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Divided yet united: Balancing convergence and divergence in environmental movement mobilization

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ABSTRACT

Environmental movements play an increasingly pivotal role in societal responses to pressing issues, such as climate change. These movements are often multi-scalar, spanning locations, ideological orientations, organisational types, and tactics. We investigate how the UK's anti-fracking movement manages the tension between the necessary convergence of collective actions and this divergence of scale. Based on a frame analysis of press releases, position papers, websites, blogs and 20 semi-structured interviews, the paper shows how heterogeneous environmental movement actors, with diverse framings of fracking, utilised three convergence processes – funnelling, expanding and familiarising – making connections vertically, horizontally and contextually. These processes created a 'web' of resistance that held the environmental movement together while maintaining diversity. Our paper contributes to the environmental movement literature by explaining how movements overcome divergence without establishing homogeneity. This is important in understanding how environmental movements can expand their role within a broader constituency in opposing environmental destruction.

KEYWORDS Environmental movements; fracking; framing; convergence; divergence

Introduction

Environmental Movements (EMs) play an increasingly pivotal role in societal responses to the worsening climate crisis through their opposition to new fossil fuel extraction, including new oil pipelines (McAdam *et al.* 2010) and the spread of hydraulic gas fracturing (fracking) (Nyberg *et al.* 2020). This involves both established environmental NGOs like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth which have repositioned their central agendas to address climate change by challenging the fossil fuel industry, as well as newer grassroots organisations such as 350.org, the Climate Justice Alliance, Plane Stupid and Extinction Rebellion which oppose the opening of new carbon frontiers

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(Dietz and Garrelts 2014, Westwell and Bunting 2020). However, the growth of collective action in the form of protests, campaigns and voter mobilization has been far from unified, with movements and coalitions encompassing numerous and often conflicting agendas and strategies (Rootes 2007).

To account for these complexities, Levkoe and Wakefield (2014) refer to EMs as 'complex assemblages', while Özen (2009, p. 408) highlights the competing 'discursive spaces' of environmental protest mobilization. In his recent book 'Space Invaders', Routledge (2017) emphasises how the role of place comes to the fore as a critical component of a movement's character. He suggests that 'places can have a key role in shaping the claims, character and capacities' of EMs in giving rise to particular 'terrains of resistance' (Routledge 2017, p. 5). Thus, the role of place is particularly prominent in EMs, which are often typified by short-lived coalitions of divergent interests in defence of a specific territory.

It is this multi-scalarity, which spans geographical locations, ideological orientations, diverse organisational types and tactical traditions, which makes EMs particularly suited to the study of divergence and convergence in protest organisation. In these physical and discursive spaces, different actors with environmental concerns overlap and intertwine, while their heterogeneous relations remain. The question is then how EMs manage the tension between i) the divergence of locations and strategies, and ii) the necessary convergence of collective actions to gain political clout.

We address this tension through an empirical investigation of the anti-fracking movement in the UK. The investigation is based on interviews with key groups in the debate over fracking and documents produced by both national non-government organisations (NGOs) and local grass roots opposition groups during the period 2011–2019. To understand the intra-movement agendas, we employ the concept of framing to analyse negotiations over how environmental concerns are presented to maximize mobilization (Allan and Hadden 2017). The findings from our frame analysis show how heterogeneous environmental movement actors, with diverse framings of fracking, utilised three specific convergence processes – *funnelling*, *expanding* and *familiarising* – to make connections vertically, horizontally and contextually in order to temporally align their positions. Our findings suggest that these processes allow for the maintenance of diversity in resistance, while also bringing actors together into a collective movement of opposition.

The paper makes three general contributions: First, we build on Routledge's (2017) work on the multi-scalarity of EMs to understand how movements manage the tension between grounding protest in a localised place and maintaining national/global mobility. We do this by explaining the spatiality of connections – vertically, horizontally and contextually – to remain grounded in multiple locales. These linkages form a flexible 'web' holding the movement together without establishing homogeneity. Second,

our paper advances the notion of frame bridging or frame expansion within EMs (Boudet 2011, Allan and Hadden 2017) by demonstrating how three discursive processes – *funnelling*, *expanding* and *familiarising* – align different frames in bridging heterogeneous movement concerns and methods. Finally, and more practically, this paper reveals how local community groups can retain ownership of opposition by maintaining divergence within what is a complex national movement of heterogeneous actors. This allows local movements to move beyond a characterisation as NIMBYs without altering locally relevant framings of the issue. Understanding how these groups function with a broad and inclusive membership is important, since it explains how EMs can expand their role within a broader constituency. Thus, we show how the discursive convergence processes enable unity without homogeneity.

Environmental movements and the convergence/divergence tension

The literature on EMs generally draws upon social movement studies to define EMs as ‘spaces where individuals, groups and organisations engage in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals’ (della Porta and Diani 1999, p. 21; see e.g. della Porta and Parks 2014, Di Gregorio 2012, Jimenez 1999, Levkoe and Wakefield 2014). Yet EMs exhibit divergence in their composition, often spanning multiple spatial scales from local to global (Rootes 1999a). In addition, ideological orientations also vary. For example, in his work on UK anti-road protests, North (1998) highlights the tension between ideological orientations, of negotiation versus confrontation and the internal conflict over identity and strategy.

Further, organisational types also vary, with a typical mix of formal NGOs, local residents and mobile caravans (Routledge 2017). For Rootes (1999b, p. 157) such organisational divergence leads to tension, with the potential for formal NGOs to be ‘outflanked by more radical ad hoc groupings’. This tension is then amplified by differences in tactical preferences, leading to formal NGOs being ‘left in the uncomfortable position of having publicly to distance themselves from actions of which many of their supporters at least privately and often publicly approve’ (Rootes 1999b, p. 158). Thus, broader EMs include diverse sets of strategies and tactics from groups mobilizing action in local, national and global disputes.

Despite such divergence, researchers have stressed how ‘commonalities’ can enable movements to be held together. For example, in studying the expansion of Israel’s EM, Tal *et al.* (2013) noted that the collective ideological orientation of the movement enabled cohesion. Similarly, Jimenez (1999) explores institutionalisation as a means of consolidating heterogeneous EMs in Spain. Hajer (1993, p. 45) explains this collectivity by outlining the process

of discourse coalition, whereby 'a group of actors share a social construct' of a given issue. For Hajer (1993) discourses, constitutive of ideas, concepts and categories underpin how meaning is attributed to a particular issue and it is via these discourses that the context of a phenomenon is understood. While Hajer acknowledges a plurality of discourses surrounding phenomenon, he suggests that people from varying backgrounds communicate and unify when these discourses are put together in a convincing storyline or narrative. For Hajer, therefore, heterogeneous EMs are unified under a common narrative of a given phenomenon and a shared world view.

However, Levkoe and Wakefield (2014) challenge this idea of movement unity in relation to EMs by suggesting that a coherent political program is not always necessary. Furthermore, Rootes' (1999a) critique of the institutionalisation of EMs reinforces the idea that moving towards a homogenous composition may not be the most effective strategy given that both moderate and radical environmental voices are of value in a movement's success. Thus, environmental disputes offer a unique lens through which to advance our understanding of protest and political organisation in a forum where such commonalities are often lacking as a result of their diverse constituencies. The key concern within the literature is then not 'whether' EMs are heterogeneous (they are), but 'how' these movements continue to function amid such divergence.

This complexity can be explored by drawing attention to the diverse geographical and political backgrounds of EM make-up (see e.g., Routledge 2000, Smith 2002, Özen 2009). To understand this tension, Smith (2002) explores how globally dispersed organisations come together through the articulation of collective strategic frames, which in turn motivate global organizing and collective action between groups. Similarly, Routledge (2000) investigates the space where globally dispersed interests, goals and tactics converge. He proposes that such inter-organizational networks represent 'not an organization, but rather a convergence space – a heterogeneous affinity of common ground between resistance formations wherein interest groups, tactics and strategies converge' (Routledge 2000, p. 25). In his more recent book, Routledge (2017) emphasises the importance of place, suggesting possible spatial strategic interventions to take EMs forward into coming decades. These include 'know your place', whereby 'protestors deploy place-specific knowledge and cultural codes, and powerfully culturally recognisable symbols in order to engage public opinion and participation', but also 'stay mobile', where strategies of mobility mean not always being too obviously 'in place' (Routledge 2017, p. 131, 135).

By using the concept of framing below, we advance the debate on EMs by explaining how such multi-scalarity and diversity are managed. By exploring how fracking is framed, we show how discursive connections enable a movement to remain grounded in multiple locales, whilst also transcending spatial constraints and ideological, organisational and tactical differences.

Framing

To understand how EMs mobilize, scholars have drawn upon framing as a core explanatory process (Boudet 2011, della Porta and Parks 2014, Allan and Hadden 2017). Frames are established ‘schemata of interpretation’ that are used to make events meaningful and to organize experiences (Goffman 1974). The activity of framing is conducted by presenting issues that emphasise the different schematic ways of thinking that might apply (Chong and Druckman 2007). Within contestation, actors ‘engage in framing practices in an attempt to make their frame resonate and mobilize action in their favour’ (Kaplan 2008, p. 730). This for example may include shifting to a broader frame in order to expand mobilization and enhance an EM’s influence (Allan and Hadden 2017).

Central to current theoretical understandings of the role of framing in processes of mobilization has been the theory of frame alignment. Snow *et al.* (1986, p. 464) propose that ‘frame alignment of one variety or another, is a necessary condition for participation’. The key mechanism to achieve this is frame expansion (Boudet 2011), which occurs when a frame is successfully applied to seemingly separate issues by creating linkages between groups allowing for collaboration. This involves tapping into existing shared interpretive frames to gain wider support and engagement (Boudet 2011).

Benford and Snow’s (2000, p. 614) review of the framing literature sets out how framing processes can be used to simplify and condense aspects of the ‘world out there’. They suggest that collective action frames are the outcome of ‘negotiating shared meaning’. Thus, extant framing literature generally adheres to the theorisation that for collective action to emerge, framing processes must act to bring together multiple actors under a shared discourse or frame of a given issue (Zeng *et al.* 2019). The need for a shared discourse or frame has similarly been identified in relation to social movements. However, the multi-scalar characteristics of EMs mean that discourses and frames can be much more divergent. While framing disputes have been explored between opponents in environmental contestations (Nyberg *et al.* 2020), the complexity of frames within the opposition movement itself holds potential contributions for understanding how divergent framings influence intra-movement actors. Thus, this intra-movement framing demands greater attention.

It is recognised that controversies and conflict can occur within a movement in regard to the saliency of a given frame (Benford and Snow 2000). Here, framing has been used to understand how such tensions are overcome, with Benford and Snow (2000) outlining four processes of frame alignment: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. It is clear that existing theoretical approaches to framing see conflict and controversies as problematic characteristics of EMs, which framing works to overcome (della Porta and Piazza 2007, Zeng *et al.* 2019), and each of these frame alignment processes act to orientate a movement under a set of interests, activities or

ideologies which are congruent and complementary across the movement as whole. Yet, as already highlighted in our review of the EM literature above, divergence and complexity are often innate aspects of these movements and this includes how an issue is framed. Thus, rather than approaching framing as a means to overcome complexity and bring about unification, our analysis below explores the multi-scalarity inherent in environmental disputes by unpacking how groups with divergent frames work together over time. Following this, our core research question is: *How is convergence of environmental movements sustained amidst divergence of frames?*

Research method

Context: Fracking in the United Kingdom

The proposed development of shale gas fracking in the UK has had a turbulent history. Test drilling for shale gas extraction first began in 2011 at Presse Hall, Lancashire, in the Northwest of England. However, resulting seismic activity led to a year-long moratorium. With this lifted in December 2012, the development of fracking progressed slowly as a series of UK parliamentary inquiries proceeded into the economic and environmental implications of the proposed industry. This prolonged delay was particularly surprising given the strong political support for the industry. For example in January 2014, the UK's then Prime Minister, David Cameron declared that the UK government were 'going all out for shale' (Watt 2014), and in 2018 Prime Minister Theresa May released plans for direct cash payments of between £5,000 and £20,000 for households in production areas, so as to encourage regional acceptance of the industry (Woodcock 2016).

A vocal EM opposed to fracking proved to be remarkably successful in delaying the roll-out of the industry in the UK (Williams *et al.* 2017), and there are suggestions that success has now extended to halting the industry altogether with a second moratorium on drilling from 2019 (Vickerstaff 2019). This movement was inherently multi-scalar, with each proposed fracking operation leading to the formation of vehement local opposition groups and support from national organised EMs such as Friends of the Earth. Each local conflict was grounded in a dispute over local land use and although there were specific sites of protest in places such as Balcombe in the Southeast and Preston New Road in the Northwest, nationally almost 300 grassroots organizations were mobilised in opposition to fracking in the UK, each grounded in a specific region (see Table 1). It is this web of grassroots environmental activism and the national NGOs opposing fracking that are the focus of this study.

This movement is a particularly relevant case in seeking to understand the framing processes involved in the convergence of heterogeneous actors, since it i) spans local, regional and national scales, whilst connectedly exhibiting diverse ideological orientations (with some campaigners opposed to fracking in its

Table 1. The composition of hydraulic fracturing opposition in the UK.

Type of organization	Examples	No. of groups
Established NGOs	Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace	6
National grassroots opposition networks	Frack Off	1
Grassroots community groups opposed to fracking	Frack Free Fernhurst, Frack Free Derbyshire, Rossendale Against Fracking	287

entirety, whilst others simply objected to it in a given place), and it ii) spans different types of environmental organizations with a web of networks having emerged between regional groups sharing information and across national organisations offering legal, and strategic expertise. It is the complexity of these characteristics that is particularly of interest in this paper, specifically in terms of how a movement which spans so many dimensions was able to mount an effective collective resistance. Therefore, although our framing analysis may hold for social movements in general, it is particularly important for environmental disputes which are more keenly characterised by the multi-scalar and temporal coalitions of divergent interests in defence of a specific territory that we see exhibited here.

Data collection and analysis

Initial data collection was broad and involved identifying the key voices and groups in the debate over fracking in the UK. Drawing on the list of opposition voices identified in this first stage of a broad media search, the second phase involved the extrapolation of textual accounts by these actors (see [Table 2](#)). This involved downloading all press releases (PR) developed by the identified groups over the period 2011–2019, which represented the period between the two governmental moratoriums on the industry. This data included over 400 press releases.

Finally, interviews were conducted by purposely sampling the main participants uncovered in the previous stages of analysis. The data collected draws on the accounts of 20 interviewees (see [Table 3](#)). Interviews lasted between one and two hours and were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Table 2. Number and distribution of press releases.

Organisation	No. of press releases reviewed
Frack Off	115
Frack Free Fernhurst	204
Friends of the Earth	57
Greenpeace	13
RSPB	6
CPRE	8
The National Trust	2

Table 3. Interviewees.

Government (10)	Category	Role
GOV#1	European Union	MEP
GOV#2	Parish Council	Parish Councillor
GOV#3	Health and Safety Executive	Civil Servant
GOV#4	County Council	Chief Officer
GOV#5	County Council	Environment Officer
GOV#6	Environment Agency	Civil Servant
GOV#7	Environment Agency	Civil Servant
GOV#8	County Council	Chief Officer
GOV#9	National Government Industry Body	Commissioner
GOV#10	Government Consultancy	Director
NGO (4)	Category	Role
NGO#1	National Organisation	Policy Director
NGO#2	National Organisation	National Campaigner
NGO#3	National Organisation	Senior Campaigner
NGO#4	National Organisation	National Campaigner
Grassroots opposition (6)	Category	Role
OPP#1	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer
OPP#2	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer
OPP#3	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer
OPP#4	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer
OPP#5	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer
OPP#6	Local Opposition Member	Volunteer

We conducted a frame analysis of these texts, focusing on how the issue of fracking was constructed and given coherence through central concepts. For each key framing, we clarified the problems addressed or identified with fracking, the solutions or tactics mobilized by the framing, and the rationale or call to arms used to engage in resisting fracking (Benford and Snow 2000). This culminated in the identification of heterogeneous actors with divergent framings. These divergent framings triggered our interest in how they kept the overarching movement together amid such divergence.

The final stage of the analysis unpacked the dynamics of the different framings. The analysis established three processes of convergence – funnelling, expanding and familiarising – which collectively produced a ‘web’ of vertical, horizontal and contextual linkages to establish a convergence space of resistance within which aspects of divergence could be maintained. Thus, the analysis of these processes showed that convergence did not overcome divergence, but rather that divergence was maintained within the convergence space.

Divergence within the UK fracking movement

Our findings suggest that actors within the movement framed fracking differently in terms of two core aspects: i) divergence of concerns over the effects of fracking and ii) divergence of methods of opposition. This was often due to difference in focus, with grassroots opposition members focusing on the local – ‘we were

concerned about what it would mean to us, as a community' (OPP#1 2019) – and NGOs working more broadly: 'my involvement was sort of primarily to engage with key stakeholders in government and elsewhere to sort of outline our position and what we thought was required in terms of changes' (NGO#1 2014). Similarly, established NGOs tended to demonstrate greatest concern in relation to climate change, while grassroots community groups framed fracking more towards locally specific issues, including contamination of local water, air pollution from vent flaring and increased traffic, industrialisation of the countryside, destruction of property values, seismicity and the degradation of areas of natural beauty.

The *divergence of concern* was explained in part by one interviewee who referred to local communities being more receptive to the immediacy of local environmental impacts as opposed to the intangibility of climate change in the locale:

To some extent the far biggest risk and argument against the shale gas industry is climate change and that's a global issue . . . but in some ways the increased traffic and the increased disruption and the earthquakes . . . those are the things experienced immediately by the local community and those are the things that are getting the attention (GOV#1 2019)

Thus local environmental impacts appeared to be central to the emergence of grassroots resistance as they were immediately more tangible to local communities, so much so that at times local issues took precedence over climate change concerns within opposition framing, to the extent that climate change would no longer be included in framings of opposition: 'Some people – some campaigners think that you shouldn't mention climate change at all because it's an issue most people don't understand or if they do understand they don't really care about it'. (OPP#2 2014). So, although there was a tendency for climate change to be overshadowed in some community based communications, NGOs themselves remained firm in prioritising climate change as the central reason to oppose fracking in their broader campaigns: 'I go and explain why [our NGO] have got a problem with it, which focuses on climate change' (NGO#3 2015).

This local orientation to framing fracking not only revealed divergence between NGOs and community resistance movements, but also led to regional divergence between community groups dependent on their geographical position. For example, concern over fracking proved stronger in areas where industry development was imminent. In these instances, objection tended to originate from a regional perspective regarding how the practice would affect the local community:

But what happened was, we didn't know anything about it, didn't know what shale gas was, didn't really have much of an opinion either way, but we were concerned about what it would mean to us, as a community. (OPP#1 2019).

This regional focus was further pronounced by references to fracking's suitability in particular areas. For example, near national parks, the oppositional framing focused on the suitability of the chosen location. Thus, far from homogeneity, there was divergence in the basic premise of whether actors were opposed to fracking or not, with those who objected to the practice in its entirety and those who objected on the basis of geographic location alone.

There was also *divergence of method*, with different framings of appropriate action. For example, for those areas where licences to frack were possible but not imminent, methods of opposition tended to be limited to persuasive activities like lobbying local councillors for support or information raising events. By contrast, for those areas facing the imminent development of fracking, opposition tended to take on a more physical presence, often in the form of protest camps. Most notable cases of such opposition included the anti-fracking protest camps set up outside proposed development sites in Barton Moss and Preston New Road in the Northwest and the Balcombe in the Southeast.

There was also differentiation in how actors within the environmental movement engaged with legal processes, particularly regarding land access rights. For example, in 2014 the government proposed changes to existing trespass laws to allow fracking companies to frack without consulting landowners above the horizontal well. In response groups within the environmental movement mobilised support against the proposal to stop fracking by harnessing their existing legal right to object. However, in areas where fracking was imminent, rather than utilise legal avenues of opposition, numerous protesters engaged in direct action, often facing arrest and prosecution for trespass onto fracking sites.

Yet, despite the divergent framings in both how fracking was framed and how it was resisted, opposition to fracking in the UK has more generally been presented as a unified movement:

You'd be hard pushed to find anything nice to say about fracking, but this weekend it did something great. It brought together thousands of people from all walks of life and from across the UK to stand together against fracking and fossil fuel extraction everywhere (FoE PR 2013).

The above quotation from a Friends of the Earth (FoE) press release is perhaps unsurprising given that the NGO seeks to coordinate action across the UK. However, the benefit of displaying a unified front has also been recognised at a more regional level, with a Frack Free Fernhurst Press release stating that 'if enough of us stand together we can't be ignored' (Frack Free Fernhurst 2014). This recognition of the role played by unity in resistance movements, from both established NGOs and grassroots community groups suggests there has been a willingness across the anti-fracking space for some

form of collectively of opposition. The following sections explain the processes through which this collective resistance was formed, despite the divergence of concern and method.

Processes of convergence

In this section, we outline three processes of convergence which contributed to creating a collective space in which divergence in framings of fracking and opposition to fracking could be maintained, while ensuring a broader convergence of resistance. We have termed these convergence processes: funneling, expanding and familiarising (see [Table 4](#)).

Funnelling

Funnelling created vertical linkages between heterogeneous actors by drawing connections between multiple framings of potential fracking impacts. For example, members of grassroots opposition movements, initially drawn to the cause by local concerns such as increased traffic or denuded countryside, began to engage in resistance beyond these boundaries. These linkages were formed by making connections between local concerns and the broader issue of climate change. As one fracking opposition member suggested:

Fracking is a very good way of getting climate change into people's consciousness . . . It does make people look at the whole issue really from a very personal angle, whereas the climate change debate can be very impersonal. The glaciers that melt aren't in Britain . . . When a fracking [vehicle] turns up in your backyard that's when you know it's really - it's very, very personal. (OPP#2 2014)

Similarly, funnelling enabled connections between climate change concerns and more localised objections: 'People who've been fighting what often feels like a long and lonely battle for clean energy and climate justice found ways to link up their struggles' (BBC News 2013). Thus, funnelling was a means of making connections between reasons for opposing the industry. For example, the following grassroots opposition member became more engaged with the climate debate after joining the movement due to local issues:

I'm quite interested in countryside rural matters and I do believe in preserving our green space, etc., so I've got that hat on. I've never really done any activism, I've not really done any campaigning prior to that and in the last five and a half years, I've done everything. I've been to Paris, to the Climate Change talks, I've been to the Houses of Parliament twice to speak, I've been on TV, I've been protesting at the site doing slow walks at all the sites. (Opp#1 2019)

However, these vertical linkages did not lead to a homogenisation of the movement, in that the relationship between broader and local concerns could remain contingent. As another interviewee noted: 'people weren't unconcerned about

Table 4. Processes of convergence.

Process	Process Description	Illustrative Quotations	Outcome
Funnelling	Draws vertical linkages between multiple opposition framings of fracking	I started off thinking it was about traffic and noise and light and the risk to the water. And then you start to realise there's far more impact, so then once you get engaged into that, you start realising it's a lot bigger (OPP#1, 2019) It's on our doorstep, its right there, it's a new industry, it's so perverse in some ways to be doing this, it's so visual [local impacts] and it brings climate change down to a very visible level in England. (GOV#1, 2019) It [fracking water] damages the environment or we have to transport it. We've got trucks – HGV – heavy goods vehicles – transporting mass quantities of water and chemicals back and forth between the plants, let alone all the traffic that's going to cause and let alone all the pollution that's going to cause from the traffic. (OPP#5, 2015)	Creating shared meaning
Expanding	Draws horizontal linkages between divergent locales	If fracking is allowed to go ahead in Lancashire it could happen throughout the UK. (Frack Off, PR, 2012) This means that 20–80% of the water also remains underground and once underground, fracking fluid mixes with the naturally occurring brines and is subject to geological forces and chemical processes over the long term, from years to decades. How far and how fast this blend can travel, and how it might change chemically, is impossible to know and control (FoE, PR, 2013) Eventually, here, at Roseacre, it's got turned down eventually, Cuadrilla can't crack at our village, but we're heavily involved with Preston New Road, it's not just about our community to us, it's about all of the communities that would be impacted. (OPP#1)	Broadening geographical boundaries of the movement
Familiarising	Draws contextual linkages via the use of social norms to legitimate action across a diverse constituency of actors	When I first took part in the direct action we were really keen to make sure that this was people who had responsible jobs, you know ordinary (if there is such a thing) members of the community (GOV#1) It's a brilliantly powerful movement because I think simply because it is communities coming together and not having to be mobilised by Friends of the Earth or Greenpeace or anybody else. (NGO#1) They [protesters] brought their children and their little dogs and whatever. (OPP#4)	Creating shared experience

climate change but the local issues came more to the fore' (OPP#2 2014). Thus, some groups would start out in opposition to fracking due to local concerns and then via funnelling become fully immersed in the climate debate, thus creating vertical linkages around opposition to fracking with actors outside the locale such as NGOs. Conversely, others would remain primarily concerned about local issues, and as such divergence remained in the perceived saliency of each frame. Therefore, although these vertical linkages enabled actors to unite under common oppositional frames, the movement as a whole remained heterogeneous with regards to the perceived saliency of these local diagnostic frames.

Expanding

The convergence process of expanding enabled horizontal linkages to be made across spatial boundaries, with opposition to fracking in one locality projected onto others. This expansion of the geographic threat posed by fracking, multiplied the number of local concerns for environmental degradation, water contamination, noise, traffic and seismicity across regions. This served to duplicate the concern over fracking beyond specific locales and built connections with and support from other regions. Subsequently this led to networks of engagement across communities, with regional groups coming together with the assistance of national NGOs to work collectively as part of a more coordinated movement:

So, we do work together, it's not hand-in-hand all of the time, but there is a network there that people use and there are groups that are national groups, if you want, national anti-fracking groups like Frack Free United and groups like that who do more working with NGOs, groups like that. (OPP#1 2019)

Yet these linkages again did not lead to homogeneity as methods of opposition continued to diverge based on the saliency of localised reasons to oppose fracking. For example, Friends of the Earth suggested that 'the volume of water needed might not be significant at a national level . . . however there could be local and regional problems' (FoE PR 2013). Consequently, for some regions water use was often raised as a significant concern:

The [local area] is one of the poorest parts of the UK. We're about to let companies come in and throw millions of gallons of fresh water into a pump and it comes back radiated and toxic. (OPP#3 2014)

This represented a form of divergence between opposition members in other regions, where water use was not deemed to be as significant. And, similarly to areas where there was localised concern over fracking in national parks, areas with scarce water supplies adopted a more parochial opposition to fracking while remaining ambivalent about its use in other locales with more plentiful water supply. Yet, despite divergence in the perceived saliency of water use on

a localised level, horizontal framings were formed which created linkages between these regions by expanding the focus from a regional to a national concern. For example, one interviewee in drawing on the policy objectives of the national water companies reframed the problem of water use as a national as well as a regional concern: ‘the water industry is being faced with some fairly tough targets for cutting down on wastage ... how much water is going to be used for fracking is going to become an issue.’ (OPP#1 2019). Thus, expanding to a national frame enabled horizontal linkages to be made between regions as they each shared in the same national water industry.

Expansion also enabled horizontal linkages between areas where proponents of fracking had previously emphasised divergence. For example, in arguing for an expansion of UK fracking, Lord Howell Guildford called for a distinction ‘between one area and another, rather than lump[ing] them all together’ and argued that the new industry was more suited to the upper quadrant of the UK, an area he characterised in Parliament as the ‘desolate north’ (BBC News 2013). Opposition politicians and fracking opponents seized on these comments by creating horizontal linkages between these two regions, enabling a space of convergence between the North and South in a projected collective resistance: ‘From the ‘desolate’ north to the southern Tory heartlands, communities across the UK are unlikely to sit quietly by if the Government allows dozens of gas wells to be drilled in our countryside’ (BBC News 2013).

Thus, horizontally expanding the discourse enabled a growing convergence in the strength of opposition across regional lines, broadening the geographical boundaries of the movement. However, again this did not lead to homogenisation of opposition. Instead, the horizontal linkages made by expanding enabled the development of a convergence space via duplication and magnification of local concerns, whilst on a regional level the prioritisation of individual localities could still be upheld. Thus, the continuation of prioritisation served to uphold the strength of (in this case local) opposition framings, whilst simultaneously strengthening a broader opposition movement, which for proponents of fracking was harder to fragment.

Familiarising

Like funnelling and expanding, our third process of familiarising worked to bolster and strengthen collective resistance to fracking, whilst enabling localised divergence to be retained. This process centred on the development of contextual linkages between rationales of opposition and resistance, specifically the normalisation and legitimisation of opposition and civil disobedience to create a shared experience. Familiarising used social norms to legitimize actions. Thus, familiarising framed members in terms that would be recognised and deemed to be legitimate by the full spectrum of opposition members. For example, in quoting members of the opposition in media sources, reference

was often made to a socially endorsed characteristic of those member(s), such as their occupation or domestic position in a family structure. A good example of familiarising was the famed ‘Nanas of Barton Moss’, who often featured in images of civil disobedience such as slow walking and lorry blockades.

The Nanas were a group of women who opposed fracking. They were various ages, and not all members had grandchildren of their own, but they were presented as ‘Nanas’ in numerous press releases. They employed a range of actions, including occupying proposed fracking sites, engaging in social media promotion and creating human road blockades for fracking lorries. It was the framing of the group as Nanas which led to a process of familiarising. As one Nana suggested: ‘The Nanas are just ordinary people who want what is best for our families and our communities’ (Nana, in Talk Fracking 2016).

Using familiar contextual social frames such as ‘Nanas’ involved a re-framing of the profile of an activist to something which was more familiar to the ‘ordinary people’ who made up the grassroots membership (Nana 2016). As a result, convergence was enabled between the ‘ordinary people’ of the grassroots and the activist activities characteristic of traditional EMs. In turn, this produced connections between grassroots and mainstream activists in accordance with a shared legitimisation of certain approaches to resistance.

However, again this did not equate to homogeneity in methods of resistance, as actors continued to employ multiple tactics to oppose the industry, from lobbying local politicians to physical protests on-site, and as such divergence remained as to how best to oppose the industry. Thus, the role of familiarising provided a further contextual convergence space within which non-stereotypical activist activities could be combined with other established resistance methods in a form of shared experience.

Discussion and conclusion

The above analysis has shown that the three convergence processes – *funnelling*, *expanding* and *familiarising* – worked collectively and simultaneously to generate vertical, horizontal and contextual linkages within and across the anti-fracking environmental movement. We show that these processes have worked collectively to bring about a convergence space of opposition via a ‘web’ of linkages rather than a homogenisation of the movement under any single unifying frame. Funnelling established vertical links between different issues, thus reinforcing convergence on why fracking should be opposed. Expanding, worked to disseminate this common discourse horizontally across geographical boundaries, resulting in multiple locales opposing fracking in accordance with the various issues brought together and connected via funnelling. Finally, familiarising worked together with expanding to contextually link opponents by legitimising a broad means of opposing fracking in different locales.

The above three processes have enabled a convergence space to form where concerns over fracking have been brought together, connected, and spatially disseminated, whilst multiple means of opposition are legitimised as appropriate. These processes of convergence have enabled a disaggregated grassroots resistance and a centrally organised environmental movement infrastructure to project an image of unity in opposing the development of the hydraulic fracturing industry in the UK. Yet importantly, the movement remains far from homogenous, since divergence remains apparent through the prioritisation of why and how fracking is opposed.

These findings make three central contributions. First, we build on Routledge's (2017) work exploring the radical geographies of protest by explaining how the challenges derived from the multi-scalarity of EMs are managed. In this paper we explain how movements may be both grounded in a localised place, whilst maintaining national/global mobility by demonstrating how discursive connections are made vertically, horizontally and contextually, in order to enable a movement to remain grounded in multiple locales, whilst also transcending these spatial constraints. This provides a detailed understanding of the inner-workings of multi-scalar coalitions that make up EMs.

Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that although actors are able to portray external equivalence in resisting environmental degradation, through processes of convergence actors do not become homogenous, since areas of divergence remain at the inter-regional and inter-organisational level. This supports Routledge's (2000) theory that, rather than taking the form of organisations, EMs represent more a convergence space between heterogeneous actors. Our findings build on this by demonstrating how convergence is enabled, whilst allowing differences to be upheld. In demonstrating how movements can be maintained whilst not only withstanding, but thriving on continued divergence, this paper questions the current tendency to focus on divergence as a hindrance to be overcome in EMs. Rather, our findings support the current shift of many EMs from seeking unification around narrow issues, to a broadening of their agendas to a wider membership base which holds greater political strength.

Whereas this contribution specifically speaks to environmental movement scholarship due to the multi-scalar characteristics of this context, our findings may also be expanded beyond environmental disputes to contribute to our understanding of other forms of social movements. This is especially the case, since prior research on social movements has focused on how dispersed movements may construct shared frames of resistance to unite their campaigns across geographical space (Smith 2002).

Second, our research reinforces the notion of frame expansion within EMs in recognizing that convergence processes enable linkages of goals and activities (Boudet 2011). However, this paper goes further by also addressing where convergence is balanced with divergence. Thus, our analysis demonstrates that complementarity and homogeneity between a movement's interpretive

orientations and framings is not always paramount to successful EMs. Instead, these interpretive orientations can be complementary without necessarily being congruent; where continued divergence in the prioritisation of these interpretive orientations can not only persist, but also be vital to the success of a growing and diverse movement. Rather than wasting resources, the divergence among environmental movement actors can ensure a broader frontier aligning interests to a larger section of society. In our case, people not concerned by climate change opposed fracking for local environmental concerns.

This builds on existing EM research which has unpacked the complexity of movement composition to suggest that a unifying and central discourse can 'accommodate different yet compatible values' (Di Gregorio 2012, p. 6). In this study, we go further by showing that even where a unifying central discourse is not apparent (for example some opponents did not even object to fracking per se, simply to fracking in a specific location), a 'web' of vertical, horizontal and contextual linkages could collectively act to accommodate not only different but also sometimes incompatible positions. Thus, we show that multiple linkages can be made between heterogeneous actors within a movement, working to connect actors in a 'web' of resistance rather than a unified whole.

Finally, and more practically, this paper has revealed how local environmental groups have retained ownership of opposition by retaining divergence within what is a complex national movement of heterogeneous actors. We argue that the vertical, horizontal and contextual processes of funnelling, expanding and familiarising enable divergence to be maintained by creating linkages between framings of reasons to resist environmental destruction and the methods of resistance, without the need for homogeneity. In so doing these processes allow groups to come together, moving beyond connotations of NIMBYism to project a more unified resistance. Here we further Boudet's (2011) work on the role of frame bridging between NIMBYs (Not in my back yard) and NIABYs (Not in anyone's back yard) in EMs. We find that these processes of convergence act locally, inter-regionally, nationally and internationally to construct a coherent 'voice' that has in this case served to significantly delay, disrupt and potentially halt the development of fracking in the UK. The key of the opposition is then not a unified message or method, but discursively linking diverse and, at times, even contradictory demands against a temporal target of opposition. In our case, this target was fracking, although, this could mean all fracking or just fracking in certain places.

Although the movement's success in halting fracking permanently remains to be seen, continued local and national resistance has significantly delayed a full roll out of the industry. This was evident in reports that despite Cuadrilla's fracking

activity in the Northwest of the country, seven out of eight fracking planning applications were rejected by local authorities responding to local environmental and congestion concerns (Vaughan 2018), and more recently the government has put in place a second moratorium on the industry (Ambrose 2019), which at the time of writing has yet to be lifted.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical approval

Ethical approval to conduct this study was granted by the University of Leicester, School of Business Ethics Committee. Before taking part, all participants were provided with a participant information sheet detailing the nature of the study and the nature of their requested involvement.

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