7. Environmental and climate activism and advocacy in the EU

Louisa Parks, Donatella della Porta and Martín Portos

INTRODUCTION

According to Eurobarometer survey data, 90 per cent of respondents – at least three quarters in each Member State – think that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions should be lowered to allow the EU economy to become climate-neutral by 2050. As many as 93 per cent of Europeans perceive climate change as a serious problem, and 18 per cent rank it as the most serious problem facing the world as a whole, slightly ahead of all other global challenges, such as poverty, hunger, disease and lack of drinking water (Eurobarometer, 2021: 7). Any exploration of how EU citizens express their opinions about environmental problems, including climate change, would be incomplete without paying attention to broader trends within the environmental movement which, particularly in recent years, has sought to place both environmental problems and climate change in a complex justice perspective. Since 2018, new movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion have gained prominence, repeatedly hitting the headlines in Europe in particular, and brought many onto the streets. Meanwhile, in more behind-the-scenes work, advocacy by long-established and professionalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), aimed at reforming EU climate and environmental policy, continues to be an important feature of interest representation in Brussels.

Against this backdrop, this chapter explores contemporary environmentalism and how it engages with the institutions of the European Union in the era of the European Green Deal. In order to explore this theme, we make a conceptual distinction between activism and advocacy as a useful heuristic tool to inform our broad overview of how environmentalism has unfolded with reference to the EU over time. Specifically, the distinction allows us to pay attention to both headline-grabbing and behind-the-scenes strategies used by different actors at different times.

As scholars working within the tradition of political sociology and the study of civil society and social movements, we understand activism and advocacy as modes of action. To better define these for the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to outline our general view of civil society as a broad space within which environmentalism plays out. In a nutshell, our view is in line with prominent scholarship from the turn of the millennium about the idea of global civil society as a field that comprises both formally organized, NGO-style actors (including trade unions) and informally organized, social movement actors (defined as networks of groups and individuals that engage repeatedly in contentious action forms, including protest, to make their claims), and all those other actors that lie in between (e.g. Kaldor, 2003; Keane, 2003). The basis of this view is that historically, civil society actors have grown in symbiosis with States, and have continued to develop alongside supranational and global governance regimes. Just as the actions of civil society were part and parcel of the emergence of European states, so the emergence of the structures of global, and indeed European governance are tied to them

(McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). This understanding serves both to justify attention to civil society activism as necessary for a full understanding of the EU and its actions today, and to point to our emphasis on modes of action.

One consequence of such a broad definition of civil society is that it is nigh on impossible to supply an exhaustive list of the types of groups it comprises. It includes an array of actors with both particularistic (bringing benefits to the actors claiming an interest) and altruistic interests (aiming to bring benefits to others), different funding and membership models, and more and less hierarchical organization. Most importantly, many of these are hard to pigeonhole. Trade unions, for example, have lobbied the EU over proposed reforms of the Emissions Trading System (Thomas, 2021) and other aspects of climate policy, but have also been involved at the core of campaigns for human and environmental rights, such as the right to water (Parks, 2015; Bailey et al., 2017; Bieler, 2021). Labels based on actor types can thus mask heterogeneity, shifting alliances, and the use of different strategies. Civil society should instead be seen as composed of more and less formally networked actors, even if the organized actors tend to last longer than waves of social movement protests (Berny and Rootes, 2018).

In this chapter we focus instead on *modes of action*, sketching a more complete overview of the most prominent groups and strategies followed in European environmentalism without becoming caught up in debates about which actors are social movements, which are NGOs, and which are somewhere in between. The more interesting story, as we argue throughout, is about the general emphasis on different modes of action during different phases or waves of environmentalism. As mentioned, we distinguish between two main modes of action: activism and advocacy. Activism is usually understood as the preserve of social movements and social movement organizations, though these may also at times include a range of NGOs of different types. Activism can take the form of protest, but also includes a range of other types of actions that can be summed up as 'outsider' strategies in the sense that those engaged in them do not have a role, access or close contacts within the targeted organization, or at least they do not choose to use these in planning an action. In many cases these strategies take place outside arenas of decision-making in a literal sense, in the form of protests, counter-summits and the like. Advocacy, on the other hand, is usually understood as the preserve of more formally organized NGOs, though social movement actors can and do use this mode of action too. Advocacy includes a range of actions that can be grouped under the umbrella term of 'insider' strategies, which mean that advocates draw on their role, access and close contacts within a targeted organization.[1]

In the following sections we explore environmental activism and advocacy in turn. Though we organize these discussions in discreet sections, we seek to show that over time, cyclical shifts from one mode to the other are evident, in distinct phases. These can be read as logical and strategic reactions to evolutions in understandings of environmental degradation and climate change, changes in the geopolitical context, and to perceived opportunities and barriers to the influence of environmentalism in different spheres of governance. We therefore seek to tell a story of interlinked and overlapping waves or phases of environmentalism, as it has related to concerns over climate change specifically. There have always been tensions between activist and advocacy modes of action, but the primacy of one or other mode can be read within a longer history of adaptation: moves from activism towards advocacy are made as opportunities for insider influence open up in different sites of environmental governance. Conversely, when opportunities close, or as actors decide they have been co-opted, the emphasis shifts back to outsider strategies and activism.

In the history of environmental movements, a number of significant junctures can be identified (della Porta and Parks, 2014). Environmentalism's first phase began with the conservationism of the late nineteenth century, focused on saving distinct species of flora and fauna or preserving certain spaces as 'pristine' nature in an apparently apolitical frame (though the framing of spaces as pristine and untouched was in many cases politically mobilized to justify the displacement of indigenous peoples and local communities). The Cold War and accompanying environmental threats from nuclear weapons testing saw a first major moment of politicization (e.g. Kitschelt, 1986) and a move towards more disruptive activism in a second phase. As part of the broader '68 New Left social movement protests, social movement groups such as Greenpeace emerged. They picked up the baton for species protection, but expanded the environmentalist agenda to oppose nuclear testing, and drew on frames that questioned the prevailing bloc system of hegemonic powers and their constant readiness for war.

Following the end of the Cold War, as the architecture of global environmental governance blossomed with the Rio Treaties and multilateralism at its centre, environmentalism moved into a more advocacy-oriented mode. This we can identify as a third phase. Indeed, the peak of effective advocacy in the EU context, discussed in detail later in the chapter, unfolded at this time, which also saw the birth and progressive construction of EU environmental competences and policy. Arguably, however, this advocacy-oriented third phase has now been succeeded by a fresh, fourth phase, characterized by a new turn towards activism.

In developing this argument, the next section explains the activism-oriented phases of environmental activism: the second, from the end of the 1968 cycle of protest to the end of the Cold War, and the fourth from more recent years, and especially since the late 2010s. We provide detail about this most recent activist phase, placing its development in Europe in the context of disillusionment with multilateral environmental governance, and particularly the Rio Treaty processes. In the following section, we explore the advocacy-oriented phase following the end of the Cold War. We also reflect in this section on how advocacy has adjusted in light of the fourth activist phase of environmentalism, noting a move towards emphasizing compliance that includes recent climate litigation. Here, we offer brief thoughts on contemporary campaigns around the European Green Deal which suggest a new wave of attention from actors that are either of recent creation or have not traditionally been involved in EU-level environmental politics. Concluding, we suggest some specific explanations for the clear demarcation of roles in EU environmental activism, where social movements push for change through horizontal forms of protest and transnational campaigns that target governments at various levels, while more advocacy-oriented actors use lobbying, public opinion campaigns and participatory opportunities offered by the institutions of the EU, such as the European Climate Pact, to push for changes in policy. Participatory spaces are identified in particular as a fruitful area for future research, as they may provide locations where activists and advocates find common ground.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE ACTIVISM

In this section we provide a broad overview of environmental and climate activism by social movements with a focus, albeit not a strict one, on Europe. Narrowing this story entirely to Europe would risk obscuring changes in the environmental movement in recent decades that

are best explained by the convergence of different movements, campaigns and organizations from across the planet. As discussed in the introduction, the activist mode of action is the one most often associated with social movements. In the literature, social movements are conceptualized as distinct social processes characterized by actors that: engage in contentious forms of collective action; are in conflict with clearly identified opponents; are connected through dense, informal networks; and share distinct collective identities (della Porta and Diani, 2020: 21–22). Social movement activism operates by posing 'a sustained challenge to power holders', which is repeatedly displayed through public performances which demonstrate a movement's 'worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment' (Tilly, 1999: 257). These public displays help social movements convey crucial political messages to their targets and relevant publics (Tilly, 1999). Environmental movements are in turn defined as 'a loose, non-institutionalised network of informal interactions that may include, as well as individuals and groups who have no organisational affiliation, organisations of varying degrees of formality, that are engaged in collective action motivated by shared identity or concern about environmental issues' (Rootes, 2004: 610).

According to Giugni and Grasso (2015: 354–355), environmental movements have traditionally displayed three characteristics. They are heterogeneous in terms of the actors and organizations involved (from supranational professionalized organizations to local and loosely structured milieus), in terms of issues, goals and strategies (from radical to moderate activism), and the effects of their actions are also varied. Like other social movements they have transformed, as new actors, issues and frames have emerged around environmental struggles within a more general shift from conservationism to justice-oriented movement streams. Moreover, environmental movements have tended to provide fertile ground for more formally organized groups to emerge (known in social movement studies as a process of institutionalization) (ibid.). These newly emerged organizations in turn take different forms, including Green political parties and organized civil society groups. The latter have often shifted their attention to include specific policy issues as well as the broad claims of movements, adopting an advocacy mode of action as their principal strategy. The European branches of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, mentioned later, are examples where such a shift can be seen over time.

The transformations of environmental movements in light of new actors, issues and frames form a useful point of departure to reflect on how environmentalism can be described over time. Different junctures in environmental struggles help to highlight changes in activism around these transformations. Shifts of scale from local activism to national, and even transnational, levels have often been accompanied by a politicization of collective action frames, with more explicit aims of political change. While the first phase of conservationist environmentalism saw saving species and wild nature as beyond politics, the second activist-oriented phase politicized environmentalism, linking it to the Cold War. The fourth activist-oriented phase sees movements question the fitness of existing governance systems to effectively tackle climate change (see Kenis, 2019), and increasingly disruptive forms of action.

The move from the third phase of environmentalism, characterized by advocacy, to the fourth, activist phase, illustrates these points in more detail. As time wore on after the end of the Cold War it became clear that the institutions of global environmental governance were failing to deliver effective action to halt environmental degradation and climate change. This led to some tensions about how to move forward within organized, advocacy-oriented groups operating at the global level of environmental governance (see the following section). As a result, groups convinced that activism was the answer formed the Climate Justice Now!

network in 2007. As Hadden (2015) notes, these emerging, more radical groups converged at a critical juncture – the counter-summit at the 2009 Copenhagen UNFCCC COP. They held large-scale street protests and attempted to penetrate the 'red zone' where official negotiations took place. In 2010 they met with like-minded national governments at an international meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The emerging climate justice movement stressed grassroots, polycentric participation and participatory democracy in opposition to the top-down models of the United Nations, most notably the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the performance of which was judged disappointing, particularly following the Doha Conference of the Parties in 2012. It is important to note that this movement also emerged in a context of increasing repression, including the assassinations of several climate justice activists, as well as the campaigns of climate change deniers, supported by the most polluting industries.

The framing of environmental and climate issues also shifted at this juncture. One clear limit of the multilateral approach is the fact that, despite their apparent commitment to environmental protection, professed in multilateral forums, States allow business as usual in the form of damaging extractive projects to continue within their borders. The frames of environmental justice and climate justice reflect this, conceiving of environmental issues as social justice issues. These insights were raised concretely in local struggles across the globe, ranging from grassroots groups in the United States that opposed the effects of environmental racism (Agyeman et al., 2016), to indigenous peoples' opposition to deforestation, land grabs and extractives industries, and European movements against infrastructure projects. Longstanding Europe-based campaigns against 'mega infrastructure' projects show how events shape local conflicts that may then escalate and connect transnationally. The campaigns against the expansion of the international airport in Munich (Friends of the Earth Europe, 2012) and the high-speed train in Val di Susa, Italy (della Porta and Piazza, 2008) are two such examples from the European context (see Mertens and Thiemann, Chapter 5 in this volume, on how such events have brought the climate credentials of the European Investment Bank into the spotlight). In others, environmentalists have come together with pacifist struggles in contentious politics over military bases and other 'Locally Unwanted Land Uses', using global frames to define their diagnosis and prognosis (della Porta and Fabbri, 2016).

It is against this background that a new wave of protest for climate justice developed globally and gained momentum (Wahlström et al., 2019; de Moor et al., 2020; Zamponi et al., 2021) in the late 2010s, following the Paris Agreement. In Europe this wave of protest has been dominated by the Fridays for Future movement and its School Strikes for the Climate, bringing younger generations into the frame of environmental activism. Another prominent example is Extinction Rebellion, which began in the UK and has since spread to other countries, and has marked a shift towards civil disobedience reminiscent of that seen in activism against nuclear testing in the 1970s (see Box 7.1).

7.1 FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE AND EXTINCTION REBELLION

In Europe, Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg started a school strike in August 2018 that quickly spread across the globe. After school pupils had ritually gone on strike every Friday to call for urgent action against climate change, on 15 March 2019, Fridays for Future (FFF)

organized a global 'day of action' for climate justice involving 1.6 million people worldwide (della Porta and Portos, 2021; see Wahlström et al., 2019; de Moor et al., 2020). Another three global days of action were called that same year, culminating in the September day of action just three days before the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. This saw 7.6 million participants on the streets in 6,000 protest events across 185 countries in what can be considered the largest climate protest in world history (de Moor et al., 2020, 2021). Along with the FFF protests, born in Europe, the more transgressive Extinction Rebellion (XR) emerged on 31 October 2018 in the UK with a 'Declaration of Rebellion' against the British government. XR has three core claims promoted through civil disobedience and non-violent direct actions: governments must: (1) tell 'the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency'; (2) act 'to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions'; and (3) create 'and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice' (https://rebellion.global/about-us/; see de Moor et al., 2021).

Both FFF and XR have broadened their repertoires of action (beyond school strikes and provoking mass arrests, respectively) and spread globally. According to Hagedorn and colleagues (2019: 139–140), 'the enormous grassroots mobilisation of the youth climate movement … shows that young people understand' the urgent need to protect the climate and other foundations of human well-being. Moreover, in contrast to '"do-it-yourself" forms of action such as developing grassroots solutions and taking direct action against the fossil fuel industry', Joost de Moor and colleagues (2021: 4; see also Zamponi et al., 2021) have noted that 'FFF and XR represent a "return to the state"' in the sense that these groups ask national governments to act to find effective answers to the climate crisis, which arguably tallies with a disillusionment with multilateralism. XR sees citizens' assemblies as a key part of this. At the same time, protest survey data from FFF climate strikes in Europe reveals that individual activists believe that putting pressure on politicians to act, while crucial, needs to be accompanied by individual action (de Moor et al., 2021; della Porta and Portos, 2021). While national government action is key to the demands of both FFF and XR, citizens are still seen as a central to change. Thus, protesters' calls for state responsibility are also accompanied by a focus on promoting changes in individual behaviour, new mutualism or alternative forms of production. Pro-climate actors have developed previous concepts of energy democracy as well as introducing new ones including the shared economy, consumer ownership of renewables and connection of community power in the energy sector (Jenkins, 2018; Stephens, 2019).

Overall, we can conclude alongside Togami and Staggenborg (2019) that 'recent developments in grassroots activism on climate change provide reason for optimism. In response to political intransigence, grassroots activists are marching in the streets, boycotting fossil fuel corporations, halting pipeline projects, and lobbying elected officials for comprehensive climate change legislation', both in Europe and elsewhere. Attempts to build transnational coalitions and solidarity both between European groups and beyond have long been underway. Nevertheless, there are clear tensions and challenges to this movement building (de Moor, 2020). In addition, anti-climate activism is on the increase and climate change denialism has been linked to support for right-wing populism, a growing political force in Europe (Lockwood, 2018). Although it is difficult to prove direct effects between activism and decision-making by national and international institutions, it is well established that movements do have consequences, and that they tend to be complex – they combine and mix with other sources of

influence when they come to bear on official decision-making, including EU-level decisions (Bosi, Giugni and Uba, 2016). In the long term, environmental activism is also argued to have played a role in injecting imaginative and radical ideas into societal and state understandings of environmental problems (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2011).

ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY IN EUROPE

Advocacy in the EU context is the focus for this section. It is useful to place this within the broader global story of the different stages of environmentalism outlined so far, before looking in more detail at the work of environmental NGOs based in the EU. The previous section touched briefly on the first and second phases of environmentalism before delving into the fourth. This fourth wave was described as emerging from frustration with multilateralism following a period where parts of social movements became more organized, with a view to exploiting post-Cold War opportunities to engage with the developing architecture of global environmental governance. These opportunities were opened by environmental activism from the 1970s onwards, with environmental concerns brought onto the agenda by anti-nuclear activists in both the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Numbers of NGOs, including environmental NGOs, increased exponentially at the end of the Cold War to take advantage of new opportunities to advocate and shape institutions of global governance (e.g. Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Kaldor, 2003).

This advocacy-oriented phase of environmentalism continued with the first major multilateral governmental discussions on climate change at the United Nations Earth summit on Environment and Development in 1992 and the Rio Treaties it produced (the UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification). The trend persisted with the adoption of important implementing protocols, particularly the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC concluded in 1997. NGOs capitalized on the opening up of spaces for their participation in these treaty processes and multilateral meetings, and advocacy became the natural strategy for many. Collective action in this third phase of environmentalism thus followed a predominantly insider logic, via targeted advocacy led at the global level by a coalition of large environmental NGOs. Among the most visible groups active on climate change issues prior to the spread of disillusionment with multilateral environmental governance (see previous section) is the Climate Action Network (CAN). Founded in 1989, it gathers about 700 mainly environmental organizations and has several branches, with one of the most active being CAN-Europe.

The history of NGO advocacy in the European Union can be read as one ‘branch’ of this broader story of shifts between phases characterized by an emphasis on either advocacy or activism. The Single European Act (1987) brought the creation of a specific chapter on the environment and a range of other more ‘social’ competences within the EU’s remit, and has generally been seen as the moment when the numbers of NGOs in Brussels began to climb in response to this opportunity (Greenwood, 2017). Scholars have focused on an increasing variety of aspects of the work and influence of these ENGOs, with earlier work concentrating on the perspective of interest representation or lobbying (Wurzel et al., 2017). Some core ENGOs, particularly those that formed the ‘Green 8’ (now the ‘Green 10’) were identified as central to network-building and influence on EU decisions on environmental matters. These

ENGOs included both umbrella organizations of national conservationist NGOs, notably the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), created specifically to influence EU policy, as well as branches of groups with more activist histories, such as the Greenpeace European Unit and Friends of the Earth Europe. In particular, it has been argued that the Green 8 facilitated a thematic division of labour to cover the increasing volume of EU environmental legislation that occurred from the first decade of the millennium (Biliouri, 1999; Parks, 2015), and, prior to that, to have even contributed to the development of the EU Commission's Environment Directorate General (DG ENVI) through a 'revolving door' between NGO and Commission staff and their ongoing close relationships (Ruzza, 2004).

Related to this, ENGOs, including prominent members of the Green 10 such as the EEB, also receive funding from the European Commission, both for specific projects and for their operational costs under the last LIFE programme (European Commission, 2015; see Bürgin, Chapter 2 in this volume). Scholars have reflected on the possibilities for co-optation via such funding, which may create dependencies between ENGOs and the institutions they seek to influence. Empirical studies have found this to be complex and navigated using the aforementioned division of labour, whereby more advocacy-oriented and institutionally funded ENGOs stick to insider strategies, and ENGOs with different funding models seek to also employ outsider strategies (Parks, 2015). There is no scholarly evidence that ENGOs have directly avoided critical approaches to EU policy as a result of receiving funding, rather, cooptation can take place through more nuanced processes where funding and involvement in official consultation processes may over time shape organizational forms and logics in ways that make critical standpoints less likely (ibid; see also Choudry and Kapoor, 2013).

In empirical terms, numbers of ENGOs, or more precisely NGOs with a declared interest in the environment, in the EU transparency register suggest that the story of advocacy on EU environmental decision-making remains important, even as environmental activism in the form of prominent movements like FFF and XR has risen. At the time of writing, these accounted for 1,598 out of 3,350 NGO entries (though many also register other interests). In other words, approaching half of all registered NGOs, who must register if they want to engage with EU institutions, declare 'the environment' as a major concern. The coverage of the register can only be taken as a general indication given its various limitations (Greenwood, 2017: 12). Nevertheless, it is considered a good source for estimating trends in organized civil society, particularly since the decision to make registration mandatory was taken in December 2020. Variations in numbers year on year have in the past followed developments in debates over the nature of the register, such as the requirement to be registered in order to be able to meet with a Commissioner, added in 2016 (Greenwood, 2017: 12). The jump in NGOs declaring the environment among their interests in 2020 and 2021 likely indicates this improved coverage of the register. Yet these increases in numbers also correlate with significant climate and environment-related policy junctures, such as the Paris Agreement and the announcement of the European Green Deal. This underlines the impression that ENGOs active in the EU sphere have continued in their advocacy. It also shows that, like activist-oriented social movement groups, ENGOs develop in light of significant events.

A deeper investigation of the literature suggests that ENGO advocacy and its impacts in the EU have changed over time in a way that ties in with the broader story of a shift towards activism in recent years. While earlier work points to ENGOs' influence on specific legislative and policy decisions (e.g. Ruzza, 2004), more recent scholarship suggests a shift towards monitoring and compliance as a main focus (Börzel and Buzogány, 2019). In more detail, the

nascent ENGO sector was seen as peculiarly unified, and a useful source of expertise for the Commission and its new DG ENVI (Biliouri, 1999). Empirical studies then revealed whether and where influence was wielded by ENGOs, focusing on the first, more spectacular cases of influence, such as the late 1990s campaign that led to the moratorium on the imports of foods containing genetically modified organisms (Kettnaker, 2001). Clear-cut cases like this are not found in climate change policy, where broad agendas tend to be decided in international arenas, and ENGOs have tended to seek to influence either by guiding norms or to reform specific details of policies such as the Emissions Trading System (Moore and Jordan, 2020). Comparative studies have sought to explain ENGO influence on environmental (and social) issues in a broader perspective. Effective coalitions, political opportunities in the form of either powerful allies in the EU institutions or, conversely, the possibility of mobilizing grassroots members to act in particularly influential Member States, are found to be central to explaining influence over EU decisions (Ruzza, 2004; Parks, 2015). A still broader view seeks to explain ENGO influence on EU decisions in terms of policy preference alignments, strategic choices, and issue areas (Bunea, 2013; Junk, 2016).

With the European sovereign debt crisis of the 2010s, scholars foresaw, and subsequently found evidence of, a decline in the EU's environmental ambition and policy (Gravey and Jordan, 2016). Nevertheless, over time this decline has been attributed by several scholars less to the financial crisis than to the pursuit of a policy agenda defined by a discourse of ecological modernization (Machin, 2019; see also Fitch-Roy and Bailey, Chapter 12 in this volume), on the one hand, and the increasingly diverging interests of Member States, on the other (Burns, Eckersley and Tobin, 2020). This is supported by research that notes a shift in attention towards improving the implementation of the existing EU environmental *acquis* (Börzel and Buzogány, 2019). Anecdotal evidence from the few EU-oriented environmental campaigns to percolate into the mass media in recent years, such as the campaign surrounding the renewal of the glysophate licence by the EU Chemicals Agency, supports this argument about advocacy shifting away from the aim of influencing decisions and towards ensuring enforcement, and identifies a role for ENGOs in this process (Hofmann, 2019). The role of NGOs in enforcement is often welcomed by the Commission (European Commission 2017) and facilitated in international law by the Aarhus Convention (Bürgin, Chapter 2 in this volume). A focus on implementation is also suggested by research on influence and relative preferences. In particular, Bunea (2013: 553) finds that median positions 'are more likely to be translated into policy outcomes', and that neither issue salience and the polarization of preferences, nor inter-organizational ties, have a direct effect on policy influence, suggesting the peculiarity of the dynamics described in case study-based research.

Shifting towards ensuring the full implementation of EU environmental legislation, even if found to fall short, makes strategic sense according to this view. If influence is rare and relies on factors outside the control of ENGOs, investing more energy in compliance makes sense, particularly at a moment in which broader change is being demanded via activist means. Indeed, the progressive engagement of advocacy-oriented groups in judicial activism alongside citizens via climate litigation at the Member State level suggests awareness of this limitation. Prominent successful cases in this line include that against the government of the Netherlands (see Stoczkiewicz, Chapter 9 in this volume) and subsequently against Royal Dutch Shell, as well as against the German government.

Support for this view can also be drawn from the literature on social movements. The move to an environmental justice frame in activism was the result of work to achieve convergences,

shifts in local struggles to address global issues, and spillover effects between such struggles, as well as disillusionment with multilateralism. In the previous section we underlined the local struggles in which these justice frames can be seen. Yet justice frames are also clearly traceable to the traditions of the global justice movement, which also considered environmental themes. This movement engaged with the EU only to ask for systemic change, underlining that 'Another Europe is Possible' (della Porta et al., 2006). The same could be said about the more recent activist phase of environmentalism, where the idea of environmental and climate justice has come to the fore. Here too international organizations are addressed as systems (one of FFF's most well-known slogans is 'system change not climate change') and, as discussed earlier, more state responsibility is demanded.

Though the evidence at present is anecdotal, the broad pattern of cycles of contention over time suggests this explanation may hold. Environmental advocacy at the EU level has focused on specific policies, and more recently on compliance, while broader demands have been brought by the movements already discussed, or by relatively new EU political actors that fall into the category of 'movement parties' (della Porta et al., 2017) (see Box 7.2). Moving towards a preference for outsider strategies to raise broader questions beyond implementation makes strategic sense in an EU where discourses other than ecological modernization, such as those of the Green New Deal, are marginalized (Machin, 2019) (see Box 7.2).

BOX 7.2 ACTIVISM AND THE EUROPEAN GREEN (NEW) DEAL

A notable example of a new actor at the European level making broad demands about environmental and climate governance is the movement party Diem25, which has led a campaign for a European Green New Deal linked to the wider international movement for environmental justice. They argue that the Commission's European Green Deal (EGD) has adopted the language of the new deal in name only, while at the same time it continues to reproduce hegemonic discourses of market-led economic growth, and to call for the mobilization of private finance without meaningful democratic accountability. The result is the promotion of policies that require nothing more than cuts in GHG emissions and new energy policies for growth to continue, supposedly without causing further environmental damage (Samper et al., 2021). In justice-focused and holistic Green *New* Deal approaches the value of economic growth, and the role of private capital, is fundamentally challenged. Thus the EGD seeks to reproduce and co-opt the language of the new deal, but not its content: it reproduces rather than challenges the nature/culture divide, closing off real political debate about transformation. Although details of how the EGD and the Just Transition Mechanism are actually to be achieved remain hazy, initial experiences indicate that funds may be susceptible to elite capture (Gabor, 2020; Samper et al., 2021), and the European Trade Union Confederation remains sceptical as to how far it will directly benefit affected workers (ETUC, 2020).

A final consideration when discussing the shift in ENGO advocacy towards implementation and compliance is that the fourth, activist-oriented phase of environmentalism has led states and indeed the EU to seek direct input from citizens. This has not led to new opportunities for ENGOs to engage in advocacy around policy directions, as input is sought in ways that bypass

civil society to speak directly to citizens. There is a growing trend among EU Member States and the EU itself to set up citizens' assemblies to gather opinions and input for environmental decision-making. Prominent recent examples in the Member States include Ireland's Climate Assemblies, France's Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat, and Germany's dialogue on the climate protection plan 2050 (see respectively e.g. Devaney et al., 2020; Giraudet et al., 2021; Krick, 2021). In a similar vein, the EU is also apparently seeking to turn more directly to citizens with the recent launch of the European Climate Pact.[2] The Climate Pact, a part of the EGD, seeks to create knowledge and learning networks in the EU with a view to developing and scaling up climate solutions. It involves series of events, pledges, and the naming of 'climate pact ambassadors' amongst other things (see Tosun, Pollex and Crumbie, 2023), and was developed following an open online public consultation. Efforts to engage with citizens in such forums which are arguably linked to deliberative and direct democracy can be seen in a positive light: citizens' assemblies are, as noted, a central demand of XR. At the same time, whether these forums have been designed with enough attention to the structural power asymmetries that must be addressed if free and fair deliberation is to be achieved remains under debate. Equally important is the open question of whether and how their outcomes will be taken seriously by governments and EU institutions. Finally, the question of what these experiments mean for civil society – whether activist or advocacy-oriented – also remains to be addressed. These forums have mushroomed at a moment in European politics where the demands of the populist right for a direct link between government and 'the people' are prominent, yet this view excludes any democratic role for civil society (Ruzza, Berti and Cossarini, 2021).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we have outlined major instances of environmental activism and advocacy in Europe in recent years. In one interpretation, this points to a fairly clear (though not necessarily formal or organized) demarcation of roles in EU environmentalism where social movements push for change through activist strategies including protests and transnational campaigns that target governments at various levels, and EU ENGOs use advocacy strategies initially to push for changes in EU policy and subsequently to monitor compliance and implementation. However, our explorations also sought to underline a more nuanced interpretation by discussing how these currents cross and sometimes take more and less prominent positions. We outlined a broad story of waves of environmentalism when advocacy and activism respectively move into the foreground, linking these shifts to new actors, frames of understanding, and political developments. In that view both advocacy and activism reflect strategic choices. Certain tactics take the spotlight when deemed more effective for achieving influence. This does not mean that others disappear: rather, they take a backseat.

Nevertheless, though they overlap and blend, there are clear differences between advocacy and activism approaches to environmentalism, and climate politics, in Europe. What explains this demarcation in the field of environment and climate specifically? We have suggested that the growth in social movement-led activism in the present is linked to justice frames and the increasing recognition of the need for comprehensive, transformative changes to address the planetary crisis. At the same time, the existing dominant view of ecological modernization, seen as underpinning internal European environmental policy, has arguably reached maturity

in terms of the legislation produced. This consolidation on one hand, and the perception of its fundamental limits on the other, goes some way to explaining the clear differences between ENGOs and social movement organizations in European environmental activism, both during the different phases outlined and at junctures of change. Tensions between those preferring different modes of actions are particularly prominent at these junctures. In the scholarly literature, deep critiques have been forwarded against phases where organized groups engaged in advocacy. Advocacy is soon displaced, they argue, by veritable co-optation as powerful actors shape NGOs and discipline the broader field of civil society through them, leaving little space for activism (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013). Other scholars see these tensions as normal moments of change and strategic reactions to political contexts (Tarrow, 1998).

Another layer of explanation relates to the meso level of organizations and their links with members as compared to those with institutions. In the EU in particular, organized civil society groups (ENGOs) that engage mostly in advocacy have tended to become progressively distanced from grassroots members. This is partly because of the information and expertise demands that EU processes place on these groups, and partly because of relatively scarce resources (Parks, 2015). This has been seen as problematic to the extent that '[e]nvironmental NGOs that are not consistent with these ideas and preferences [about the role of NGOs in the decision-making process], particularly those that do not bring technical expertise or knowledge to the policy process, are typically viewed as recipients, rather than providers, of policy-relevant information' (Hallstrom, 2004: 182). The turn towards new forms of participatory climate and environmental policy-making by local, national and even European institutions with the European Climate Pact, matched by demands from some prominent social movement organizations including XR, appears as a promising area for further research. These spaces could in fact potentially provide venues to overcome the gap between activism and advocacy, by bringing together activist and advocacy modes of action in a new configuration, if designed and implemented carefully.

Finally, issue salience may also contribute to explain the divide between activism and advocacy, movements and organized groups. Research suggests that influencing EU decisions requires both of these strategies to occur in parallel, and that activist strategies like protest are easier to mobilize where an issue has higher public salience, as is certainly the case for climate justice in the cases of FFF and XR (Junk, 2016; Crespy and Parks, 2017). These movement actors have been proven to command sizeable mobilization capacity at the transnational level. By involving a new generation of activists, recent protest campaigns have transformed organizational configurations and networks as well as action strategies (in particular as regards the combination of street politics and individual lifestyle change). Frames of social inequalities and environmental destruction have been bridged, as the pandemic has also underlined the complex ways in which environmental harm is bound up with health (habitat destruction and dense populations are fertile ground for zoonotic diseases), and lockdowns revealed the importance of nature to wellbeing (della Porta, 2022). Such salience is hard to imagine for individual EU policies, or even for the European Green Deal, which is regarded as an essentially technocratic endeavour by many movement activists.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of insider–outsider framework in social movements, see Briscoe and Gupta (2016) and, for EU civil society specifically, Dür and Mateo (2016).
2. See: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact_en. On consultation processes, see e.g. Parks (2015).

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