols	Greta Thunberg David Attenborough Celebrity endorsement (of which there are many)
Systemic Change	We We are/have Collective Action Humanity Duty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government must</li> <li>• Companies must</li> <li>• We must</li> </ul> Humanity Demands Education	Saving the world Well-being	No other choice Right to protest Solutions Positive outcomes Hope Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly Humanity  Air Quality Eco-Anxiety Climate-Anxiety Existential Crisis Life-choices Protecting future generations
Individual quest	Individual stories Opinion Pieces “I’m doing this for” Founders Motivations Humanity Compassion	Lessons learned	Reflection Self-doubt Improvement
Ridicule	Mocking Criticism of methods Carnival Festival	Not in my back Yard	Criticism of Methods Criticism of Disruption

	Hypocrisy		
Privilege	Celebrity endorsement Celebrity criticism Under-representation Public Opinion	Stagnation	Narrow Exclusive Loss of momentum
Extreme Narrative	Mass Disruption Global Disruption Terrorism List Protest Arrests Violence Splinter Groups		

*Table 4.1: List of codes by Theme.*

## 4.2 Classification of media outlets

It is problematic to make clear distinctions about the political and ideological stance (in relation to environmental issues) of the news outlets, however for the purposes of this study the news outlets have been defined as either tabloid or broadsheet (and online equivalents) or broadcast media, and of a particular political stance, i.e. left, centre and right.

Some new outlets have made overt claims about their stance on climate change and environmental issues and likewise some have long-standing political affiliations. However, some have historically held more fluid political leanings and editorial stances. Stance on the environment is more nuanced than simply political affiliation, but generally support for protest movements is likely to be more prominent in left leaning organisations. Therefore, quantifying the stance on environmental issues by a given news organisation is difficult however this research assumes that those news outlets that present themselves as more liberal are more likely to be supportive of XR as a movement and more likely to present the climate crisis and environmental issues as definitive, current, real-world issues.

In 2017 YouGov conducted a survey of 2040 UK adults and their perceptions of the political leanings of 8 national newspapers. Of these 8, 5 were perceived as

predominantly right-wing (the *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Sun* , *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* respectively) and 2 as predominantly left-wing (*Mirror* and *Guardian*), and 1 as broadly centrist (*The Independent*).

*The Daily Mail*, the UK most read newspaper was identified at the most right wing, with *The Guardian* as the most left wing and *The Independent* as the only centrist, although with a slight left leaning. Interestingly of the people asked a rate of 39-49% stated they did not know what the political leaning of the newspapers were.

The study also found that personal ideology did not have a large impact on the people's recognition of a paper's political leaning, with those from different ends of the spectrum largely in agreement about the political stance of each news outlet (Smith, 2017).

#### **4.3 Media Headline Findings**

The themes identified from coding articles from different news outlets and occurrence of these themes varied, with those outlets known to be more left of centre having an overall more positive approach to reporting about XR and climate change, and those with a more right-wing editorial stance generally being more negative, or critical, of the movement and others, such as the Schools Strike for Climate. News outlets such as *The Guardian* and *Independent* were more obviously favourable to the movement, whereas organisations such as *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* were less favourable.

However, the political stance of the news outlet and their portrayal of the movement is not mutually exclusive, with all newspapers giving credence to both positive and negative aspects of the movement to some degree. It is of note that the *Daily Mail*, despite an editorial stance that would be expected to be critical of the movement, (and indeed many of the articles reflected this, with ridicule as one of the most commonly occurring themes) however *The Daily Mail* often gave credence to environmental issues and had historically been linked to the anti-single use plastics campaigns of recent years.



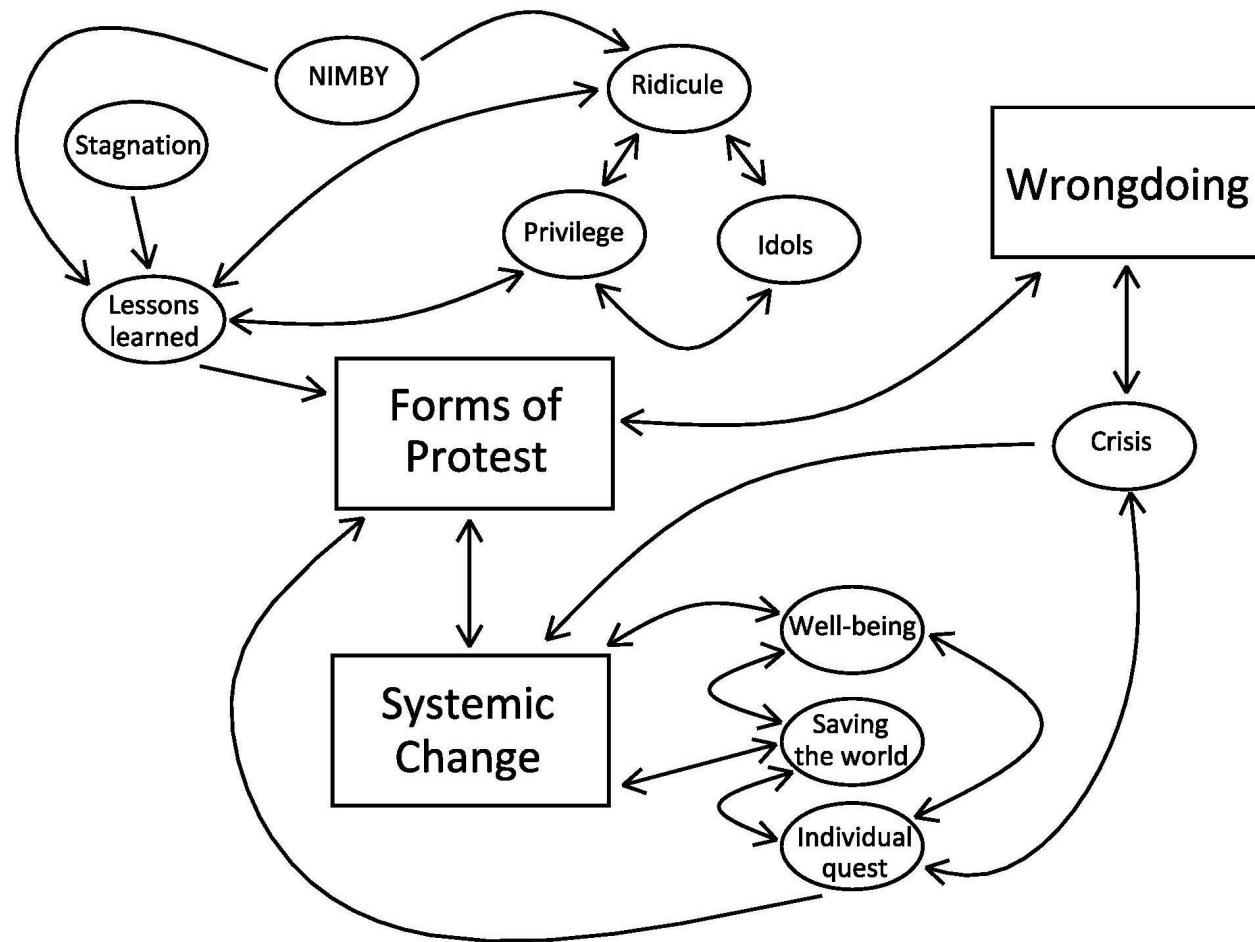


Figure 4.1: Themes identified and their interrelation.

	<b>Forms of Protest (25%)</b>	<b>Wrongdoing (19%)</b>	<b>Ridicule (11%)</b>	<b>Individual Quest (9%)</b>	<b>Extreme Narrative (7%)</b>	<b>Privilege (7%)</b>	<b>Idols (6%)</b>	<b>Crisis (6%)</b>	<b>Saving the World (4%)</b>	<b>Systemic Change (2%)</b>	<b>NIMBY (2%)</b>	<b>Well-being (1%)</b>	<b>Lessons Learned (1%)</b>	<b>Stagnation (&lt;1%)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<i>Daily Express</i>	17	13	16	4	10	9	5	1	0	2	9	0	2	0	<b>71</b>
<i>Sky News</i>	27	19	9	6	5	11	0	9	5	4	3	0	0	0	<b>71</b>
<i>The Evening Standard</i>	48	34	15	10	9	12	10	9	12	5	3	2	2	1	<b>124</b>
<i>The Telegraph</i>	15	17	16	8	17	9	6	3	4	1	0	1	1	0	<b>83</b>
<i>The Sun</i>	25	15	46	10	14	17	11	4	5	1	5	4	3	0	<b>135</b>
<i>BBC</i>	69	51	4	12	9	9	9	11	14	3	0	4	2	1	<b>129</b>
<i>Daily Mail</i>	76	51	46	42	14	25	24	19	7	4	7	5	2	0	<b>246</b>
<i>The Guardian</i>	49	60	9	25	19	4	4	17	14	9	5	1	6	2	<b>175</b>
<i>The Independent</i>	46	24	4	9	6	5	13	13	3	9	2	0	2	1	<b>91</b>
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	12	11	3	7	2	1	6	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	<b>36</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	

Table 4.2 Headline Theme frequency by news outlet.

Following the coding of the data, from the initial 50 codes allocated, 13 overarching themes were developed and checked as part of the check of coding. An overview of the 13 themes and how they interlink can be found in Figure 4.1 above. The themes are further defined in the Codebook (Appendix 1) and are discussed at length in the below sections.

Table 4.2 details the frequency of theme per headline for the entire data corpus. Headlines often had more than 1 overarching theme, thus the total theme frequencies are more than the total number of articles in the data corpus.

Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of theme occurrence across media data, with the most frequently occurring being forms of protest (25%) followed by wrongdoing (19%) and Ridicule (11%).

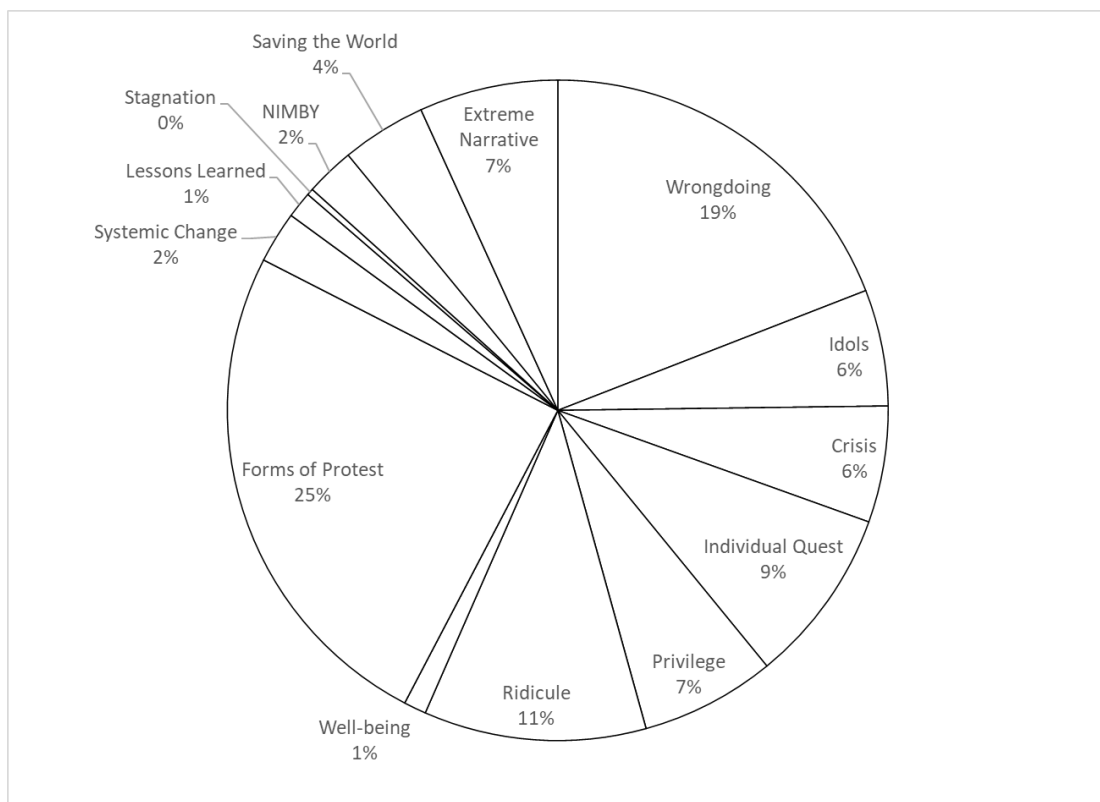


Figure 4.2 percentage of theme occurrence across media data by headline

The following sections explore these frequencies and the occurrence of certain themes in different news articles in more detail, including discussions of the sub-coding and specific examples from the media articles.

#### **4.4 Extinction Rebellion Press releases**

*“XR itself is a media organisation and has been a lot of time very effective”*  
(Anonymous interview participant, 2020).

Extinction Rebellion exist as a media entity themselves, with a distinct wing that deals with the media and regularly issuing press releases. A series of these articles and press releases were captured from the XR website using the methodology detailed in Chapter 3, for the same time period. A thematic analysis (also as detailed in Chapter 3) was then carried out in order to compare the way in which XR intend themselves to be presented versus how they are presented by the media.

The media data from the XR website was captured from the “press” tab of the website which contains news from the UK, press releases, updates, images and videos from the movement themselves. The data is captured over the same time period as the media news articles.

Figure 4.3 displays the frequency of themes across the XR data. Forms of protest was the most frequently occurring theme (48%), followed by systemic change (11%) and wrongdoing (9%), in contrast to the media data, there were no occurrences of ridicule or NIMBY across the headlines. Stagnation (1%) was also unique to the XR data.



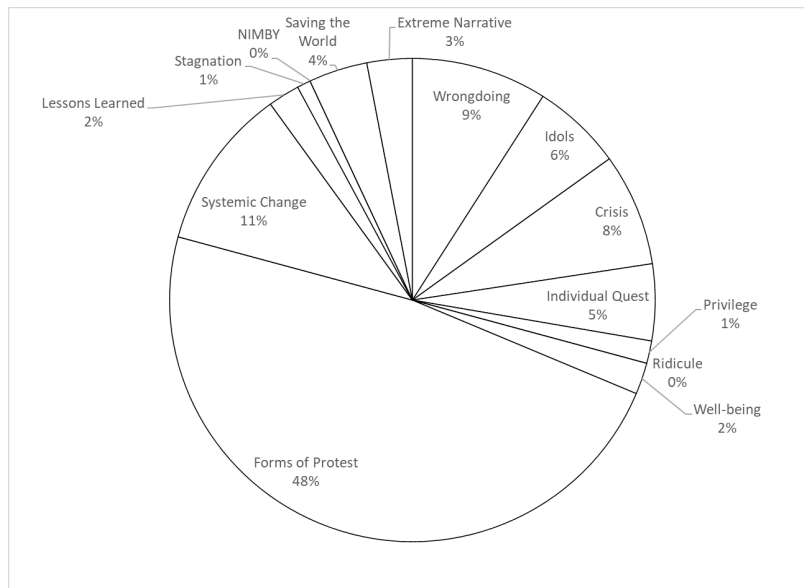


Figure 4.3 percentage of theme occurrence across Extinction Rebellion article headlines

Evidently, the language used by XR differs somewhat from that of the media. Particular differences include a greater focus (by XR) on emotive language and imagery and more of a spotlight on the “idols” involved with the protest action, that being the celebrity supporters of the movement largely. As well as an emphasis on the “we” in the context of actions and demands.

#### 4.5 Interviews

Five supplementary interviews were carried out with people who considered themselves to be affiliated with the movement in some way, some, at the time of interview considered themselves active participants of civil disobedience, some considered themselves to have been previously active, but no longer involved in civil disobedience for a variety of reasons (lockdown due to Covid-19, health, resources etc).

The media tended to be more positive towards the individual stories of the participants of XR, these individual stories, and perceptions of the media coverage versus how the movement wishes to be seen add a valuable nuance to the data

gathered from the XR website. Thematic analysis, using the same coding structure (as detailed in 4.1 above and in Chapter 3) was also carried out on the interview data.

#### **4.6 Forms of protest**

Forms of protest is a central theme running throughout most of the articles in the data corpus. It is the most frequently occurring theme across headlines for both the media and XR data occurring in 25% and 48% of headlines respectively. Forms of protest was distributed fairly evenly across the news outlets, with slightly more occurrences in the *BBC* (69) articles and the most in *The Daily Mail* (76) (however *The Daily Mail* had more articles overall).

Different forms of protest are portrayed in varying ways across the news media, with a positive emphasis on those taking individual action and on many of the “idol” figures speaking publicly about their involvement in the movement, and a more negative emphasis on civil disobedience, mass protest in general and criminality, discussed further in the sections below.

Forms of protest is the most occurring theme, and the most direct “news” of all of the themes that were evident, with all of the news outlets reporting on incidences of civil disobedience by the movement across the timeframe, with an increase in reporting around the “Rebellion” events of April and October 2019.

The way in which forms of protest are presented vary across the news organisations, with those that are expected to be impartial, the *BBC* and *Sky* presenting what happened (and the consequences) in very neutral language, often quoting both XR and representatives of companies targeted by the civil disobedience. For example in an article about protests opposing the expansion of the Drax power station in April of 2019, the *BBC* presents the facts in a neutral way “*Environmental campaigners have protested about plans to expand a North Yorkshire power station*”, giving a balanced view with both the protesters view that the expansion should not go ahead and that the government should “*scrap*” the “*£2.1m in subsidies that the power station gets*

*each day*" but also Drax's view that *"biomass and gas was vital" in the UK's transition to a net zero carbon economy*" (BBC 2019a)

The news outlets that have a more overt political stance are less impartial in the language used and the way they frame civil disobedience. For example, *The Guardian* in an article about protests at Gatwick and London Fashion week, present the events with relative neutrality *"Activists from XR blocked traffic outside a London Fashion week venue on Saturday and also staged a protest at Gatwick airport"*, *"a handful of activists held a peaceful demo"* (Badshah, 2020) however the article focuses only on what the protesters did, and only quotes those involved in civil disobedience, omitting any statements from representatives of fashion week or the airport. The quotes chosen by the participants of the protests reinforce the seriousness and urgency of the issues:

*"We have all failed but now radical leadership is required, we need you the British Fashion Council, as appointed industry administrators to find the power and courage to centre a visionary process and protocol, without delay"* - Sara Arnold, coordinator of the fashion week protest (Badshah, 2020).

*"We are already in climate crisis. We need to act now and as we have seen in history, one of the best ways to bring forward actual legislation is to be in non-violent disobedience"* - Dan Burke, youth activist (Badshah, 2020).

*The Daily Mail* present civil disobedience in a less favourable light, for example in an article with the headline *"Eco-mob plot to ruin Easter: Climate protesters vow to bring Heathrow to its knees"* they refer to *"mainly middle-class" "eco-warriors"* bringing *"misery to Easter holidaymakers"* referring to XR as *"left-wing"* and recited messages sent by a *"privately-educated"* ring-leader, with a sub-story criticism of police for not regaining control despite *"1000 police" being "deployed each day"* (Buckley, Sinmaz and Gysin, 2019).

Extinction Rebellion report their own activity in both a matter-of-fact way, referring to themselves in third person *"Extinction Rebellion escalates disruption of London*

*Fashion Week*" (Extinction Rebellion, 2020d) but also at times with a sense of ownership and inclusivity, with the phrase "we are" occurring frequently when referring to forms of protest and other articles where they declare a stance on a particular issue:

*"We come in peace"* (Extinction Rebellion 2019a)

*"We are scared"* (Extinction Rebellion 2019b)

The press releases by XR also tie in with the sense of crisis and urgency, often using extreme language:

*"We are fucked"* (Extinction Rebellion 2018)

*"The emergency isn't going away, and neither are we"* (Extinction Rebellion n.d.a)

#### **4.7 Wrongdoing**

The concept of wrongdoing a wide-ranging theme noted across all of the news outlets and data from XR. In the media data, the theme is second only to "forms of protest" occurring in 19% of headlines. References to police, arrests and criminal proceedings formed the basis for many of the articles, combined often with sensationalist language from some of the newspapers, particularly in the articles' headlines.

The concept of "wrongdoing" also occurs across 9% of article titles from the XR data, where it is more nuanced than in the media data which generally talks about criminality, involvement of the police, arrests and subsequent charges. The XR data acknowledges the criminal element of the civil disobedience undertaken by the movement and several articles relate to arrests and subsequent prosecutions but linked to actual criminal activity is also the notion of unethical practice by the system. That is, highlighting the incidences of wrongdoing by businesses and the state that are not necessarily illegal, but are unethical in the way their environmental impacts

are disregarded. Wrongdoing was also distributed across all of the news outlets, with more occurrences in the *BBC* (51), *The Guardian* (60) and *The Daily Mail*(51).

The following headline and extracts are from an article published by *Sky* in July 2019 following the “Rebellion” of April 2019:

*“Courtrooms turned over to hundreds of Extinction Rebellion cases” (Sky, 2019).*

*“Two courtrooms will set aside a day a week for nearly five months to deal with hundreds of cases after the Extinction Rebellion protests in London...More than 1,000 people were arrested... and so far, 232 files of evidence have been passed to the Crown Prosecution Service”. (Sky, 2019)*

The emphasis here focuses on the number of protesters that were arrested and subsequent prosecutions, and the focus is on the police continuing to bring about prosecutions of those involved.

Conversely, the issue of the protests putting undue pressure on the police service has been raised. Highlighting a disparity between the police being “seen” to be carrying out their duties and the police being “overstretched” and unable to deal with “real” crimes.

Extinction Rebellion acknowledge that wrongdoing in terms of criminality is something that they actively undertake, in many cases the aim is to be arrested, the XR press releases include guidance on what to do if a protester was to be arrested. However, XR also identify wrongdoing in ways that are not overtly criminal, examining the unethical practice of the government and big business, with a particular emphasis on energy, aviation and banking.

Some of the media articles also picked up on these unethical elements in wider society, highlighting key points made by XR. For example, *The Daily Mail* quoted Roger Hallam in a headline stating the planned Heathrow airport expansion was a “crime against humanity” (Hussain, 2019a).



Figure 4.4 Police Remove Activist from Waterloo Bridge (Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty in Gayle, 2019)



*Figure 4.5 Police remove protester (AP in Hussain, 2019b).*

Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show protesters being forcibly removed by police. Being arrested is a key tactic utilised by XR, for which they receive training, the police have previously expressed displeasure at the way protesters "go floppy" when arrested, as it "looks looks to the general public like police are overreacting", something that image 4.5 certainly reinforces, with several police officers surrounding one individual being carried away.

#### **4.8 Systemic change**

Systemic change is something less acknowledged in the media articles occurring in only 2% of the headlines but is an underpinning theme evident in the XR data, occurring in 11% of the press data and included in the 10 key principles of the movement. Systemic change was highlighted more in the XR data, but it did occur across all of the news outlets, with twice as many mentions in *the Guardian* (9) and *The Independent* (9) than the other news outlets.

*The Evening Standard*, a London focused right-wing newspaper appears less partisan than some of its counterparts, recognising the need for civil disobedience as well as reporting on the inconveniences it posed to the citizens of the Capital. One headline indicates this recognition "*Climate Change protesters on the right side of history*" (Evening Standard 2019b).

*The Independent* goes so far as to suggest that XR should look to change tactics in order to affect systemic change by following the lesson of "*the Brexiteers*" to "*infiltrate the Tories*" taking "*political action... through the mainstream political system - laws, codes, taxes incentives. Not direct action*" (O'Grady, 2019).

Interviewees also discussed the notion of systemic change and how this linked to their reasons for becoming involved with the movement:

*"XR want to be portrayed as like an alternative to the norm, like you know they want to show people that through collectivism and a different way of approaching*

*the system that we live in, there could be alternative approaches to what's happening*" – Interview participant 5

#### **4.9 Ridicule**

Some of the newspapers have extensively utilised the theme of ridicule, particularly as a means of grabbing attention with a controversial headline, *The Sun* in particular has utilised ridiculing language in this manner, as to have *The Express* and *Daily Mail* to a lesser extent. It occurs in 11% of the media headlines. Ridicule however does not occur in the XR data at all, while the XR data does address issues and lessons learned within the movement, ridiculing language is not used even in criticism by the movement. Ridicule occurs across all of the news outlets, but overwhelmingly in *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* (46 occurrences in both) compared with 16 occurrences in the *Daily Express* and *The Telegraph*, 9 in *The Guardian*, 4 in the *Independent*.

*The Sun* uses particularly colourful language to reinforce their points including phrases like, "*Indulged Kiddults*" implying the protesters are privileged and immature; "*Bungling eco-warriors*" and "*Vegan lunatics*" reinforcing the negative "hippy" stereotypes and "*Middle-aged morons*". The newspaper also regularly points out hypocrisy:

*"Extinction Rebellion forget that dole money, tents and yoga mats all come from... oil"*(Clarkson, 2019)

*The Telegraph* in particular also utilised ridiculing language in several of their headlines, "*we've had enough*" [of Extinction Rebellion] was a repeated phrase used in headlines, as well as more direct negative language such as "*brain dead eco-snobs*".

Ridicule is also extensively used by the *Daily Mail*:

*"Dame Emma jets 5,400 miles to show how green she is!"* (Odling, 2019)



*"eco rabble" (Rose and Owen 2019, Hookham and Taher 2019)*

*"Hypocrisy' of Extinction Rebellion founder's 11,000-mile trip to Costa Rica"  
(Martin, 2019).*

This language "others" the protesters as if they are part of an undesirable group, or that they operate outside of mainstream society, reinforcing the "eco-warrior" and "hippy" stereotypes. The participants interviewed recognised that this was a factor in the way the movement is presented in the mainstream media, with one participant stating:

*"I know a lot of this stuff is seen as a laugh and a joke. And look at those idiots and what people are thinking" – Interview participant 4*

Photographs are another tool used by the media (in particular the tabloid media), they are powerful in that they communicate in ways words do not, but they can also be misleading (Soules, 2015). The images used by the media reflect the colourful nature of much of the protest, but they also are used to highlight the feeling of "festival" and "carnival" in a way that reinforces ridicule, often in conjunction with stories that discuss ridicule and privilege (see images 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 below).

Images also lose their effectiveness once they cease to be novel, causing fatigue due to overexposure or 'psychic numbing' (Lifton, 1982 in Soules, 2015) this is well documented in the case of traumatic images and photographs designed to bring awareness actually cause a dissociation (Soules, 2015).



Figure 4.6 Activists dance in front of the Marble Arch (Paul Davey/SWNS in Duell, 2020)



Figure 4.7 An XR boat and ecocide protesters (John Keeble/Getty Images in Gayle, 2019).



*Figure 4.8: The Red Rebel Brigade (Guy Bell/REX in Bancroft and Heale, 2019).*

Figure 4.6 shows a group of protesters dancing barefoot in colourful clothing. Figure 4.7 depicts protesters using costume and imagery to shed light on biodiversity loss. Figure 4.8 depicts the "Red Rebel Brigade", one of many ways art and symbolism are used by the movement as forms of protest. The brigade is a performance "artist" troupe who dress in red to symbolise "the common blood" shared with all species (Red Rebel Brigade, n.d.). They feature heavily across news coverage.

These images are representative of much of the imagery used by the press, both to reinforce criticism or perpetuate symbolism. Most of the images used are bright, colourful and evoke a sense of "carnival" or "festival". Previous research (Cresswell, 1994; North, 1998) has explored the imagery invoked by the media, often with weaponised undertones that draw the focus away from the protest:

*"Often protestors appear through the lens of the mass media as grotesque, marginal members of a political freak show. By using the unsettling tactics of*

*the carnivalesque, activists [...] run the risk of diverting attention away from the more serious point of their protest.” (Cresswell, 1994, p.56)*

The repeated theme of ridicule with the underlying "carnavalesque" images reinforce these findings, the mass media paint a potentially unflattering, and undermining image of the XR protesters, much the same as the media in the 1990s did of the road protesters. Interestingly, while the language around ridicule is much more prominent in those outlets that are right of centre, all of the news outlets used imagery of this kind when illustrating the movement.

#### **4.10 Individual Quest**

The notion of the individual has been given credence by several of the news outlets, occurring across 9% of the headlines and interestingly, individual stories in many cases seem to be treated more favourably by newspapers that have written about mass protest and civil disobedience in a less favourable light. Individual Quest occurs across the news outlets, most frequently in *The Daily Mail* (42) and *The Guardian* (25).

*The Sun*, a paper that has utilised ridicule in many of its other articles discussing XR appears to change the language and the context it uses when referring to an individual's reasons for becoming involved, although it only occurs in 10 instances across the sample. For example, in an article from October 2019 that focuses on Daniel Hooper (who became known as "Swampy" after his involvement in the Road Protests of the 1990s) after his arrest and subsequent charges for blocking a road to the Valero Pembroke Refinery in September 2019. This article demonstrates the more lenient stance taken towards those individual actions by some news outlets.

It describes the previous involvement of Swampy in the road protests and mentions his arrest and charges using very neutral, matter-of-fact language. The article describes him as a "*veteran eco-warrior*" and a "*national figure*", that XR gives him "*hope*" and quoting his reasons for becoming involved:

*"My beliefs are the same as they always were and I did have a quiet 10 years, almost to the point where you have apathy towards how we can change things, then Extinction Rebellion started happening" (Hawken, 2019).*

This focus on individual reasons also occurs in the XR data albeit to a lesser extent, across 5% of the headlines. The more favourable portrayal by the media is notable, given that XR's principles are based on notions of the collective, and the need for systemic change, with less focus on individual actions and solutions (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

The *Daily Mail*, which is notably interested in, yet critical of, civil disobedience as discussed above is another newspaper that presents individual reasoning for taking part in the movement in a more favourable light. In an article with the headline *"Our planet is at stake': Bush craft instructor behind London Climate protests"* (White, 2018) *The Daily Mail* paints Simon Bramwell, one of the founders of "Rising Up" as a sympathetic, adventurous character who used to teach bush craft to children but now *"cares for his disabled mum"* quoting him widely, including his reasons for involvement with the movement:

*"What I've seen from getting back to nature like I do is what a beautiful planet we have and how vulnerable it is thanks to us. I'd put my liberty on the line to save it. Not just for me but for future generations like my niece and nephew. We're killing our planet and it's our children and grandchildren who'll ultimately pay the price" White, 2018).*

The article goes on to mention the *"fury from motorists"* and arrests made, but also quote Bramwell again saying *"I'll take the wrath of the motorists. It's worth it. Once people really know what we are all doing to our world, they generally understand why we're doing this"*. The article also summarised XR's demands in a neutral way, stressing that environmental issues are *"our"* as in everybody's problem:

*"They hope to push them [the government] to enact enforceable policies to combat our most pressing environmental issues and to launch a citizens*

*assembly to provide the oversight the group feels is now urgently needed"*  
White, 2018).

Throughout the articles sampled across the period the language, context and structure used by *The Daily Mail* is notably different when reporting on individual cases rather than mass civil disobedience, with an emphasis on personal reasons, particularly worry for future generations, highlighting the parental (or grandparental) status of the individuals and quoting their concerns:

*"he says he's has 31 grandchildren 11 great grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren who he worries about" - The Daily Mail* reporting on 91 year old Jon Lynes who was arrested and charged after occupying one side of a dual carriage way near the Port of Dover (Boyle, 2019).

The *BBC* and *Sky* also highlight individual reasons for involvement across a number of articles, particularly if that individual is notable for some reason:

*"Priest, 77, joined Extinction Rebellion protest 'to save human life'" (BBC, 2020b)*

*"I rebel so I can look my grandchildren in the eye" (Gillet, 2019)*

*"I gave up a six-figure salary to join Extinction Rebellion" (Asher, 2019)*

The language here implies that the individual has something to fight for, or is prepared to make lifestyle changes in order to be involved with the movement.

#### **4.11 Privilege**

The notion of privilege in the media discourse is an interesting one, with some critical of the somewhat elitist appearance of much of the movement, but some embracing the stereo type. Privilege occurs across 7% of the media headlines and is also addressed in 1% of the XR data. Privilege, like ridicule also appeared much more frequently in *The Sun* (17) and *The Daily Mail*(25) than the other news outlets, with only 4 occurrences in *The Guardian* and 1 in *The Mirror*.

The Prime Minister's father Stanley Johnson for example was widely quoted about being "proud" to be called a "crusty" (Hefer, 2019), and a host of celebrities admitting to being "hypocrites" across many of the news outlets and XR themselves.

The notion of privilege is also often conveyed in the imagery used by the media, there is a distinct lack of representation of minority ethnic groups, perhaps reinforcing the idea that in order to commit to participation in some of the civil disobedience, and indeed to be able to be arrested (a key tactic of the movement) you have to be privileged enough to make that sacrifice. Thus, eliminating certain groups in society who cannot risk being arrested, such as single parents, those whose job is at risk if they were to face criminal charges and those members of minority ethnic groups who may not be treated fairly by law enforcement.

*The Daily Mail* ran a story on XR planning "to attract 'poor' activists from ethnic minorities" in order to "change the white, middle class make up" of the movement (Bancroft and Heale, 2019). Citing extracts from XR documents and quoting XR members *The Daily Mail* highlights the lack of diversity within the movement and the apparent will to change this from within:

*"The movement needs to 'sound less hippy'"*

*"The group's aim of mass arrests will alienate ethnic minority communities who historically suffered racial injustice at the hands of the police"*

*"This [direct civil disobedience] is where you'd likely see the 'stereotype' of XR; white, British national, middle-aged or a pensioner, middle-class, educated, and probably a Left-leaning Guardian reader" (Bancroft and Heale, 2019)*

The notion of privilege was also touched on by interview participants particularly the expectation to "drop everything" and head to London but also with regards to the glorification of being arrested, and how that just does not work for people from certain ethnic backgrounds:

*"this sort of glamorisation of being arrested and one of the things that she struggled with [...] in certain ethnic groups it just wouldn't be the same, like if you get arrested as a white person that, it is just different, like your advantages are just different" - Interview Participant 5*

One interview participant highlighted their frustration about not being able to participate in some protest action because their situation simply did not allow them to:

*"I did look in to going to some of the bigger protests in London but I found it really challenging actually, I felt like there was a lot of encouragement to just sort of drop everything and go to the protest which is totally understandable but I felt like its hard when that wasn't necessarily an option for everyone you know I felt like I needed to work my shifts at the job that I had and you know that was paying my rent and things so it wasn't so easy to drop and go to these things" – Interview participant 5*

There was also some frustration at the lack of local action:

*"usually it's been London centric" – interview participant 4*

*"Its strange that its decentralised or trying to decentralise but then its all centralised, its all in the capital, [...] I think it there could be some reflection, I think it would be encouraging people to do as much locally as they can" – Interview participant 5*

#### **4.12 Extreme Narrative(s)**

Extreme narratives occur across 7% of the media headlines, and 3% of the XR data. In this study extreme narrative is used to refer to how XR is presented as a group as opposed to extreme language used to describe the climate crisis. as discussed in Chapter 1, it is widely accepted that climate change and environmental issues are a



real and urgent threat, therefore the use of extreme language when presenting these issues is necessary. The theme occurred across all of the news outlets, with *The Guardian* having the most occurrences (19), followed by *The Telegraph* (17), *Sun* and *Daily Mail* (both 14).

The perpetuation of extreme narratives occurs frequently across some of the news outlets and linked to this in February 2020 Extinction Rebellion was included briefly on the list of extreme ideologies.

Much of the reporting in *The Guardian* was in defence of XR and highly critical of the listing:

*"If defending life on Earth is extremist, we must own that label" - The Guardian*  
(Monbiot, 2020).

#### **4.13 Crisis**

Linked strongly to the themes of extreme narrative and saving the world, the idea that the world is in crisis as a result of environmental issues is a central theme occurring in the XR data and is echoed by other concurrent movements. The theme occurs in 6% of media headlines and 8% of XR article titles respectively. Crisis occurred across all of the news outlets, with occurrences in *The Daily Mail*(19) and *The Guardian* (17) highest.

The notion of "*existential crisis*" and the urgency of the situation is one of the chief justifications given by the movement for their actions. Many of the headlines from the XR data utilise language that reinforces this message:

*"This is not a drill"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019c)

*"Everything needs to change"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019d)

*"Our lungs are on fire"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019e)

*"The emergency isn't going away. Neither are we"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019f)

The XR data also contains regular mentions of the "*climate emergency*" and uses phrases that emphasise the stark, negative and urgent nature of their message:

*"No food on a dying planet"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019g)

*"Climate change kills children"* (Extinction Rebellion, 2019h)

The media data is less direct in their use of language around the climate crisis, with some newspapers having declared an overtly pro-environmental stance using language that reflects the severity and urgency of environmental issues. This is particularly evident from *The Guardian* and the Independent.

*The Guardian* published an article about changing its use of language when referring to these issues in May of 2019. Instead of "*climate change*" the preferred terms are "*climate emergency, crisis or breakdown*" and "*global heating*" is favoured over "*global warming*" (Carrington, 2019). *The Guardian* emphasise the need to be scientifically accurate as well as clear communication as reasoning for this change, the then Editor-in-chief Katherine Viner stating:

*"The phrase 'climate change', for example, sounds rather passive and gentle when what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity. Increasingly, climate scientists and organisations from the UN to the Met Office are changing their terminology, and using stronger language to describe the situation we're in"* (Carrington, 2019).

#### **4.14 Idols**

The use of idols, both in a positive and negative light is also a prominent theme that has emerged across the news outlets and XR data (both 6%). Use of celebrities to

support a cause is not a new concept in media discourse, and it is apparent from the articles that XR have a number of famous supporters. XR use this to their advantage, highlighting instances of support from celebrities, scientists and public figures. Idols occurred across the news outlets, occurring much more frequently in *The Daily Mail* (24).

Strongly linking to the theme of "ridicule" a number of famous supporters have been accused of hypocrisy by the media, one of the most widely publicised was that of actress Emma Thompson who flew to the UK from the USA in order to take part in XR protests.

*"Emma Thompson denies being a HYPOCRITE despite flying 5,000 miles to be at demonstration" - The Express (Knowles 2019).*

*"Emma Thompson takes gas guzzling flight" -The Sun , (Grove, 2019)*

*"Dame Emma Thompson joined the Extinction Rebellion protests in London after flying from Los Angeles." The Independent (Vaughn, 2019)*

Conversely, in many cases those famous supporters have made a point of acknowledging their hypocrisy, utilising it to make a wider point about society and the need for systemic change. The *BBC* ran a story in October 2019 about an open letter penned by over 100 celebrities admitting to being hypocrites over their high carbon lifestyles:

*"Spice girl Mel B, comedian Steve Coogan, musician Bob Geldof, actor Sir Mark Rylance, model Lily Cole and Glastonbury's Emily Eavis, among others, all confessed their culpability in the climate crisis". (BBC 2019c)*

With the letter stating:

*"Dear journalists who have called us hypocrites. You're right. We live high carbon lives and the industries that we are part of have huge carbon*

*footprints. Like you, and everyone else, we are stuck in this fossil-fuel economy and without systemic change, our lifestyles will keep on causing climate and ecological harm."* (Pike, 2019)

Some news outlets also use idols to highlight general criticism of the movement, either because of general opposition to the movement and their tactics or because they have been personally impacted (see below). Repeated headlines in *The Sun* use the phrase "*Piers Morgan blasts*" or "*Piers Morgan slams*" particular activities undertaken by XR or individuals affiliated with XR:

*"the Grand Tour's James May says Extinction Rebellion are 'too much'"* (Halls, 2020)

One article from *The Independent* in December of 2019 uses the headline:

*"Noel Gallagher says Extinction Rebellion 'lost the plot' when they interrupted commuters"* (Petter, 2019).

The content of *The Independent* article goes on to quote the musician about what he does personally to address the climate crisis and highlight his criticism for the protests at Canning Town station where an activist climbed on the roof of a train before being attacked by commuters, the article also acknowledges that XR had "*expressed regret*" over the protest.

#### **4.15 Saving the World**

Again, linked to the themes of crisis and extreme narrative, a perception that the movement is contributing to saving the world (or at least think they are) has been perpetuated. Often focussing on the impact of the individual this notion of responsibility, or a particular reason for being involved in the movement, The concept of "saving the world" occurs in 4% of both media headlines and XR articles. Saving the world occurred across 8 of the 10 news outlets, with most occurrences in

the *BBC* and *Guardian* (both 14) and no occurrences in *The Daily Mirror* or the *Daily Express*.

One interesting point to note is that of the interest from the primarily right-wing *Daily Mail*, who at one point credit XR, along with Greta Thunberg and Schools Strike for Climate, for bringing about awareness and declarations of climate emergency from local governments.

Saving the world is also a prominent theme in the XR data, with the urgency and seriousness of the climate crisis being used to frame themselves as saviours of the planet:

*"We choose to save our home, the Earth"* (Extinction Rebellion 2019i)

*"the climate and the ecological emergency, you know, it is much more in people's heads and you know, it's definitely out there more"* – Interview participant 4

#### **4.16 Not in my Back Yard**

The not in my back yard (NIMBY) concept has been closely associated with the environmental movement for much of its history, particularly as a critique of local environmentalist mobilisation (Armiero and Sedrez 2014) and according to the press the XR movement is no different. Although to a lesser extent than most of the other main themes (2% of media headlines, does not occur in XR data), there is an observable focus on members of the public who does not necessarily disagree with environmental protest, unless it affects them in some way. NIMBY occurs in 8 of the 10 news outlets, it is omitted by *The Telegraph* and the *BBC* and occurs most frequently in *The Daily Mail* (7).

*The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* in particular utilise celebrities to highlight the NIMBY mentality, reporting on instances where celebrities have been disrupted by, or criticised the movement:

*"Simon Mayo is left trapped in his office" - Daily Mail (Fullerton and Hussain, 2018)*

*"Irate Jim Davison fumes while he's stuck in traffic as climate change activists block London Roads" - Daily Mail (Robinson and Duell, 2018)*

*"Good Morning Britain in chaos after Rob Beckett MISSES interview thanks to 'Extinction Rebellion Traffic'" - The Sun (Gallagher, 2019)*

#### **4.17 Well-being**

Although well-being occurs less overtly in the headlines than many other themes (1% in the media, 2% in the XR data), the concept of health and well-being is strongly interlinked with peoples' individual reasons for being involved in the movement and the notions of urgency and the need for action on environmental issues. Well being occurs in limited numbers across 6 of the 10 news outlets, it is omitted entirely by the *Daily Express*, *Sky*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Mirror*.

Conversation on mental health has increased in many arenas in recent years, and studies have shown that the environment and peoples' relationship with it can have an effect on mental health (MIND, n.d.).

*"The mums with eco-anxiety - 'I could cry all the time'" - BBC (BBC, 2019d)*

*"Parents warned to stop 'terrifying' children with climate change warnings amid surge of 'eco-anxiety' cases"- The Evening Standard (Somerville, 2019)*

Although the theme occurred least across both the media data and the XR data, Well-being was discussed in several of the interviews, with participants reporting on their reasoning for becoming involved with the movement:

*“I’m full of anxiety and fear about the climate and the ecological crisis” – Interview participant 3*

*“It’s like the world is falling apart around us. We’re taking no notice of it. We’re going to destroy ourselves and take most of the rest of planet with us” – Interview participant 3*

One participant also identified personal well-being as a reason another individual disengaged with the movement:

*“she found that after a while it was actually sort of taking over and while that can be viewed in a positive way, she found she was getting quite ill and strained, she was getting stressed all the time [...] anyway so she’s kind of dropped off now” – Interview participant 5.*

#### **4.18 Lessons Learned**

Although it does not occupy a large proportion of headline themes, learning from successes and disappointments is highlighted by both the movement and later in the sampling period, the media (2% and 1% of headline themes respectively). Lessons learned occurs in 8 of the 10 news outlets, with slightly more occurrences in *The Guardian* (6). Some of the civil disobedience undertaken was identified by the media as *“tactical stupidity”* and the lessons learned in many of these cases were addressed by XR in their press releases. The movement also made clear when they wanted to *“distance”* themselves from the actions of *“splinter groups”*. This distancing of XR from certain activities is a problem for movements that profess to be *“de-centralised”* as at the very core of their ideology is to be inclusive and not to dictate the day-to-day actions of participants. This is particularly difficult to reconcile when the actions are deemed unsavoury, like for example the campaign stickers that appeared to celebrate the Covid-19 pandemic, controversial comments made by one of the movements founder’s Roger Hallam, and of course some protest action that in hindsight may seem ill-advised.

*"XR distances itself from stickers which called the corona virus 'the cure" – The Telegraph (Jarvis, 2020)*

*"Extinction Rebellion splinter group faces backlash over 'humans are the disease' stickers" – The Daily Mail (Weston 2020)*

*"Founder told he is 'not welcome' in movement after Holocaust comments" – The Independent (Baynes 2019)*

Lessons learned were highlighted more prominently by the interviewees, several of whom *Expressed* concern / frustration at some of the tactics employed, particularly the level of privilege, or situation required in order to actively be involved in the larger protest events, as discussed above.

Improvements to how the media present climate change has also been addressed by some outlets, including *The Guardian* and *The Independent* who were amongst the first to recognise the Climate Emergency. XR themselves have also openly criticised the *BBC* for their coverage of environmental issues.

#### **4.19 Stagnation**

Stagnation as a theme did occur across the corpus of media articles, particularly later on in the timeframe for analysis, following controversies surrounding Roger Hallam and a notion of "what next" for the civil disobedience in the light of both successes and the action-limiting lockdowns imposed as a result of the pandemic. However it occupied less than 1% of the total headlines and only occurred in 5 of the 10 news outlets. Some newspapers reported on the disillusionment of some of the participants of the movement. *The Daily Mail* ran an article in July 2019 with the headline *"Extinction Rebellion is 'taking on a Marxist tinge'"* say disillusioned members. reporting on alleged statements made by founder Roger Hallam:

*"We are going to force the governments to act. And if they do not , we will bring them down and create a democracy fit for purpose... and yes, some*



*may die in the process*" - Hallam as quoted in *The Daily Mail*(Hussain, 2019b)

The article goes on to report that *"infighting is rife"* that some are *"being bullied' by vegan members"* and that members are leaving due to the *"increasingly Marxist tinge"* stating that *"a former supporter warned that protesters may be forced to commit more and more dangerous stunts if they want to continue making headlines"* (Hussain, 2019b).

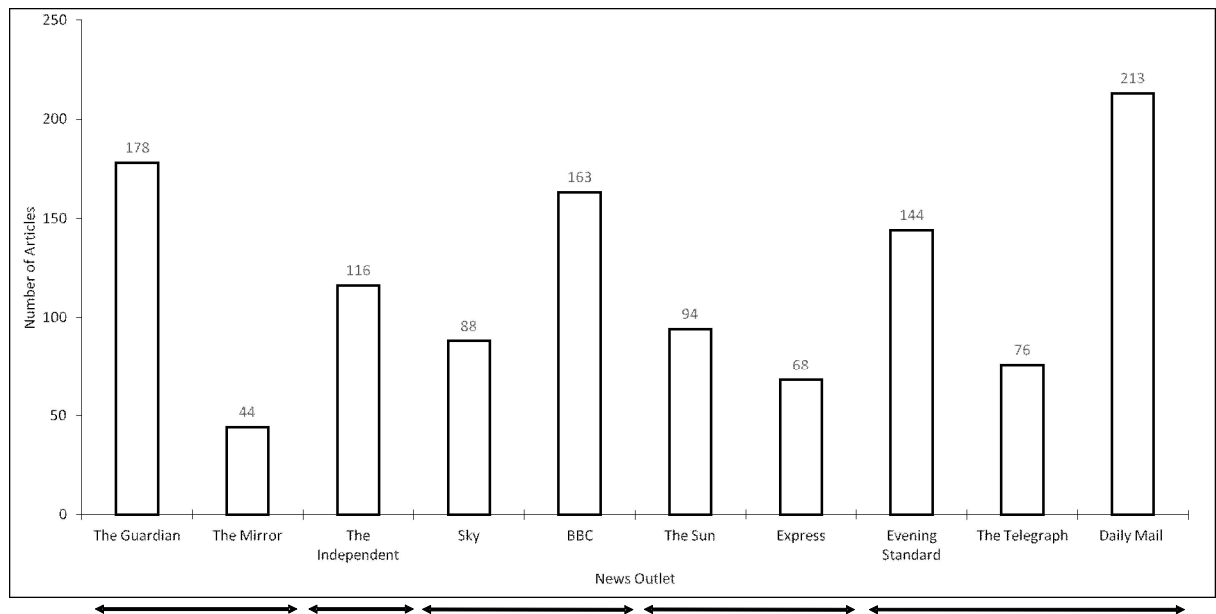
However, stagnation was more of a concept raised by the interviewees. The interviews themselves were conducted in late 2020 when Covid-19 restrictions were in place.

Several interviewees raised that they had become distant from the movement, mainly due to lockdown and the impact on social freedoms as a result, however there was a feeling of stagnation, standing still, and not progressing forward from those interview participants:

*"I'm not quite sure that I'm up for dramatic actions at the moment. I've been arrested once. I'd be quite happy to be arrested, but I does not want to be doing things particularly which are kind of dangerous"* – Interview participant 3

## **5 Critical Discourse Analysis**

As detailed in Chapter 4, the different news outlets may present XR differently depending on political affiliation and editorial stance. Figure 5.X below shows the overall attention given by each of the 10 news outlets across the period sampled.



*Figure 5.1 Coverage of XR by news outlet*

Figure 5.1 shows that those news outlets gave varying levels of attention to XR during the sampled time period, with the most overtly right-wing outlet, the *Daily Mail*, publishing 213 articles, more than any other source. *The Guardian* also gave a lot of attention to XR publishing 178 articles, followed by the *BBC* (163) and *The Evening Standard* (144). *The Mirror* gave the least attention to XR, publishing only 44 articles in the time period.

The frequency of occurrence of themes in the overall headline data clearly demonstrates that those outlets that are right of centre focus more heavily on elements of ridicule and privilege. This particularly includes the appearance of the protests as “carnivals” and the hypocrisy of some taking part. Whereas those that are left of centre are much more likely to be less overtly critical of the movement.

An in-depth comparison using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was carried out using articles regarding the same event from various news outlets, in order to compare the narrative of these events from opposite ends of the political spectrum

and makes some inferences about the influence on and perceptions of those demographics. The criteria for selection of this data followed “critical discourse moments” (Carvalho 2000) or indeed moments in time where there is a particular interest from the media regarding a given issue that challenges existing discursive positions (Chilton, 1987). The timeline from formation of XR as a movement to the 2019 “rebellions” and subsequent prosecutions lends itself particularly well to examining these “critical discourse moments”.

The discourse discussed includes media data, television transcripts and semi structured interviews with a focus on environmental activism, specifically XR the ability of XR to undertake successful protest, and the disruption they cause. The media discourse not only provides matter-of-fact reporting on instances of civil disobedience but also provides a wider commentary about the politics and nature of protest. The media and transcript data comes from the sampling period and all of the interviews took place in December 2020 and January 2021.

The media data was obtained from online sources, the process for this is outlined in Chapter 3. Data produced in this way goes through a particular editorial process, being written by a journalist and then edited by others often with a particular intended audience or “implied reader” in mind, usually with asset of values that are in direct opposition to another group (Reah, 2002). News media is effectively live commentary on events, however each of the news outlets have their own agenda, or editorial stance with some being more partisan than others. The overall aims and target audience differ between the organisations, with the newspaper often reinforcing the worldview of its readership (Reah 2002). Specific meaning is conveyed in the discourse according to the political affiliation, stance on environmental issues and readership. With some of the organisations being more sympathetic to XR and more likely to run stories about environmental issues. Some of the news outlets recognise the urgency of environmental issues but are less open to liberal ideas and ideologies, so the philosophy behind civil disobedience is at odds with their editorial stance.

The television transcripts were also obtained online, and the process outlined in chapter 3. The programmes were produced for TV and have an often wide range of

people contributing towards the content, including the journalists /presenters, members of XR, politicians and others.

## 5.1 Daily Mail vs. The Guardian

*The Daily Mail* is a traditionally right-wing tabloid and published more articles referencing XR than any of the other 9 news outlets sampled. *The Guardian* is a traditionally left-wing newspaper. Both news outlets polled as being perceived as the most right-wing and the most left wing of British news outlets in a 2017 poll conducted by YouGov (Smith, 2017). From the thematic analysis, *The Guardian* emerged as the most supportive of XR, whereas *The Daily Mail* was one of the most critical (with the exception of reporting on individuals). *The Guardian* was also one of the first to acknowledge the severity of the climate crisis by consciously changing the language that it used:

*“I think one of the best things The Guardian did is to change the language, to talk about kind of crisis, not climate change with climate breakdown. You know, this is really this language is really, really important”* – Interview Participant 3

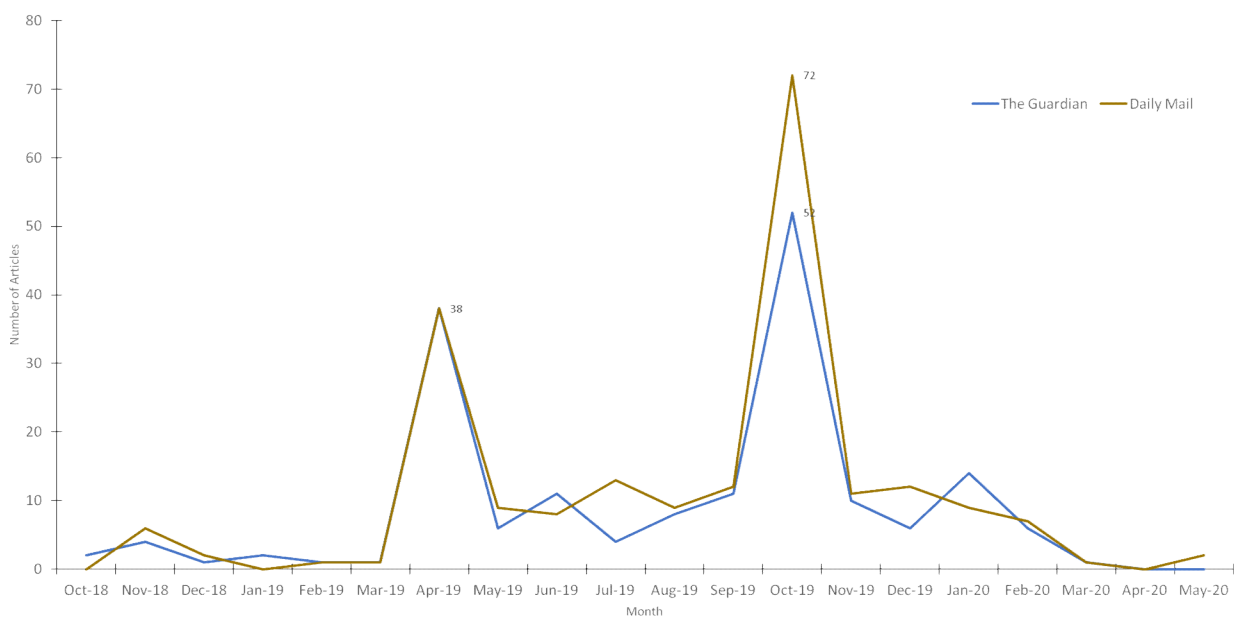


Figure 5.2 Articles across the sampled period from the Guardian and Daily Mail.

Figure 5.2 above shows that the two news outlets publishing largely followed the same peaks and troughs in attention over the time period sampled, although *The Daily Mail* showed more attention initially, it waned until the first rebellion event in April 2019. Both outlets gave the most attention to the movement during those key rebellion events of April (both papers published 38 articles) and October (*The Guardian* published 52 articles and *The Daily Mail* 72).



The Daily Mail		The Guardian	
Word	Count	Word	Count
rebellion	3847	climate	1349
extinction	3787	extinction	1101
article	2518	rebellion	1002
message	2489	police	835
London	2429	people	823
<i>Daily Mail</i>	2420	<i>Guardian</i>	821
police	2150	October	610
climate	2016	London	568

protesters	1874	emergency	543
protest	1251	change	539
activists	1241	protest	528
change	1232	support	518
protests	1067	action	440
group	1014	protesters	437
people	953	world	427

Figure 5.3 Comparison of the most frequently occurring words across the whole sample

Figure 5.3 shows the 15 most commonly occurring words over 5 letters for each of the news outlets across the whole data corpus, many of these are the same with "extinction" and "rebellion" occurring frequently (1101 and 1002 in *The Guardian*, 3787 and 3847 in the *Daily Mail*. *The Guardian*'s most frequently used word is climate with a count of 1349, with "police" (835) and "emergency" (543) also occurring frequently. The *Daily Mail*'s most frequently used word is rebellion followed by extinction, with "article" (2518) with the third highest count. "police" is 7<sup>th</sup> highest for the *Daily Mail*, with a count of 2150, more than double that of the count for *The Guardian*, reflecting the overall higher coverage by the *Daily Mail*. Combining all of the iterations of protesters (protesters, protest, activists, protests) *The Daily Mail* word count is 5433 compared with just 965 in the *Independent*.

## 5.2 Article Comparison Using CDA

The articles selected for comparison are from a "critical discourse moment", namely the "Rebellion" of October 2019, and address the same subject. A CDA was then undertaken on the articles following Fairclough's 2003 framework. The articles were then compared looking for similarities and differences in terms of action (what the text is doing), representation (how the text is represented to its audience, and vocabulary (the words used).

The texts analysed here are an article from each news outlet that cover the same event during the October 2019 rebellion event:

1. *The Daily Mail* headline "Canning Town Extinction Rebellion protester is remanded in custody" with the article sub-headline "Buddhist teacher, 36, pulled from a Tube train by angry commuters during Extinction Rebellion protest is remanded in custody after breaching previous order not to use the railway" (Adams and Spillet, 2019)

2. *The Guardian* headline "Extinction Rebellion rush-hour protest sparks clash on London Underground" (Gayle and Quinn, 2019)

<i>The Daily Mail</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>	
Word /Phrase	Count	Word / Phrase	Count
Fury / Furious	3	Clash /clashed	3
Angry	2	Disrupted / disruption	3
Backlash	1	Dragged	2
Unauthorised	1	Counter-productive	2
Disrupt	1	Delay	1
"dragged bodily"	1	"Illegal action"	1
Beaten / kicked	1	Complained	1
Chaos	1	(commuters) were not impressed	1
"huge own goal"	1	"unfair burden on...police"	1
Blunder	1	Inconvenienced	1
Spectacular failure	1		

Table 5.1 Vocabulary with negative connotations towards XR action

<i>The Daily Mail</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>	
Word / Phrase	Count	Word / Phrase	Count
Good conscience	1	Apology / apologise	2
Stood up for (people)	1	Bring people together	1
		Gratitude	1

		Accountability	1
		Learn and reflect	1

Table 5.2 Vocabulary with positive connotations towards XR action

<i>The Daily Mail</i>		<i>The Guardian</i>	
Word / Phrase	Count	Word / Phrase	Count
Remanded (in custody)	6	Arrested	3
Bail / breach of bail	4	Civil Disobedience	3
Charged	3	Non-violence	2
Forbidding / ban (of protest action)	2	Destruction of the environment	2
Banned (from talking to press)	2	Christian	2
Buddhist	2	God	2
Offences	1	"Affiliated groups acted autonomously"	1
Eco-protest	1	Regretted commuters affected	1
Reverend	1	Climate / ecological emergency	1
Father	1	"72% (of XR) opposed action"	1
Trainee teacher	1	Self-defence	1
Privately educated 'poet'	1	Grandfather	1
Prison	1	Ex-Buddhist Teacher	1
		Vicar	1
		Former GP	1

Table 5.3: Uses of other words / phrases of note

*The Daily Mail* article is much shorter than *The Guardian* article, and as tables 5.1 and 5.3 above demonstrate the language used is more extreme and focuses on the negative as opposed to *The Guardian* article which balances the negative accounts of the incident with accounts and a defence from XR.

The texts are news stories that stem from a particular event, the Tube protests of October 2019, which are situated within a larger chain of social events, including civil disobedience and public dialogue that precluded the event. The text is part of a chain



of news stories, building on reporting since late 2018, and framed within news reporting of protest action, which has a long and rich history.

The way the two articles present difference is interesting, both address difference in the report, but *The Daily Mail* presents much more of a protagonist-antagonist relation between the different points of view, i.e., the commuters versus XR protesters.

In terms of intertextuality, both articles give voice to the opposing sides and directly report those voices via quotes. *The Daily Mail* gives voice to both XR and commuters affected by the action, reinforcing the protagonist-antagonist relationship, for example an XR member was quoted as trying to address the Court in defence of the man charged, stating "The real criminal in this is the Government and its inaction on the eco-side", Whilst also quoting members of the public, including one person who said "I would have pulled him down off the train myself if I'd been there".

*The Guardian's* article is longer and presents more voices, and thus nuance. The article quotes both the commuters impacted, but also allows for XR to present their defence. With some commuters questioning the action "Is an electric train good or not?", "The way they're doing it is not right". The article then includes quotes from XR as to their reasons for civil disobedience:

"The actions are intended to bring further economic disruption to the Capital as part of the ongoing campaign to convince the Government to take meaningful action on the climate and ecological emergency."

Whilst also addressing the potential bad press generated by such action:

"Extinction Rebellion said in a statement that it was aware the action at Shadwell was divisive, and that many in its movement were not in favour".

The story also presents a number of other voices, for example the view of the Mayor of London:

"I strongly condemn the Extinction Rebellion protesters who have targeted the London Underground and DLR this morning. This illegal action is

extremely dangerous, counterproductive and is causing unacceptable disruption to Londoners who use public transport to get to work”.

And the Rail Union TSSA:

"Protesters should be mindful that what they have done today has simply inconvenienced ordinary working people trying to get on with their lives and trying to work on the most carbon-emission friendly options available to them to date."

Examining the assumptions made by both newspapers it is clear that both present the action taken by XR as “wrong” However *The Guardian* is much more sympathetic and prepared to give voice to a range of interested parties.

The predominant semantic relations in *The Daily Mail* article are causal, particularly with reference to the consequences of the action taken, with some discussion as to the reasons for the action, which is contrastive, using the conjunction ‘but’ to introduce the protester’s point of view. The text is not characterised by a higher-level semantic relation (i.e., problem-solution). Grammatical relations are primarily paratactic in that the article discusses what happened largely in a matter-of-fact way without subordinate or superordinate relation. however, when discussing the case, the grammatical relations are occasionally hypotactic “his presence puts him in breach of that particular bail condition”.

The predominant semantic relations in *The Guardian* Article are similar to that of *The Daily Mail* article, they are causal and contrastive, and grammatical relations are paratactic. There is however a higher-level semantic relation, with an element of focus on problem-solution, particularly around the theme of saving the world. The article also discusses the problem in relation to the police ban, referring to XR lawyers filling an application for judicial review.

In *The Daily Mail* article, the predominant types of exchange are statements of fact, and the predominant grammatical mood is declarative, it refers primarily to the incident and the outcome of the court. There are “metaphorical” relations between

the speech functions where a protester tried to address the court, in that the statement (opinion) is given as fact: "the real criminal in this is the Government". *The Guardian* article presents a much broader picture in terms of exchanges, there are statements of fact, but the article gives a much stronger voice to both the protesters and the commuters.

The discourse in both articles is the representation of wrongdoing as part of the social event (tube protests), the type of people involved in the wrongdoing, and the feelings of those affected by the wrongdoing. The articles both represented the space time relation stating dates and locations of the social event. The main social actors are people, the protesters and the commuters, but also an organisation – the court. The social actors are activated, named and classified, particularly in terms of their privilege; "privately-educated", standing in society "Reverend" "trainee teacher" "pensioner" "former GP", their familial relations "father", "grandfather" and system of beliefs "Buddhist", "Christian". In classifying the protesters by their standing in society, the article is giving legitimacy to their status as protesters and by making reference to familial relationships and belief systems, alluding to the possible motivations for engaging in civil disobedience. This is a pattern repeated throughout much of the body of *Daily Mail* articles, there is an overarching narrative of disdain when it comes to mass protest, yet sympathy (bordering on support) for individuals and their motivations.

The feelings of those affected by the wrongdoing are represented as activated, particularly by the *Daily Mail*; "angry", "fury", "furious", although they are classified only as the broad term "commuters". The vocabulary in *The Guardian* article is less extreme than *The Daily Mail* when representing the commuters, stating they "were not impressed" and "inconvenienced" is quite different to the feelings of vitriol that the language used by *The Daily Mail* elicits.

Whilst the styles of both of the articles are journalistic, with the authors as reporters, reporting on an actual social event (or series of social events), the representation in *The Daily Mail* article is more overtly critical and ridiculing than *The Guardian* article, using emotive language, with words such as "fury" and "backlash" used to illustrate the reception of the action by commuters, and referring to the action as a "blunder"

and "spectacular failure" and quoting an XR member who admitted the action had been a "huge own goal". *The Daily Mail* presents the commuters as protagonists responding to the protesters as antagonists whereas *The Guardian* article presents a much more balanced picture, giving more in-depth voice to both the protesters and commuters and the police, lawyers, rail union and the Mayor of London. *The Guardian* does present the wrongdoing, but it also presents the reasoning for that wrongdoing, the acknowledgement of the event by XR, and their apology and reflection on the event.

Both articles primarily use epistemic (truth) modality as they make strong commitments to truth, they are presenting a series of events as they happened. Both articles make several unmodalized assertions "he was remanded in custody", "activists have disrupted London's public transport network", with some modalized statements in *The Guardian* article "an action is likely to polarise opinion", "actions are intended to". *The Guardian* article also uses deontic (obligation, necessity) modality "he had to be defended".

Both articles highlight wrongdoing, demonstrate the criticism of the protest action and go some way to present voices from opposing sides. It is difficult to ascertain each author's values, it could be concluded that the author of *Daily Mail* is sympathetic towards the commuters and opposes the action taken by protesters, this is not realised explicitly, but in the use of emotive, occasionally extreme vocabulary and in the omission of the statements of other actors which are included by *The Guardian*.

### **5.3 The Independent vs. The Telegraph**

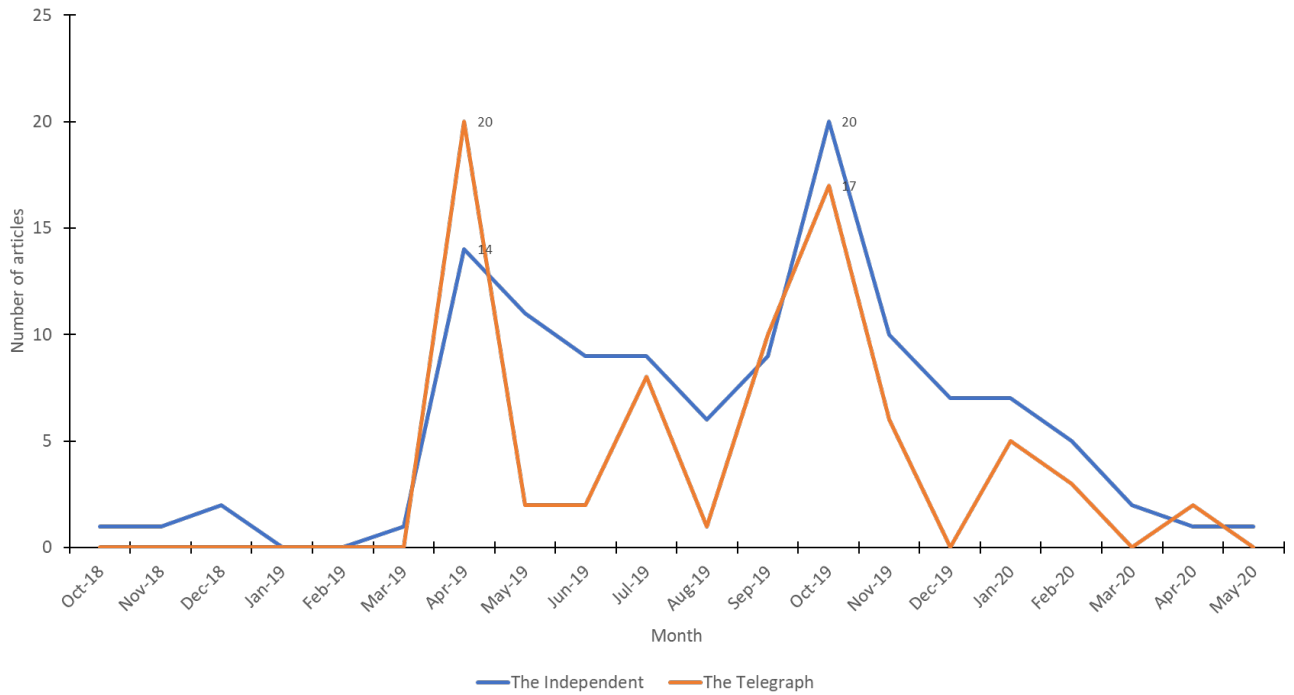


Figure 5.4 *Articles across the sampled period from the Independent and the Telegraph.*

Figure 5.4 above shows that the two news outlets publishing largely followed the same peaks and troughs in attention over the time period sampled, although *The Independent* showed more attention initially, it waned until the first rebellion event in April 2019. Both outlets gave the most attention to the movement during those key rebellion events of April (*The Independent* published 14 articles and *The Telegraph* published 20) and October (*The Independent* published 20 articles and *The Telegraph* 17). The attention given by *The Independent* was generally higher than *The Telegraph*, with the exception of the April 2019 rebellion event, *The Independent* also maintained relatively high levels of interest from the April rebellion event until early 2020.



The Independent		The Guardian	
Word	Count	Word	Count
climate	519	rebellion	182
extinction	504	extinction	177
rebellion	497	police	101
people	255	climate	89
change	253	London	81
police	241	people	72
London	231	change	57
independent	194	group	56
group	190	protest	55
action	182	protests	55
protesters	177	public	44
activists	169	activists	43
protest	169	protesters	40
government	163	government	38
protests	157	arrested	37

Figure 5.5: Comparison of the most frequently occurring words across the whole sample.

Figure 5.5 shows the 15 most commonly occurring words over 5 letters for each of the news outlets across the whole data corpus, many of these are the same with "extinction" and "rebellion" occurring frequently (504 and 497 in the Independent, 177 and 182 in *The Telegraph* . The Independent's most frequently used word is climate with a count of 519, followed closely by "extinction" and "rebellion". *The Telegraph* 's most frequently used word is "rebellion" followed by "extinction", with "police" having the third highest count.

#### 5.4 Article Comparison

The second article comparison undertaken is two pieces as published by *The Telegraph* and *The Independent* in June of 2019. *The Telegraph* article is framed much more as an opinion piece by the comments editor, but both discuss the potential for action at Heathrow airport and the Independent's article concludes with the journalist opinion also.

The articles examined were as follows:

1. *The Independent* article "Extinction Rebellion Heathrow Protest: Could flights be cancelled by drones?" (Calder, 2019).
2. *The Telegraph* article "We've had quite enough of the law-breaking environmental fanatics of Extinction Rebellion".

<i>The Independent</i>		<i>The Telegraph</i>	
Word / Phrase	Count	Word /Phrase	Count
Serious criminal offence / criminal offence	3	Economic terrorism	2
Endanger lives	1	Economic cost	2
Life-sentence	1	"we've had quite enough"	1
Potentially dangerous	1	Fanatics	1

Jeopardise safety	1	Threatening	1
Reckless action	1	Ludicrous	1
Could be some risk	1	Eco “protesters”	1
		<i>Blackmail</i>	1
		Demand	1
		Holidays ruined	1
		“No one sane can support”	1
		Cultural cringe	1
		Eco-lobby	1
		Unthinking delusion	1
		“criminal and motivated by contempt”	1
		Radical vegans	1
		Pro-immigration activists	1
		Anti free speech vandals	1
		Invade	1
		“crime could become mass murder”	1

Table 5.4 Vocabulary with negative connotations towards XR actions

<i>The Independent</i>		<i>The Telegraph</i>	
Word / Phrase	Count	Word /Phrase	Count
Work together constructively	1		
Non-violence	1		
Advance notice	1		
(will not) put passengers at risk	1		

Table 5.5 Vocabulary with positive connotations towards XR Actions

The Independent		<i>The Telegraph</i>	
Word / Phrase	Count	Word / Phrase	Count
Shut down	3	Police	2
Cancellation of flights	1	Arrested	1



Disruption		"I'm all for protest, but not like this"	1
Obstruction	1	"Our politics is obviously dysfunctional, but it's not so bad that we all need to commit crimes to get our point across"	1
arrested	1	"Extinction Rebellion are given too easy a time"	1
No refunds	1	Extinction Rebellion is generally held to have the best of intentions, even if their tactics are to be regretted	1
Decoy for other action	1		

Table 5.6 uses of other words / phrases of note

Both of the articles discuss potential action on disruption at Heathrow airport, something which ultimately proved to be divisive within XR themselves.

The texts are news stories that stem from a particular proposed event, the potential disruption of flights at Heathrow by drones in June of 2019, like the articles discussed in the last section, these are situated within a larger chain of social events, including civil disobedience and public dialogue that precluded the event. The text is part of a chain of news stories, building on reporting since late 2018, and framed within news reporting of protest action, which has a long and rich history. The genre and style is journalistic, authors are reporting on an event, however *The Telegraph* article is presented as an opinion piece, unlike *The Independent* article and thus is likely to be skewed to one side of the argument, while *The Independent* article which presents a more balanced view.

Difference is presented in *The Independent* article, but is not really addressed in *The Telegraph* article, which is more of an opinion piece than *The Independent* article and thus is likely to be skewed to one side of the argument, unlike *The Independent* article which presents a more balanced view. Figure 5.5 demonstrates the much

higher frequency of negative words and phrases in *The Telegraph* data compared with that of *The Independent*

In terms of intertextuality *The Independent* article gives voice to opposing sides, and reports these voices directly via quotes. *The Telegraph* article does not attempt to detail anything positive about the movement or present their point of view, *The Independent* article however does present a more balanced picture, giving voice to a variety of actors via direct quotes, including XR, The Aviation Minister, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, the Civil Aviation Authority and a Heathrow spokesperson.

*The Independent* balances the argument by recognising the potential seriousness of the offences, and detailing the economic costs, but also details XR's point of view in that the protests are "non-violent" people are given "advanced notice to change travel plans" and that they "will not take action that would put airline passengers at risk" stating that the "plan is to launch drones during the night, when flights are not usually operating, and prevent the airport opening in the morning.

The article also quotes the Heathrow spokesperson acknowledging the need to act on climate change but also the focus on the potential seriousness of the action:

*"We agree with the need to act on climate change, but that requires us to work together constructively – not commit serious criminal offences just as hardworking people prepare to spend a well-earned holiday with their family and friends."*

The article goes on to discuss the potential for financial losses and personal disruption to holiday makers, but the author concludes "*my prediction is that anything other than temporary disruption is unlikely*".

*The Telegraph* addresses difference by indirectly giving voice to a generalised view of the positive intentions of XR, but quickly disagrees with this:

*"Extinction Rebellion is generally held to have the best of intentions, even if their tactics are to be regretted. No. Their actions are criminal and motivated by contempt for the rest of us"*.

Examining the assumptions made by both newspapers it is clear that both present the action taken by XR as “wrong” However *The Independent* article is much more sympathetic and prepared to give voice to a range of interested parties, going so far as to assume with weeks of warning the police “will be out in force” and that the prediction is “anything other than temporary disruption is unlikely”.

The predominant semantic relations in *The Telegraph* article are causal and elaborative including discussion of the potential social event (drones disrupting flights) but also expanding with examples where other activities wouldn’t be treated as leniently the article’s author perceives XR have been. Grammatical relations are primarily paratactic in that the article presents largely in a matter-of-fact way without subordinate or superordinate relation. The semantic relations in *The Independent* are also primarily causal and elaborative, and grammatical relations are both paratactic and hypotactic.

The predominant type of exchanges in *The Telegraph* article are activity exchanges with speech functions including statements questions and demands. *The Telegraph* particularly focuses on hypothetical statements. The predominant grammatical mood is declarative but does include some interrogative sentences; “why is this the case” “why else would they be targeting ordinary holidaymakers (and, before that, car and van drivers)?”.

*The Independent* details activity and knowledge exchanges via statements and questions, including statements of fact: “it is a criminal offence to fly a drone near an airport”, hypotheticals: “a drone striking the windscreen of the flight deck may also have serious consequences”, and predictions: “anything other than temporary disruption is unlikely”. The predominant grammatical mood is declarative but does include some interrogative sentences to lead into different sections of the article: “With weeks of warning, presumably the police will be out in force?”.

Discourse in *The Telegraph* article is primarily negative towards XR and civil disobedience in general and is reflective of the author’s opinion. The social actors are classified and named but attributed generic, stereotypical classifications,

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“Swampy wannabes”, “radical vegans”, “environmental fanatics”. There are instances of grammatical metaphor in the article. It is evident from Table 5.X above that *The Telegraph* article uses much more emotive, negative and extreme language, also using the words “terrorism” and “vandals” to refer to XR.

*The Telegraph* article also uses ridiculing language, with “ludicrous”, “unthinking delusion” “cultural cringe” “no one sane can support”, “unthinking delusion” all being used to describe the actions of the movement, and other protest groups used by the journalist for comparison. The article acknowledges that there is a general consensus that XR has the right idea, but imperfect execution, but the author rejects this, arguing that they are “given too easy a time” and compares their actions to hypothetical situations that would likely be taken more seriously by the police:

*“I were to threaten to cut the power to the Treasury building, because I consider the tax burden to be an “emergency” and I deem the Government to be insufficiently serious about addressing the scandalous way our money is wasted, I would expect to be stopped from doing so.”*

*The Independent* article presents a much more balanced picture detailing the stance of XR, the airport, the Civil Aviation authority, the aviation minister and the police.

*The Telegraph* article does not really address the detail of the proposed social event, stating XR are “threatening economic terrorism” by shutting down the airport for 10 days. Whereas *The Independent* article gives much more detail, stating the number of days, start date, and a summary of the potential consequences as well as statistics from similar historical civil disobedience.

Whilst the styles of both of the articles are journalistic, with the authors as reporters, reporting on an actual social event (or series of social events), *The Telegraph* article is an opinion piece whereas *The Independent* article presents more as a news article with the author voicing a brief opinion at the end. *The Telegraph* presents XR as antagonist and himself as the protagonist, speaking on behalf of “ordinary holidaymakers”. *The Independent* article presents a much more balanced picture, giving more in-depth voice to a range of actors, it does present the potential activity

as criminal as well as a discussion of the safety, but it also plays down the potential impact.

Both articles use epistemic (truth) modality as they make strong commitments to truth, in terms of criminality and consequences of the potential civil disobedience. Both articles make several unmodalized assertions; “We may, very soon, have a chance to show just how much we care about the environment”, “the airworthiness could be affected”. *The Independent* uses a deontic highly-commitment modalized statement when discussing legality: “You must not fly within the flight restriction zone”.

Both articles highlight wrongdoing, demonstrate the criticism of the protest action and go some way to present voices from opposing sides. The values of *The Telegraph* articles author are clear and realised explicitly; they do not agree with this kind of civil disobedience; XR are in the wrong. However, it is difficult to ascertain the author’s values in the case of the Independent, it could be concluded that the author is perhaps more sympathetic to civil disobedience, however this is not realised explicitly, and a balanced view of all voices has been presented.

## **6 Discussion**

### **6.1 Critical Discourse Moments**

Critical Discourse moments are key periods in the discourse, where the focus intensifies or changes leading to challenge to an existing discourse.

*“when I’ve seen stuff in the media, it’s usually nearly always been on the back of the big rebellions”* – interview participant 4

During 2019 there were a number of moments that could be considered “critical discourse moments”, including:

- The April 2019 “Rebellion”
- Declaration of a “Climate Emergency” and acceptance of new language
- The Citizens Assembly
- The October 2019 “Rebellion”

As shown in Figure 3.2 there are two clear peaks across the sampling timeframe where there is a distinct increase in attention to XR by the media. April and October can be considered critical discourse moments due to the sheer number of mentions of XR in the media. April is particularly significant due to the accompanying change of language around climate and environmental issues and the emergence of declarations of a “climate emergency” by local governments.

The press data also shows peaks in July 2019 and February 2020 reflecting protest action, subsequent prosecutions and controversy surrounding the listing of Extinction Rebellion on the list of extreme ideologies by the UK government in early 2020.

### **6.2 The April 2019 Rebellion**

The April 2019 rebellion attracted a lot of media attention 219 Articles were captured as part of the sample data used for this work.

The protests had a wide-reaching affect across London and other parts of the UK., together with School Strike for Climate and other concurrent campaigns, this coverage led to the changing of language around climate (Carrington, 2019) and the declaration of a climate emergency in May of 2019.

### **6.3 Declaration of a "Climate Emergency"**

The April rebellion was undoubtedly successful, in May of 2019 the UK Government became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency (Turney, 2019), and whilst there are also other factors at play, discussed in Chapter 6 in more detail, Extinction Rebellion were a lynchpin of the changing conversation around the climate crisis, having evolved from a group of radical thinkers to a movement with a global reach and significance. Turney (2019) attributes the declaration to a group of culminating factors, chiefly the April 2019 XR protests, Greta Thunberg's visit to parliament and David Attenborough's documentary Climate Change: The Facts.

### **6.4 Citizen's Assembly**

The creation of a Climate Assembly in June of 2019 went some way to meet XR's third key demand: "Go Beyond Politics - Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice." (XR, n.d.a).

The UK Climate Assembly was set up in June 2019 and brought together people from different backgrounds from across the country. Six Select Committees (groups of MPs from different political parties responsible for examining policy issues, accountability, and new law proposals) called Citizens Assembly The assembly educated the members on climate change and ways in which it can be addressed, allowing for discussion of potential measures, and recommendations to be taken forward (Climate Assembly n.d.a).

Named 'Climate Assembly UK: the path to net zero' the assembly examined how to meet the Government's target of net zero by 2050. With potential impacts on daily life, the assembly members discussed exactly how this target could be met. Their discussions were held from January to March of 2020 and then online following Covid-19 lockdown rules with outcomes of the discussions reported in September 2020 (Climate Assembly, n.d.a). 107 participants were involved, and included "believers" and "sceptics" (Elstub, 2021).

The report included recurring themes from the member's discussions, these are the need for:

- improved information and education for all on climate change;
- fairness, including across sectors, geographies, incomes and health;
- freedom and choice for individuals and local areas;
- and strong leadership from government.

Whilst also highlighting the need for support for protecting and restoring nature, and the value of 'co-benefits' to tackling climate change, such as improvements in health, local communities and the economy (Climate assembly, n.d.b).

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) concluded that despite the setting up of the Climate Assembly and declaring a climate emergency the UK is "*failing to match climate rhetoric with action*". (Schwarz, 2021). Everyone has a role to play in tackling the climate and ecological crisis, but the might of the fossil fuel lobby is still great, and ultimately the responsibility for making "*collective change in the interests of us all*" lies with the government and big business (Shwarz, 2021).

At present the affect of the Climate Assembly is thought to be limited, with parliament not having a clear plan about what to do with the recommendations before they received them, as well as little interaction with MPs and a change of chairs and members of the commissioning committees as a result of the latest general election (Elstub, 2021).

## **6.5 The October 2019 Rebellion**



The October 2019 rebellion received the most news coverage out of all of the months sampled, and twice as much as the April 2019 rebellion. A total of 326 articles were captured. However, the tactics were not as fresh and new and did not have the same amount of impact as the April rebellion had, something that was also reinforced by interview participants. By this point XR had fully aligned itself with concurrent movements and had participants from around the globe.

Poorly executed, or indeed ill-advised instances of civil disobedience, such as the tube protests, and much discussed disruption at Heathrow Airport, began to draw criticism from previously sympathetic news outlets (Spicer, 2019) as well as from within XR themselves:

“that's the difficulty because people are allowed to go off and do whatever they want to do [...] [the] whole XR strategy was reviewed after” – Interview participant 4.

## **6.6 Change in discourse over time**

Extinction Rebellion emerged as a movement in Autumn of 2018, with some initial protest action taking place in various locations, most media outlets picked up on this and ran articles following the actions in October or November of 2018. In general, the media coverage tended to follow the action and the consequences of that action, with peak article publications around the time of the April and October "Rebellions", that is, large scale protest action primarily carried out in London over a number of days or weeks. As discussed above the initial rebellion event in April attracted a lot of media attention and along with concurrent movements contributed to a widespread change of language around the climate crisis and the Government declaring a climate emergency.

The April rebellion was undoubtedly successful, in May of 2019 the UK Government became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, and whilst there are also other factors at play, discussed in Chapter 6 in more detail, Extinction Rebellion were a lynchpin of the changing conversation around the Climate Crisis, having

evolved from a group of radical thinkers to a movement with a global reach and significance.

Following on from the April rebellions, coverage focussed on subsequent prosecutions and a focus on criminality, with several of the news outlets highlighting court cases and police handling of the protesters. By the time of the October rebellion XR were drawing more criticism from the press, even from those organisations who had outwardly displayed support (or had previously supported) the movement. Focus on some of the missteps made were evident. At the start of 2020 XR had briefly been listed on the “extreme ideologies” list by counter-terrorism police and by March 2020 the media attention given to the environment, and many other issues was largely overshadowed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is also an observable difference in the media discourse since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was then a seemingly significant change in the levels of media attention to environmental issues in general in the run up to the (rescheduled from 2020) COP 26 in November 2021. This data is out of the scope of the media data captured for this work but is discussed using some supplementary data.

Interestingly the narrative of wrongdoing is still present in the media, in the form of discussion around the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (2021). The bill awards the police with more powers to deal with civil disobedience and has been widely criticised by a variety of campaigning organisations.

## **6.7 Portrayal by the Media**

The findings of this study with regard to the portrayal of XR in the media during the sampling period are twofold:

1. There is a difference between the way XR is presented by different media outlets, specifically between those that are left of centre and "serious" and those that are right of centre and "sensationalist".

2. There is a significant difference in the way those outlets that are right of centre, particularly those prone to "sensationalism" (*The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*) portray individual stories.

Those news outlets that are objectively serious and left of centre are much more likely to frame XR in a positive manner, with some (particularly the *Guardian* expressing outward support for the movement). Those news outlets that are right of centre and tend to be more "sensationalist" are much more likely to present the movement in a negative frame focusing on critical and ridiculing language and emphasis on the criminality of civil disobedience, this is supported by previous literature (e.g. Carvalho and Burgess, 2005; Ruiu, 2021). The exception to this is the more positive presentation of individual stories, as discussed below. This portrayal of XR by the right of centre is potentially dangerous for the movement and possibly messaging around the climate crisis as a whole because if the credibility or trustworthiness of news about climate change is called into question this decreases the public's interest and thus minimises its impact and influence (Feldman and Hart, 2021).

The findings of this study with regards to political orientation and organisation type support the findings of previous studies (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2017, Ruiu, 2021) in that those news outlets that are right of centre are more likely to represent climate change in a negative light or with a sceptical frame. Brüggeman and Engesser (2017) observed that the right construct contrarianism as editorial opinion whereas the left construct it as an external viewpoint, similar to the findings of the CDA article comparisons (see Chapter 5), where the right present the negativity towards XR as fact or opinion whereas the left represent a range of voices, all presented as external quotes.

There is an observable significant difference in the way some of the right-wing outlets portray mass protest and the way they portray individuals. Whilst most of the news outlets delve into an individual's reasoning for being involved with XR, it is most notable in these right-wing news outlets, particularly *the Daily Mail* and to a lesser degree *the Sun*, due to the stark contrast in the framing, tone and language used when compared with reporting on protest action in general. *The Daily Mail* not only

gave a lot of attention to individual stories (42 articles) the framing, tone and language could not be more different than the negative, ridiculing language it uses for articles on mass civil disobedience. *The Daily Mail*, uses an empathetic frame and much more positive language to present individual stories, with an emphasis on personal reasons, particularly worry for future generations, highlighting the parental (or grandparental) status of the individuals and quoting their concerns. In addition to the different language the *Daily Mail* also demonstrated more interest than any other news outlet, as well as using positive framing when discussing Greta Thunberg and the Schools Strike for Climate movement. This was also observed in *The Sun* and to a lesser extent, *The Telegraph* and is supported by the work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) who found that there was a significant difference between "serious" and "sensationalist" types of media outlets and the way they use frames. In particular, they observed that serious news outlets use frames of conflict and responsibility, whereas those that are sensationalist tend to use human interest frames. The human interest frame typically brings a "human face or emotional angle" to the news story (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p95) something evident from the media data that the *Daily Mail* and *the Sun* have focused on.

## **6.8 How Extinction Rebellion wish to be perceived**

How XR wish to be perceived can be determined from not only their guiding principles and the content of their press releases but also from the reported perceptions by the interview participants. Individual perceptions of the movement are highly subjective and depend on the outlook and the individual reasons the interviewees had for their involvement with the movement. Because the movement is decentralised, a layer of complexity is added, as despite there being guiding principles, each off-shoot of the movement or indeed each individual involved is free to take whatever action they wish under the XR banner.

XR themselves are a media organisation, particularly using new media to become news providers in their own right in order to subvert the journalistic norms, as according to Powers (2015) journalists are generally "uninterested in using NGOs to mobilize broad public debate or to include voices and viewpoints from the margins of society" (p. 434).

During the semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked how they perceived the movement and their aims, with a number of different views reported:

*“Diverse, urgent, truth telling wake up call. That is deeply compassionate and humane and wants to break the sort of socially constructed silence around the urgency of the situation and to do that through symbolic disruption and on occasion, you know more than symbolic disruption so as to force the agenda or force it up the agenda, force action and engage a very much massive, massively larger section of the public in demanding systemic change rather than individual consumer led behaviour change.”*

- Interview participant 1

*“I suppose just as a bunch of people really trying to do something about an incredibly existentially serious situation, which all too often is just pushed to the side, because it's not convenient and it interferes with people's nice lives, etc”* Interview participant 2

*“I thought that this would be a bunch of around four or five people sitting in some guy's front room whingeing about the climate. I thought, it's not really for me. I want some action. I turned up a hundred and ten people there before. Okay. This is the real thing. This is what it's about. So I joined immediately”* – Interview participant 3

*“For me, it was a perfect meeting of minds of people from all different backgrounds, really. And, you know, whether professionally or from a voluntary basis or whatever. So I think it's yeah, it was very exciting when I kind of felt, all right, I'm going to I'm going to join this group and do something.”* – interview participant 4

*“XR was a huge part of a bit of an awakening, I feel like they are one of the only organisations that have gone as far as they have with regards to what's happening”* - Interview participant 5

*"XR want to be portrayed as like an alternative to the norm, like you know they want to show people that through collectivism and a different way of approaching the system that we live in, there could be alternative approaches to what happening"* – Interview participant 5

The perceptions of XR as put forward by the interview participants have common threads, particularly wanting to do the right thing, the need to cause an inconvenience and action as a collective. These ideas reinforce the 10 principles of XR but also elaborate on the individual reasoning for becoming involved with the movement. All of the interview participants expressed the view that XR were doing something, feeding into the narratives around crisis and saving the world.

It is interesting to note that the interview participants often refer to XR as something "other" than themselves, as opposed to themselves being part of the movement, this may reflect a level of stagnation because of lack of momentum due to lockdown restrictions.

Throughout the media discourse, voice has also been given to people who consider themselves to be members of XR, both in news media, opinion pieces and other periodicals:

*"We arrived nervously at Marble Arch on the first day of the Rebellion, not really knowing what to expect and how long we would stay. I was taken aback by the calm, welcoming atmosphere and the respectful behaviour towards the police and vice versa. There was a palpable feeling that we did have agency to make decisions about our future and we could act to create the type of world we all want to live in."* (Shah, 2019 p345)

Again this re-iterates the saving the world narrative.

The way the interview participants refer to XR is generally much "softer" than the media narratives, protest action that some outlets would frame dramatically as

"chaotic" or "criminal" the participants refer to as "not convenient", "compassionate" and "alternative approaches".

## 6.9 Interaction with Media by Extinction Rebellion

Extinction Rebellion have also made a number of demands of the media via both targeted direct civil disobedience and via interactions with the press, including press releases and the opportunity to write guest pieces in sympathetic newspapers. Even likening the current influence of the media to the influence that it had time of the Second World War, i.e. as a mechanism for propaganda. Propaganda includes “systematic and deliberate attempts to sway mass public opinion in favour of the objectives of the institutions (usually state or corporate) sending the propaganda message” (Snow, 2010 p66). It is difficult to distinguish propaganda from other campaigns but persuasion becomes propaganda when it is consciously misleading or exploiting beliefs, values and attitudes (Soules, 2015). Propaganda also can be split into various categories, with sociological propaganda differing from political propaganda in that it is more diverse and less organised, and where the news plays a key role (Ellul, 1973 in Soules, 2015).

Writing for *The Independent* an Extinction Rebellion member drew parallels between the role of the media in the Climate Crisis and the role the media had in “rallying the troops” during the Second World War. It is interesting to note that Extinction Rebellion acknowledges the power that the media have over the general public when at the same time the media themselves can be heavily critical of the movement. Propaganda however needs to be utilized carefully as audiences feel betrayed when they learn they have been manipulated (Soules, 2015).

The interview participants discussed their opinions of media-XR interactions, including some of the challenges:

*“it got loads of coverage for all the wrong reasons you could say, but at least it was coverage”* – interview participant 1

*“XR are fighting against a system that is broken, they will never be represented in the media how they would like [...] they are never going to*

*support something that is opposing a system that they are built on" – Interview participant 5*

*"some media like to sort of fluff up like the climate crisis isn't as bad as it seems, [...] the power is within these big corporate organisations who hold the decisions [...] its tricky with the media [...] there's always gonna be opposing sides" - Interview participant 5*

*"biggest problem has been the lack of coverage [...] because it wasn't doing things that were different enough, until it did something that struck a bum note" – Interview participant 1*

This reflects the theory of media cycles and that the action needs continually adapt in order to keep the media interested.

The participants also reported that some news outlets were much more supportive of the movement than others:

*"It's [XR] had good understanding from The Guardian a little bit from the Independent" – Interview participant 1*

Some of the participants expressed their frustration at the media, in particular the *BBC*:

*"The main media channels have gone of to the right of the spectrum, let's say. So, you know, of course, they're not going to be supportive of what we're trying to do or what we're trying to say." – Interview participant 4*

*"the BBC has sometimes being disappointing" – Interview participant 1*

*"A lot of us felt that below the BBC had really, really failed to get a grip on this. And hence the protests that we held outside the BBC" - Interview participant 3*



*“What's happened with the BBC is they feel they can't respond directly to us because that would mean that they were succumbing to pressure from a protest group”* Interview participant 3

*“some people would say we're fighting a losing battle because of the control of the media”* – Interview participant 4

However one participant did report that coverage from the *BBC* got more favourable with time:

*“They've taken the issues and they started to take those issues apart and say, what is it about with what's happening in this part of the world? How does this affect you? And how does this relate to the issues around the climate crisis? So they've actually given it the prominence, but not in terms of XR. Just in terms of the issue [...] So I feel much more sympathetic to the BBC this year than I did last year.”* - Interview participant 3

## **6.10 Identity vs. Portrayal**

It is evident that there is often a stark difference in the way XR wish to be perceived verses how some aspects of the media portray them, however there is also an element of XR's identity that wishes to be controversial, and thus will naturally attract controversial headlines. The aim of inconveniencing people, getting arrested, the undertones of revolution, are all shock tactics engineered to gain as much attention as possible.

The media has always been an avenue for persuasion (Soules, 2015) and XR exist as a media organisation themselves, in the publishing of material to their website and press releases. However, actual action by the movement as oppose to press releases regarding that action, is an important determinant of the level of press coverage.

Being a decentralised all-encompassing movement also has its drawbacks. In being all inclusive, the movement may attract those with values that do not align with the ideology that makes up the underlying principles. And in being decentralised with little to no control of what local and off-shoot groups do, this has led to some internal conflict (and negative press for the movement).

There are some key differences between the way XR frame themselves and the way they are framed by the media. As discussed above there are clear differences in the way the type and political affiliation of the media outlet frame XR, and by generally examining the media data and the XR data it is evident there are some significant similarities and differences between XR and the media that are worthy of discussion.

Firstly, both in the overall media data and the XR data forms of protest is the most commonly occurring theme with 25% and 48% respectively. Both XR and the media dedicate a lot of column inches, explaining what is going on in terms of protest action. Evidently as discussed above, different news outlets utilise very different frames for the presentation of this information, with those right of centre using more extreme, negative language and those left centre tend to be more matter of fact or show outward support.

Secondly, the theme of wrong doing occurs across the media data and the XR data, however there are many more media articles that utilise this as a main theme (19% in comparison with 9%). There is also a significant difference in the way wrong doing is presented by XR in comparison with the media, the focus of the media data is primarily the criminality of XR, i.e. the police presence, arrests and subsequent trials of the protesters. Whereas, whilst XR acknowledge there is a criminal element to their actions (a key aim is to be arrested), the focus of the XR data is much more centred around the wrong doing of government, fossil fuel companies and those who invest in them. Effectively there are two strands to the theme of wrongdoing which set XR and the media apart; 1. the criminality of civil disobedience 2. the "criminality" of capitalist society.

It is this criminality of capitalism that feeds in to the third discussion point, which is that the call for systemic change seems to be largely ignored by the media on the

whole. Systemic change is the main theme of 11% of the press releases by XR, and is of course a large component of their guiding principles, it was also widely discussed by the interviewees as a major reason for their involvement. However it only occurs in 2% of the media data. This is also compounded by the apparent lack of engagement from the media with regards to actual solutions to the climate crisis, and demonstrates that media attention regarding XR is much more focused on who the movement are and what they are doing as opposed to what they actually want to achieve.

Finally, ridicule and privilege are utilised relatively widely by the press (with more occurrences in those that are right of centre, as discussed above). Interestingly XR do not use ridicule at all, understandably they are not likely to ridicule themselves, but it is also not used by the group to illustrate their points with regards to the government or polluting industries. Privilege was used by the media, often when criticising those involved in the movement along with criticism and highlighting the hypocrisy of celebrity involvement. XR addressed their privilege in a small percent of the data (1%), and privilege was raised as a point by interview participants, particularly with regards to feelings of exclusion due to lack of privilege.

### **6.11 Environmental concern vs. civil disobedience**

Concern regarding environmental issues does not always translate to support for or undertaking protest action. This is well documented in terms of individual behaviour and the value-action gap, “spillover” and cognitive dissonance (Kolmus and Agyeman, 2002, Thomas et al, 2006, Booth and Davenport, 2017). However, the results of this study show that it is also true of media organisations. The more liberal news outlets are more likely to support (or at least be sympathetic to) XR as a movement, whereas those that are to the right of centre and more "sensational" are less likely to report on XR favourably. However, it is interesting to note that most of these newspapers in some degree acknowledge the seriousness of environmental issues, particularly the climate crisis, even if they weren't particularly tolerant of civil disobedience. This supports the existing body of literature that the mass media are increasingly moving towards total acceptance of the climate crisis (Matthews 2017) and away from contrarianism and "false balance" (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2017).

The data detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 shows that while the more right-wing newspapers were often highly critical of XR, at the same time they also devote a lot of attention to the movement and their headline grabbing rebellions. It's interesting to note that not all newspapers that were negative about civil disobedience were negative about the climate crisis, and they were often very positive about individuals' participation in such action. Interviewees also highlighted that that this was something that was reiterated by interview participants, with one stating there was *"really interesting in-depth reportage by mail journalists, which was quite descriptive and sort of... fascinated really was the tone"*.

This finding supports the work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) who found that the most significant difference was between "serious" and "sensationalist" types of media outlets, concluding that serious news outlets use frames of conflict and responsibility, whereas those that are sensationalist tend to use human interest frames. The human interest frame typically brings a "human face or emotional angle" to the news story (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p95). The more right wing, and in-particular the "sensationalist" *Daily Mail* were observed to use this human interest frame, with the framing, tone and language used much more favourable in comparison with reporting on mass civil disobedience.

The findings of this study show a definite link between the type and political allegiance of a news organisation and its reporting on civil disobedience, in short, those to the right of centre are much less likely to be supportive of such movements than those that are more liberal. It is less easy however to make conclusions about a news organisation's stance on the climate crisis. It seems that the message of urgency around the climate crisis may be getting through, but the appetite for protest movements is limited. There is a possibility that some of the discourse around criminality and the (especially right-wing) news outlets lack of taste for protest action maybe reinforced by the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which outlines harsh consequences for protest action.

Those news outlets that are subject to broadcasting regulations, in the case of this work the *BBC* and *Sky*, are more likely to be impartial, as per the regulations,

however historically this has resulted in the presentation of "false balance" (Brüggeman and Engesser, 2017) in that journalists would often give voice to climate deniers in the attempt to create balance, this is discussed further below.

## **6.12 Deviancy amplified?**

One of XR's key aims what for as many of its members to be arrested as possible and of course in turn overwhelm the court system. At the time of writing, there were still a number of ongoing prosecutions from action taken in 2019-2020 and of course the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have resulted in a backlog of court cases and appeals for those who have been convicted (Dearden, 2021b).

In August of 2021 it was revealed that due to the number of quashed convictions a Supreme Court Judge has urged the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to review all remaining XR cases as the Supreme Court ruled that protests can be a "lawful excuse" to block roads in June (Dearden, 2021a).

Despite quashed convictions there seems to be a disparity between leadership on the climate emergency, and XR as one of the key players in catalysing that very declaration. As Schwarz (2021) phrases it *"the UK Government became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, yet the same government appear to be disdainful of civil disobedience"*.

In January 2020, XR was briefly included on a list of extreme ideologies by counter-terrorism police. Home Office Minister Baroness Williams swiftly admitted that listing XR as an extremist ideology was a misstep, stating that "it's inclusion in the document was an error of judgement" (Hayhurst, 2020).

Following XR's "brief stint" on the extreme ideologies list in January 2020 (Schwarz, 2021), the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (2021) has potentially huge ramifications for those involved in civil disobedience. The bill aims to: "strengthen police powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament" and "strengthen police powers to tackle

unauthorised encampments, where trespassers cause distress and misery to local communities and businesses" (Gov.uk, 2021).

A number of groups, including XR have been highly critical of the bill, stating that it is hugely detrimental to civil liberties (Siddique and Weaver, 2021) and that it is "an attack on some of the most fundamental rights of citizens" (Allegretti and Wolfe-Robinson 2021). In March 2021, a joint statement was released by 99 signatories, including several branches of XR condemning the action and demanding that M.P.s "Kill the bill" (Extinction Rebellion 2021).

Shwarz (2021) states that the bill is "a response to the blossoming [XR] movement" and is the final stage of a pattern that occurs each decade that results in seminal public order legislation. Schwarz claims that a high-profile social movement is met by "a reactive and sometimes unlawful police response" assisted by "a hostile" and "co-ordinated" media who vilify the protesters and criticise the lack of police powers, therefore generating a justification for new powers and criminal offences (Shwarz, 2021).

This is perhaps an example of a moral panic (Cohen, 1972), the protester behaviour is framed as deviant leading to new laws to deal with this deviance. The results of this study indicate that this may be the case. Wrongdoing was the second largest theme identified from the media headline data, particularly underpinned by language around "criminality". This is also reinforced by language that "others" the protesters from civilised society. Many of the news outlets covered either the fact that the police were being overburdened by the protesters, or that the police have not dealt with them harshly enough. The findings of this study give credence to Schwarz's (2021) postulation – the media have both vilified the protesters and criticised the lack of police powers, in turn potentially legitimising the case for more police powers.

### **6.13 Right-Wing Environmentalism**

One aspect of XR's principles, the idea of being inclusive in many ways as discussed previously can lend itself to criticism, however, the ability to cross political boundaries, given the amount of support from the right-wing is much less than those in the centre and left, it could also potentially be a positive.

Despite the traditional alignment of environmentalism with the left (Pepper, 1985), lack of support from those who self-identify as right wing (Andi, n.d.) and the more negative language and focus on negative themes (as discussed in the above sections) there is an avenue for environmentalism in the right-wing. Although it is perhaps more closely associated with conservationism, the preservation of wildlife and aesthetic environments rather than environmentalism as a broader concept (Mertig and Dunlap, 2001).

However there is an ideological division between the materialist and idealist perspectives within environmentalism, with those advocating for more radical change often situated towards the extreme ends of the political spectrum (Pepper, 1985). Indeed, deterministic, scientific based arguments have legitimised many right-wing "eco-fascist" arguments (Bookchin, 1980) including organisations that called for human population control (Pepper 1985).

Previous research has argued that the ideology that environmentalism transcends politics is naive because it is idealistic and not materialistic, as well as reactionary and elitist (Pepper, 1985), the environmental crisis after all is a product of capitalism and does not affect everyone equally.

The media has addressed the potential benefits of aligning with the conservative governments "*Extinction Rebellion's protests aren't working. To fight climate change they should infiltrate the Tories*" – *The Independent* (O'Grady, 2019). And there is an important point to be made about how the environmental movement needs mainstream support in the form of laws, codes taxes and incentives, As O'Grady (2019) puts it: "*what better way to achieve it than to change the winning party from the inside*".

Of course, this is in stark contrast with the way XR operate fundamentally, particularly with reference to two of their 10 key principles. Firstly, “welcoming everyone” which requires a degree of political neutrality, and secondly “challenging a toxic system” which rejects the idea that traditional change-driving methods are successful within the current system (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.a).

#### **6.14 The What but not the Why?**

One aspect of note that was observed in the media data was that the primary focus of the majority of news articles across all 10 news organisations was the movement themselves, and how their actions relate to daily life. However, there is comparatively little mention (within the sampling period) of the climate crisis in any detail, or regarding actual solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss. This is different to previous campaigns, where the focus was often on what can be done, both in promoting individual behaviour change and encouraging systemic change. This is particularly evident in the anti-single use plastics campaigns of recent years. Moss (2021) states that throughout the publicity around SUPs there were many media 'moments' that led to massive public attention and subsequently changes to the use of plastic in society both individually and on a systemic level. Moss (2021) states that "While these were not campaigns in the traditional sense, each of these examples demonstrates the potential for change that exists when individuals become mobilized around solving a problem".

It is clear from the frequency of theme occurrence in the headline data , that the main focus of news articles is forms of protest and the wrongdoing (criminality) associated with that protest, with these two themes covering 45.5% of the entire sample. By contrast, themes that discuss the nature of the crisis behind the movement, crisis and saving the world respectively, cover just 10.8% of the headlines.

Extinction Rebellion themselves do not profess to suggest specific solutions and instead rely on symbolism of civil disobedience to convey the urgency of the situation and influence systemic change, whilst leaving it up to respective governments to facilitate actual solutions. Chapter 1 details the 10 principles as laid



out by XR, and none of them explicitly make reference to individual solutions, instead there is a focus on symbolic action in order to force the agenda and engage with the public to demand “*systemic change rather than individual consumer led behaviour change*” (interview participant 1) something that has often been the focus of government and media led campaigns. Pickerill (2017) also points out that this is often an issue in academia, “*too much geographical scholarship pointing out what is wrong with the world and how it became that way, with little attention paid to what we can do about it*” (pg.2).

### **6.15 The Covid-19 Pandemic: Issues & Opportunities**

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic posed a problem for XR, as a movement reliant on in person civil disobedience, with the very aim to cause disruption to modern society, the effects of lockdown were felt keenly. However, the pandemic itself caused major disruption to the day to day running of society, in a way that was structured, government mandated and, in many ways, good for the environment. A briefing published by the European Environment Agency (EEA) (2020) reported that there had been several temporary environmental improvements as a result of the pandemic, these included improvements in air quality, lower greenhouse gas emissions and lower levels of noise pollution. The assessment also found some negatives, including an increase in single use plastics but did stress that the way out of the pandemic was an opportunity to reshape unsustainable markets (EEA, 2020).

Interview participant 3 stated that “*ironically, covid is achieving what we [XR] couldn't achieve*” but also acknowledged at “*some point Covid is going to go away and that's when everyone is gonna want to kick start the economy*”, implying that perhaps any environmental gain could be swiftly counteracted as society moves out of the most urgent phase of the pandemic.

The series of lockdowns in the UK evidently prevented protest action going ahead, and XR had to cancel planned civil disobedience as a result of the “stay at home” order. Off-shoots of the movement also publicly claimed that the pandemic was a good thing for the environment, implying that the human population was to blame for

environmental issues and any reduction in population would be advantageous for mother nature (Bergman, 2020). Evidently this claim was seen as very much in bad taste given the severity of the situation and loss of life that would ensue. XR claimed this was nothing to do with the movement, but this poses another question as to the validity of decentralised movements, if there is no structure and people are free to behave however they like under the name of the movement, then there will inevitably be issues arising due to conflicting ideas and bad publicity.

Not only was the protest action brought to a halt as a result of the pandemic, but the climate crisis and media discourse all but stopped as a result of the intense coverage of the pandemic initially. Interview participant 1 reported that *“while we’re in the middle of Covid, it’s actually very difficult to get attention, anybody’s attention. That’s gotten so hard”*. The levels of attention given to any subject in the media relation to their immediate salience, the state of the economy and the predominance of other major socio-political issues (Melis, Elliot and Shryane, 2014). The climate crisis (as well as almost everything else) was overshadowed by Covid-19 in the media, especially in the early months.

It was interesting to note that some civil disobedience movements did “break lockdown rules”, both Black Lives Matter (BLM) and anti-violence against women movements carried out civil disobedience when there were restrictions on the movement of people (BBC 2020a). Protest action was never banned under the restrictions (Grierson and Dodd, 2020) but limits on numbers gathering in later lockdowns did apply as well as regulations requiring a Covid risk assessment (Liberty, n.d.). XR clearly interpreted the Covid-19 restrictions in a different way, obeying the “stay at home” order and subsequent limitations on number of people that could meet in groups. This is likely due to a number of factors, partly safety grounds, partly criticism the movement had received, and the lessons learnt from that criticism may of increased hesitancy. Additionally, as reported by the interview participants there was a feeling of stagnation of the campaign and distance from the movement, as well as the need to personally protect themselves.

## 6.16 No such thing as bad press?

Perhaps the biggest cause for concern is how to keep momentum of any environmental campaign, especially in the face of emerging, serious and often more urgent issues. Covid-19 reduced the momentum of coverage built-up in 2019. One of the interview participants suggested that reporting had slowed regarding the movement because they weren't doing anything "interesting enough", i.e., the media had capitalised on the shock factor of the initial rebellion events, and they weren't as captivated by the ongoing tactics. This is supported by previous research (Anderson, 1997; Lester, 2009) which found that the media becomes less interested in protest action over time.

Insulate Britain, a recently launched campaigning organisation, have been grabbing the headlines more recently as they have undertaken a series of recent protest blocking roads, including the M25 and immediately around parliament (BBC, 2021b). The Government has recently granted a civil banning order to prevent the protesters blocking traffic in areas of London and a number of participants in the blockades have recently been sent to prison (BBC 2021b). Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the group "*Irresponsible crusties who are basically trying to stop people going about their day's work*" (Sommerlad, 2021). The term "crusties" is repeated by the Prime Minister on a number of occasions throughout the sample period and more recently in response to insulate Britain, it implies the protesters are outside of the boundaries of acceptable society, reflecting a stereotype which is not true of many of those involved in the protests.

XR have distanced themselves from Insulate Britain to some degree, although it is supported by some of their member and they share some goals, tactics and allied networks, the groups are not officially integrated (BBC 2021b). The chief common denominator is Roger Hallam, who was reported to be a "founder", "leader" or "mastermind" in October 2021 by several organisations, including *The Sun* (Christodoulou, 2021) *The Mail on Sunday* (Robinson, et al, 2021) and the *Metro* (King, 2021). It is interesting that these media outlets focus on the leadership element of the movement, this may suggest there is a link between focusing on the individual, whether that is due to the difficulty in apportioning blame on a

decentralised collective, or when giving credence to individuals reasoning for participation, it does appear that the media devote more attention to the individual than the broader picture. Hallam claims he is not a founder of Insulate Britain but has outwardly declared his support for the group – specifically by facilitating meetings between campaigners and professionals (Withers, 2021).

It is interesting to note that the same themes seem to be emerging from the press around Insulate Britain in recent months that were identified in the XR data from the sampling period, specifically; privilege, ridicule and wrongdoing (criminality).

Media cycles and the waxing and waning of issues (or at least the importance placed on those issues by the media) (Anderson, 1997) are important for campaigning organisations to understand and strategies for, and the decrease in media attention during the sampling period when XR weren't actively conducting civil disobedience is evident. However, as discussed below, it does seem like the media in the UK have moved toward an acceptance of the severity and urgency of the climate crisis. The media coverage of the climate crisis is of course not confined to XR. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* in particular, demonstrate more of an outward interest in environmental issues more broadly, as would be expected as this appeals to the interests and values of their intended readership (Reah, 2002).

XR never explicitly reported to be about solutions to the environmental crisis merely a voice and facilitator of change via civil disobedience but at what point and how, does this translate from gaining attention and raising awareness to promoting and supporting action for change? Where XR head as a movement in future depends heavily on what they decide to proceed with in terms of actions.

Historically similar protest movements have seen some success and either faded into obscurity or become part of the system, operating with organised governance. Generally, as movements develop they become “tame” as they grow and develop formal structures, conflict and opposition also emerges from within (della Porta and Rucht, 2002). The Dongas, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2, are one such movement. Much like XR their aim was not to achieve one specific end but to show society what the movement thinks society should be, the Dongas had no real

strategy by which they could achieve their vision (North, 1998). Capitalism does not allow for permanent revolutionary socialism and there are several historical examples of failure, they are not practical for a working-class majority and not sustainable for the active minority (Molineux, 1994). Other organisations with roots in protest such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, have transitioned from a movement to an organisation, and in doing so, having a more clearly defined role in civil society.

It is clear that there is a balance between the need for shock tactics (in order to capture media attention) and what is necessary so as to not undermine the message. Shock tactics are evidently short lived, and the media appetite for them wanes, unless the movements are willing to escalate their tactics to elicit further shock and surprise.

## **6.17 Successes and Lessons Learned**

The impacts of the movement are far ranging and complex, presenting a variety of juxtapositions both in the way the movement is presented by the media and themselves and the way change has manifested throughout the course of the movement's development.

XR have been successful in a number of ways, the media devoted lots of attention to the movement, even with negative framing it could be argued that the message was still in the public domain, which generated conversation. The government created the Climate Assembly at least in part as a response to the demands of, and protest action carried out by the movement.

XR is now a global movement, with support from around the world, and specific groups set up locally but also in groups that legitimise XR from a professional point of view, there are XR Scientist, Doctors for XR and many more (Extinction Rebellion n.d.e, Scientists for XR, n.d., Doctors for XR, n.d.) who all use the XR name if they agree with the 3 demands and 10 core principles.

Aligning with other movements and their figure heads was a positive for the movement, in particular alignment with the School Strike for Climate movement and support from Greta Thunberg, who has individually mobilised millions of young people.

The splintering of the group also presented challenges. XR state that they will point out and do not tolerate poor behaviour (Extinction Rebellion, 2019a). This was emphasised by a very public fall out between the movement and one of its founders, Roger Hallam. And of course the actions that were ill-advised such as the tube protests emphasise the challenge of being de-centralised:

*“Yes, it was misdirected. I'm sure it was misdirected. But I don't see an action like that which creates an inconvenience. It's the one that gets the attention and raises the profile of the organization and gets new members and gets the message out”* – Interview participant 3.

One key criticism of XR, as identified in Chapter 5 above is that of privilege, in that those protesting about the environment are a product of the very society that brought about those environmental issues in the first place. And that these individuals still buy in to consumerist society, which leaves them open to criticism for being hypocritical, but at what point does individual responsibility stop and systemic change need to start?

## **6.18 The role of the activist-journalist and activist-scholar**

Society has proven during the Covid-19 pandemic that it can be adaptive and make fairly major changes to the way it operates on relatively short notice, or at least when action absolutely needs to be taken, which begs the question how serious does the issue need to be before large-scale action is taken? Should academics and journalists also take the role of activists? Scientists for XR are a wing of XR, consisting of academics who seek to sow solidarity for, and bring credibility to the movement.

For academics and journalists taking the role of activist can look very different. There are many complex ethical questions that can arise in research into social movements, and while the media will create their own spin on a given movement or issue, academics are bound by certain codes of ethics both governed by their institution and their own moral judgements and sympathies (Gillan and Pickerill, 2012). The role of activist-academic is potentially problematic, the aim particularly in scientific research (from which much of the data on environmental issues comes) is that there is a tendency to eliminate bias, to seek the truth as it is, not how it is perceived, and moving towards activism could be seen to jeopardise the credibility and impartiality of the researcher.

For activist movements however, adding the voices of academics and other high-profile supporters reinforces the credibility of their messages, that they are real movements, with valid messages grounded in real research. There is an increasing group of academics and professionals lending their voice to XR and other concurrent movements. Farhana Yamin, a former UN lawyer who had helped draft the Paris Agreement and key climate treaties emerged as a key public figure during the April 2019 rebellion. Yamin enhanced XR's credibility and was utilised by the group as a key public advocate. Yamin was interviewed by *The Guardian* in 2020 and said; "*I had been working with people who were not telling the truth about where we are, and are in a state of euphoric, egocentric denial,*". Immediately agreeing to join XR Yamin stated "*when I saw [coverage of] the October rebellion*" (*The Guardian*, 2020).

There has also been increased focus on the media and their responsibilities as sources of information, including increasing questions as to whether they are getting the level of reporting on the climate crisis right, and also in 2021, whether they too should become more vocal in their reporting on green issues and their support for solutions to environmental problems. The exact role of the media is difficult to quantify, but it does have an important influence on the construction of widespread consensus around the climate crisis (Carvalho, 2000).

Journalists in theory would have an easier time becoming activists than other professionals and academics, however they are still bound by editorial stance, other newsworthy items overshadowing environmental stories, and getting environmental

news stories on the front page. In October 2021, The Media Show, a talk show broadcast on the *BBC* news channel highlighted the need for journalists to "get off the fence" about climate issues and the issues they have in breaking through the rest of the news in trying to promote the urgency of these issues. Participation is possible within the news without losing control but development in this areas is vital to address issues of disinformation, security and credibility (Novak, 2018).

The Media Show programme brought together journalists from a range of organisations to discuss environmental journalism moving forward post COP 26. The programme highlights recent changes in media attention towards the climate crisis and environmental issues as a whole. This is particularly evident in the digital age with the rise of new media the conventional boundaries between issue advocacy and activism are blurred providing challenge to journalistic norms (Russell, 2017).

Tom Chivers, the Science Editor at UnHerd, stated that the climate crisis has "become a much bigger and more widely discussed topic" and that the tendency to try and include an alternative view or as Chivers refers to it "the topic of false balance" is now largely avoided, particularly by the *BBC*, which is supported by the literature (Brüggeman and Engesser 2017). Chivers also states that there's much more "weight on scientific output" even to the point of "overstating", giving the example of articles regarding people actively choosing not to have children because of the climate crisis. Chivers states that it's difficult to engage people with a "technical and difficult" reality but that there is a huge appetite for the contrarian and alarmism. One narrative is evident is public opinion by painting activists as criminal and/or using the environment as a cover for socialist views (Newlands, 2018), with Wrongdoing being the second largest theme in the media headline data.

One thing to note particularly is the way the Media Show programme highlights the need for journalists to take some responsibility for the power they have over their audience. Wolfgang Blau founder of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network (and former Global Chief Operating Officer of Condé Nast) states that the news media has a responsibility to educate people as amongst all of the communicators talking about the climate crisis the "number one source" is the news media. Blau also states that the conversation has moved on from whether climate change exists to "how



*urgent is it, how quickly do we have to address it, and who is paying the cost of the transition in carrying the risk?"*

The programme also touched on the difficulties of reporting on environmental issues. Natasha Clark, the Environment Correspondent for *The Sun* stated that their readers were more interested in the environment than the journalists believed them to be, setting up a campaign telling readers about individual actions they could take after a poll revealed "89% were concerned about plastic pollution". Clark also states that it is difficult to get green issues on the front page as "doomsday climate reports" may not be palatable to a lot of readers. Chivers echoes this statement, concluding that the reality of "central projections that it [climate change] will likely contribute to millions of deaths a year and cost trillions of dollars 'dollars' worth of damage, and make life much harder" is scary enough without the emphasis on doomsday reporting.

Tied up with the complexities of environmental reporting is the way the newsrooms work, i.e. how the decision is made that something is newsworthy. Blau, having previously studied the subject, states that it's "recency", "vicinity", is it an event or a process, is it simple and is their public interest, stating that a lot of climate news gets "filtered out" because it's something that "gets worse in the future", "is worse somewhere else", "is a process", and "is rather complicated". However there has been a shift in news organisations in addressing the public interest. Blau argues that journalists should not be activists but should give the climate crisis the "visibility it deserves in the public interest". Chivers adds to this by discussing the notion of journalistic objectivity, and that maintaining that objectivity is hard when writing about social justice issues and that it is the job of a journalist to "find out what's true and important, and tell people that, not to distort reality to achieve some political end".

Speaking about Brazil and the Amazon, Daniela Chiaretti, Environment Reporter at Valor Econômico (Brazil's Economic (Brazil's biggest financial newspaper) highlights the importance of the global south, stating "we are all connected".

There is an increasing body of literature (Annany, 2018; Barnes, 2014; Bennett and Sergerberg, 2013; Dutta and Gangopadhyay, 2019; Novak, 2018; Robinson and

Deshano, 2011; Robinson, Lewis and Carlson, 2019; Russell, 2017; Sabaté-Gauxachs, Micó-Sanz, and Díez-Bosch, 2019) that support a move away from traditional models of journalism and moving towards a new paradigm where the public "become part of the news making process" (Dutta and Gangopadhyay, 2019, p713) and that this is particularly facilitated by new media that fosters inclusivity and individuality in connective action (Bennett and Sergerberg, 2013).

Press freedom should be less about journalists and more about the "public's right to hear" (Annany, 2018, p.3.) thus moving away from a traditional journalistic model towards being "makers and defenders" of networks as well as creators of "listening environments". This is particularly evident in narrative journalism in digital forms is that it is given social context (Sabaté-Gauxachs, Micó-Sanz, and Díez-Bosch 2019). In order to engage more productively, journalists should move away from the normative frameworks of journalism and towards perspectives that allow for debate across a wide range of social groups with journalists as facilitators (Powers, 2015).

## **6.19 Urgency reconciled?**

Chapter 5 details the apparent lack of physical solutions or suggestions for physical solutions within the media across the time period sampled. However crisis and the framing of climate change with a sense of urgency is something that occurs across all media outlets, despite only occupying 6% of the overall themes. It appears that given the increase in media attention to environmental issues in the months that followed that actual solutions have been given much more attention in the mainstream media.

The limitations of the time-frame in which the articles were collected are discussed below, notably the media often outpaces academia and some of the observations from the data corpus sample for the project could be considered "out of date" in terms of the media cycle. Given the amount of data examined here and the months between the completion of data collection and the writing up of this work, there have now been a wealth of media articles which discuss the environment and climate crisis, both in the light of the global pandemic and the actions called for by

movements organisations and governments alike. It isn't possible to examine all of these articles in detail for this thesis however a number of significant articles have been selected for some further discussion.

As discussed in Chapter 2 Gunningham's 2019 work proposes the notion of a social "tipping point" in which enough factors would be engaged with de-carbonisation to begin to enact the systemic change needed to avert (or at least mitigate) the climate emergency. The increase in media coverage on environmental issues would seemingly indicate that this "tipping point" may be approaching. It is possible of course that the media coverage in the UK is directly linked to the occurrence of COP26 in Glasgow and it is another instance of a media cycle. However, there is a promising emergence of discourse around journalists taking an increasingly pro-environmental stance (as discussed below) in addition to those other factors e.g. concurrent campaigns and celebrity support, a consistent and regular approach from the media could enact the change needed.

The news media is at the core of environmental discourse and as time passes less credence is given to protest actions, reverting to the government and industry framing (Lester 2009). It has previously been shown that the mainstream media is unlikely to participate in the mobilisation of activist messages (Lester, 2009), however this may be changing. For example, the *BBC* have a section dedicated to climate access from their main news page and in October 2021 published an article entitled "six things the UK could do to tackle climate change" including discussions about how the Government could subsidise heat, cut down on meat, provide charging for electric vehicles on streetlamps, and introduce climate accounting including plans to reach net zero taxing carbon and investing in green technologies (Hooker, 2021).

In the months leading up to COP26 there appears to have been a "critical discourse moment" and although the media coverage during this time is out of scope for much of this project it is worth noting that there appears to have been a large increase in the amount of column inches and screen time dedicated to environmental issues. This is supported by the findings of Matthews (2017) and Ruiu (2021) who observed

an increase in the messaging around climate change over time, particularly referencing the increased frequency of language that reinforces the severity and urgency of the issue. This is further supported by Feldman and Hart (2021) who argue that in discussing climate change as an emergency or crisis, a new frame is introduced, where people are encouraged to understand climate change within this frame and that by describing something as an emergency the public are given a sense that something of value is at risk and that this is a time-limit in which to address this harm (Anderson 2017). The right language after all is vital in communication the climate crisis (Lackoff, 2010) and the media is part of the process by which the public form their opinion (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) The exact role played by XR (and others) in this increase in messaging is something worthy of further investigation.

Examining these more recent news stories it is apparent that news outlets are paying more attention, or at least the focus has shifted, with regards to the seriousness of environmental issues. This includes discussion around actual physical solutions to climate change as well as broadcast programming with a distinctly environmental focus. This is in contrast to the above observations in Chapter 5 which highlighted the comparatively little attention that had been given to actual solutions to climate and environmental issues (especially with reference to environmental movements).

The relationship between journalists and activists is critically important, mainstream media is the way that most receive environmental news (Reuters Institute, 2021) and key issues lose their impact and legitimacy if they are not given credence by the mainstream media (Lester, 2009). Media discourse is part of a feedback loop, in that it influences the way individuals construct meaning and but that public opinion also is part of the way journalists "crystallise meaning in the public discourse" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p.2). *The Guardian* is one of the most openly vocal about the climate crisis in recent years and has also run stories about the ecological crisis, covering the effects of global heating across the world, including not only the visible issues such as mass die offs but also the issues that are harder to quantify such as heat stress and behavioural changes (Weston, 2021).

One key omission from much of the data examined is the voice of the global south and of those less privileged. The scope of this work is the UK media so that may mean less of a global focus was captured in the data, however the Climate Crisis is framed (and should be framed) as a global issue (Armiero and Sedrez, 2014), yet the voices of those most affected but least responsible are almost absent from the data. A key part of this debate is individual agency versus fundamental change in society (Hargreaves, 2011). Activism in itself is a paradox (DeLuca, 2021) made possible because of the very system that it criticizes. Its participants, broadly speaking, are privileged and from consumerist societies, therefore it is vital that the voices of those with less privilege are heard. This is another area that appears to be beginning to change in the lead-up to COP 26.

## **6.20 Limitations**

The following sections discuss the general limitations of this study.

## **6.21 Nuance and Culmination**

Extinction Rebellion of course do not exist in isolation and are not the only voice to be heard in the fight for environmental justice and reform. Future studies should examine all of the players in the environmental arena in order to paint a holistic picture of the effects of their interactions with, and portrayal by the media, both in mainstream and social media contexts.

This study primarily focused on the articles directly related to XR within the sampling period, whilst there was overlap with reporting on other movements and organisations and some examination of these, the study could have been expanded to include articles directly related to School Strike and other concurrent movements, in order to draw more robust conclusions. Especially regarding the effects of the movements on subsequent reporting, government policy and behaviour. Effects of environmental activism are not instant, but cumulative (Saunders, 2013), examining concurrent movements in detail along with XR would capture greater nuance and cumulative effects.

The media is a fast-moving entity, that is often out of sync with the pace of academia. Conclusions drawn from this study are true of the sampled time-period, however, there appears to be a marked change in the uptake of pro-environmental news in the period since. This study has included some discussion around this, but it is recommended as an area for further research. In particular, the prevalence of environmental news around the climate crisis has increased in the period up to November 2021. It is possible that between the end of the sampling period and the time of writing there has been a (or series of) critical discourse moments leading to the increase in discourse around the subject.

This is likely a cumulative effect, from the actions of protest movements, COP26, climate targets, increased awareness and discussion around greener technologies, such as the abolition of manufacture of petrol and diesel cars etc. Thus, it is difficult to pinpoint the catalyst for the change, but it is worthy of further exploration.

## **6.22 Timeframe**

One area that particularly stands out for further discussion is the attention to environmental issues given since the end of the sampling period in 2020. It would be interesting to investigate whether there has been an increase in media attention since the emergence of the movements discussed or whether this was catalysed by some other factor, or combination of factors. There certainly are other factors that may tie into the potentially increased debate, for example at the time this thesis was written (December 2021) there has been much debate around the (delayed from 2020) COP26. As well as several simultaneous natural disasters with potential links to climate change, including flooding in Germany and wildfires across Mediterranean Europe. Turkey and Greece in particular experienced fires that burned an area more than 8 and 12 times the average respectively (Goodman and Horton, 2021)

Environmental issues form part of the nuance of many other news stories from later in 2021, including Brexit, Fuel “shortage” debate around electric cars, programming with an environmental framing, and natural disaster events such as the release of gases from the erupting La Palma volcano. It is perhaps of note (and merits further study) that many headline grabbing events are being framed with the environment in

mind, or through an environmental lens. This could indicate that climate change has become less of an abstract, future issue, and more a concern of the here and now.

There has also been a marked difference in entertainment programming around the environment, with the “Attenborough Effect” particularly apparent in programming featuring the veteran broadcaster, who has taken an explicit stance on environmental issues. And other high-profile entertainment programming has also been broadcast, such as the “Earth Shot Prize” where green technologies and environmental schemes have been given a prize, including funds to upscale their project or educate others. The *BBC* also aired “The Trick” a dramatization of “climate gate” a scandal in which an academic was accused of faking climate data, something found to be untrue in court proceedings, but is thought to have delayed action on measures to halt climate change (McKie, 2009).

### **6.23 A Global Pandemic**

Unfortunately the onset of lockdown due to Covid-19 at the beginning of the data collection period meant the study had to be reworked in line with the national stay at home legislation, and therefore the element of public involvement planned was ultimately scrapped. In order to assess the true impact of the media on public perception of wider issues, an element of public involvement either via observation or interviews is necessary (Anderson, 1997). Focus groups, interviews or a representative survey with members of the public on the media representation of XR would be a valuable resource in research in this area going forward.

The Covid crisis also had a significant impact on XR, not only putting paid to large-scale demonstrations, but also according to *The Guardian*, led to a scale-back of the London Headquarters and cessation of living allowances for volunteers (Taylor, 2020).

### **6.24 Interview Data**

5 semi-structured interviews were carried out with individuals involved in the XR movement; this is a limited number given the overall number of participants involved

with the movement. More potential participants had been identified but recruitment was challenging in a period of lockdown and virtual recruiting. Data was also incorporated from news stories or opinion pieces written by active members of XR, which allowed for further expansion and clarification of discussion.

Whilst the interview process led to some interesting discussion points, further interviews would have been useful to address some of the points raised and ensure conclusions were more robust, particularly in reference to the disengagement and disillusionment with the group.

The study limits itself by primarily focusing on XR, other protest movements were also active leading up to and during the sampling period, as were policy changes. It is likely that the cumulative effect of these had an impact on public perception and the increased prevalence of media attention given to the climate crisis in more recent months.



## **7 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The questions that guide this research are the following:

- How do different news organisations (with a particular focus on political affiliation/editorial stance) frame Extinction Rebellion and their actions?
- How does that differ from the way Extinction Rebellion frame themselves?
- How do the media and Extinction Rebellion interact and how does this impact directly upon activists?

This chapter will answer these research questions and provide some recommendations for XR, the media and for future study.

### **7.1 The Framing of XR by the Media**

Extinction Rebellion is framed in a number of ways, to some it is a catalyst for change towards more sustainable society. To others it is a problematic entity, with an overarching message of impending doom with the movement's actions being at best, irritating and at worst, illegal.

The findings of his study are twofold with regards to the framing of XR:

1. There is a difference between the way XR is presented by different media outlets, specifically between those that are left of centre and "serious" and those that are right of centre and "sensationalist".
2. There is a significant difference in the way those outlets that are right of centre, particularly those prone to "sensationalism" portray individual stories.

Firstly, the results of this study demonstrate that the way the media frame environment protest movement does vary by newspaper, particularly with reference to their editorial stance, target audience, political affiliation and tendency towards "seriousness" or "sensationalism". In particular those right of centre were more likely

to frame the movement as negative, disruptive, hypocritical and farcical, whereas those to the left of centre and centre were more likely to be sympathetic, or at least include the issues raised by the movement in their reporting in order to present a balanced view.

Secondly, there is an observable significant difference in the way some of the right-wing outlets portray mass protest and the way they portray individuals. Whilst most of the news outlets delve into an individuals reasoning for being involved with XR, it is most notable in these right-wing news outlets, particularly the *Daily Mail*, due to the stark contrast in the framing, tone and language used when compared with reporting on protest action in general. *The Daily Mail* not only comparatively gave a lot of attention to individual stories (42 articles) the framing tone and language shifts from negative and ridiculing to positive and empathetic. In addition the *Daily Mail* also demonstrated more interest than any other news outlet, as well as using positive framing when discussing Greta Thunberg and the Schools Strike for Climate movement. This was also observed to a lesser extent in the *Sun* and the *Telegraph*.

One area for future study is the recent shift in attention and narrative around environmental issues, crisis and the framing of climate change with a sense of urgency is something that was observed across all media outlets during the sampling period. There has since been a “critical discourse moment” in that the media appear to have become more interested in the climate crisis and that more coverage has been given to environmental issues in general. Occurring between the end of the sampling period for this study (May 2020) and the lead up to COP 26 in November of 2021, examining exactly when this change happened (and the reasons behind it) is complex, but it is likely that XR and concurrent movements had a key role to play and this is something worthy of future investigation.

The representation of XR in the media may have contributed (along with other concurrent movements) in the framing of mass protest and civil disobedience as deviant. Wrongdoing was the second largest theme identified from the media data, particularly underpinned by language around “criminality”. This is also reinforced by language that “others” the protesters from civilised society. The media have both vilified the protesters and criticised the lack of police intervention, in turn potentially

legitimising the case for more police powers, and thus the implementation of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (2021). Again this is something that would warrant further investigation.

## **7.2 The way XR Frame Themselves**

There are several key differences between the way XR frame themselves and the way they are framed by the media.

Firstly, both in the overall media data and the XR data forms of protest is the most commonly occurring theme. Both XR and the media dedicate a lot of column inches, explaining what is going on in terms of protest action. Evidently as discussed above, different news outlets utilise very different frames for the presentation of this information, with those right of centre using more extreme, negative language and those left centre tend to be more matter of fact or show outward support.

Secondly, the theme of wrongdoing occurs across the media data and the XR data, however the media relies on this more as a headline or framing. There is also a significant difference in the way wrong doing is presented by XR in comparison with the media, with the focus of the media data is primarily the criminality of XR whereas, the focus of the XR data is much more centred around the wrong doing of the system. Effectively there are two strands to the theme of wrongdoing which set XR and the media apart; 1. the criminality of civil disobedience 2. the criminality of capitalist society.

The "criminality" of capitalism and the need for specific change seems largely ignored by the media, it is a large component of XR's principles and was a theme widely used in the XR press releases, but this did not translate to media headlines. This is also compounded by the apparent lack of engagement from the media with regards to actual solutions to the climate crisis, and demonstrates that media attention regarding XR is much more focused on who the movement are and what they are doing as opposed to what they actually want to achieve.

Ridicule and privilege are utilised relatively widely by the press (with more occurrences in those that are right of centre, as discussed above). Interestingly XR do not use ridicule at all. Understandably they are not likely to ridicule themselves, but it is also not used by the group to illustrate their points with regards to the government or polluting industries.

Privilege was used by the media much more and in a different way to XR, often when criticising those involved in the movement along with criticism and highlighting the hypocrisy of celebrity involvement. The use of, or alignment with, celebrity or "idols" has been successful for XR but has also reinforced the hypocritical narrative weaved by some news outlets, particularly those that utilise the "cult of celebrity" to gain readership, such as *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. XR addressed their privilege in a small percent of the data, and privilege was raised as a point by interview participants, particularly with regards to feelings of exclusion due to lack of privilege.

### **7.3 Interaction between the media and XR and impact on activists**

Extinction rebellion of course are a "media" outlet in themselves and have interactions with the media, via press releases, by directly addressing press releases to the media (including making demands) and also by the media giving voice to XR themselves.

Extinction rebellion accept the power the media have over public opinion, and with that come opportunities and challenges. Interviewees recognised these opportunities and challenges, acknowledging the difficulty and their disappointment at negative coverage, or indeed a lack of coverage at all. *The Guardian* and *Independent* were much more supportive of any other news outlet, often giving direct voices to members of XR with publication of opinion pieces. Interviewees also acknowledged that whilst coverage from the *Daily Mail* was not always favourable, it demonstrated curiosity on the part of the newspaper and kept up conversation in the mainstream.

XR's relationship with the *BBC* appears to have improved over time, initially XR members felt a frustration with the lack of coverage by the broadcaster, speculating that this was due to wanting to appear impartial, however in light of recent coverage

and discussions about journalists roles as activists, it appears that the *BBC* is giving more prominence not just to XR but to the Climate Crisis as a whole, a trend observed throughout all of the media outlets.

XR have been successful in a number of ways, the media devoted lots of attention to the movement, even with negative framing the message was still in the public domain, which generated conversation. And XR is now a global movement, with support from around the world, and specific groups set up locally but also in groups that legitimise XR from a professional point of view. The government also created the Climate Assembly at least in part as a response to the demands of, and protest action carried out by the movement.

#### **7.4 Recommendations for Further Study**

Future studies should also seek to measure the direct impact on the public, particularly those in the "moveable middle" to assess if and how movements interactions with the media actually influence their individual behaviour. In order to holistically look at effects of the media and element of observation or interview is needed.

There perhaps has been a reticence in the academic community to outwardly declare an allegiance to a protest movement or group, that demonstrating a bias is a negative and can impact on the validity of research. However, allegiance to movements of change is often needed, giving credibility to the movement themselves, whilst informing them in terms of valid research. This seems to be changing, if slowly, with scientists becoming active participants in civil disobedience movements, and key journalists getting (or at least discussing) "getting off the fence" when it comes to the climate crisis.

There is a need perhaps to distinguish criticism of civil disobedience from climate contrarianism within the media, as there is a trend toward the acceptance of climate change as a real and present threat, however there is an observable resistance, particularly amongst right-leaning organisations toward civil disobedience. This trend

towards the presentation of the urgency of the climate crisis and the social responsibility of the media warrants further study.

## **7.5 Recommendations for Protest Movements**

The findings of this work highlight a number of key debates and strategies that movements need to balance, this is often nuanced, delicate and difficult to enforce in a decentralised movement. These are discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6, however the following section highlights some key take-aways for protest movements:

1. The Media is the biggest weapon in the armoury – they may not always be favourable, and there is a shift from traditional to social media which needs closer examination, but as it stands the mainstream media is still the arena where most environmental news is consumed, and this coverage is needed to give legitimacy to a cause. Recent narratives appear to acknowledge the severity and urgency of the climate crisis, this may provide an opportunity to reinforce messaging and maintain momentum.
2. Individual stories work - the media data reflects much more positively on those who have a specific relatable reason for involvement for example those parents and grandparents who rebel for future generations, this is true particularly of right-wing news outlets who are otherwise critical of civil disobedience. Conversely, the media are also much more likely to vilify and apportion blame to an individual, particularly where that individual is seen to be hypocritical or overly sensationalist.
3. Provide an avenue for those without privilege – interview participants reported disillusionment when their situation did not allow them to partake in major protest action or did not allow them to risk arrest. This is particularly pertinent

given the likelihood of the passing of Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill. More broadly, the unequal effects of the climate crisis across the globe need to be considered – not everyone has the same level of responsibility and impacts vary, often with those who are least responsible being affected the most.

## **7.6 Recommendations for the Media**

The media landscape is ever changing, and the level at which reporting on the climate crisis has increased very quickly in recent years, much of which is out of the scope for the present study. However the following section highlights some key take-aways for journalists and media outlets:

1. Separate civil disobedience from reporting on the climate crisis - particularly where critical of the movements consider if it is counter-productive to continue to widely vilify environmental protest movements. The climate crisis is now widely accepted and seen and reported on as real and urgent, with impacts being felt across the world, including in the UK. The language used to frame the climate crisis is very important, and is potentially very damaging if validity and trustworthiness is undermined. Take care with the way the climate crisis is framed via the lens of civil disobedience.
2. Consider working with environmental movements and academia more closely - this is a key emerging area of research following the developments of recent years. The role of activist-journalist is valid and potentially very powerful and something that is beginning to be discussed in the mainstream. Given the severity and urgency of the climate crisis, there is a social responsibility to report on it accurately without the frames of contrarianism and false balance and in a way that focuses on solutions. Also consider that these solutions may include systemic change rather than individual responsibility.

## **7.7 Approaching the Tipping Point?**

What also seems to be currently emerging from the media narrative is that society is moving towards a greener future, XR are certainly not the only actor to have facilitated this, and nor have the challenges of systemic change been overcome as yet, but as a civil disobedience movement they have played a pivotal role in increasing the awareness of such issues and continually driving forward a media discourse that finally seems to be moving away from "false balance" and towards factual stories grounded in science.

Given the power that the media have with regards to the dissemination and legitimacy of the environmental movement and this ever-increasing perpetuation of discourse about environmental issues, it is possible that society is moving towards mobilisation of enough people and enough engagement with business and governance, to reach the "tipping point" needed for decarbonisation of the system.



## APPENDIX 1: MEDIA SEARCH PROCESS AND NCAPTURE FOR NVIVO

### The process of searching and capturing web data for use in NVivo

The process by which the data was obtained as per the following process:

Open Google Advanced Search

2. In the dialogue box “all these words:” type “extinction rebellion”

### Advanced Search

Find pages with...

all these words:

this exact word or phrase:

any of these words:

none of these words:

numbers ranging from:  to

0. Use the “narrow results by” options to set language to English, region to UK, and type in the domain name of the specific news outlet:

Then narrow your results by...

language:

region:

last update:

site or domain:

terms appearing:

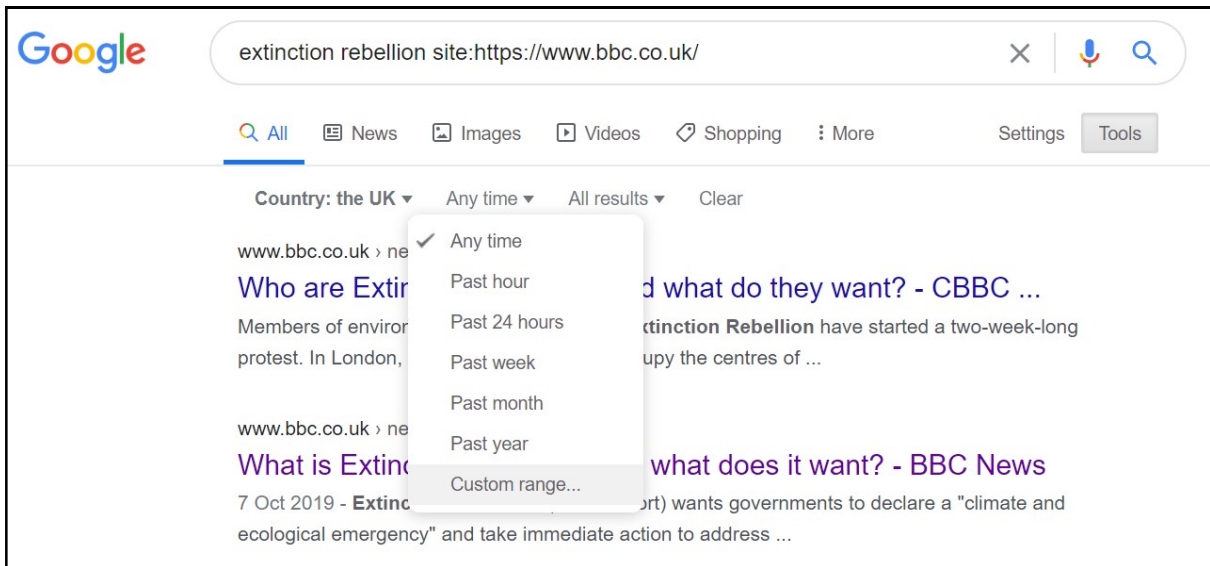
SafeSearch:

file type:

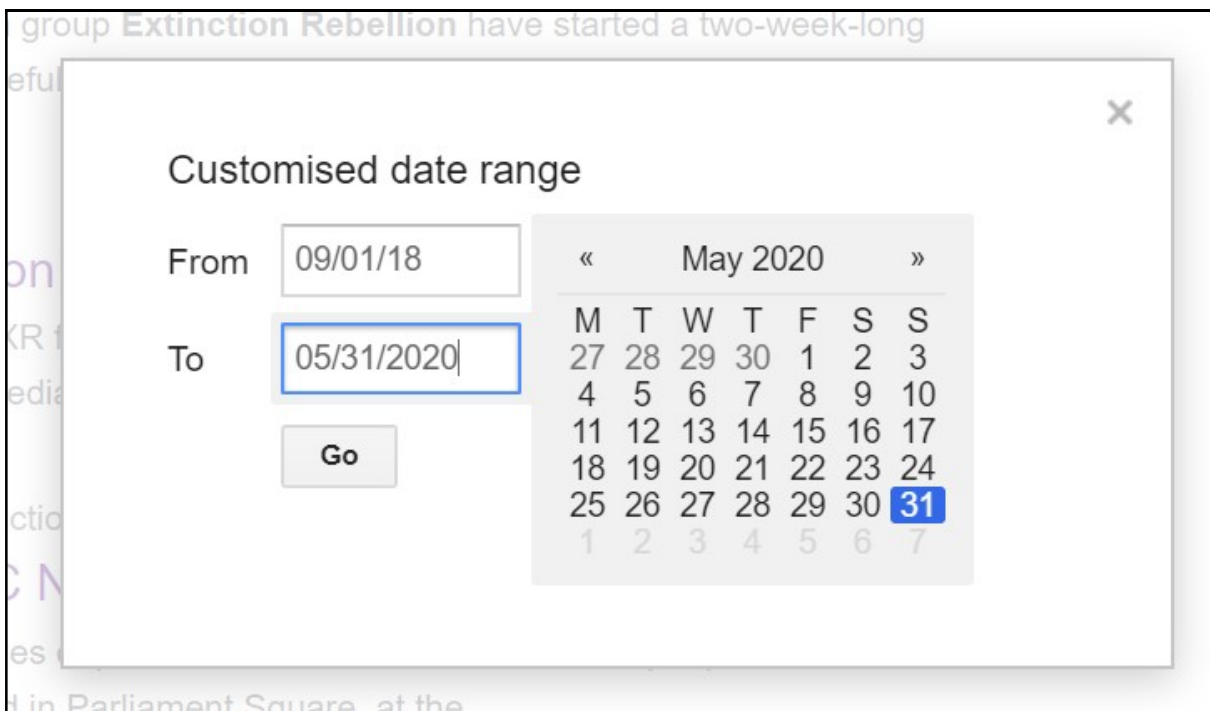
usage rights:

0. Run the advanced search by clicking the blue “Advanced Search” button at the bottom of the page

0. Use the drop down box to narrow the result by date by selecting “custom range”:



6. Type in the date range in the US convention (MM/DD/YY):



7. Run the search for the date range by pressing “go” button.

8. Manually sort data, and capture using N-capture function, as detailed below.

### **Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion**

The criteria for inclusion are:

News Articles in a text format from the top 10 news agencies as detailed by Ofcom  
About events in / relevant to the UK  
Primary story about XR, environmental issues or relevant related subject (i.e. stories about the oil and gas industry and connotations for Climate Change)

Some of the data obtained via the Google Advanced search still required some manual sorting as the Google advanced search results do include some articles that are not relevant, such as in-depth programming, videos (which often have brief text descriptions) and articles from other news agencies, particularly the *Mail* Online which displays results from other agencies such as Reuters or the *Mail* Australia.

As such, several criteria for discounting data have been applied:

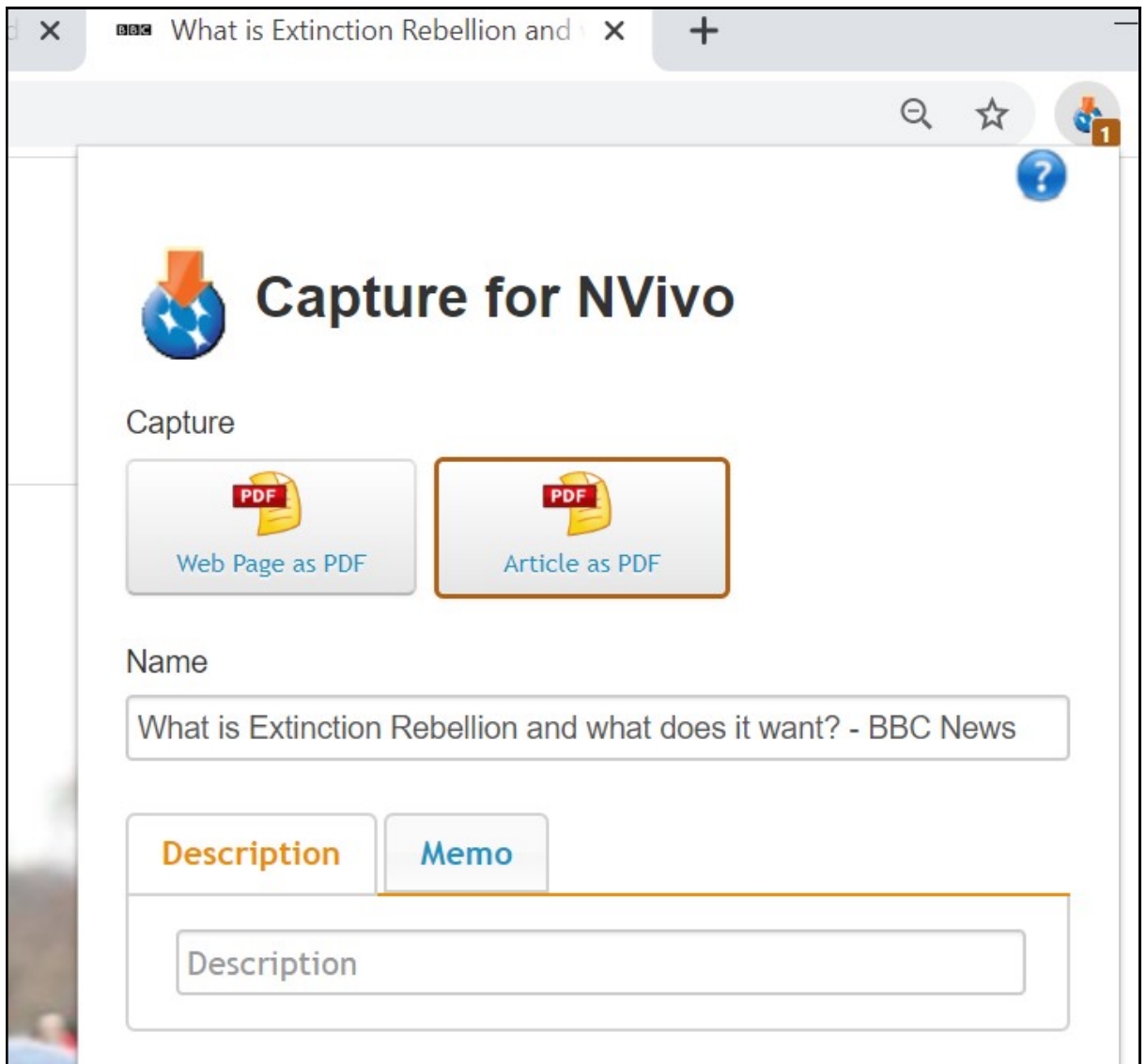
1. Video clips / programmes with text introductions (transcription data from programming is discussed in Section X).
2. Articles where there is a passing mention to XR, i.e. political pieces from the 2019 general election, minor quotes from XR representatives on stories where the main focus is something other than XR or environmental issues.
3. Where the origin of the article is a news agency external to the publishing outlet.
4. Any world news (non-UK)
5. Where the news story is from a sub-platform of the news outlet, i.e. Newsround from the *BBC*.

### **Capturing Data Using NCapture for NVivo**

NCapture is an extension that can be added to Google chrome in order to capture websites or their text and images as PDFs for use in NVivo.

Open the article in the Google Chrome tab.

2. Conduct and initial reading to ensure the article is relevant and what initial codes should be applied.
0. Click the N capture icon at the top of the browser next to the web address
4. Click the capture "article as PDF" option:



5. Apply initial coding of surface level data, such as date and news outlet using the "code to node function":

**Capture for NVivo**

Capture

Web Page as PDF      Article as PDF

Name

What is Extinction Rebellion and what does it want? - BBC News

Description      Memo

Description

Code at nodes

BBC ×    2019 ×    October 2019 ×

[Show capture progress page](#)      Capture

6. Download by clicking the capture button at the bottom of the window. The download should appear at the bottom of the tab and in the Downloads folder on the computer.

0. Save data to a folder called N-capture.

### Importing Data to NVivo

Although N-capture is a relatively swift way of saving data from the internet, the files can only be opened in NVivo. Following the N-capture process in the Google Chrome browser, the n-capture files were uploaded to N-Vivo using the following process:

- Open NVivo
- Go to the import tab
- Click n-capture Icon
- Import from relevant folder

The automatic coding added during the N-capture process are added automatically as nodes and the content of the article (text and images) as PDFs.

## APPENDIX 2: CODEBOOK

“Surface Level” Coding		
Node	Sub-nodes	Description
Year of publication	Month of publication	2018, 2019, 2020 and months of the year.
Publishing News Organisation	<i>BBC, Sky, Mail, Express, Sun, Guardian, Independent, Mirror, Telegraph, Standard</i>	N/A
Location	London, other UK	

Coding Structure		
Node (Themes)	Sub-nodes (Codes)	Description
Forms of Protest	Protest Demonstration Blockade Carnival Festival Speech Symbolic disruption Civil disobedience	Ways in which protest is carried out, links to extreme narrative, however many are positive narratives that allude to more sedate ways of communicating the messages, this is not without criticism linked to “carnival” atmosphere and notions of privilege.
Wrongdoing	Unethical practice “Criminal” / “illegal” Criticism of companies / government Media unfairness Lack of media coverage Climate denial  Criminality Police Arrests Court Criminal Charges Protest Ban Violence	References specifically to government and company wrongdoing.  Lack of recognition by the government. Failure to hit targets, poor performance, fossil fuel investments etc.  Statements about the unfairness of the media / media criticisms.  Denial of the existence/severity of the issues.  References to criminal behaviour, arrests and charges.  Outcomes of court cases and specific examples

Systemic Change	<p>We  We are/have  Collective Action  Humanity  Duty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government must</li> <li>• Companies must</li> <li>• We must</li> </ul> <p>Humanity  Demands  Education</p>	<p>References to actions taken and action that is planned by groups of people / elements of the movement and what they hope to achieve.</p> <p>Articles written with “we” as the focus.  References to duty to take action at all levels from government to collective protest to individual action.</p> <p>Explicit references made to demands made by XR to government/companies/individuals</p>
Individual quest	<p>Individual stories  Opinion Pieces  “I’m doing this for”  Founders  Motivations  Humanity  Compassion</p>	<p>Stories and references to individual actions and reasons for those actions.  Justification for involvement in the movement.  Positive and negative connotations, individual journalist pieces.</p>
Ridicule	<p>Mocking  Criticism of methods  Carnival  Festival  Hypocrisy</p>	<p>References to specific groups that take part in XR protest action /methods of protest action. Mocking and criticism of methods and/or individuals (some overlap with Privilege).</p>
Privilege	<p>Celebrity endorsement  Celebrity criticism  Under-representation  Public Opinion</p>	<p>References to specific groups that take part in XR protest action / have specific views. Ideas that to engage there must be a level of privilege involved - stereotyping etc.</p> <p>Under representation of certain groups i.e. BAME, working classes etc.</p>

		Portrayal of eco-anxiety <i>Expressed</i> by certain groups (typically white women with children etc.).
Extreme Narrative	Mass Disruption Global Disruption Terrorism List Protest Arrests Violence Splinter Groups	References to extreme behaviour, violent or unreasonable behaviour, XR being listed on terrorism list, splinter groups pushing extremist ideology (racism, Covid-19 being the answer to over population etc), mass or disruptive arrests etc (some overlap with Criminality theme)
Crisis	Climate Emergency Climate Crisis Urgency Climate Targets Climate Demands Biodiversity Loss Animal Welfare	References to XR influence on climate policy, positive and negative.  Declaration of climate emergency and progress towards climate targets (links to Saving the World)
Idols	Chris Packham Greta Thunberg David Attenborough Celebrity endorsement (of which there are many)	Using individuals as a tool to highlight issues in conjunction with or because they took part in action with XR.  Positive language and rhetoric. Links to privilege and saving the world themes.
Saving the world	No other choice Right to protest Solutions Positive outcomes Hope Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly Humanity	Justifications for protest / disruption / civil disobedience, keeping the debate going on environmental issues (Links to Individual Quest).  References to potential solutions and how they link to XR demands. Policy changes and public declarations by the government as a result of those demands.  Reflections on previous protests and successes.  Often emotive language used “hope” “hope for the future” etc
Well-being	Air Quality Eco-Anxiety Climate-Anxiety Existential Crisis Life-choices Protecting future	Public perception of how environmental issues affect them and their mental health, links to privilege



	generations	
Lessons learned	Reflection Self-doubt Improvement	Acknowledgment / recognition of a mistake / criticism / privilege  Justification of reasons and suggestion for improvement.  Links to wrongdoing, privilege, forms of protest, criminality
Not in my back Yard	Criticism of Methods Criticism of Disruption	Criticism for XR/protests/mode of operation quoted in news stories / documentaries. Public opinion.  Outright negative statements by journalists themselves.
Stagnation	Narrow Exclusive Loss of momentum	Primarily a stalling of action due to Covid, but also issues raised about not being able to be completely inclusive due to the type of actions taken - many can't afford to travel to protests or be arrested.

## APPENDIX 3: MEDIA ARTICLES USED FOR CDA (TEXT-ONLY)

This appendix details text-only copies of the media articles that were used for in-depth critical discourse analysis. This includes an article from the *Daily Mail* and an article from the *Guardian*, reporting on the Tube protests of October 2019 and an article from the *Telegraph* and *The Independent* reporting on the proposed Heathrow protests of June 2019.

### Daily Mail

Buddhist teacher, 36, pulled from a Tube train by angry commuters during Extinction Rebellion protest is remanded in custody after breaching a previous order not to use the railway

British Transport Police moved quickly to bring charges against XR activists

Three men and two women have already been charged over Tube protests

Mark Ovland who stood on a train at Canning Town is among those charged

By JOEL ADAMS and RICHARD SPILLETT FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 10:01, 18 October 2019 | UPDATED: 21:44, 18 October 2019

*e-Mail*

124shares

An Extinction Rebellion protester who was pulled from the top of a tube train by angry commuters will spend tonight behind bars after he was remanded in custody.

Buddhist teacher Mark Ovland was one of a group of activists who sparked fury among passengers at Canning Town station in east London yesterday morning.

It emerged today that the 36-year-old was subject to bail conditions forbidding him from using the rail network following similar protests in April this year.

DailyMail.co.uk: News, Sport, Showbiz, Celebrities from Daily Mail

Pause

Next video

0:00 / 0:00

Full-screen

Read More

Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court heard today that Ovland accepts that he had breached his bail conditions and he was remanded in custody ahead of further court hearings.

+3

+3

Buddhist trainee teacher Mark Ovland (left in left picture, and right) has been remanded in custody after he scrambled on top of a tube at Canning Town yesterday

Prosecutor Zahid Hussain: 'Mr Ovland admits to breaching his bail. He accepts that he was at Canning Town Underground Station yesterday at around 6.45am. He admits that his presence puts him in breach of that particular bail condition from the court.'

But as he was remanded in custody, another Extinction Rebellion activist, privately-educated 'poet' Robin Boardman-Pattinson stood up and tried to address the court.

Boardman-Pattinson said: 'I'm afraid I can't hear this happen in this courtroom that a man of such good conscience is sent to prison.'

'He has stood up for so many people around the world. The real criminal in this is the Government and it's inaction on the eco-side.'

RELATED ARTICLES

Ovland was taken down while four others accused of offences over the protest were allowed to leave.

Earlier at the same court, three others appeared before magistrates; Father Martin Newell, 52, Reverend Sue Parfitt, 77, Margreit Bos, 32, from the Netherlands, and 83-year-old pensioner Phil Kingston.

They are all accused of taking part in rush hour demos at Shadwell station yesterday. The four allegedly involved in the Shadwell protests were bailed to appear at Inner London Crown Court on November 19.

+3

Extinction Rebellion protesters Martin Newell, Sue Parfitt, Philip Kingston and Margreit Bois leave court after Ovland was remanded in custody

Yesterday as Extinction Rebellion's eco-protest entered its 11th day activists launched a co-ordinated strike on three [London](#) Underground stations, clambering on top of carriages and gluing themselves to doors despite Monday's city-wide ban issued by the Met Police.

But their efforts to disrupt public transport were met with a furious backlash from commuters, industry groups and politicians leading one XR spokesman to admit the move had been a 'huge own goal'.

Video surfaced from Canning Town station of a protester seemingly being beaten and kicked by angry workers on the station platform having been dragged bodily from the top of a train.

Second activist as been banned from talking about PR own goal

James Mee, who was also pulled down from the train, has been given the cold-shoulder by the activist group after the stunt backfired

The second protester on the Canning Town train has said he has been banned from talking about his activist by Extinction Rebellion's leaders.

James Mee, 35, said: 'I've been told by the XR press team not to speak to the media and it makes sense because I'm always saying the wrong things.'

Leaders within the XR movement are said to be 'furious' at Mee's blunder which could turn public opinion further against the climate change activists.

Mee lives in a rented semi-detached house in the suburbs of Bristol where his neighbours were unaware he is a member of XR.

One resident of the quiet street said: 'He deserves what he got - I would have pulled him down off the train myself if I'd been there.'

'I'm not sure who he thinks he is to travel from Bristol to cause chaos and upheaval in London.'

Another neighbour said: 'He lives in a rented house with a few others. He's not there all that often, none of them are. I've had to take a sign for a few Amazon parcels for them.'

Extinction Rebellion's press team are expected to tell Mee to keep his head down in coming weeks after the spectacular failure of his unauthorised tube train protest.

ADVERTISEMENT

## Guardian

Extinction Rebellion rush-hour protest sparks clash on London Underground

This article is more than 1 year old

Commuters clash with demonstrators over morning rush hour disruption

Protesters dragged off tube train as Extinction Rebellion delay commuters in London – video

Damien Gayle and Ben Quinn

Thu 17 Oct 2019 18.41 BST

Extinction Rebellion activists have disrupted London's public transport network during rush hour, in an action that is likely to polarise opinion on the environmental movement's tactics.

There were clashes at Canning Town tube station as commuters dragged a protester from the roof of a Jubilee line train and set upon him. He had to be defended by London Underground staff and other passersby.

At Shadwell, five activists blocked the Docklands Light Railway, with two climbing on top of a train and at least one glued to the door.

Commuters now physically dragging protestors from the roof of the train. [@itvlondon pic.twitter.com/gDkXfJNxmL](https://twitter.com/itvlondon/pic.twitter.com/gDkXfJNxmL)

— Holly Collins (@HollyJoCollins) October 17, 2019

Phil Kingston, 83, whose hand was glued to the side of a carriage, said he was doing it for the sake of his grandchildren.

### Extinction Rebellion defies protest ban and targets Google

[Read more](#)

"I'm also very concerned about what's happening in the poorer parts of the world who are being hit the hardest by climate breakdown," he said. "I'm a Christian and it really upsets me to see God's creation being wrecked across the world.

"So I'm here on those three counts and I'm longing for the government to take some actions which are in accord with the parliamentary declaration of climate and environmental emergency."

Police said eight people had been arrested as a result of both incidents.

Ruth Jarman, who sat next to Kingston, said they had targeted the DLR because its destination was London's financial district.

"It's heading for the City, which is the God of our time," she said. "All the scientific reports coming out now about what we should do about the climate breakdown, about the ecological breakdown, we need total transformation of the economy. At the moment we serve economic growth. Humanity, the planet is crucifying itself to economic growth. It cannot go on."

"I'm a Christian and it really upsets me to see God's creation being wrecked."#ExtinctionRebellion @CCClimateAction activist Phil Kingston, 83, who has superglued himself to the DLR at Shadwell. This will be his 13th arrest [pic.twitter.com/oH57nwAoud](https://twitter.com/oH57nwAoud)

— Damien Gayle (@damiengayle) October 17, 2019

Extinction Rebellion said in a statement that it was aware the action at Shadwell was divisive, and that many in its movement were not in favour.

It added that those involved included a grandfather, an ex-Buddhist teacher, a vicar and a former GP, who had planned it autonomously.

### 'It has been polarising': tube protest divides Extinction Rebellion

[Read more](#)

"We are aware that one of our activists responded in self defence in a moment of panic when confronted by a threatening situation. He acknowledges his accountability for this action and we offer gratitude for members of the public who helped to protect him," the group said.

“In light of today’s events, Extinction Rebellion will be looking at ways to bring people together rather than create an unnecessary division.”

It later issued an apology in a statement on its Facebook account.

It said: “Following our previous statement on this morning’s London transport actions, we would also like to apologise to all those whose lives we disrupted this morning. We have spent a lot of time thinking about how best to respond.

“Extinction Rebellion remains fully committed to nonviolence. The climate and ecological emergency is the biggest threat facing us all today, and it is unfortunate that something like this has to happen for this to become ‘newsworthy’.

“That said, we are all incredibly sad at how events unfolded this morning, and are using this as an opportunity to learn and reflect as an organisation.

Although we are pushing for disruption and civil disobedience, we are still learning how to do this in a way that does not result in violence, and that does not discriminate against hard-working individuals, especially those in communities who stand to be most affected by the climate and ecological crisis and are most vulnerable to systems of power.”

The group launched a wave of civil disobedience on 7 October to highlight the risks posed by the climate crisis and the accelerating loss of plant and animal species. At least 1,711 people have been arrested since the protests started.

Most commuters at Shadwell were not impressed. “Is an electric train good or not?” one asked the protesters. “Is this train good for the environment?”

“The way they’re doing it is not right,” said another, who complained that her daughter was now stuck on a DLR train between stations.

XR said in a statement that activists were willing to go to prison “in order to save lives in acts of conscience and necessity”.

The group said: “The actions are intended to bring further economic disruption to the capital as part of the ongoing campaign to convince the government to take meaningful action on the climate and ecological emergency.

“Safety measures are in place to ensure nobody is trapped underground.”

Q&A

What are Extinction Rebellion's key demands?

Show

The results of an internal poll of XR members, shared with *The Guardian*, showed 72% opposed action on London’s underground network under any circumstances.

It is understood the results of the survey were shared with the groups planning the transport action before it took place. No information on the size of the sample or the methodology of the poll was given.

One activist who protested at Canning Town but was not arrested said she regretted that commuters had been affected. When XR activists previously took action on the DLR, in April, at Canary Wharf station, it was mainly financial workers who were immediately affected.

XR had said that Thursday was to be a day to “pause and focus on training, outreach and our plans for attrition actions nationwide in the coming months”.

But instead it proved to be a day in which a number of affiliated groups acted autonomously in staging their own actions around London. In Southwark, two members of the Animal Rebellion faction were arrested outside the offices of the farm standards organisation Red Tractor Assurance.

Connor Thomas, 23, from Newcastle, said Red Tractor was in hock to the farming industry. “These are farmers regulating farms, they are going to go for whatever the cheapest, most profitable option is – with no care for the animal welfare,” he said.

Protesters from 13 different groups gathered outside the Bangladesh high commission in a protest over a planned coal-fired power plant they said would despoil and destroy the world’s biggest mangrove forest, *The Sun* darbars.

Dr Akhter Khan, of the Phulbari Solidarity Group UK, said: “It’s a unique ecosystem, home of the Bengal tiger. The Bangladeshi and Indian governments want to set up a coal-based power plant ... that will emit huge amounts of carbon and other pollutants that will cause the destruction of the forest.

Also on Thursday morning, protesters from XR Peace staged actions targeting the London offices of the arms makers Leonardo, Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems. At 11am nine activists from the group glued themselves together outside the supreme court in Westminster.

Sylvia Boyes, 75, a Quaker from Keighly, said: “We are calling on the supreme court to end all arms sales, especially those to regimes such as Saudi Arabia, where the weapons are being used in clear violation of international humanitarian law in the war on Yemen.”

Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, said: “I strongly condemn the Extinction Rebellion protesters who have targeted the London Underground and DLR this morning. This illegal action is extremely dangerous, counterproductive and is causing unacceptable disruption to Londoners who use public transport to get to work.

“It is also an unfair burden on our already overstretched police officers. I urge demonstrators to protest peacefully and within the boundaries of the law.”

A rail union meanwhile urged Extinction Rebellion protesters to think again over attempts to disrupt public transport, describing the actions as dangerous and counterproductive.

Manuel Cortes, the general secretary of the TSSA, said: “Earlier this week I signed a letter condemning the Metropolitan police for banning peaceful climate protest.

“I have not changed my mind on this, but protesters should be mindful that what they have done today has simply inconvenienced ordinary working people trying to get on with their lives and trying to work on the most carbon-emission friendly options available to them to date.”

The ban on XR protests in London is due to remain in place until they finish on Saturday, after judges in the high court put off a hearing on a legal challenge by the group until next week.

Lawyers for XR on Wednesday filed an application for a judicial review of the Metropolitan police’s section 14.

Tobias Garnett, a human rights lawyer working with XR’s legal strategy team, said: “While we are disappointed that the court is not able to hear the application sooner – particularly given the immediate risk of people being unlawfully arrested for peaceful, non-violent protest – we nonetheless look forward to putting forward our arguments next week.”

## Telegraph

We've had quite enough of the law-breaking environmental fanatics of Extinction Rebellion  
TOM WELSH 2 June 2019 • 10:00am

There is no point in beating about the bush. The Extinction Rebellion eco “protesters”, who are reportedly planning to shut down Heathrow airport for a day in mid-June and then for another 10 days in July, if their ludicrous demands aren't met, are threatening what amounts to economic terrorism. They plan to fly drones above the airport if Heathrow's third runway project is not scrapped. It is black*Mail*, pure and simple: if the result is that planes are grounded, as at Gatwick last year, thousands of people will have their holidays ruined and the economic cost will run into the millions; if they are not, their crime could become mass murder.

No one sane can support such “activism”. Whatever your views on climate change, and the measures necessary to stop or mitigate it, this is not cost-free or even non-violent protest. If I were to threaten to cut the power to the Treasury building, because I consider the tax burden to be an “emergency” and I deem the Government to be insufficiently serious about addressing the scandalous way our money is wasted, I would expect to be stopped from doing so. For some reason, however, Extinction Rebellion believe they should be allowed to use precisely the same arguments to shut down one of the world's busiest airports.

Why is this the case? To be fair, the police did eventually take a hard line against these people when they blocked roads across London this year. More than 1,000 were arrested, and police chiefs called for the law to be reviewed to ensure that the right to protest does not become a cover for criminal activity. But when I asked an officer at an earlier protest why they did not clear the streets of the Swampy wannabes who were holding up traffic, he said that they had orders not to do so.

There is an embarrassment, a cultural cringe, among politicians about taking on the eco lobby. They have accepted the language of a climate “emergency”. They have bowed and scraped before Greta Thunberg and her unthinking delusion that nobody before her ever cared about the environment. On the Left, but among Conservatives, too, Extinction Rebellion is generally held to have the best of intentions, even if their tactics are to be regretted.

No. Their actions are criminal and motivated by contempt for the rest of us: why else would they be targeting ordinary holidaymakers (and, before that, car and van drivers)? And unless they are stopped, all we will do is give the nod to other, similar “protest” groups, from the radical vegans who regularly invade farms and the pro-immigration activists who have sought to prevent legal deportations, to the anti-free speech vandals who are determined to silence anyone they disagree with.

I'm all for protest, but not like this. We may, very soon, have a chance to show just how much we care about the environment, or whatever, in a general election. Our politics is obviously dysfunctional, but it's not so bad that we all need to commit crimes to get our point across.

## The Independent

Extinction Rebellion Heathrow protest: Could flights be cancelled by drones? | *The Independent*  
Extinction Rebellion, the climate-change protest group, says it intends to shut down operations at Europe's busiest airport, Heathrow, for 11 days this summer. Here's everything you need to know.

What is Extinction Rebellion planning?

The group has asked supporters to congregate on the fringes of Heathrow on 18 June, "to carry out nonviolent direct action to ensure Heathrow Authorities close the airport for the day".

The move follows widespread shutdowns of key London traffic locations by the group in April.

Extinction Rebellion supporters Show all 19

The climate-change protesters have also told the government that if expansion plans for Heathrow are not cancelled, "Extinction Rebellion will act to shut the airport down for up to 10 days from 1 July".

It says: "The addition of the planned third runway would make Heathrow the single biggest carbon emitter in the UK; to expand the airport at this critical point in history would be madness."

Extinction Rebellion's plan is to launch drones during the night, when flights are not usually operating, and prevent the airport opening in the morning.

Where did they get the idea?

From whoever decided to close down flights at Gatwick shortly before Christmas. Unauthorised drone activity closed Britain's second-busiest airport for 33 hours, leading to the cancellation of more than 1,000 flights and disrupting travel for 150,000 people.

The financial cost ran into tens of millions of pounds. The authorities have not yet identified the perpetrator(s).

Why are flights immediately grounded if there is a drone in the vicinity?

Watch more

Although drones are tiny compared with passenger aircraft, they can jeopardise safety. For example, a drone ingested into an engine could shut it down. Were key surfaces to be hit by a drone, the airworthiness could be affected.

A drone striking the windscreen of the flight deck might also have serious consequences.

Therefore if an unauthorised drone is flying in a potentially dangerous area, operations are suspended. This has happened more than once at Gatwick and also at Heathrow.

What does the law say?

It is a criminal offence to fly a drone near an airport. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) says: "You must not fly within the Flight Restriction Zone of a protected aerodrome."

Heathrow and all other passenger airports count as "protected aerodromes". The exact specification of the exclusion zone is complex but, in the case of Heathrow, drones should not be flown within 5km of the airport.

The aviation minister, Baroness Vere, said: "Flying drones near an airport is a serious criminal offence and using drones to deliberately put people's safety at risk carries a maximum life sentence."

With weeks of warning, presumably the police will be out in force? Yes. When Extinction Rebellion tried to disrupt roads in the Heathrow area, Metropolitan Police were augmented by officers from as far away as South Wales and the protesters left after a couple of hours.

Police chief says Extinction Rebellion protesters will be arrested 'very, very fast' and suggests officers were not assertive enough last time

In addition, the Met's commissioner, Cressida Dick, has said that the protests will be tackled sooner, saying police will be "very, very fast and assertive about getting people arrested and getting obstructions where we can lawfully out of the way quickly".

But the climate-change group believes that if enough supporters turn up with drones – which cost less than £40 from Argos – the police could be overwhelmed.

What does the airport say?

A Heathrow spokesperson said: "This is reckless action that if carried out could endanger the lives of the travelling public and our colleagues.

"We agree with the need to act on climate change, but that requires us to work together constructively – not commit serious criminal offences just as hardworking people prepare to spend a well-earned holiday with their family and friends."

Extinction Rebellion stresses that it "is fully committed to nonviolence and will not take action that would put airline passengers at risk".

But if, for example, a drone was flying at Heathrow in the early hours of the morning and an overflying aircraft needed to divert, there could be some risk.

Should people booked to fly on 18 June or 1-10 July make alternative arrangements?



Read more

Extinction Rebellion says so: "Holidaymakers are being given advance notice to change travel plans." But with 2.5 million people likely to be booked to fly in or out of Heathrow during the 11 days of protests, there is simply not enough additional capacity in the system. In addition, no airline will offer full refunds for flights on the affected dates – because they currently expect operations to go ahead as normal.

It is also possible that the highly publicised plan for closure on those dates is actually a decoy for other action at other times at Heathrow or elsewhere.

What happens if flights are disrupted?

European air passengers' rights rules mean that airlines are responsible to provide alternative flights, possibly on another carrier from a different airport, and to provide meals and accommodation until the passenger reaches their destination.

Disruption at Gatwick before Christmas cost easyJet alone £10m, and a significant shutdown at Heathrow could dwarf that figure.

"Consequential losses," for example if a cruise is missed because of a cancelled departure from Heathrow, may be covered by travel insurance.

But my prediction is that anything other than temporary disruption is unlikely.

## APPENDIX 4: INFORMATION SHEET FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

### The Climate Crisis and the Media: Assessing the Impact of campaigns in the UK.

#### University of York Research Project Information Sheet

##### Introduction:

This research contributes to a PhD research project examining the effect of the representation of environmental campaigns in the mainstream media in the United Kingdom. The aim is to identify and analyse the ways in which environmental campaigns/movements are portrayed in the media, how that compares with how the campaigning movements wish to be portrayed and what bearing these have on public perception. Extinction Rebellion (XR) has been used as the primary case study for this research.

##### Movement Involvement: Identifying perceptions within Extinction Rebellion:

The purpose of this interview process is to find out about how members (or previous members) of XR perceive how the movement should be portrayed versus how it is portrayed by the media. This constitutes the second phase of collecting data, following a discourse analysis of the mainstream media's reporting on the movement from its initial inception to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. A discourse analysis is the study of language in relation to its social context, in this case the language and strategies used by the media to portray the climate crisis, the Extinction Rebellion movement and specific civil disobedience events.

**This will be carried out via semi-structured interview, including questions such as:**

- Are you an active member of XR?
  - If so, what is your level of participation?
- Were you previously active?
  - If so, what was your level of participation?
  - And what were your reasons for ceasing participation?
- Could you talk me through how XR wish to be portrayed in the media / perceived by the general public?
- Do you think that XR have been fairly and accurately represented by the media?
- Could you tell me about a success and a disappointment of previous actions?
- What are the lessons learned and how has that subsequently influenced future action?
- Would you be willing to share information about any upcoming campaigns/protest action?

Within the Semi-structured interview there would be an opportunity for individuals to give their own viewpoints not linked to XR's principles should they choose to do so.

All information collected for the research will be totally confidential and anonymous unless otherwise agreed in the consent form. Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary.

### **Public Involvement:**

Following interviews with organisations, the findings of these interviews and a media discourse analysis may be used to develop a survey to be undertaken with the general public in order to explore if they have been influenced by XR (or their representation in the Media, how and why. Potentially providing valuable information about the successes and disappointments of the movement.

### **Introducing the Researchers:**

The Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York are the team leading the research as part of a PhD project.

#### **Principal contact:**

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You can also write to the Stockholm Environment Institute, Department of Environment and Geography, Third Floor, Environment Building, Wentworth Way University of York, York, YO10 5NG, UK.

### **What happens with your data:**

All research data will be anonymised, unless permission has otherwise been granted via consent forms. Data will be made identifiable (in anonymised format), retrievable and kept on the university servers or Google Drive with limited access to those working on the project. Data will be retained for a minimum period of ten years from completion of the project.

**MANY THANKS FOR YOUR HELP**



## GLOSSARY

**Activism** - The use of direct action with the aim of achieving a result.

**Activist movements** - decentralised group of people who share a collective goal and take action in a variety of ways.

**Assumptions** – (in CDA) the implicit meaning of texts. 3 types, existential (what exists), propositional (what is the case) value (desirable or undesirable).

**Biodiversity** - a term used to describe all aspects of biological diversity especially with reference to the complexity of ecosystems, species richness and genetic diversity.

**Broadcasting** - distribution of information on television or radio.

**Campaigning Organisations** - a group with formal organised governance that aims to raise awareness / take action on an issue(s).

**Civil Disobedience** - the active, non-violent refusal to accept the dictates of governments. Opposition to unjust actions including illegal action.

**Clause** – (in CDA) a simple sentence with 3 main elements, processes, participants and circumstances.

**Climate Action** - any action to mitigate the effects of climate change, including political activism demanding change

**Climate Change** - an alteration in the regional or global climate; esp. the change in global climate patterns increasingly apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and linked largely with increased emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by human activity

**Climate Crisis** - the increasing risk of hazardous, irreversible changes to the climate, resulting from global warming; the environmental crisis arising from this risk

**Climate Denier/Denialism** - the rejection of the idea / evidence that climate change caused by human activity is occurring, or represents a significant threat to the environment and society.

**Climate Justice Action** - activism intended not only mitigate the effects of climate change but also address related social justice, including the disproportionate projected impact of climate change.

**Climate Refugee** - a person who moves to a place where the climate is more beneficial; a person forced to move to a different home, region, or country because of the effects of climate change.

**Climate Strike** - a form of public protest (i.e. School Strike for Climate) intended to draw attention to climate change and the need for urgent action.

**Demographic** – a group of people that share similar characteristics, i.e. age, social class, level of education etc.

**Discourse** – Language as an element of the social which is dialectically related to the other elements.

**Eco-anxiety** - anxiety caused by threats to the environment, such as pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.

**Environmentalism** - an interest in or study of the environment, in particular with a view to lessen the human impact on it.

**Environmental movement** - a group who share an interest in and / or study the environment. The movement has historical roots, with origins in the late 19th century and scholarship in the mid-20th giving rise to the contemporary movement.

**Evaluation** – (in CDA) the aspect of text that has to do with values either explicit or assumed.

**Existential Threat** - a threat to existence, used in the media to reflect the reality and urgency of the climate crisis for society.

**General Public** - the public as a collective irrespective of views or demographic.

**Genre** -a way of acting in discourse, can be linked (genre chains) or mixed.

**Globalization** – the operation of economic, political and social processes on a global scale.

**Grammatical mood** – the distinction between declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences.

**Grammatical relations** - the way clauses are combined in sentences, i.e. paratactic – related clauses of equal grammatical status, hypostatic – the superordinate-subordinate relation and embedded – a clause as an element of another clause.

**Global warming / Global Heating** - the heating of the planet as a result of the greenhouse effect (gasses in the atmosphere trapping heat from *The Sun* ). The term global heating is now often used in preference in order to convey the seriousness of the issues.

**Interdiscursivity** – analysis of mix of genres, discourses and styles and how they are worked together in a text.

**Intertextuality** – the presence of other texts (or voices) other than the authors own.

**Media** - any means of mass communication, including news media, publishing, broadcasting and social media.

**Modality** – relationship set up between author and representations - two types epistemic (probabilities) and deontic (necessity and obligation).

**Net-zero** - generally means deep reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and remaining sources being offset by greenhouse gas removal.

**New Media** - media available via electronic devices and the internet, i.e. social media, YouTube.

**News Media** - any media reporting on current events to the general public or a subsection of the public.

**Publishing** - production and distribution of information, typically books, newspapers and magazines, both in print and available electronically (e-publishing).

**Semantics** – the branch of linguistics that studies meaning in languages.

**Social Actors** – participants in social practices

**Social events, practices and structures** – what is possible, actual and the relationship between them.

**Socio-politics** - systems or problems involve a combination of social and political factors.

**Social media** - websites, programmes and apps that allow individuals and groups to share information via the internet, this media can be in a variety of formats.

**Speech Functions** – exchange types of which there are two main types, knowledge and activity.

**Target audience** - group or demographic that is targeted specifically by the media or activist movement.

**Traditional media** - media utilised prior to wide use of the internet, i.e. in-print and broadcast media.

**Wildlife** - any undomesticated organism, often used to describe animals but broad definition includes all kingdoms of life.

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