The British environmental movement:
organisational field and network of organisations

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Introduction

‘Britain has the oldest, strongest, best-organized and most widely supported environmental lobby in the world’ (McCormick 1991: 34). McCormick’s claim might be contested, but a movement already strong in the 1980s grew apace into the 1990s. By 1997, the combined membership of the eleven major British environmental movement organisations (EMOs) whose membership figures are published annually in the official government publication, Social Trends, totalled almost 5.3 million. Allowing for the fact that many people are members of more than one group and for the memberships of the many groups not included in Social Trends, these numbers are consistent with the findings of a 1998 survey that found that almost 20 per cent of Britons claimed to be members of one or more environmental organisations (Johnston and Jowell 1999: 183).

Rawcliffe (1998: 15–6) identifies four phases in the development of the British environmental movement. The first – from the mid 1880s to 1900 – was marked by the formation of groups such as the RSPB, National Trust and the forerunners of the Town and Country Planning Association and the Wildlife Trusts. The second – spanning the interwar years – saw the formation of new groups drawing on the broadening base of environmental concern, among them the Councils for the Protection of Rural England, Wales and Scotland, the Ramblers’ Association and the Pedestrians’ Association.

The third phase – from roughly 1960 to the late 1970s – has been seen as marking the emergence of the modern environmental movement. This was not only a period of increased organisational innovation (the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Transport 2000, the Green Alliance and the forerunner of the Green Party all date from this period) but also one of the emergence of international environmental organisations; WWF, Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Greenpeace all established organisation in Britain during these years. It was also the period in which environmentalism was transformed

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1 The research on which this paper is based was undertaken as part of an eight nation comparative investigation: the TEA (Transformation of Environmental Activism) Project, funded by contract no.: ENV4-CT97-0514 from the EC DGXII (Science, Research and Development) (see Appendix A). We are indebted to Debbie Adams and Ben Seel for research assistance.

2 Van der Heijden et al (1992: 18), drawing on Krohberger and Hey (1991), ranked British per capita membership of EMOs well below that of the Netherlands, Denmark and West Germany, but it should be noted that their relatively low figure for Britain was achieved by excluding the National Trust’s two million members, whereas in the case of the Netherlands an apparently similar organisation (Natuurmonumentum) was included.

3 Lowe and Goyder (1983: ) estimated that 30 per cent of members of environmental groups were members of more than one such group.
from a minority concern into a mass movement and its forms of action extended to embrace the more moderate forms of direct action.

The fourth phase – which Rawcliffe dates from the mid 1980s – has been a period of dramatic growth both in the number of environmental groups, and – especially – in the numbers of members and supporters of those groups. In fact, this is a period in which several temporally distinguishable processes followed one another in quick succession. First, from about 1988 to 1990, there was a dramatic increase in the number of members of already established EMOs, and one that was most rapid in the case of the newest and most activist organisations – FoE and Greenpeace. Second, from 1991, there emerged a new generation of EMOs, most notably Earth First!, more radically critical of capitalist consumerism and more committed to mass participation in direct action.

Remarkably, although there have in recent years, been some very good studies of individual organisations or of the broad field of environmental group politics – most notably Peter Rawcliffe’s excellent book (1998) – the last broad and systematic survey of environmental movement organisations in Britain was conducted in 1979–80 by Lowe and Goyder (1983).

In an attempt to remedy this surprising lack of systematic data, we have analysed the data on EMOs that appears in the Environment Council database, Who’s Who in the Environment? (WWE) (1999), and during 1999 we conducted a survey based on a short questionnaire mailed to all 329 environmental and animal welfare organisations which, on the basis of their listing in WWE, might possibly be EMOs operating at the national level in England, Scotland, Wales and / or Northern Ireland. To these we added a small number of radical or recently formed groups of which we had knowledge but which had been omitted from WWE.4

We have focused our efforts on national organisations. One reason for doing so is because this is part of a crossnationally comparative project and, for that reason, we wanted to standardise our units of comparison as much as possible. A second and no less compelling reason is that we had good reasons to believe it would be impossible to assemble data on the whole range of local, district and regional environmental groups and organisations in a country of nearly 60 million people in which the group life of environmentalism is rich and diverse. We knew from earlier studies that local groups are very numerous; for example, the Canterbury and District Environmental Network,

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4 Although WWE? is an invaluable resource, it lists 1,052 organisations. Many of these are government departments or agencies, industry groups, services of interest to environmentalists, or groups whose interests are only peripherally or incidentally environmental, all of which fall outside our conception of the environmental movement. The listings vary a great deal in the amount and quality of the information they provide, and it is not always possible on the basis of the listings alone to determine whether a listed group is a national-level EMO or even whether it is a group at all (a considerable number of grand-sounding environmental organisations turn out, upon investigation, to be one-person operations). For this reason, we decided in our second mailing to err on the side of inclusiveness. Thus we received completed questionnaires from 34 organisations that, on the basis of the information they supplied, did not meet our criteria, usually because they proved to local or regional groups, research or commercial organisations. These have been excluded from the analysis.
which covered a population of about 100,000, consisted of more than 100 organisations of varying sizes and kinds and degrees of activity (David 1997). However, there exists no national directory which lists such local organisations in any comprehensive or representative way, and so we had no base from which to construct a national sample.

However, to talk about ‘national’ organisations in Britain is problematic. The United Kingdom is, officially, a multi-national state consisting of the three nations of Britain (England, Wales and Scotland), together within the ‘province’ of Northern Ireland. However, England is so overwhelmingly the largest constituent (accounting for about 85 per cent of the population) that, in order to facilitate crossnational comparisons, we have treated as British national organisations, all organisations that are active across the whole of Britain together with those that are active in two or more regions of England. Because their numbers are small, we have not analysed Scottish and Welsh national organisations systematically.

Defining the environmental movement

Applying and adapting Diani’s (1992) definition of a social movement, the environmental movement may be defined as: a loose, non-institutionalised network that includes, as well as individuals and groups who have no organisational affiliation, organisations of varying degrees of formality; that is engaged in collective action motivated by shared environmental concern; of which the forms and intensity of both action and concern may vary considerably from place to place and from time to time (Rootes 1997: 326).

Operationalising our definition is a necessary first step in the conduct of empirical inquiry, but it is not so simple as it might seem. Especially in countries such as Britain, EMOs operate in a rich and complex organisational field and whilst each may at least occasionally have contact with a great range of other organisations, it would be stretching common sense too far to describe them as ‘networked’ to all of these organisations, let alone to describe the totality of all such organisations as constituting the ‘environmental movement’. Whether all networked organisations are engaged in collective action is an especially difficult question to answer and is one best deferred until we have established the extent of the ‘network’ that constitutes the environmental movement.

In order more tightly to specify the object of our interest, we developed some principles of selection. In common with our European partners, we sought to survey all groups and organisations principally concerned with nature conservation and environmental protection and operating on a nation-wide basis. We excluded:
• institutions and institutes in natural sciences and technology
• county, district or local level groups
• groups focused solely on regional levels beyond one nation state, and which are clearly not operating at the national level (e.g. dealing with the pollution of the North Sea)
• groups specialising in the conservation of a particular animal, plant or species
• groups of professionals and educational institutions
We also took the decision at the outset to exclude groups concerned only with the conservation of buildings. In this respect, we have parted company with Lowe and Goyder (1983) whose survey of 77 environmental groups included seven groups primarily concerned with buildings (the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, the Ancient Monuments Society, the Friends of Friendless Churches, the Historic Churches Preservation Trust, the Rescue Trust for British Archaeology and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings). We also excluded groups whose principal purpose appeared to be recreational and only incidentally to involve the environment. Thus four further groups included by Lowe and Goyder (the British Horse Society, the British Mountaineering Council, the Camping Club, and the Caravan Club) fall outside our conception of the environmental movement. The upshot is that we would consider only 65 of Lowe and Goyder’s 77 groups to be part of the environmental movement. Only 22 groups appear in both their survey and ours, and this may be taken as evidence of the fluidity of the movement. Nevertheless, since both include all the largest and most generally important groups, we can be reasonably confident of the comparability of our results.

Our greatest difficulties arose when attempting to select among wildlife groups. Employing the common criteria detailed above, we have not included in our analysis data on the British Dragonfly Society or the International Otter Survival Fund. However, we did include the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society because its remit appeared to be wider than its name implies, and because of the iconic significance of whales and dolphins to the environmental movement. Such cases signal the difficulty of making classificatory decisions and serve as a reminder that, at the margin, decisions on inclusion and exclusion are somewhat arbitrary. Nevertheless, although some decisions at the margin may be disputable, we are confident that the broad picture we paint of the British environmental movement is a fair one.

Because this research is part of a crossnationally comparative European project, we have adopted a common and inclusive definition of the environmental movement. In one important particular, however, British conceptions of the scope of the environmental movement differ from those prevalent in most of continental Europe. In most European countries, animal welfare and hunting issues are generally regarded relatively unproblematically as a part, albeit usually a minor one, of the broad agenda of the environmental movement. In Britain, however, anti-hunting and animal welfare groups have quite distinct histories, and although there are some overlaps of personnel and concerns between them and environmental groups, there are some respects in which they have been at variance with the mainstream of the environmental movement.

Many people who identify themselves as members or supporters of the environmental movement in Britain do not regard that movement as including either campaigners against hunting or other animal welfare campaigners. Although vegetarianism is part of the culture of the British Green Party (Faucher 1997, 1999) and many members of British environmental movement organisations are vegetarian, as a matter of policy if not
necessarily as a basis of individual choice, their vegetarianism is sometimes on ecological rather than animal welfare grounds. Some self-proclaimed conservationists are pro-hunting on the grounds that the preservation of hunting encourages landowners to retain traditional landscape features that on strictly commercial criteria might be removed; hedges and copses act as refuges for hunted animals and, because they are also sanctuaries for other native wildlife and for many species of endangered flora, they are considered essential to the preservation of bio-diversity. This is one strand of the pro-hunting Countryside Alliance, the umbrella organisation that incorporates the long-established British Field Sports Association and in 1998 organised one of the biggest street demonstrations ever seen in London.

The recent rise to prominence of groups concerned with the welfare of animals kept for commercial purposes, whether as farm animals or for medical experiments, has further complicated the picture. There is, however, considerable evidence that mainstream environmental movement organisations are concerned to keep their distance from animal welfare groups. As one prominent British environmentalist remarked, the environmental movement is threatened by animal welfare as ‘it is driving their agenda into a corner that they don’t really want to go into’. For some organisations, there is a straightforward conflict of interest: ‘a lot of … members [of the RSPB] support their objectives because they want to shoot ducks. … if suddenly it is cruel to shoot a duck, they would lose a lot of their members’ (Wigglesworth and Kendall 1999).

In Britain, animal welfare has generally been considered as a set of issues quite distinct from those embraced by the environmental movement and it seems that by failing to distinguish animal welfare groups from those concerned with more strictly and narrowly environmental issues we might, in Britain, be conflating two quite separate movements. However, the distinction is not – and never has been – a completely watertight one. The (Royal) Society for the Preservation of Birds (RSPB) first met in 1891 on the premises of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). The RSPCA had itself been formed in 1824 and had by the 1850s embraced the conservation of wild birds. Lowe and Goyder (1983) did include the RSPCA among the 77 environmental groups they surveyed but, significantly, it was the only such group they included. Because the RSPCA’s primary purpose is not environmental, we have classified it as an animal welfare group.

There are good reasons why previous studies of the environmental movement in Britain have not generally included animal welfare organisations, and, as we shall see, our evidence strongly supports the maintenance of this distinction. For that reason, in this initial descriptive account of the movement, we report the findings for animal welfare and more strictly environmental organisations separately.

The survey

The survey was conducted in two stages, with a first mailing in Spring / early summer 1999 to the 120 groups that appeared most unambiguously to meet our criteria. After reminder letters and follow-up calls, this first stage produced 86 usable responses, but it included all the larger environmental movement organisations; only four apparently
significant groups failed to return completed questionnaires. In December, after we had conducted a more detailed analysis of the listings in *Who’s Who in the Environment?*, we mailed questionnaires to those groups that, on the basis of their listings, appeared to be possibly national-level organisations within the environmental movement as we conceived it but which had not been included in our original mailing. This second mailing produced a much lower response rate and few additions to our sample. It was clear from the responses to this second mailing that we were testing the limits of the environmental movement, reaching organisations that did not consider themselves to be part of the movement and / or that were extremely small, sometimes one person ‘front room’ or ‘letterhead’ organisations. For these reasons, we are confident that our survey of environmental movement organisations operating at the national level in Britain is as comprehensive as is practicably possible.

Altogether, we mailed questionnaires to 329 organisations. We received 154 responses and 144 completed questionnaires. These included responses from all eleven EMOs whose membership figures are reported annually in *Social Trends*.

**Estimating the size of the movement**

McCormick (1991: 4) claimed there were ‘about 150 organizations which can be described as national, regional or local environmental interest groups’ in Britain. The *Directory for the Environment* (1990) (cited in McCormick 1991: 34–5) listed 65 environmental NGOs working at the national level, ‘62 local groups (mainly county wildlife and naturalists’ trusts) and 16 regional groups (restricted to Scotland, Wales and / or Northern Ireland)’.

The Environment Council database, *WWE*, in 1999 listed 203 organisations that appear to meet our criteria for inclusion as EMOs operating at the national level, as well as 20 animal welfare organisations operating at the national level. There are, in addition, 18 national organisations that deal with a single (or very closely related group of) species, 56 whose environmental concerns appear limited or secondary, and 8 that are part of another organisation. The database lists 25 national EMOs (and 3 animal welfare organisations) for Scotland, 8 for Wales and 7 for Northern Ireland. The database also contains information on 67 EMOs that operate only on a regional, district or local level.

It would appear that either the 1999 database is considerably more inclusive then the 1990 one, or that there has, in the meantime, been a considerable proliferation of EMOs in Britain. When we look at the dates of foundation of the EMOs listed, it is evident that both are true.

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5 These were the the Soil Association and the Wildlife Trusts, the Socialist Environmental and Resources Association (SERA) and the Women’s Environmental Network (WEN). Of these, neither SERA nor WEN was regarded as one of their most important cooperants by any of our respondents.

6 It is difficult to estimate a response rate because, in the absence of reliable population parameters, part of our exercise was to establish precisely how many national-level environmental groups there were in the UK.
Table 1.
Dates of foundation of EMOs and Animal Welfare Groups listed in WWE

As can be seen from Table 1, well over half of all the national EMOs listed were founded after 1980, and of the local / regional groups listed, more than four-fifths were founded after 1980. By contrast, most of the animal welfare groups listed were established before 1980.

It is tempting to conclude from this that the rate of organisational innovation in the environmental movement has increased markedly, but it is hazardous to do so from this information alone. WWE may give us a reasonable snapshot of the range of environmental organisations that existed in 1999 (although, as we discovered, some of those listed had already ceased to exist by the time the database was published), but it is not an historical record of the various waves of group formation.

It is likely that the newest groups will be underestimated in any directory, but that those established between five and ten years ago will be quite fully represented because they have existed long enough to have become known to the compilers of directories but not for so long that organisational entropy will have led to the delisting of groups that survive in name only. Older organisations are the survivors from among previous waves of organisational innovation and time has thinned their numbers. Some organisations change their names, some amalgamate with others, some decline in importance and prominence, and some simply cease to exist. To assess waves of organisational innovation properly would require us to compare the listings of comparably inclusive directories at a number of points in time. Such an undertaking would be time-consuming and frustrating (how, for instance, can we be confident that directories compiled in the past are comparably inclusive with those of the present?) and it is not one we have attempted.

Nor should we make much of the contrast between the ages of the EMOs and animal welfare groups listed. WWE is, after all, primarily a directory of environmental organisations and it cannot be expected to be as inclusive in its listings of animal welfare groups, only the better established of which are likely to be listed. The more specialised Animal Contacts Directory (1999) lists 600 ‘national (UK) animal rights and welfare groups’, and a further 270 ‘key’ local groups.

The apparent decline in the rate of formation of environmental groups in the 1990s might be exaggerated by the changing forms of environmental (and animal welfare) organisations. Although it is perhaps understandable that WWE did not list Genetix Snowball, the group campaigning against GMOs, because it was founded only in 1998, neither did it list Earth First! even though it was set up in Britain in 1991, or The Land is Ours, established in 1995. These new, radical groups, so characteristic of the most recent wave of British environmental activism, are deliberately resistant to the forms of organisation most hospitable to the compilers of directories, and so they are more likely to be omitted.
Our survey includes rather more than one in three of the organisations listed in the Environment Council database. In order to avoid giving an inflated estimate of the representativeness of our survey, we have, if anything, erred on the side of inclusiveness in our analysis of the Environment Council database and on the side of strict application of our criteria in the case of the survey data. Compared with the database, the pattern of dates of formation of the environmental groups on which we have collected survey data is similar, except that the survey includes over half of the groups established up to 1960 and a lower proportion thereafter. This is consistent with our concern to ensure the inclusion in the survey of all the larger and most frequently mentioned groups.

Table 2:
Environmental and animal welfare groups by number of employees

As Table 2 shows, if we use numbers of paid employees as an indicator of size (it is also likely to be a reasonable surrogate for income), all but one of the largest groups (over 100 employees) listed in the database are covered by our survey. (The one large omission – Intermediate Technology – is essentially a Third World development charity and its omission does not seriously compromise our results.) We also have survey data on almost two-thirds of the medium sized groups (21 – 100 employees) and a little less than one-third of the smaller groups.

When we crosstabulate the age and the size of national environmental groups, it is apparent that our survey includes all six of the larger groups (groups with more than five employees) established up to 1900, 9 of the 13 such groups formed between 1901 and 1960, and 16 of the 49 formed after 1960. Apart from Intermediate Technology, for which no founding date is listed, the only groups with more than 50 employees missing from our survey data are The Wildlife Trusts and Landwise Limited, both founded in the 1980s.7

Thematic concerns

If we compare the WFE listings for the 74 national EMOs covered by our survey with all the 203 national EMOs whose thematic concerns and areas of activity were listed in the database, the leading area of concern in both cases was wildlife habitats (roughly 40 per cent of EMOs) and thereafter the rank orderings are similar (see Table 3), with farming, fishing and forestry and parks, reserves and landscapes ranking highly in both cases. The built environment was in both cases a middle ranking concern. Where the organisations surveyed differed most from those listed in the database was in the rankings attributed to flora and fauna (25 per cent in the database, 11 per cent among those surveyed). The groups surveyed were also rather more often concerned with transport and with energy issues. This suggests that our ‘sample’ of EMOs is somewhat

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7 The Wildlife Trusts (also known as the Royal Society for Nature Conservation) is a network of local trusts which seek to protect wildlife in town and country and manage 2000 nature reserves. Landwise gives its primary aim as the promotion of the employment prospects of unemployed people, principally through their involvement in environmental improvement projects in decayed urban areas.
biased toward those concerned with urban and industrial issues and away from strictly and narrowly wildlife issues. As far as their activities are concerned, information ranked first (just under half in both cases), followed by services and management and education.

Table 3: Thematic concerns and activities of national EMOs and animal welfare groups. (source WWE - reclassified)

By comparison with EMOs, the pattern of concerns of animal welfare groups, both in the database and in our survey, is quite different and is markedly specialised upon animal welfare issues, issues that were listed as being of concern to only one in ten EMOs. If we employ a simplified classification of the very extensive list in the Environment Council database (see Table 3), we find that animal welfare groups checked an average of 1.7 thematic concerns, compared with 2.95 for the national EMOs. Of the 20 animal welfare groups listed in the database, only fauna and flora was listed as a thematic concern of as many as five groups, and only two groups declared a concern with wildlife habitats. A similar pattern was evident among the animal welfare groups surveyed.

In our survey, we also asked respondents to check which of a long list of issues constituted their main fields of action. Confusingly, both EMOs and animal welfare groups reported that they had more areas of concern and to be less specialised than their entries in the Environmental Council database had indicated (see Table 4).

Table 4: Issues of concern to national groups (survey 1999)

Spatial distribution

Of the 203 national EMOs, just over one third (72) had registered addresses in London, 38 in the South East and 25 in the South West, with the rest distributed across the rest of the country. We can compare this with what, in our survey, respondents reported to be the parts of the country in which their group to be most represented (see Table 5). The areas of significant over-representation are London and the South-west, whereas England from the Midlands north is clearly under-represented.

Table 5: Addresses of national EMOs compared with distribution of UK population by region

This pattern can be compared with the geographical distribution of protests reported in The Guardian between 1988 and 1997 (Rootes 2000). Just over half (52 per cent) of all environmental protests of which the location was reported occurred in London and the South-east of England, regions that together account for just under a third (31 per cent) of the British population. The most over-represented region was London (12 per cent of population but 30 per cent of reported environmental protest). London apart, it was the South-west of England which was the most over-represented region: 12 per cent of reported protest was located in the South-west, compared with just over 8 per cent of the

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8 The list corresponded to that of the list of claims coded in our analysis of the protest event data.
population. This overrepresentation is consistent with a very modest geographical concentration of electoral support for the Green Party and with claims that the South-west is the centre of a ‘DIY’ counterculture (Jowers et al., 1996) of which environmentalism is a key component.9

After allowances are made for the tendency of national protests and national organisations to be concentrated in the national capital, the patterns of addresses of EMOs and of reported protest do not differ radically from the picture of the spatial distribution of membership of EMOs reported in earlier studies. Both Cowell and Jehlicka’s (1995) mapping of the spatial distribution of membership of major environmental organisations and Rüdig, Bennie and Franklin’s (1991) survey of members of the Green Party show that greens and environmentalists are disproportionately concentrated in the South of England outside London.

**Institutionalisation: organisational growth**

Van der Heijden (1997: 31) distinguishes three aspects to the process of institutionalisation: organisational growth; internal institutionalisation; external institutionalisation. On all three counts, but especially the first two, the British environmental movement is in an advanced state of institutionalisation.

The numbers of organisations (discussed above) give one take on the organisational growth of the movement. Numbers of members and supporters give another.

**Table 6: Membership of national EMOs and animal welfare groups, 1997**

We asked respondents to our survey to indicate the numbers of their members for each of ten years 1988–1997. The numbers for 1997 are reported in Table 6. Not all the EMOs surveyed are membership organisations, but amongst those that are and that answered the question, there is, as might be expected, a considerable range in the numbers of members. It is apparent that the size of the membership of an EMO tends to correlate with its age.

Probably more interesting that the size of the membership at any one point in time is its change over time. Unfortunately, a high rate of non-response to the relevant questions means that it is extremely difficult, on the basis of the responses to our survey, to detail changes over time. Only 30 of the 76 national EMOs provided membership figures for at least the first and last of the ten years 1988–97. Fortunately, however, information on the number of members of the largest EMOs, supplied by the EMOs themselves, is published annually in *Social Trends*. Table 7 displays the figures for various years from 1971 to 1998.10

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9 If data from summary reports is included, the over-representation of London is reduced and that of the rest of the South-east is markedly increased, but both the impact of a few large campaigns and the high proportion of missing data suggest caution in the interpretation of this data.

10 ‘Membership’ is, in some cases, construed rather broadly. The figures for Greenpeace, which is not a mass membership organisation, refer to the numbers of supporting donors. The apparent
Between 1971 and 1981, the membership of several of the longest established environmental movement organisations, including the National Trust (NT) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) grew fourfold; between 1981 and 1991, it doubled again, and it has gone on increasing, albeit more slowly, through the 1990s to the point where the NT now has 2.5 million members and the RSPB over 1 million. During the 1980s the most spectacular growth was in organisations newly established during the previous decade, notably Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Greenpeace. Between 1981 and 1991, the numbers of members or supporting donors of FoE grew six-fold and those of Greenpeace grew ten-fold. It is not easy to interpret the apparent decline in the ‘membership’ of Greenpeace since its early 1990s peak since Greenpeace is not, in fact, a mass membership organisation and so reports the numbers of its supporting donors instead. As the Greenpeace respondent to our survey remarked, the numbers of Greenpeace supporters in any year reflects, to a considerable extent, Greenpeace’s fund-raising efforts in that year; years in which special fund-raising campaigns were conducted will thus show an increased number of supporters.

Even the new campaigning organisations of the 1970s are now substantial operations: in 1995, Greenpeace, with over 200,000 donor supporters, had a staff of 106 and an income of over seven million pounds, and FoE, with over 100,000 members, had a staff of 110 and an income of nearly four million pounds (Rawcliffe 1998: 78–80). Our survey gives us some information on the incomes of EMOs and animal welfare groups in 1997 (see Table 9).

### Table 8: Income of national EMOs and animal welfare groups, 1997

The older organisations (founded before 1901) tended to have the larger memberships and the larger incomes, whereas more recently founded groups tended to have lower memberships and (especially) lower incomes. However, there is a lot of missing data here: only 49 of the 76 EMOs provided information on even their 1997 income, and only 51 provided membership figures for that year.

It is even more difficult, on the basis of the responses to our survey, to detail changes over time. Only 28 of the 76 national EMOs provided information on their income for at least the first and last of the ten years 1988–97, and only 19 provided details of the numbers of their employees through the decade (and of these 19, nine had no employees throughout).

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Although it has been possible to piece together from published sources the story of the growth over time of the larger and more prominent EMOs, such sources tell us little or nothing about the plethora of smaller groups. However, we are able, from our survey, we have information for the decade 1988–97 on the membership of 25 smaller national EMOs, the numbers of the employees of 9, and the incomes of 24 smaller EMOs. These are aggregated in Table 10.

Table 9: Aggregated numbers of members, employees and incomes of smaller national EMOs, 1988–97

On all three indicators of size, it would appear that over the decade the rate of growth of smaller (often newer and more specialised) groups has been faster than that of the larger EMOs.

Although the relatively high rate of non-response to these questions means that our survey data is incomplete, such information as our respondents did provide supports the contention that, in terms of all three of membership, number of employees and income, national EMOs have grown significantly during the past decade or so and that there has been no general reversal of that growth in the most recent years. This picture of an overall fairly steady rise in the size of the environmental movement sector is a nice counterpoint to the more episodic pattern of environmental protest as revealed by our earlier work (Rootes 2000).

Sources of income

As far as their sources of income are concerned, the overriding impression is one of diversity, both of the source of income of most individual groups, and among the groups considered collectively (see Table 10).

Table 10: Sources of income of national EMOs

Donations and membership subscriptions were the most common sources of income, but the proportions of total income so derived varied widely. The least frequently reported sources of income were the EU from which only 14 groups reported deriving any income, compared with 51 who reported that they derived none from the EU. While 23 groups reported deriving some income from state subsidies, 43 derived none. It appears that private companies are a little more liberal with their disbursements: 24 groups derived some income from companies, compared with 40 who derived none.

Table 11: Sources of income of selected national EMOs

The most striking thing to emerge from a comparison of a selection of EMOs is the much greater reliance of the newer campaigning groups (FoE, Greenpeace and Earth First!) on membership contributions and donations (at least 90 per cent in each case) by comparison with the older organisations where the mix of advocacy and service
functions is usually tipped more towards the provision of services than to the advocacy of causes.

**Forms of action**

**Table 12: Forms of action taken by national EMOs**

Respondents were asked about the forms of action in which their group had engaged in the previous twelve months. What is most striking is the moderation and conventional character of most EMOs’ actions. Only two reported that their groups had participated in a blockade or sit-in, only three in an occupation or disruption of an event, and only seven in a boycott. Street demonstrations are an increasingly accepted form of protest in Britain (see BSA data), but only 9 groups were reported to have participated in one, and only one of them more than three times. Rallies were rather more common (15 groups were reported to have participated in one) and indoor assemblies or teach-ins even more so, almost half (37) of those who answered this question reported that their group had participated in the previous twelve months. In terms of the number of groups engaging in it, leafletting was the most common form of action (62 groups), followed by press conferences and lobbying (each 49), the publication of scientific reports (46) and petitions and public letters (45). Recourse to litigation was relatively rare (11 groups) and procedural complaints were only a little more common (18).

If we consider the volume of each activity and not merely the number of groups that employ it, it is lobbying that emerges as clearly the most common form of action, followed closely by leafletting and more distantly by petitioning and letter-writing and indoor assemblies. The more radical forms of action are uncommon.

The snapshot that emerges of British EMOs in 1999 is one of organisations more engaged in lobbying government, informing the public, attempting to mobilise public opinion via the mass media, and publishing scientific reports rather than engaging in mass demonstrations or more radical forms of direct action. The picture then is one of organisations that behave in the predominantly conventional ways characteristic of a relatively institutionalised movement.

But if, on this evidence, EMOs appear to be relatively institutionalised, there is no clear evidence that this is a recent development. Asked whether their group engaged in each of these forms of action more or less often five years previously (i.e. in 1994, towards the peak of the wave of environmental protest that we have documented elsewhere [Rootes 2000]), in every case the overwhelming majority of those who answered the question reported that the frequency of the activity was the same as it had been then.12 The

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12 It is interesting to speculate whether a different wording of the question might have produced different results. It might have been better to have asked ‘Please indicate whether your group engages in these activities more or less often now than it did approximately five years ago’ instead of ‘Please indicate whether your group engaged in each of these activities more or less often approximately five years ago’ even though the question was prefaced with the request ‘Please think back about five years’. If the question as asked was ambiguous, it may well have produced a random pattern of response concentrated about the ‘same’ category.
number of groups reported to have increased the frequency of leafletting (16) was almost balanced by the number (18) reported to have reduced its frequency. Similar counterbalancing changes were apparent in respect of demonstrations and litigation. Only in the cases of press conferences (19 more often five years previously, 11 less), scientific reports (16 more often five years earlier, 12 less) and petitions and public letters (11 more often five years earlier, 8 less) was there a clear nett shift towards reduced frequency of action, and only in the cases of cultural performances (6 more often five years earlier, 10 less) and of lobbying (11 more often five years earlier, 14 less) does there appear to have been a nett increase in frequency of action. The pattern was similar among the eight animal welfare groups surveyed.

**External institutionalisation**

Environmental movement organisations in Britain have often felt marginal to the political process, but even organisations such as FoE and Greenpeace that were long regarded as the radical, activist end of the environmental movement have, as a result of their past successes, consolidated their status as unofficial experts in various environmental policy areas and have increasingly been admitted to policy-making circles. Mainstream environmental movement organisations are increasingly prominent actors in a range of activities in partnership with government and / or industry, and many groups, both established and grass roots, are involved in Agenda 21 activities at the local level.

To assess the extent of the integration of EMOs with other prominent actors in civil society, respondents were asked whether their group had ever been involved in regular exchanges of information and / or collaboration with any of 22 organisations or types of organisations.

**Table 13: Groups with which EMOs and animal welfare groups have regularly exchanged information or collaborated**

It is perhaps an indication of the degree of institutionalisation achieved by British EMOs that the category most often checked was ‘state agencies’ and that ‘business organisations’ ranked third, just behind ‘community action groups’ and just ahead of ‘groups working on aid, trade and development issues’. All three established political parties ranked in the top half of the list, with the Conservatives lagging only a little behind Labour and Liberal Democrats. Rather surprisingly in view of its electoral marginality, the Green Party ranked just behind the centre-left parties and ahead of the Conservatives.

The main difference between EMOs and animal welfare groups was that the latter were disproportionately unlikely to have exchanged information or collaborated with community action groups, state agencies and business organisations.

**Networks**
We have earlier defined the environmental movement as a network. However, as we have seen, environmental organisations in Britain are numerous and diverse both in their organisational characteristics and their thematic concerns. The extent to which they are sufficiently networked one to another and to which they have shared a common identity is therefore problematic. We might confirm (or disconfirm) the existence of an environmental network and its density by considering the interaction among the groups we have surveyed and their responses when asked which are the most important groups with which they regularly co-operate. This information will also enable us better to define the boundaries of the environmental movement.

Respondents to our survey were asked ‘which, for you, are the most important groups (both environmental and non-environmental) with which your group regularly co-operates?’ They were further asked to rank their nominations from 1 to 5 in order of importance. A number of respondents named more than five groups and, in all, a total of 57 different environmental and 10 animal welfare organisations were nominated as well as an assortment of other groups and organisations (see Table 11).

**Table 14: Groups nominated as most important collaborators by kind of nominator**

Considering only the first five groups named, Friends of the Earth received most nominations, followed by WWF, Greenpeace, Wildlife and Countryside Link, CPRE and the RSPB (see Table 11). Interestingly, the National Trust was nominated only three times. This suggests that it is marginal to the British environmental movement and might offer some justification for Krohberger and Hey’s (1991, cited in Van der Heijden et al 1992: 18) omission of it when estimating the per capita density of membership of environmental movement organisations in Britain.

However, other organisations that many have considered to be part of the environmental movement were seldom nominated. It should be borne in mind that by asking respondents to name only the five most important organisations (environmental and non-environmental) among their collaborators, we have loaded the dice against the newer and smaller groups which are likely to receive fewer nominations than either better resourced EMOs or state and para-state agencies even where these new groups are ideologically closer to the EMO for which the respondent speaks. Nevertheless, even if we consider all the groups nominated (and not only the first five named), the Green Alliance, the Green Party and Earth First! each received only a single nomination; the Socialist Environmental and Resources Association (SERA) and the Women’s Environmental Network (WEN) received none at all.13 Our decision to exclude groups concerned with the conservation of buildings appears fully vindicated; not a single respondent to our survey nominated any of them as being among the important groups with which they regularly cooperate.

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13 However, one respondent wrote in SERA as an organisation with which their group had been involved in regular exchanges of information and / or collaboration, and one respondent listed WEN as an organisation with which they had exchanged information during the last twelve months.
Animal welfare groups (AWOs) appear only a little less marginal to the environmental movement. The 58 EMOs that answered this question nominated AWOs only four times, and two of these four nominations were for the RSPCA. Similarly, the five AWOs that answered the question nominated one or another EMO only five times, no EMO received more than a single nomination, and three of these five nominations were made by the RSPCA. We might conclude from this that while the RSPCA is only weakly linked to the environmental movement network, other animal welfare groups are scarcely linked to it at all.

Figure 1: Network of groups nominated as most important collaborators and their nominators

Figure 1 gives an impression of who nominated whom as being among their most important collaborators. The most striking thing here is the pattern of links among FoE, RSPB, WWF, Wildlife and Countryside Link and the smaller groups aggregated as ‘other EMOs’. However, because Figure 1 does not indicate the frequency of nominations but only the existence of a link between groups, it should be read in conjunction with Table 11. Thus although Greenpeace, whose representative did not answer this question, does not appear central to the network even though the number of ‘other EMOs’ nominating it was relatively large. The same is true, albeit to a lesser extent, of Transport 2000, the Soil Association and the Wildlife Trusts. Reading Figure 1 and Table 11 together, the three individual EMOs that stand out are FoE, WWF and Greenpeace and these may be considered to be the core of the environmental movement, with Wildlife and Countryside Link, CPRE and RSPB constituting a rather more specialised inner circle around the core, and beyond that a range of more specialised groups. The animal welfare groups appear relatively detached from the network, their strongest link with it being the RSPCA.

Respondents were also asked to indicate with which of nine major UK and European EMOs they had, during the preceding twelve months, firstly, exchanged information and/or expertise and, secondly, cooperated in campaigns. The responses of twelve leading EMOs and three AWOs are summarised in Table 12 and 13 respectively.

Table 15: Matrix of information and/or expertise exchange between leading UK EMOs during the preceding twelve months (1997–8) (leading animal welfare groups appended for comparison)

Table 16: Matrix of collaboration in campaigns between leading UK EMOs during the preceding twelve months (1997–8) (leading animal welfare groups appended for comparison)

Once again, the centrality of FoE, WWF and Greenpeace is apparent, although, especially with respect to the exchange of information and/or expertise, CPRE is also often named. When it comes to collaboration in campaigns, the leading position of FoE is even more striking. It is noteworthy that Greenpeace appears to distance itself from other EMOs much more than they do from it: the Greenpeace respondent did not name any other group as being an important regular collaborator (this helps to account for their apparent lack of centrality to the network depicted in Figure 1), and reported that
Greenpeace exchanged information and/or expertise only with FoE, WWF and CPRE ‘rarely’ and collaborated in campaigning only with FoE ‘rarely’.

On the face of it, this would suggest that Greenpeace was less closely networked to the other major EMOs than the animal welfare organisations, RSPCA or Compassion in World Farming (CIWF). Perhaps the words ‘sometimes’, ‘rarely’ and ‘never’ mean different things to different people. It is very likely that the choice of one such word rather than another to describe the frequency of interaction will be strongly influenced by the total volume of a group’s activity; thus for a very active group such as Greenpeace five contacts a year may count as ‘rarely’ whereas for a less active group five contacts would reasonably be considered to be ‘sometimes’. It is possible too that these questions are tapping the self-image of the respondent groups rather than measuring their actual network interactions.

Defining the boundary:
are animal welfare groups part of the environmental movement?

Fortunately, we have other data that permit us to determine the extent to which the various issues and groups that, from a European perspective, might be considered part of the environmental movement do in fact in Britain form part of a single network.

From our analysis of the data on protest events reported in The Guardian from 1988 to 1997, it appeared clear that animal welfare and anti-hunting protests and the groups associated with them formed a quite distinct cluster from protests about, and groups concerned with, more strictly environmental issues. Of the 321 environmental protests in which two issues were reported to have been involved, in only seventeen cases (5 per cent) was animal welfare at issue alongside an environmental issue.

When we looked at the frequency with which each of the dozen most frequently named groups was involved in protests about various issues, a very clear pattern emerged. Of the 329 protests in which one or more of the seven most frequently mentioned environmental groups (other than animal welfare groups) was reported to have been involved, in only one was an animal welfare or hunting issue reported as having been raised. Similarly, of the 110 protests reported to have involved one or more of the five most frequently mentioned animal welfare or anti-hunting groups, only three were reported to have involved any issue other than animal welfare or hunting. Although there is a degree of specialisation in the issue concerns of environmental groups, there is no evidence of the shared concern among environmental movement organisations and animal welfare and anti-hunting groups that might justify considering them to be part of a single social movement.

Figure 2: Network of groups named in reports of environmental protests

The picture is no less clear if we examine the pattern of interaction among the various groups. In only a relatively small number of cases were two or more groups named as having been involved in the same protest, but whereas the interactions among the environmental movement organisations varied, in not a single case was one of the seven
leading environmental groups mentioned as having participated in a protest with one of the five most mentioned animal welfare or anti-hunting groups. If the environmental movement is a network (see Figure 2), then in Britain the animal welfare and anti-hunting groups are at best distant outliers to it, no more closely connected to it than the Labour or Liberal Democrat parties or several charities not normally considered to be part of the environmental movement. The impression gained by inspection of the network diagram is confirmed by a formal network analysis employing a dichotomised matrix (see Table 14): the animal rights and anti-hunting groups score much lower on measures of centrality to the network than do the environmental groups.  

**Table 17: Interaction of groups named in reports of environmental protests**

The network analysis confirms the existence of a network of environmental movement organisations. Moreover, it does so despite the fact that some groups – most conspicuously Greenpeace – appeared to show a marked preference for protesting on their own. The analysis also confirms the marginality to the environmental movement of the animal welfare and anti-hunting groups in the patterning of reports of action in which two or more groups were named. However, protest event methodology, dependent as it is upon media reports, is not well suited to the identification of personal networks or of subterranean or clandestine networks that may exist among groups that do not engage in common public action. Our survey data sheds a little more light on these less publicly visible network linkages. Yet what is striking even from the survey data is the relative lack of shared concerns and the paucity of links between environmental and animal welfare groups.

**Conclusion**

We have been concerned to map the British environmental movement by focusing upon the organisations and groups that are the most stable and visible of its constituent parts. The picture we have been able to paint is one of continuing organisational innovation and growth and a pattern of activity that suggests that the movement is already well-institutionalised. We have also been able to shed light light on the nature and limits of the network that is the environmental movement, and upon the links between EMOs and other groups in society.

However, one major caveat is in order. Our focus here has been firmly upon organisations. We are unable to say anything about the individuals who are their members and their activists. This is a considerable limitation if, as we suppose (Rootes 1999), the character of environmental activism is changing with the result that small groups of environmental radicals who owe little or no allegiance to stable, formal EMOs are becoming more important. We are unable by means of the kind of analysis we have undertaken here to shed much light upon such developments. As one of our respondents observed,

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14 We are indebted to Manuel Jiménez for providing the network analyses of the protest event data.
‘Your questionnaire doesn’t really get at the networking / collaboration aspect that now enables small groups of people or even individuals to run short-term but effective campaigns using ever-changing ‘activists’ groups but maybe the same individuals’.

We can only agree. The present paper is, therefore, best read as a complement to the work we have done on protest events (Rootes 2000) and to our parallel, more probing investigations of a few selected organisations (notably Earth First! – see Rootes, Seel and Adams 2000). Nevertheless, we still lack the kind of detailed information on individuals and their activities that might address the issues involved in these new, ‘subterranean’ networks.

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