

**Think Global, Reconfigure the Local:**  
How Intermediaries Articulate  
Pro-Environmental Values and Practices

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## Abstract

Contemporary debates about the conservation of natural ecosystems and resources owe most of their influence to the rise of *sustainable development*, or, *sustainability*. Since its inception, 'sustainability' has become the dominant paradigm for addressing global ecological problems, as well as a strong motivator for changing patterns of behaviour at the level of individual people. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) introduced this framework into global pro-environmental discourse in 1987, and it has since been the source of many debates and discussions within and between academic disciplines. One of the central issues has been the opposition between *agency* and *structure*. This is the problem of whether to appeal to agency (theories of individual behaviour change) or structure (theories of social practice) when addressing global environmental problems, as these fields are generally characterised as necessarily opposed to one another. However, each of them at least conceives of a *particular kind* of agency, meaning that both make an appeal to 'the individual' in one way or another. The ultimate aim of this thesis, then, is to reconfigure the way in which individual people are framed by and thus implicated in contemporary discussions about sustainability. In order to do this, I will be drawing heavily on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the 'cultural intermediary,' as well as Stuart Hall's (cf. Grossberg, 1986) theory of 'articulation.' I propose a framework that characterises pro-environmental groups as 'intermediaries,' as each of these groups acts as a 'mediator' or 'point of articulation' between the structural dimensions of sustainability and the individual people that they address. I will analyse this framework by appealing to two close studies of two different intermediaries: Greenpeace, and its 'Save the Reef' campaign, and Sydney's Inner West Council, and its 'Home Eco Challenge.'

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# List of Abbreviations

**ABS**

Australian Bureau of Statistics

**AMCS**

Australian Marine Conservation Society

**AP**

Australia Pacific

**CO<sub>2e</sub>**

Carbon dioxide equivalent

**EIS**

Environmental Impact Statement

**ESB**

Environmentally Significant Behaviour

**GBRMPA**

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

**GHG**

Greenhouse Gas

**Intl.**

International

**IWC**

Inner West Council

**LGA**

Local Government Area

**Mtpa**

Mega-tonnes per annum

**NAIF**

Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility

**UN**

United Nations

**WCED**

World Commission on Environment and Development

**WHA**

World Heritage Area

## Introduction

Contemporary debates about the conservation of natural ecosystems and resources owe most of their influence to the rise of what has been termed *sustainable development*. This is a framework that seeks to find a balance between human economic activity and the continued existence of life on Earth; given that our planet's natural resources are finite, a trade-off must be made between global resource consumption and current standards of living if we are to ensure that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to grow and flourish (WCED, 1987: 40). In the late 1980s, this term was introduced into the global pro-environmental lexicon, and has since remained the dominant approach to addressing large-scale ecological problems, as well as thinking about pro-environmental futures.

The rise of sustainable development—or 'sustainability,' now a more common formulation—laid the groundwork for many interesting pro-environmental discussions, innovations, and scholarly pursuits. For example, the work of Gerald Gardner and Paul Stern (1996; Stern, 1999; 2000) within the field of behavioural psychology is mostly concerned with finding the most effective ways to 'intervene' in individual behaviour patterns so as to encourage the cultivation of more sustainable and thus less ecologically-damaging lifestyles. As such, Gardner and Stern favour an *agency-centred* approach to sustainability, to the extent that they focus on the individual as the dominant site for addressing pro-environmental futures. Elizabeth Shove (2010), however, contends with this approach on the grounds that a focus on human agency is too narrow for engaging meaningfully with overarching global problems. Her research instead focuses on the cultivation and interpretation of *social practices*, which are systems of habits and relations that are produced and reproduced within a social context. Shove is therefore interested in how social practices are implicated in a broader pro-environmental framework, which is to say that she takes a *structural-transformative* approach to sustainability.

Both agency and structure, then, are important factors to consider when engaging in discussion about sustainable futures. Each approach, viewed in isolation, produces tangible pro-environmental outcomes, as I will demonstrate in my review of the relevant

literature. When we look at both agency and structure side-by-side, however, problems tend to arise. An agency-centred theory of individual behaviour change leaves no room to address the structural causes and effects of global environmental problems, and, concurrently, a theory of social practice downplays the role of the individual, autonomous agent.<sup>1</sup> A paradox arises, therefore, when we try to characterise global environmental problems as overarching structural issues, and, at the same time, attribute responsibility to individual agents. This breakdown is the source of a longstanding debate within social and cultural theory, and it is known as the *structure versus agency debate*.<sup>2</sup>

As I will make clear in my first chapter, different academic disciplines will mostly focus on *either* structure or agency in a theory of pro-environmental change, given the difficulties that arise in attempting to accommodate both of them. Within the humanities and social sciences, contemporary scholarship tends to favour social practices and therefore structural transformation as a solution to global environmental problems, to the extent that social practices engage with a *particular kind of agency*. It is important to distinguish this, however, from the kind of agency that I am working with, so as to not undermine my overall argument. Anthony Giddens (1979: 55, original emphasis) characterises agency as '*a continuous flow of conduct*,' as compared to the combination of a series of distinct actions. This is a way of incorporating agency into a social structure to the degree that social practices exist as *relations of autonomy and dependence* (88), meaning that individuals and social structures are both *independent from* as well as *reliant upon* one another (cf. Giddens, 1976). The type of agency that I refer to in this thesis, however, concerns the *aggregation of independent behaviours and choices*. The reason that I am appealing to this kind of agency is because it aligns with that of the behavioural-psychological theories that I will address in Chapter One. From this point of view, social practices are not a solution to the agency/structure problem but rather

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Giddens' (1976) theory of *structuration* cuts across the agency/structure binary, and therefore incorporates agency into a theory of social practice. He discusses what he calls the *duality of structure*, which is the idea that 'social structures are both constituted *by* human agency, and yet at the same time are the very *medium* of this constitution' (121, original emphasis). Though this would appear to undermine my argument, Giddens is working with a different conception of agency to the one that I reference in this thesis. I will address this on the next page.

<sup>2</sup> My main argument in this thesis relies upon this dispute being characterised as a kind of necessary opposition. As such, I will be referring to the breakdown between agency and structure as the *agency/structure binary*.

remain complicit in its perpetuation; as I will further discuss, contemporary theories of social practice tend to be necessarily opposed to theories of behaviour change.

Though there are differing kinds of agency that run between both theories of behaviour change and theories of social practice, it is worth noting that each field at least conceives of a kind of agency, meaning that a theory of pro-environmental change relies upon *some* conception of an individual person, and the kind of theory that it turns out to be will, in part, be determined by how this individual is addressed. The ultimate aim of this thesis, then, is to *reconfigure the way in which individual people are framed by and thus implicated in contemporary discussions about sustainability*. The rationale behind this endeavour is attributable to a series of emails that I received from various pro-environmental organisations in 2016. It wasn't so much the content of these emails that sparked my interest, as much as their mode of address. Each of them displayed two distinctive traits: an *informed understanding* of a specific environmental issue, and the means to be able to *engage directly* with this issue. As such, these campaigning groups were operating as 'brokers' or 'negotiators' of pro-environmental values, which is to say that each of them acts as an *intermediary* between a structural discourse of sustainability and the actions of individual people.

The intermediary, then, is the theoretical construct that this thesis is most concerned with. The intermediary, I argue here, has received too little attention in contemporary debates about sustainability, in terms of both its scale of operation and its significance. In order to understand how I arrived at this concept, however, I must first explain how this thesis is assembled. My first chapter is based on four key ideas, the first of which is the development of a coherent understanding of 'ecological sustainability' within contemporary pro-environmental discourse. The reason for this is because my entire argument in this chapter is predicated upon the idea that ecological sustainability has become the dominant paradigm of contemporary pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes. The second section deals with the various discussions and debates that have emerged in response to the sustainability framework. In particular, I explore three general areas: the 'responsibilisation' of individual people for environmental problems under a neoliberal system of governance, the behavioural-psychological field of 'individual behaviour-change,' and the sociological 'social-practice-theoretical' domain.



The third section of this chapter is the keystone of this thesis. I propose that contemporary pro-environmental discussions and debates tend to be polarising, to the extent that they perpetuate unnecessary binaries between different systems of thought and may therefore exclude potentially valuable alternatives. The final section of this chapter is my answer to this problem, and that answer is the *pro-environmental intermediary*. Drawing heavily on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) conception of the 'cultural intermediary'—and also Stuart Hall's (cf. Grossberg, 1986) theory of articulation—I propose a framework that characterises pro-environmental groups as 'intermediaries.' Each of these groups, I maintain, acts as a 'mediator,' or 'point of articulation' between the structural dimensions of sustainability and the individual people that they address.

The second and third chapters of my thesis take the same form. Each is a case study of a different kind of intermediary, which will allow me to critically engage with the theoretical framework that I have constructed. Chapter Two is a close study of Greenpeace and its 'Save the Reef' campaign, which is centred on stopping the series of proposed coal mines in Queensland's Galilee Basin, and also the expansion of the coal terminal at Abbot Point. Greenpeace's campaign addresses individuals in a variety of ways, but my primary focus will be on its email campaign, and the ways in which this particular mode of address articulates pro-environmental values and attitudes. My third chapter takes Sydney's Inner West Council's (IWC) 'Home Eco Challenge' as its focus, an initiative that the Council facilitated in 2016. Built around a series of 'challenges' that ranged from waste reduction to energy consumption, households who successfully completed each challenge went into a draw to win various prizes. My primary focus in this chapter is to investigate the means by which the IWC, as an intermediary, has the capacity to articulate pro-environmental values and attitudes, in ways that a group like Greenpeace perhaps cannot. The reason that I chose these two studies is because of the fundamental differences that underpin them. Both Greenpeace and the IWC are intermediaries in their own particular way, and yet each of them is predicated upon very different founding principles; one of them is an independent campaigning organisation, and the other is a branch of local government. My third chapter, then, will finish with a discussion about the differences between these two intermediaries, and what this means in a broader discourse on sustainability.

# Chapter One

## Sustainability, Interdisciplinarity, Intermediaries

### 1. Ecological Sustainability as the Dominant Paradigm of Pro-Environmental Behaviour

#### 1.1. The Rise of Sustainable Development

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)—also known as the Brundtland Commission—published a report titled *Our Common Future*. The Brundtland Commission was formed by the United Nations in 1983 to deliberate over possible solutions to the problems that human economic development posed for the natural environment, and its report was shadowed by a question that proponents of unhindered capital growth had hitherto dared not ask: how can modern human societies continue to grow their economies and populations alongside the knowledge of our planet's finite natural resources? *Our Common Future* proposed that, in order to address this question, emphasis ought to be placed on the welfare of future generations; thus, the WCED coined the phrase *sustainable development*, which it defined as a form of economic activity that 'seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future' (1987: 40). This was a crucial point in the development of global pro-environmental discourse, as it marked the international recognition of the fact that our current needs are not superior to those of future generations; as such, sustainable development is concerned with supporting our current quality of life on Earth, so long as those needs do not diminish the ability of future generations to flourish.

In 2005, at the United Nations (UN) World Summit, the 'three pillars of sustainability' was introduced into pro-environmental discourse. The UN General Assembly suggested that sustainable development consisted of three 'mutually reinforcing pillars:' *economic development*, *social development*, and *environmental protection* (2005: 12). These three components, when valued in a fair and equal manner, were believed to be conducive to a sustainable future; the main challenge of sustainable development was to promote and cultivate all three pillars with impartiality, ensuring that no one 'pillar' takes precedence over either of the others. Kent Portney (2015: 4, original emphasis) builds on this idea, suggesting that sustainable development is primarily concerned with 'finding some sort of steady state so that Earth or some piece

of it can support the human population *and* economic growth without ultimately threatening the health of humans, animals, and plants.’ This evaluation, I maintain, quite effectively captures what popular environmental discourse has come to term the ‘Three E’s’ of sustainable development: environment, economy, and equity (2015: 6-7).<sup>3</sup> These three words act as signifiers of the ‘three pillars,’—the word ‘equity’ replacing ‘social development’—which, in a sense, abridges the concept of ‘sustainable development’ so as to be fit for popular consumption; nonetheless, this linguistic device has played an important role in contemporary environmentalism, as it is quite clear that, since its inception, sustainable development has yet to be superseded as the hegemonic mode of addressing environmental problems, present and future (Tulloch & Neilson, 2014; Portney, 2015).

The 1987 definition of ‘sustainable development’ was a critical turning point in the evolution of pro-environmental discourse; not only did it attempt to address the future implications that continued global economic growth would have on the world’s natural resources, but it legitimised pro-environmental behaviours at the international level, working as a kind of top-down structure over individual countries and enabling the integration of a popular, universal environmentalism into political and economic discourses. *Our Common Future* presented the world with a framework that is difficult to contend with, let alone think outside of; contemporary economic thought and ecological concern are now so intricately tied together that they are understood to be mutually interdependent (Tulloch & Neilson, 2014). This framework, however, can also be the site of numerous difficulties. For example, much like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s (1987) critique of Freudian psychoanalysis, reliance on a hegemonic totality as a tool for understanding concrete relations and enacting behaviours can blind us to potentially useful alternative methodologies and relations. Deleuze and Guattari contend with Freud’s tendency to explain certain phenomena by reducing them to terms that his own theories can make sense of. They suggest that this process has a kind of ‘arborescent’ or tree-like shape, to the extent that Freud seems to always trace his patients’ symptoms

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the ‘Three E’s’ is by no means a stable lexicon; different contexts have called for the replacement of ‘environment’ with ‘ecology,’ and ‘equity’ with ‘ethical.’

back to a theory within his own body of work, in order to determine causality.<sup>4</sup> Sustainable development, then, has taken root in our collective consciousness, and ever since—in an arborescent manner—continued to grow deeper into pro-environmental discourse, each of its structural roots representing a specific discipline or field of knowledge. As a result, it is difficult to think differently, more laterally, about pro-environmental futures.

Furthermore, the over-simplified structure of the three-pillared model within popular discourse fails to account for the complexities of the relations within and between each domain; equity, or ‘social development,’ can thus appear to be a little too idealistic, to the extent that it must address a multiplicity of social spheres—such as identity politics, gender, class, race, education, geography, political affiliations, and individual capabilities—in order to be even remotely valuable. It is not within the scope of this paper to address all of the problems associated with sustainable development. Thus, I will be focusing my efforts only on the *ecological* domain as opposed to the economic or social ones; though all three domains are inextricably linked, a coherent account of pro-environmental behaviours must unequivocally begin with the relations between humans and the natural environment.

## 1.2. Ecology: The Environment and Us

In a discussion about the Spinozan conception of how bodies are defined by their capacity to affect and be affected, Deleuze (1992: 627) refers to his conceptual framework, the ‘plane of immanence,’ as ‘the plane of Nature that distributes affects, [and which] does not make any distinction at all between things that might be called natural and things that might be called artificial.’ It is in this way that I would like to begin developing my account of human-environmental relations; that is, as a kind of ontological framework that understands humans in their capacity as affecting/affected agents in relation to the material world. In disrupting the natural/artificial binary, we are better

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<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose an alternative framework for understanding social phenomena: the *rhizome*, another kind of root system. Grass is an example of a rhizomatic root system, as rhizomes tend to grow laterally and form shoots in arbitrary places. The purpose of this metaphor is to distinguish between a social or cultural theory that is a distinct totality and thus reductive in nature, and a series of decentralised, independent theories or explanations.

able to understand human actions and interactions as implicated in nature, as opposed to being outside of and taking precedence over it.

Building on this idea, I look to the work of psychologist Paul Stern (2000), who developed the concept of *environmentally significant behaviours* (ESBs). Stern defines ESBs by appealing to their impact; that is, that the magnitude of an ESB is ‘the extent to which it changes the availability of materials or energy from the environment or alters the structure and dynamics of ecosystems or the biosphere itself’ (408). A rudimentary example of an ESB is deforestation, as this process involves the destruction of potentially several ecosystems at once; another is recycling, as this practice slows the rate at which virgin materials are mined in order to produce glass, paper, plastic, and aluminium products. Simply put, an ESB is a behaviour that alters the natural environment, in one way or another, and there are two important things to note about such behaviours: the first is that ESBs simply represent a *measure of environmental impact*, and do not contain any intrinsic value-judgements (they are not moralised); the second, that Stern’s use of the word ‘significant’ is intended to denote a *large aggregation* of individual behaviours. A behaviour will have a significant impact on the environment only to the degree that a substantial number of individuals are doing the same thing.<sup>5</sup>

With a clear understanding of ESBs in mind, I will now move on to discuss how they are related to ecological sustainability. Stern (2000) supposes that the idea of environmental protection as a factor in human decision-making adds another dimension to ESBs; which is to say that our behaviours may be informed by intentions to change our environment, in most cases, for the better. *Intention-oriented ESBs*, therefore, are a useful way of characterising one’s relations to one’s environment in terms of ecological sustainability, to the extent that they promote agency and choice within a framework that understands human activity to be a part of this environment. Should one intend to act in such a way as to promote the welfare of one’s biological environment, then one is performing a particular kind of favourable ESB that I will call a *pro-environmental behaviour*. These behaviours are conducive to an ecologically-sustainable future on the

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<sup>5</sup> This characterisation of human behaviour doesn’t account for the lone actor who may cause significant harm to an entire ecosystem with a box of matches or a nuclear bomb; nonetheless, the distinctive feature of ESBs is that they tie the individual to the environment in such a way that is centred on their potential to change it.

grounds that they reflect a concern for the sustained health of the planet and its inhabitants.

Though the nature of the ‘pro-environmental behaviour’ and the appeal of an ecologically-sustainable future both seem almost indisputable, the several responses to these ideas have been somewhat erratic and inconsistent. Since the Brundtland Commission released their 1987 report, some disciplines have taken to and built on its ideas with great enthusiasm, subsequently placing themselves among the dominant few approaches; others, however, have seen a rather slow epistemological development. In what follows, I will outline a few such approaches, with the ultimate intention of showing how there is a lack of congruence between the disciplines involved.

## **2. A Series of Incongruent Reactions**

### **2.1. Neoliberal Environmentalism**

Perhaps one of the most pressing challenges that an ecologically-sustainable<sup>6</sup> future will face is *neoliberal economic ideology*. The prolonged criticism of neoliberalism has turned the word into something of a pejorative, so before I begin to discuss neoliberal environmentalism, I would like to make it clear precisely which aspects of neoliberalism I am considering. James McCarthy and Scott Prudham (2004, as cited in Swaffield, 2016: 119) outline what they call the ‘identifiable dimensions’ of neoliberalism, those being the ‘prioritisation of the self-regulating market, antagonism towards state interference and the sovereignty of the individual.’ These three neoliberal ideals have become somewhat entrenched in contemporary environmental discourse, and are thus the aspects that will underpin my analysis. There are those (Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Fletcher, 2010; Tulloch & Neilson, 2014; Swaffield, 2016) who have argued that ecological sustainability has undergone a kind of neoliberalisation, which, consequently, has reshaped the economic and environmental goals originally set out by the Brundtland Commission. Instead of a conservation-centred approach to the way that the world’s resources are tied up in the global economy—for example, a focus on curbing behaviours that deplete our finite natural resources—recent years have seen pro-environmental ideals and policies rearticulated by neoliberal ones, resulting in a kind of ‘rising tide of economic growth lifts

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<sup>6</sup> I will be using the term ‘conservation’ interchangeably with ‘ecological sustainability’ in this section.

all boats' outlook (Tulloch & Neilson, 2014: 32). Which is to say that neoliberal economic principles have worked their way into the environment-economy-equity model, shifting the three-way balance in such a way that allows free-market capitalism to intervene in plausible solutions to global environmental problems, and parade as a signifier of societal progress. For example, consider the privatisation of public goods and services, a conspicuously neoliberal ideal. The 'cap and trade' carbon emissions trading scheme (cf. Harrison et al., 2011) can be understood as a means of privatising the climate (Lohmann, 2010, as cited in Swaffield, 2016). This scheme is a way for governments to place a cap, or 'allowance,' on the total amount of emissions that a company can produce without penalty. These allowances can be bought and sold, which, subsequently, creates a market that incentivises the reduction of emissions. Though this scheme may be appealing to the degree that it reduces the total amount of emissions that a country produces, it is effectively a means for the companies that produce the most pollution to buy their way out of responsibility.

This example is not a preamble to a more detailed critique of emissions trading schemes, nor neoliberalism in general; the point that I am trying to make is that this kind of neoliberal rearticulation of conservationist principles not only taints pro-environmental initiatives, behaviours, and practices with ambiguity, but also *shifts the responsibility for pro-environmental behaviours away from regulatory bodies and onto the free market*. Neoliberal environmentalism is thus the motivator behind a paradigm shift that privatises governmental responsibility for sustainable goals and values, and, consequently, allows such responsibility to be bought and sold. Given that some conservationist goals may conflict with the maximisation of the profits of a private business, however, these responsibilities, where they can, may be imposed upon communities and individuals, a process which is not dissimilar to the idea of *individual responsabilisation* (cf. Shamir, 2008). This is the idea that neoliberal principles alter the distribution patterns of broad social responsibility, so that in many cases, it comes down upon individual people; the individual is thus 'responsibilised' for problems that a governing body would traditionally be accountable for. The peculiar thing about individual responsabilisation is that it naturalises the idea that individuals ought to be held morally accountable for collective problems; in most cases, however, the consequences of individuals' actions are considered imperceptible when measured

against global problems, so it hardly seems fitting to attribute responsibility to individual people (Parfit, 1984; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2005). Nonetheless, individual-centred thought has contributed greatly to popular environmental discourse—consider the ‘think globally, act locally’ rhetoric—to the extent that it emphasises individual choice as the focal point for addressing overarching environmental problems. For example, the mass consumption of goods and services—an oft-cited adversary of ecological sustainability—is not directly challenged by neoliberal environmentalism. Rather, it is framed as an ‘arena for positive individual action’ (Swaffield, 2016: 123), by virtue of the fact that we are encouraged to opt-in to buying ‘greener alternatives’ to existing products (Hobson 2006); it is characterised as something that we must *do differently*, as opposed to something that we must *do less*.

## 2.2. Individual Behaviour Change

One of the lasting consequences of neoliberal environmentalism is that it marks individual people as the hegemonic site for effecting large-scale pro-environmental changes. As such, there is a lot of work (Heberlein, 1972; Guagnano et al., 1995; Gardner & Stern, 1996; Stern, 1999; 2000; Dolnicar & Grün, 2009) within the realm of individual behaviour change, most of which centres on two key aspects: *how* to get individual people to change their behaviours, and *why* such changes would be advantageous for a discourse on sustainability. Gerald Gardner and Paul Stern (1996) propose that there are four kinds of intervention methods which most effectively influence individual behaviour change: *religious* and *moral* approaches, *material incentives*, *educational* approaches, and *community management*. Though none of these methods on their own are particularly efficacious in producing change, Stern (2000: 419) suggests that the most effective way to bring about significant behaviour change in individuals is by appealing to a combination of different intervention methods. For example, the Australian Government’s ‘Small-Scale Renewable Energy Scheme’ (2015) is a program that provides economic incentives to Australian home- and small business-owners that install renewable energy systems, such as solar panels and small-scale wind or hydro systems. This scheme provides a material incentive to individuals, and it also educates them as to its broader purpose: the intent to achieve the Government’s proposed ‘renewable energy target.’ Also, this scheme relies upon community management in order to be effective,



given that the planning and development of infrastructure plays a role in how energy sources are created and distributed (Stern, 2000).

James Blake (1999) discusses different approaches to overcoming the *value-action gap* in environmental policy. For some time, the value-action gap has been a site of interest within social psychology, and thus has taken on several different meanings. The way in which I am using this phrase, however, is simply to signify what Blake (257-8) quite effectively summarises as the struggle to translate ‘environmental concern into pro-environmental behaviour.’ Though much of the literature on pro-environmental behaviour change (Guagnano et al., 1995; Gardner & Stern, 1996; Blake, 1999; Stern, 1999; 2000; Dolnicar & Grün, 2009) is in agreement with the idea that environmental concern is growing, there doesn’t appear to be a unified discourse on why pro-environmental behaviours are stagnant relative to such concern; thus, discussions of behaviour change need to incorporate not just attitudes and behaviours, but also *contextual* elements. This kind of thought led to what popular environmental discourse has termed the *ABC model of behaviour change*.<sup>7</sup>

The ABC model has served as an analytic for behaviour change theorists to not only better understand the psychology behind behaviour change, but also to identify and address the factors that contribute to the value-action gap. Since the ABC was first developed, context has played an important role in behaviour change research; Dolnicar and Grün (2009) conducted a study on the role that context plays in individuals’ pro-environmental behaviours, and came to the conclusion that something as simple as a change of scenery—‘being on vacation’ was the change of scenery that underpinned this study—is all that it takes for one to drastically change one’s pro-environmental behaviours. The only group of participants in their study that were immune to such a sweeping change in behaviour were those who identified strongly as ‘environmentally friendly,’ a conclusion which raises more questions for the ABC model—and theories of behaviour change more broadly—than it answers. In light of studies such as this one, there are those (Shove, 2010; Whitmarsh et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2017) who suppose

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<sup>7</sup> The ‘ABC model’ was originally theorised by Guagnano et al. (1995) as the idea that behaviour (B) is a product of the interaction between one’s attitudes (A) and their external conditions (C). It was later rearticulated by Stern (2000) as attitude-behaviour-context. Elizabeth Shove (2010: 1274) has since formulated the ‘policy version’ of the ABC model: attitude-behaviour-choice.

that the focus on behaviour change within pro-environmental discourse has become something of a weary and cumbersome resource, and that perhaps it is necessary to begin thinking outside of this paradigm.

### 2.3. Post-Behaviour Change: Social Practices

One of the most enlightening critiques of the ABC model of behaviour change is advanced by Elizabeth Shove (2010: 1274), who takes issue with it on the grounds that it necessarily excludes alternative and possibly valuable systems of analysis, such as social theories that lie outside of the ‘dominant paradigms of economics and psychology.’ Her main objection to the ABC model is that, by its very nature, it cannot account for a coherent *theory of social practice*; that is, a theory that focuses on how social relations form habits, or *practices*, which work in a reflexive manner so as to reproduce such relations within and between a society or social group. A theory of social practice, then, is a way of conceptualising social stability and order without treating practices as direct consequences of overarching societal structures, nor as the product of human agency and choice (Shove et al., 2012). For example, the daily practice of showering could very easily be attributed to contemporary standards of hygiene (cf. Shove, 2003), and therefore seem a direct consequence of these standards. However, such standards do not come into existence arbitrarily; they are the result of *social relations*, which, over time, are *produced* and *reproduced* by the act of showering daily. Thus, individuals become the bearers of this practice, at the same time as their behaviour is informed by it. Shove (2010: 1279; cf. Schatzki, 1996) advances an analytic distinction that clarifies this matter; that is, the distinction between the *practice-as-performance*, and the *practice-as-entity*. The practice-as-performance is the tangible practice that exists both spatially and temporally—such as ‘being in the shower’—whereas the practice-as-entity is the abstract dimension—the ‘idea’ of taking a shower, or, as Gordon Walker (2015: 50) suggests, the ‘shared social understanding of what it entails.’ This distinction is valuable to the degree that it helps us to determine the nature of social practices, and thus how they can change over time; if we are able to trace the meaning and formulation of a practice through its association with or on our bodies, we then have the means to be able to contribute to and alter such a practice in new and potentially valuable ways.

Framing a social practice as a performance/entity dichotomy provides us with a useful set of tools to begin teasing apart how a practice can come into being. There can be no such practice without congruence between a physical action *and* a shared social understanding of what that action means. To revisit the above example: the thing that legitimises the practice of showering daily *as a practice* is one's understanding of this connection. Without the knowledge of how the practice of a daily shower exists within a broader social context—that is, knowledge of contemporary standards of hygiene—there can be no such practice at all; conversely, to be considered a bearer of this practice, one must not simply know about it, but actively participate in it ('carry' it). Therefore, the existence of a social practice is contingent upon the reciprocal relationship between its two primary elements: *knowing* and *doing*. In this sense, simply being the bearer of a social practice is in itself a potential avenue for reforming or reshaping such a practice; Theodore Schatzki (2015: 17) proposes that all social relations are on the same plane of existence, and so it must follow that each and every social interaction or practice is a potential site for effecting large-scale change. Thus, the social practice theoretical framework appears to be a promising way of intervening in pro-environmental discourse in order to encourage meaningful pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

The idea that we should attempt to characterise ecological sustainability through a social practice theoretical lens is a relatively new one (cf. Strengers & Maller, 2015). Shove (2015) demonstrates how such a project may be undertaken in a discussion about the United Kingdom's (UK) low carbon policy, known as the 'Carbon Plan.' Very briefly, the Carbon Plan is a policy document that provides details on how the UK Government will attempt to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by half—relative to 1990 levels—by the mid-2020s (H.M. Government, 2011, as cited in Shove, 2015: 33). Armed with the details set out in this policy, Shove takes an interesting approach; rather than seeking to explain why the UK's climate change policy ought to adopt a social practice theoretical methodology, she insists that a more useful approach would be to illustrate how such policy is 'embroiled in the persistence and transformation of what people do' (32). What Shove is suggesting here is that, rather than attempting to design policy around social practices, it would be more valuable to undertake a discursive analysis of existing policy—equipped with the knowledge of how social practices develop and operate—in order to make sense of *how* such policy is implicated in everyday practices. For example,

Shove points out that a running theme throughout the Carbon Plan is the idea that climate change will be best addressed through technological innovation and intervention, which then ‘bypasses the issue of whether present standards of living could or should be called into question’ (34). She then goes on to ground this claim by discussing how the performance and user-friendliness of the hybrid electric vehicle is often compared to that of the petrol-driven car. Working from these kinds of comparisons, policymakers are indeed bypassing the question of whether our daily practices and standards of living are a potential site for effecting change. Given that the UK’s climate change policy is not informed by a proper understanding of how social practices are produced and reproduced, then, it follows that the dominant environmental discourse—within the realm of UK policymaking—is primarily concerned with the *acquisition* of new technologies, as compared to the ways in which we *use* them (39), meaning that the reference point for environmental policymakers is unavoidably our current standards of living. Thus, as Shove suggests, it is important to understand exactly how social practices are produced and reproduced, in order that we are to comprehend the ‘extent to which policy has a hand in perpetuating the conditions on which certain ways of life, or sets of practices, depend’ (41).

As is evident, there are numerous ways by which particular disciplines have tried to understand and engage with the idea of ecological sustainability. Some of these responses appear to be following a similar ideological-developmental path; others—specifically those disciplines with fundamentally different methods of research and cultivation of knowledge—are at odds with one another. In a critique of Shove’s (2010) paper *Beyond the ABC*, Whitmarsh et al. (2011: 258) discuss an oft-cited binary that remains at large within popular environmental discourse; that is, the opposition between *social structures* and *individual actions*. This binary has remained for some time a barrier to productive interdisciplinary discussion about positive environmental futures. Whitmarsh et al. highlight how such attitudes manifest by drawing attention to the specific ways in which Shove critiques the ABC model. Within moments of praising the social practice theoretical framework for the disciplinary diversity of its constitutive elements, Shove refers to the behavioural-psychological field of study as ‘homogenous,’ which, consequently, overlooks the complexities within the discipline and undervalues the contributions that it has made to pro-environmental discourse (2010: 1278;

Whitmarsh et al. 2011: 258). Though Shove's critique of the ABC model of behaviour change may be conducive to a productive discussion about the role that social practices play within the sustainability debate, her paper is perhaps unwittingly perpetuating the binary between social structures and individual actions by being complicit in the 'wholesale dismissal of nonsociological approaches to social or behavioural change' (Whitmarsh et al., 2011: 258). This is fundamentally counterproductive to a broader discourse on sustainability, as each discipline is working toward the same goal. The fact that scholars like Shove are going above and beyond their own scope of disciplinary knowledge and critiquing other fields of expertise is testament to the fact that the answer to a sustainable future is by no means an obvious nor uncomplicated one. Furthermore, such critiques give the impression that most of the disciplines involved in the broader discourse of sustainability have little in common with one another. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that, no matter the discipline, pro-environmental discourse will tend to appeal to *individual people*, in one form or another.

### **3. The Inevitable Implication of the Individual in Pro-Environmental Discourse**

#### **3.1. The New Tragedy of the Commons**

In 1968, Garrett Hardin (2000) published a paper titled *The Tragedy of the Commons*,<sup>8</sup> wherein he constructed a now widely-cited philosophical thought experiment of the same name. Hardin's 'tragedy' is a speculative response to the ecological implications of an ever-growing human population. Hardin encourages us to 'picture a pasture open to all' (188) upon which a group of likeminded cattle-owners graze their cattle. Given that these cattle owners are also rational businesspeople, it seems reasonable to assume that each one of them seeks to maximise their gains by utilising as much of this land as possible. Each cattle owner, then, will keep adding cattle to each herd, one by one, until the land is overpopulated and overgrazed, resulting in the necessity to continue adding cattle in order to maintain each person's profit margins. This is the unfortunate logical conclusion that each self-interested cattle owner will reach when they have unrestricted access to shared land. The 'tragedy of the commons' is thus the

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<sup>8</sup> Hardin is partially indebted to an economist by the name of William Forster Lloyd (1833) for the ideas in this paper. In a lecture series titled *Two Lectures on the Checks to Population*, Lloyd discusses the implications of the overuse of common land.

increasing overexploitation of finite land and resources in the pursuit of rational self-interest.

*The Tragedy of the Commons* was an illuminating prospect in the era of pre-sustainability environmental discourse, as it drew attention to the overlap between the economic and ecological aspects of resource consumption. Hardin managed to successfully construct an account of what the overconsumption of shared finite resources would look like, but he did so in such a way that was very difficult to contend with; the philosophical implications of the 'tragedy' are all-too-easily translatable to the concrete world. In light of these implications, Hardin proposed a solution which he calls 'mutual coercion mutually agreed upon' (2000: 194); this is the idea that the best way to govern the use of common resources is to come to some sort of mutually-beneficial agreement that interferes with the autonomy of each stakeholder in order to ensure the best outcome for all. Hardin equates this to paying taxes; though it is not in anyone's interest to give up a part of one's wage, people do so voluntarily so as to ensure that everyone has an equal stake in shared resources. Perhaps the most important thing to note about this hypothetical, however, is not the idea that overindulging in shared finite resources leads to unfavourable outcomes, but rather, the fact that *individual and collective utility are in no way commensurable*. The sinister locution 'freedom in a commons brings ruin to all' (189) is not merely an exercise in global resource temperance; it is also a signifier of the underlying premise that the aggregate of individuals' independent interests cannot be measured against the shared interest of a group.<sup>9</sup>

With this idea in mind, I would like to propose that we are in the age of a new kind of tragedy of the commons: the tragedy of attempting to develop an effective global discourse on sustainability. Since 1987, pro-environmental movements and theories have all been working towards a common goal, a global state of equilibrium where we are able to meet our current needs without negatively affecting the ability for future generations to flourish. However, there still remains the difficulty of trying to piece together a coherent and effective response to global environmental problems. The new

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<sup>9</sup> This idea is attributable to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1987), who made this distinction in 1762 in his politico-philosophical text *On the Social Contract*. Rousseau distinguishes the 'general will' of a polity from the 'will of all,' the former being the collective interest of a group, the latter being the aggregate of the same group's individual self-interests, which are certainly bound to conflict.

tragedy, therefore, lies not just within the self-interested over-exploitation of global natural resources, but also within the *self-interest in one's own disciplinary pursuits*, and the over-exploitation of such knowledge. The prospect of any kind of a sustainable future, then, will not become a reality if we continue to follow deeply established disciplinary trends—recall Deleuze and Guattari—but rather, in order to overcome the tragedy in question there must be a paradigm shift in the way that sustainability-oriented knowledge is acquired, structured and organised. It is not within the scope of this project, however, to even begin to explore what an entire epistemological overhaul of pro-environmental discourse would look like; instead, I will focus my efforts on only one of the core problems of this tragedy: that is, the disciplinary divide between agency and structure.

### 3.2. Finding the Equilibrium

Given the abundance of pro-environmental groups, professions, and academic pursuits, attempting to find tangible commonality between all of them is no doubt a difficult task. This, however, is perhaps not the biggest obstacle to overcome when faced with such a challenge; as Whitmarsh et al. (2011: 258) have so acutely pointed out, trying to bring different disciplinary perspectives together may prove to be quite a frustrating task, especially when such disciplines continue to be framed as necessarily opposed to one another. This is a problem that, in part, is attributable to and thus perpetuated by interdisciplinary critiques; Shove (2010: 1279) suggests that theories of social practice and theories of behaviour change are like 'chalk and cheese,' on the grounds that the former constitutes people as carriers of practice, and the latter treats them as 'autonomous agents of choice and change.' Though Shove is quite correct in making this claim, her language does not promote interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable futures, despite the fact that there have been many successful projects of this kind (cf. Whitmarsh et al., 2011: 260). Furthermore, her critique of the ABC model of behaviour change leads her to conclude that the most promising solution to policy-related environmental issues is a comprehensive structural transformation of the ways in which policymakers approach these issues, leaving no room for individual choice and agency (2010: 1281; Whitmarsh et al., 2011: 259). The problem here, then, is trying to find an approach that does not focus too heavily on individual nor structural transformation, but

rather, establishes some state of equilibrium that affords equal significance to all kinds of pro-environmental endeavours.

No matter the form of sustainability-oriented academic pursuit or critique, the individual is always addressed, in one form or another. Whether portrayed as a green consumer, responsabilised as an economic agent, determined as a site for self-motivated behaviour change, or appointed the carrier of a social practice, *individual people are inevitably implicated in pro-environmental discourse*. This, I maintain, is the point of entry into establishing an effective multidisciplinary approach to global environmental problems, and thus finding a solution to the new tragedy of the commons; pro-environmental discourse must never focus too heavily on individual agency, but also never overlook it. In *Eating the Ocean*, for example, Elspeth Probyn (2016) suggests that a comprehensive, multi-layered phenomenon like sustainability requires a certain level of complexity and internal structure for it to be an effective approach to the problems that it seeks to resolve. This she calls *necessary complexity*: the idea that each actor within a social or cultural ecosystem plays an equally important role in keeping such a system in place. The discarding of any one of these actors, Probyn suggests, may lead to an oversimplification of this ecosystem, which, inevitably, ‘strips our capacities to more widely imagine what sustainability could be’ (34). Individual people, therefore, are likely to be mobilised in a variety of ways by a diverse range of disciplinary approaches and trends, and, as such, must never be overlooked or undervalued.

There arises a problem, however, every time that the term ‘individual’ is used in the context of global pro-environmental discourse. Until now, this word has merely been a placeholder for some abstract, depoliticised universal entity. However, an abstract ‘individual’ is of little to no use within a discourse on sustainability if it is unlikely to produce any concrete or tangible effects, nor if it fails to represent the greatest amount of people that it possibly can. Probyn (2016: 2-3), when discussing urban sustainable food practices and politics, suggests that the discourse on urban localism and ‘healthy eating’ is paired with a particular kind of moralism that is complicit in shaming those who do not participate in such practices, which, concurrently, fails to account for people of colour or people of varying socio-economic circumstances: ‘The mantra ‘local is best’ barely hides its white middle-class complexion.’ As such, a focus on the utility of



individual roles and responsibilities within the context of urban food politics is a futile endeavour if it can only account for a very limited demographic, perhaps calling for a more complex, intersectional analysis of how the broader community engages in such politics. The ease by which identity politics can problematise the idea of ‘the individual’ as an actor in pro-environmental discourse unequivocally points to one human capacity in particular: *individual capability*. Amartya Sen (1995) developed a framework that he called ‘Basic Capability Equality,’ which seeks to understand human equality and inequality through the lens of one’s capabilities to be able to engage with the things that one values. Later titled the ‘Capability Approach,’ Sen’s framework focuses on the moral significance of equality (330), and how individual capabilities are often a barrier to achieving basic universal equality. With this in mind, I ask the reader to treat any subsequent reference to ‘the individual’ delicately, as it is not within the scope of this paper to address the numerous problems—regarding opportunities and capabilities—that this word inevitably creates. Given this susceptibility to easy criticism, I will move forward by acknowledging that identity politics plays a substantial role in pro-environmental discourse, and, as such, my use of the phrase ‘the individual’ will be informed by these considerations.

Returning to Probyn’s (2016) argument for *necessary complexity* within sustainability-oriented pursuits, it seems only fitting to begin a discourse on the differing ways in which individual people are mobilised within existing pro-environmental theories and arrangements. As I have already proposed, there is a clear divide between overarching structural approaches and individualised behaviour change approaches, which, by the very nature of this divide, places them in opposition to one another. What is often overlooked, however, is that space in between; that is, the place where businesses, organisations, campaigning groups, regulatory commissions, and other bodies of people contribute to the greater discourse of sustainability. Such groups I will call *intermediaries*, as their existence is predicated upon linking individual people to larger social structures. In what follows, I will construct a plausible framework to represent what I will call a *pro-environmental intermediary*, something that draws a lot of its structure from Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of the *cultural intermediary*.

## 4. Intermediaries, or, What Lies In-Between

### 4.1. Bourdieu and Cultural Intermediaries

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*,<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu (1984) conducts a kind of sociological cross-section of mid to late twentieth-century French culture. One of the principles that underpins Bourdieu's argument in this book is the concept of 'taste,' which, loosely defined, is a kind of social class-differentiating *habitus*;<sup>11</sup> what I mean to suggest here is that Bourdieu conceives of taste as an *embodied signifier* that serves to distinguish the French social classes from one another. What Bourdieu proposes is that taste serves two main classificatory purposes. The first, at the level of the individual, is to distinguish people from one another based on their judgements of cultural phenomena, which, subsequently, informs the second purpose of taste: to distinguish between social classes. Taste, then, is an *embodied system of judgements of value* that both distinguishes individuals within a social class as well as distinguishing those classes from one another. Jennifer Smith Maguire and Julian Matthews (2014: 16) characterise this quite neatly: 'In sum, taste is a mechanism of social reproduction: it enables the continuation—and veils the arbitrariness—of hierarchies between and within class groups.'

To understand what taste is, however, is not to understand how it is cultivated. Bourdieu attributes the cultivation of taste to society's *cultural intermediaries*. A cultural intermediary is a kind of cultural 'taste-maker,' which is to say that it will 'perform the tasks of gentle manipulation' of societal tastes (1984: 365), concurrently 'defining and defending (new class) group positions within society' (Smith Maguire & Matthews, 2014: 16). Any social or cultural institution—the local newspaper, an advertising agency, a University—that is complicit in the process of cultural production is to be considered a cultural intermediary. Cultural intermediaries, then, are a useful medium through which we can engage with the agency/structure binary, to the extent that such intermediaries are the point of contact between overarching social structures and individual people.

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<sup>10</sup> The first edition of this book was published in France in 1979 as *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement*.

<sup>11</sup> *Habitus* is another concept developed by Bourdieu (2002: 27, original emphasis), which he describes as 'a system of *dispositions*, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of *long-lasting* (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action.'

Bourdieu conceives of taste as a ‘match-maker’ (1984: 243), meaning that it serves to *connect* individuals to the cultural phenomena that they are predisposed to; cultural intermediaries, as the ‘taste-makers’ within society, operate in the same manner: they integrate agency into broader social and cultural discourses.

#### 4.2. Pro-Environmental Intermediaries

As a means of addressing the agency/structure binary, the cultural intermediary is an appealing theoretical construct. It is a framework that understands the production of cultural and social relations without affording too much agency to the individual, nor too much power to social structures. As such, a cultural intermediary is a unique kind of ‘broker of cultural values’—or, as Bourdieu (1984: 365) refers to them, “‘need merchants,’ sellers of symbolic goods and services’—which is to say that it acquires and rearranges values and information from the socio-cultural ethos and redistributes such values and information amongst the individuals who constitute this very ethos. In this sense, the cultural intermediary is acting as a *point of articulation* between structural socio-cultural values and individual people; whereas taste is a marker of social distinction, a cultural intermediary is a marker of agential-structural interdependence.

Removing the ‘cultural’ from ‘cultural intermediaries,’ then, I would like to insert the ‘intermediary’ construct into the pro-environmental discourse that I have been developing until now. Given that this thesis is concerned with reframing ‘the individual’ within contemporary discussions about sustainability, a theory of social and cultural relations that addresses some of the problems that I have raised within and between these discussions will ultimately be conducive to the efficacy of this project. Therefore, I will call this construct a *pro-environmental intermediary*, which is a group, institution or organisation that is complicit in the cultivation and articulation of pro-environmental behaviours and values.<sup>12</sup> To give an example: ‘Alfalfa House’ (2017) is a community food co-operative based in Sydney which sells ‘affordable, ethical and organic food in minimal packaging.’ What makes Alfalfa House a pro-environmental intermediary is the fact that this co-operative *directly engages* individuals in a broader discourse of sustainability;

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<sup>12</sup> The reader may have noticed that I have used the word ‘articulation’ in this section twice now. At this point in time, the word is merely intended to represent a kind of ‘joint’ or ‘connection.’ However, I will further develop this concept in Chapter Two, when I engage with the work of Stuart Hall (cf. Grossberg, 1986).

consumers who shop at Alfalfa House are supporting the production of ethically-sourced, organic food, as well as reducing waste from food packaging, and each of these values may appeal to an individual either independently *or* collectively. What separates a pro-environmental intermediary from some of the theories and frameworks that I have discussed, therefore, is the fact that such intermediaries cut across the typical divide that exists between theories that focus on structure and theories that focus on agency, as they are able address different kinds of individuals in various ways. The next two chapters will involve a closer look at two different pro-environmental intermediaries, and the different ways in which each is able to cultivate behaviours and values in accord with the broader principles of ecological sustainability.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Adani, Greenpeace, Closing the Value-Action Gap**

#### **1. The Carmichael Coal Mine and Rail Project**

##### 1.1. About the Mine

In 2010, Adani Mining Pty. Ltd.—a subsidiary of India’s Adani Group—announced its plans to build a coal mine in central Queensland’s Galilee Basin (McGrath, 2017). The proposal also included a 189km railway line that would link this mine to the coal terminal at Abbot Point on Queensland’s east coast, and subsequent plans to expand the terminal itself. The project in the Galilee Basin would consist of six open-cut pits and five underground mines, all of which would span an area of around 44,700ha, or roughly 30km long by 15km wide (GHD, 2015b; AMCS, 2017). The original lifespan of the mine was estimated to be 150 years, but it is now gauged at around 60 years, with an output of up to 60 million tonnes per annum (also known as mega-tonnes per annum, or Mtpa), and an expected 2.3 billion tonnes over the lifetime of the project (McGrath, 2017). The proposed railway line, which will cut through over 60 private properties and join up to the existing Goonyella rail system, will have the capacity of transporting up to 100Mtpa, which will be enough to support the demands of the Carmichael coal mine at the same time as any potential future projects (GHD, 2014). The coal terminal at Abbot Point currently has an export capacity of up to 50Mtpa, yet the expansion will see this number increase up to 120Mtpa (GHD, 2015a).

The sheer size and immense output capacity of the Carmichael project will make it the biggest coal mine in Australia, and among the biggest in the world (McGrath, 2017). As such, it is not surprising to discover that this project is at the centre of a heated debate amongst politicians, environmentalists, economists and citizens alike. For example, Adani estimates that the mine will generate around 10,000 jobs and \$16.5 billion for the Australian economy (Horn, 2016); however, in a Land Court of Queensland hearing in 2015,<sup>13</sup> Adani’s very own expert witness Jerome Fahrner (2015: 24) proposed that the project will realistically create only 1,464 direct and indirect jobs nationwide, leaving Adani Mining open to criticism by many. Furthermore, in 2016 the Coalition Government

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<sup>13</sup> This hearing took place because of an objection to the mine proposal by the conservation group Land Services of Coast and Country Inc. (LSCC).

established the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), which is a funding body entitled to approve a series of loans—totalling \$5 billion—to private companies, with the sole purpose of encouraging ‘private sector investment in economic infrastructure that benefits northern Australia’ (NAIF, 2017: 1). However, the NAIF has been accused of being a Governmental ‘slush fund’ (GetUp!, 2017; Waters, 2017) given that Adani Mining is seeking around \$1 billion in funding from the NAIF—or 20 percent of the funding body’s total allowance—to build its railway line, and it has recently come to public attention that there may be potential conflicts of interest among some of the NAIF board members, prompting a Senate inquiry (Doran, 2017; SBS, 2017).

## 1.2. The Ecological Impacts of the Mine

There have been some strong political and economic responses to the proposed Carmichael mine. However, for the purposes of my investigation here, the most pertinent are the pro-environmental considerations. The Adani Mining environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Carmichael coal and rail project gives a detailed account of the foreseeable impacts that the project will have on Australia’s various ecosystems. These impacts are broken down into several categories, including nature conservation, water resources, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and waste (GHD, 2015b). Perhaps the most peculiar category in the EIS, however, is the section on climate change, titled ‘Climate, Natural Hazards and Climate Change.’ The summary at the end of this section is as follows:

The Project (Mine) has the potential to increase the severity or frequency of natural hazards. Moreover, natural hazards may present a risk to the operation of the Project (Mine). Climate change predictions such as an increase in temperature, severe flooding, evaporation and wind speed associated with cyclone [sic], may exacerbate this relationship between the Project (Mine) and natural hazards (GHD, 2015c: 23).

Aside from the recognition of the circular relationship between mining and climate change, this statement indicates that Adani Mining is quite clearly not concerned with the broader impacts of its proposed project. Adani Mining estimates that its average GHG emissions—measured in terms of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO<sub>2</sub>e)<sup>14</sup>—related to land-

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Carbon dioxide equivalent,’ or CO<sub>2</sub>e, is a standardised unit of measurement that allows all GHGs to be expressed on the same scale. CO<sub>2</sub> is attributed a factor of 1, and other GHGs are then converted to figures

clearing, the importing of electricity, wastewater handling and the production of coal, will equate to roughly 2.29Mtpa, or 137 million tonnes over the life of the mine (GHD, 2015d: 3). This figure, however, only reflects the emissions related directly to the mine site. Chris Taylor and Malte Meinshausen (2014: 8) estimate that the GHGs emitted from the extraction, transportation, and burning of the coal that Adani Mining is seeking to mine from the Galilee Basin will exceed 4.5 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e—or 4,500 million tonnes—over the life of the project and beyond. These figures suggest that Adani Mining is claiming responsibility *for a mere 3 percent* of the total GHG emissions that will occur as a result of the Carmichael coal and rail project. Furthermore, these CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions are substantial enough to be expressed in terms of the ‘global carbon budget,’ which is the estimated allowable amount of international carbon emissions that we must not surpass if we are to have a likely chance of not exceeding a 2°C rise in global temperature; these emissions, then, equate to roughly *0.5 percent of the remaining global carbon budget* (McGrath, 2017). Given that the Adani Mining sustainability charter states that the company is concerned with ‘promoting initiatives, systems, values and behaviours that drive environmental sustainability,’ and that it will also ‘work in a manner which ensures minimal environmental impact’ (Vora, 2012: 1), it hardly seems appropriate to take this charter seriously, as it does not appear to address any foreseeable negative environmental impacts beyond the scope of its own mining practices.

The Carmichael coal and rail project, then, does not fall within the scope of a ‘sustainable practice,’ as it conflicts directly with my earlier characterisation of ‘pro-environmental behaviour.’ As such, many pro-environmental campaigning groups have expressed their resolute opposition to this project, and for varying reasons. Greenpeace Australia Pacific (AP), for example, contends with Adani Mining as a part of its ‘Save the Reef’ campaign, for two primary reasons. The first is the damage to the reef that will be caused by the dredging of the seafloor near to the Abbot Point coal terminal, a necessary part of the expansion operation (Greenpeace AP, 2012b; Advisian, 2015); Greenpeace also contends that there will be a heightened risk of shipping accidents and oil spills in and around the reef, given that there will be hundreds of coal ships passing through that

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that equate their contribution to global warming with and thus and express it in terms of CO<sub>2</sub>. For example: methane, or CH<sub>4</sub>, is attributed a factor of 25, meaning that every kilogram (kg) of CH<sub>4</sub> released into the atmosphere is equivalent to releasing 25kg of CO<sub>2</sub> (Manitoba Eco-Network, 2016).

area every year. The second reason is tied to coal mining and climate change more broadly, given that the Great Barrier Reef has undergone severe coral bleaching as a direct result of warming sea temperatures (Greenpeace AP, 2017a; cf. GBRMPA, 2017). Both of these reasons I will elaborate upon in the next section of this chapter, as I illustrate how Greenpeace's campaign marks it as a pro-environmental intermediary.

## **2. The Greenpeace Campaign**

### 2.1. About Greenpeace

Greenpeace is an international pro-environmental campaigning organisation that was established in the 1970s. Its founding mission saw a group of activists pilot a small vessel bound for Amchitka—an island off the coast of Alaska—in 1971, in protest of the United States' planned nuclear bomb testing (Greenpeace Intl., 2016). Though this mission did not ultimately prevent the test, it did give this small group of activists the international media coverage needed to inspire further protests and campaigns, eventually turning Greenpeace into one of the world's most recognisable pro-environmental organisations; today, Greenpeace has offices in more than 55 countries, and a member base exceeding 2.9 million people (2016). These conditions allow Greenpeace to operate as a highly-effective pro-environmental intermediary, meaning that it has the resources and capabilities to widely promote its campaigns and thus articulate a range of pro-environmental beliefs and values to its subscribers, and, perhaps more importantly, individuals beyond its immediate member base.

### 2.2. The 'Save the Reef' Campaign

Given that Greenpeace is such an established and pervasive pro-environmental group, its direct-intervention-style methods are often subject to criticism. As such, Greenpeace must hold itself quite strictly to its founding principles, in order to maintain some form of consistency across all of its campaigns. Greenpeace's mission statement perhaps best captures its spirit:

Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organisation that uses non-violent direct action to expose global environmental problems and to force solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future (Greenpeace AP, 2012a).



The Greenpeace 'Save the Reef' movement employs a range of campaigning methods that adhere to the principles set out in this statement. For example, a substantial part of the 'Save the Reef' campaign centres around pressuring Australia's large banks to stop funding coal projects in the Galilee Basin, and this is mostly channelled through the domain of public relations; on 5 May, 2017, two Greenpeace volunteers climbed Pymont Bridge in Sydney, and from a height of 25m, hung a banner that read 'CommBank Dump Coal! Invest in our Future!' (Boyce, 2017). Though the banner was hung in a high foot traffic zone and thus intended to be seen by many a passer-by, the primary audience of this stunt were the CommBank employees themselves, who had a very clear view of the banner from their office windows.

Another method by which Greenpeace has been promoting its 'Save the Reef' campaign is through a series of email updates to its members. Given that my rationale for undertaking this project is attributable in part to these kinds of email campaigns, I thought it necessary to briefly reflect upon how they affected me, in order to draw attention to their mode of address. Since signing up to the Greenpeace AP mailing list in mid-2016, I have been following the 'Save the Reef' campaign quite closely, and have thus become familiar with the various approaches that Greenpeace take to ensure that its message is most effective. For example, every single email that I have received from Greenpeace is addressed to me personally ('Dear Brett,' or 'Hi Brett') and is composed in such a way that appeals to my affective capacities; pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' cultivate a sense of inclusivity and engagement with the campaign, particularly when these emails also provide the means—such as an option to donate, or partake in a public demonstration—to be able to participate directly in the campaign. A stronger and perhaps more effective technique, however, is the way in which these emails make an appeal to authority. I received an email in November 2016 from Graeme Kelleher, the ex-CEO of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), denouncing the Australian government's continued interest in the fossil fuel industry and calling on them to step up and protect the Great Barrier Reef by implementing a ban on new coal mining projects within Australia.

The above examples are but two of many different approaches that Greenpeace is taking to spread awareness about the impacts of the proposed mine on the Great Barrier

Reef, and yet already it is becoming apparent just how broad an audience Greenpeace can potentially reach. The reason for this is primarily because the 'Save the Reef' campaign is organised around several different—and often interrelated—sites and institutions. The Pymont Bridge banner stunt, for instance, can be interpreted as a direct intervention in the public domain, given that it took place in an urban area of considerable foot traffic and thus was able to articulate pro-environmental values directly to unsuspecting passers-by. It also advanced a bold political ultimatum; framing CommBank's investment in the coal industry as something that is a barrier to 'our future' has a kind of polarising effect, inferring that CommBank face the choice of being either on the right or wrong side of history. Furthermore, the sheer spectacle of two activists dangling dangerously in the air above an inner-city pedestrian walkway fast attracted various media outlets, and the message was soon disseminated amongst the consumers of such media. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the stunt spoke directly to the employees of CommBank; these particular people sat in their offices all day, facing the banner, confronted with the reality of their employer's investment choices and no longer alienated from the broader implications of the decisions made by CommBank's board of directors. It is in this sense that Greenpeace is an effective pro-environmental intermediary, as it is able to cut across the agency/structure binary and appeal to various different kinds of individuals without relying upon some stable and thus abstract conception of a subject, such as 'citizen' or 'consumer.' In both of the above examples, Greenpeace is able to mobilise pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes by *articulating* different identities and subjectivities at the same time. Its appeal, therefore, is both public *and* private.

### **3. Translating Values into Actions**

#### **3.1. Modes of Address**

To understand Greenpeace as an intermediary, it is first necessary to further investigate how its 'Save the Reef' campaign addresses different kinds of individuals. As I proposed in Chapter One, individual people are inevitably implicated in pro-environmental discourse, and so a focus on the way in which these individuals are addressed and therefore mobilised will ultimately be conducive to understanding how Greenpeace operates as an intermediary.<sup>15</sup> Returning to Bourdieu's (1984) conception of

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<sup>15</sup> To avoid any confusion about differing modes of address, I will focus specifically on the ways in which Greenpeace's *emails* address individuals.

‘taste,’ Greenpeace’s ‘Save the Reef’ campaign confers upon it the role of ‘taste-maker,’ which is to say that it plays a part in not only *cultivating* but also *curating* pro-environmental values and attitudes. Though Bourdieu theorises tastes as ‘markers of class’ (2), it is important to understand here that the specific conception of ‘intermediary’ that I am offering distinguishes tastes from one another purely in terms of pro-, non- or anti-environmental values and attitudes, and so, in its capacity as a taste-maker, Greenpeace is *producing the conditions* under which these values and attitudes can be engaged with, rather than distinguishing people from one another based on a form of socio-economic hierarchy. Greenpeace, then, acts as a *point of articulation* between pro-environmental discourse and individual people.

The foregoing claim is underpinned by an implicit set of principles. To suggest that Greenpeace acts as a point of articulation between a broad pro-environmental discourse and individual people is also to suggest that it is in the position to provide the means for individuals to translate their pro-environmental values or tastes into tangible action. Another way to characterise this idea is to propose that Greenpeace *as an intermediary* is able to overcome the value-action gap by providing the conditions for individuals to indulge in their pro-environmental tastes in ways that otherwise wouldn’t have been so easily accessible. For example, most of the ‘Save the Reef’ email updates that Greenpeace sends out provide both necessary information about the campaign itself and also provide the reader with a way to get directly involved in the campaign. Recall the email that I received from Graeme Kelleher (2016); Graeme included a link to a Greenpeace petition that calls upon CommBank’s CEO Ian Narev to pull all funding from new coal projects, which, at the time of writing, has over 100,000 signatures. Other emails often ask for donations, whether they be small once-off sums or continuing commitments, and they are typically related to a particular part of the campaign.<sup>16</sup> This form of detached online activism—*clicktivism* or *slacktivism*, as it is called—is often criticised, however, for acting simply as a ‘feel-good’ mechanism that stands in for any tangible pro-environmental

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<sup>16</sup> Greenpeace often sends emails requesting donations that are going to be put directly towards some specific aspect of its campaign, which it will make explicitly clear. For example, in an email that I received on 1 May (2017b), Greenpeace requested of me a donation of \$30 to go towards the publishing of an advertisement in the Australian Financial Review (AFR). This advertisement was directed at politicians who regularly read the AFR, and was intended to put pressure on them to stray away from the allocation of funds to new coal projects in the Federal budget. This proposed advertisement is not to be confused with a similar advertisement proposal that I will discuss on the next page.

change (White, 2010); ‘slacktivism’ is thus the breakdown between ‘awareness’ and ‘action’ through an online medium (Glenn, 2015). Furthermore, a study has shown (Shulman, 2009) that mass emails sent out by pro-environmental organisations (and their subscribers) may actually *inhibit* productive discussion at the level of environmental lawmaking, to the extent that a Governmental body with an influx of generic emails will have too many to filter through, impeding the task of trying to address the more detailed concerns buried within these emails.

Nonetheless, Greenpeace is articulating a pro-environmental discourse by promoting petitions and requesting donations, and it also employs other approaches that are able to mobilise the individual and thus begin to close the value-action gap; for example, Greenpeace sent out an email on 11 August, 2017, inviting recipients to tune in to their live coverage of the NAIF Senate inquiry. Greenpeace set up outside the doors of the inquiry at Parliament House in Canberra and reported on what was happening at the hearing, followed by interviews with insiders after the hearing had finished. The aim of this event was to spread awareness about what was happening, as Greenpeace claimed that there would be limited coverage of the event by major news outlets<sup>17</sup> in virtue of the more pressing newsworthy events in Parliament at the time (Greenpeace AP, 2017c).

Another email, sent out by Greenpeace on 17 August (2017d), informed recipients that the advertisement they had funded—an advertisement that targeted CommBank and its investment in fossil fuels, to be published in the Australian Financial Review—had been rejected. Given that the advertisement intended to send a pro-environmental message to CommBank and its investors, Greenpeace asked its subscribers for alternative ideas, which were subsequently put to a vote. On 21 September (2017e), the results of the vote were sent out to recipients, and the winning idea was to cause a ‘PR [public relations] nightmare’ for CommBank by plastering posters that Greenpeace had designed all over existing advertising spaces in Australia. Greenpeace suggested that it had already secured seven high-traffic locations across Sydney, but was also calling on individuals to help spread the message even further. Those who nominated themselves to participate

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<sup>17</sup> At present, Greenpeace’s claim holds true. Though there are a few mainstream media sources (Hasham, 2017; Robertson, 2017; SBS, 2017) that precede the inquiry, my own research has failed to find any post-inquiry articles from major outlets.

would be sent a ‘poster kit,’ which included several printouts of posters bearing an anti-CommBank agenda and the tools necessary to plaster such posters wherever the user pleases.

### 3.2. General Principles and Intermediaries

The approaches that Greenpeace is taking to promote its ‘Save the Reef’ campaign, then, appear to be consistently and effectively working to translate values into actions, to the extent that individuals are consistently *informed* about environmental issues, as well as *engaged* in the campaigning process. As I have already suggested, the ways that Greenpeace cultivates taste is a key factor in this transition, and, after a brief examination of some of its campaigning methods—keeping in mind my earlier conception of a pro-environmental intermediary—it seems reasonable to draw from these a few general principles about pro-environmental intermediaries:

1. A pro-environmental intermediary cultivates taste by informing individuals about ecological concerns, and;
2. A pro-environmental intermediary engages/mobilises individuals by providing the means for such taste/s to be translated into concrete action

In its capacity as an intermediary, Greenpeace certainly appears to be giving substance to these principles. The ‘Save the Reef’ email campaign informs individuals about the potential threats to the Great Barrier Reef posed by new mining activity in the Galilee Basin, as well as politicising these threats by implicating certain members of parliament (MPs), Governmental bodies, and big banks, in the process; furthermore, the campaign engages with and thus mobilises these individuals by providing the means for direct action, be it a volunteer-organised public stunt, or a simple form of clicktivism that one can participate in from one’s home. In any case, there is a particular kind of value that comes from characterising Greenpeace as an intermediary, and that value, I believe, is attributable to the way in which Greenpeace maintains a steady focus on how individuals are implicated in pro-environmental discourse *across all social dimensions*. Which is to say that at any one time, a pro-environmental intermediary should be able to cut across the agency/structure binary by coupling individual values directly to a broader pro-

environmental discourse, so as to deliver avenues for meaningful and effective social change. Greenpeace, therefore, is acting as a *point of articulation*, in the sense that it is located in a position somewhere between the values intrinsic to the hegemonic pro-environmental discourse of sustainability and the actions of individual people. This necessitates that it plays a *pedagogical role* in its capacity as an intermediary.

### 3.3. Articulation and Pedagogy

Within social and cultural theory, the concept of *articulation* is most developed in the work of Stuart Hall. In an interview with Lawrence Grossberg, Hall explains the idea of articulation using a ‘truck and trailer’ metaphor:

The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time... So the so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness’ (Hall, as cited in Grossberg, 1986: 53, original emphasis).

What Hall is suggesting here is that articulation is an ever-dynamic, ever-productive process, one that is not bound by the confines of time and is therefore contingent upon specific existential moments. A concrete instance of articulation, then, may be one that happens in concurrence with many other instances that are similar—or perhaps quite different—in nature, and will not necessarily last over time; most importantly, though, these distinct moments of articulation are *able to form a unified discourse*. This, I maintain, is how Greenpeace cuts laterally across the typical disciplinary straight-up-and-down dimensions. In its capacity as an intermediary, Greenpeace is able to articulate a pro-environmental discourse to many different people *without relying on a simplistic or unified conception of ‘the individual.’*

Importantly, the pedagogical role that Greenpeace plays relies heavily on a reciprocal relationship; as John Clarke (2015: 281) suggests, pedagogy (in this manner) should be understood ‘as an engagement, a conversation and a process of collective discovery, rather than an act of masterly revelation.’ Which is to say that the individuals

that Greenpeace engages with and mobilises play an equally important active role in producing, curating, and sustaining pro-environmental values and behaviours. Therefore, simply by addressing individuals in the right way, Greenpeace are able to cut across the confines of any pre-established disciplinary approaches to sustainability by focusing on that which is largely common to them all: how *individual people are characterised and addressed*.

As I discussed in Chapter One, the term ‘the individual’ can be quite problematic, because it is an abstraction and therefore by its very nature cannot stand in for any concrete instance of an actual person. Nonetheless, it is helpful in supporting the distinction between how intermediaries work to mobilise pro-environmental behaviours and how other disciplines or fields of study attempt the same thing. For example, a theory of social practice conceives of individuals as ‘points’ or ‘nodes’ within a network of relations, and they are thus attributed the same theoretical value as objects and non-human animals; a theory of behaviour change marks individuals as the site for psychological intervention and expects self-motivated behaviour change as an outcome; a market-based logic may define individuals as ‘consumers,’ ‘consumer-citizens,’ ‘green consumers,’ ‘freegans,’ or any other kind of label that attaches a significance to some form of economy; intermediaries, however, are able to engage in the articulation of a pro-environmental discourse *without relying exclusively on any one conception of ‘the individual.’* In contrast, the intermediary is able to engage with various different conceptions of ‘the individual’ at any one time. Greenpeace, existing as the point of articulation between a broad pro-environmental discourse and individual people, has the capacity to mobilise many different types of individuals in many ways.

This conclusion, of course, requires a concrete example. Consider the series of emails that I discussed earlier. Specifically, consider the one that called upon individual people to participate in a poster-plastering campaign. This single email addresses numerous kinds of people in numerous ways. Firstly, it addresses individuals that are predisposed to participate in social justice campaigns, given that the email requires volunteers to plaster posters all over public spaces. It addresses those with a strong belief in civic duties and democratic solutions, as the poster campaign was decided by a vote. It appeals to those who may be inclined toward market-based solutions to environmental

problems; given that CommBank is implicated in the funding of coal mining projects, it leaves itself open to a potential boycott, or even a widespread smear campaign intended to hurt its PR. Lastly, it appeals to one's affective side, to the extent that it invokes a kind of contempt for CommBank. The above examples are but four of potentially many kinds of individuals that this campaign may appeal to, and this is all drawn from a single email. The fact that many different types of individuals are potentially able to respond to the same email in numerous ways contributes in part to the pedagogical function that Greenpeace—as an intermediary—plays; through the constant articulation of pro-environmental values and principles, Greenpeace is able to consistently engage with many different kinds of individuals at any one time, and therefore be continuously improving its effectiveness as a pro-environmental campaigning organisation.

Though there are some clear and distinctive benefits to the productive work that Greenpeace does, characterising it as a pro-environmental intermediary also has its limitations. For example, there is the problem of growth. Greenpeace, like many other pro-environmental organisations, is a group that mostly appeals to those who already hold pro-environmental values, and so it can be very difficult for it to broaden its member base and produce wider social and environmental change. There is also an issue that concerns campaigning groups and political prejudices more broadly. Given the pejorative nature of terms like 'clicktivism' and 'slacktivism,' it is not too difficult to imagine that some campaigning groups may be actively avoided by individuals who associate such terminology with these groups. As such, there may be utility to be found in other kinds of pro-environmental intermediaries; that is, *groups that are structured differently to independent campaigning organisations*. Greenpeace operates independently of any government or private company, is held together by its volunteers, and is funded entirely from donations by those in the general public who hold a firm belief in the principles of sustainability. Perhaps another kind of intermediary—one that is founded on different principles—may be able to fill some of the gaps that Greenpeace cannot.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The Inner West Council, The Home Eco Challenge, Different Kinds of Intermediaries**

#### **1. The Inner West Council**

##### 1.1. About the Council

The Inner West Council (IWC)—a local government area (LGA) in Sydney—was formed in May 2016 as a result of the NSW State Government’s forced Council mergers (Davies & McKenny, 2015). This merger saw the Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils come together under the one name, forming an LGA with a population in excess of 192,000 and spanning an area of around 35km<sup>2</sup> (ABS, 2017). This area—located immediately west of Sydney’s central business district (CBD)—is generally considered a place of progressive, centre to left-wing politics;<sup>18</sup> the 2017 election is a testament to this, given that, out of fifteen elected Councillors, ten of those were divided evenly between the Labour and the Greens parties, three Councillors were independent, and only two were members of the Liberal party (Green, 2017).

With a reasonably strong left-wing influence, then, it follows that the IWC would concern itself with pro-environmental policymaking. For example, within the ‘Sustainability’ section on its website, the IWC provides information on several pro-environmental principles, such as where the local community gardens are, how to start a worm farm or compost heap, information on the negative impacts of wasting food, and information on the measures taken to treat stormwater and thus prevent pollution from entering the local waterways (IWC, 2016d). The IWC also runs a series of programs that are aimed at encouraging its citizens to engage in pro-environmental behaviours and practices. Some of these include: the ‘Business Environment Awards,’ a series of yearly awards that seek to recognise local businesses for their involvement in sustainable principles and practices; the ‘Compost Collective,’ a program designed to encourage those living in multi-unit dwellings to participate in communal composting; the ‘Waterevolution’ scheme, a workshop and rebate program designed to incentivise the

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<sup>18</sup> Prior to the merger, all three LGAs differed slightly in their political affiliations. For example, in the wake of the 2012 election, Ashfield Council saw the loss of its only three Greens Councillors, leaving twelve seats divided evenly between the independents, the Labour and the Liberal parties (ABC: 2012a). Nonetheless, the Inner West is generally considered to be an area with an overall progressive political outlook (Ting, 2017).

purchase and installation of rainwater tanks within the Council area; engagement with the 'Plastic Bag Free NSW' campaign, a source of information for both consumers and retailers about the ecological implications of single-use plastic bags, and information as to how individuals can both reduce their reliance on these bags and promote the campaign (IWC, 2016b).

### 1.2. The Council as an Intermediary

The programs that the IWC coordinates—as well as the information that it makes available to its constituents—marks it as a pro-environmental intermediary. Recalling the two general principles that I developed in the preceding chapter, the IWC is able to both:

1. Cultivate pro-environmental taste and interest by informing individuals about ecological concerns, and;
2. Engage individuals in pro-environmental discourse by enabling them to participate in projects and programs that lead to concrete pro-environmental outcomes.

Given that the IWC is in a position to cultivate individuals' engagement with pro-environmental discourse, it is therefore necessary to investigate the ways that the Council addresses these individuals. As I proposed in Chapter Two, to understand how a pro-environmental intermediary operates is to understand how such an intermediary addresses the individual, which is to say that the *pedagogical* function of the IWC plays an important role in the articulation of pro-environmental values. The framework through which the IWC addresses its constituents, I maintain, is one that is structured around the principles of *community engagement*; as per its 'Statement of Vision and Priorities' (2016c: 3), one of the Council's top eight priorities is 'local democracy,' meaning that the IWC commits itself to 'ensuring participatory community engagement,' and 'developing partnerships to deliver community outcomes.' Furthermore, the IWC's vision statement provides insight into how it defines itself as a LGA: 'Together we are an inclusive, passionate, creative, vibrant community united in our desire to build a great future for all who live and do business here' (2).

Taken in isolation, the above statement of vision would presumably be similar to those of many other Australian LGAs. When the IWC is characterised as a pro-environmental intermediary, however, this seemingly conventional statement of vision obtains a unique supplementary purpose; the conflation of community engagement principles with pro-environmental values disrupts the typical ‘think global, act local’ rhetoric and enables the IWC to mobilise pro-environmental behaviours and practices by appealing to *situated community benefits*, as opposed to global ones. This mode of address is beneficial to the IWC in two distinct ways. Firstly, the focus on community engagement contributes to the pedagogical function of the IWC. In its capacity as an intermediary, the Council is able to articulate pro-environmental discourse within a participatory-democratic setting, meaning that the Council’s constituents are playing an active pedagogical role—to the extent that they contribute to the production and reproduction of pro-environmental values—as well as engaging in pro-environmental behaviours and practices. Secondly, a focus on the *community benefits* of participating in pro-environmental behaviours and practices—as opposed to the global benefits—gives the IWC’s constituents tangible outcomes to look forward to, which is arguably more efficacious in motivating participation in pro-environmental initiatives (cf. Gardner & Stern, 1996; Stern, 2000); ‘thinking global’ can often be a barrier to any productive change, given the vast expanse that exists between individual behaviours and global consequences. The IWC’s ‘Home Eco Challenge’ is a concrete example of how the Council promotes pro-environmental principles through a community engagement framework.

## **2. The Home Eco Challenge**

### **2.1. About the Challenge**

Between the months of May and July in 2016, the IWC facilitated a program called the ‘Home Eco Challenge.’ This program consisted of three separate month-long ‘challenges,’ and each of them was aimed toward encouraging the Council’s constituents to participate in pro-environmental behaviours and practices, in order to promote an ecologically-sustainable lifestyle within the LGA (2016a). The ‘Home Eco Challenge’ was advertised to residents of the IWC LGA (though outsiders were also encouraged to participate), and interested parties were required to opt-in by registering their household on the IWC website. Those who signed up received information on how to participate in the program, and were required to fill out an online form at the beginning and end of each

challenge, detailing how they had completed the relevant requirements (2016f). The pro-environmental practices and behaviours built in to each challenge were incentivised by the Council, as every household that successfully completed each challenge went into a draw to win one of several prizes.<sup>19</sup> The challenges—‘sustainable food,’ ‘know your waste,’ ‘energy and water at home,’ respectively—were each designed to engage participants in a specific set of sustainable practices, and were particularly focused on encouraging *households* to partake in the challenges, as opposed to just one or two individuals within each household. As stated on the ‘Home Eco Challenge’ webpage: ‘Challenge your household to do something new to reduce your impact on the planet’ (2016a).

Given that the overall aim of this program was to ‘challenge’ participants, the ‘Home Eco Challenge’ involved a variety of behaviours that were intended to address a wide audience; for example, the ‘know your waste’ challenge included activities such as upcycling, avoiding the use of plastic bags, and recycling ‘problem’ items like batteries and light bulbs (IWC, 2016e). The IWC website also provided a series of downloadable ‘fact sheets’ for each challenge, which effectively acted as the guiding principles for the program as a whole (cf. IWC, 2016a). Each fact sheet provided households with information about the pro-environmental practices involved in each challenge, and, most importantly, information about why these practices are conducive to an ecologically-sustainable future.<sup>20</sup> For example, the first challenge (sustainable food) required participants to intervene in their food consumption habits. The ‘sustainable food fact sheet’ prompted households to question matters such as how their food is produced, what it contains, where it has travelled from, what kind of packaging it is wrapped in, and how much of it the household may be wasting. After encouraging participants to think critically about such questions, the fact sheet provides information on how unchallenged food habits tend to be complicit in large-scale negative ecological effects, like GHG pollution, plastic pollution, deforestation, and the unethical treatment of animals. Lastly, the sheet

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<sup>19</sup> The prizes that households could win somewhat reflected the challenge itself. For example, the prize for the winner of the ‘sustainable food’ draw was dinner for two at NOMAD, a cellar door and restaurant in Sydney’s CDB that cooks with produce that is sourced sustainably from local producers (IWC, 2016a).

<sup>20</sup> Recalling Gardner and Stern’s (1996) work on behaviour change, the ‘Home Eco Challenge’ engages with three of their four intervention methods: material incentives, educational approaches, and community management.

offers advice on how to transition out of food habits that have a negative ecological impact, and gives helpful tips on some local initiatives that will make this transition easier. Such advice includes: purchasing organic produce, purchasing free range eggs, cutting down the amount of meat consumed per week, growing food at home, and questioning local cafés and restaurants about where they source their food.<sup>21</sup> Both of the fact sheets for the second and third challenges are structured in the same manner as the first. They *intervene* in participants' energy, water and waste habits, in order to articulate pro-environmental values and thus encourage a shift in household-wide practices.

## 2.2. What the Challenge Does

The 'Home Eco Challenge,' then, is a straightforward illustration of what the IWC looks like in its capacity as an intermediary. To recall once again the two general principles that characterise a pro-environmental intermediary, the 'Home Eco Challenge' both *informs* householders about ecological concerns and *mobilises* them through a direct engagement with pro-environmental values and principles. The key factor in this relationship is the Council's appeal to *community participation and contribution*, the effect of which is to implicate individuals in pro-environmental discourse and thus emphasise the tangible benefits that such involvement will have for the local community. For example, in the 'know your waste' fact sheet, the IWC (2016a) discusses both the ecological and the community-based advantages of recycling household items. It suggests that most household items can be recycled, and that residents in the Council area can have these items picked up from their homes during one of the 'Council clean ups.' Large and bulky items (furniture, for example) may not be accepted by the Council, however, and instead the IWC recommends organising a pick-up with 'The Bower,' and provides a link to its website.

The Bower is a second-hand collection, repair and rehoming co-operative based in the suburb of Marrickville,<sup>22</sup> and it was established in 1998 by around fifty local residents (The Bower, 2017a). The co-operative describes itself as an 'environmental charity and

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<sup>21</sup> In Chapter One, I addressed Probyn's (2016) criticism of the classed nature of urban localism. It is important to remember, however, that the 'Home Eco Challenge' is specific to an inner-city LGA, and does not seek to represent others.

<sup>22</sup> The co-operative now has a second shopfront in the suburb of Parramatta.

cooperative committed to stopping usable items from going to landfill' (2017b). The Bower collects second-hand items, repairs them in its workshop, and then sells them in its shopfront. The Bower accepts donations in-store, and also provides a free collection service across twenty-one participating Council areas in Sydney (for larger, difficult to transport items). In addition to its collect, repair and resell strategy, The Bower offers a series of hands-on workshops designed to educate individuals about home repair. It also conducts a weekly 'Repair Café,' a place where individuals can bring along their 'dodgy electrical items, wobbly bikes and rickety timber furniture' for free assistance in the repair and subsequent maintenance of such items (2017b).

The Bower, therefore, is a valuable pro-environmental resource within the IWC LGA, and it is one that participants in the 'Home Eco Challenge' are now forever aware of. With an understanding of the negative ecological impacts of landfill (paired with the community benefits of recycling and reuse), the 'Home Eco Challenge' participants have compelling reasons to continue engaging with The Bower, whether that be through the donation of their second-hand goods or the purchase of others. Recalling Stuart Hall's (cf. Grossberg, 1986: 53) comments about articulation, what I am suggesting here is that the pro-environmental principles articulated by the IWC's 'Home Eco Challenge' have *created contingent linkages* between participants of the Challenge and The Bower, meaning that such principles are the source of individuals' broader engagement in sustainable behaviours and practices. By mobilising individuals through a community-centred initiative such as the 'Home Eco Challenge,' then, the IWC is able to effect meaningful pro-environmental changes within the LGA, to the extent that this initiative encourages the continued involvement in sustainable behaviours and practices.

### **3. Different Kinds of Intermediaries**

#### **3.1. The Foundational Differences**

It is evident that the IWC's articulation of pro-environmental values relies upon several different factors, the first of which is its mode of address. As I have discussed, the Council addresses its constituents as *members of a community*, meaning that it engages with individuals through a participatory-democratic, community-centred framework. One factor that hasn't been considered, however, is the *foundational arrangements* of the Council, or, the principles around which the Council is structured. The IWC is a *taxpayer-*

*funded governmental institution*, meaning that it is accountable to its constituents and thus concerned primarily with local issues and the concrete outcomes of its policymaking. As a pro-environmental intermediary, then, the IWC is only effective to the extent that its constituents and Councillors alike participate in the ongoing cultivation of pro-environmental values, and maintain a shared vision of a sustainable future. Although it is likely—at least in the foreseeable future—that the IWC LGA remains engaged in pro-environmental discourse, there is another dimension of governance to consider. As well as being accountable to its constituents, the IWC is also subject to the will of the State Government of NSW, meaning that it is entangled in a form of legal pluralism and therefore must ensure that Council-sanctioned initiatives do not conflict with state laws.

This multi-dimensional legal structure complicates its role as a pro-environmental intermediary. It effectively means that the Council is doing the work of *two* intermediaries at any one time: it must engage with and enact the political will of its constituents, and at the same time articulate the will of the State Government. This may be counterproductive for any LGA with an investment in sustainable futures, as it leaves open the possibility that the interests of the Council's constituents may be overshadowed by those of a more conservative State Government. Returning for a moment to Greenpeace, there is a very clear distinction between the way this group is structured—and the sites that it is organised around—in comparison to that of the IWC. Given that Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organisation and does not receive Governmental nor corporate support, it is able to avoid the problems that legal pluralism creates for the IWC. Furthermore, Greenpeace makes it an imperative to 'force solutions which are essential to a green and peaceful future' (2012a), whereas the IWC—as a Governmental body—is bound by the principles of democratic election and governance. The organisational structure of each intermediary, then, plays a significant role in *who they are able to address* and *how they articulate pro-environmental values*, meaning that the differences between these intermediaries determines the role of each of them in a broader discourse on sustainability. The IWC—as a local Council—is primarily concerned with environmental issues at the level of local Government, whereas Greenpeace—as an international campaigning organisation—is primarily concerned with overarching environmental issues, often at State and Federal Government levels; to characterise these groups as pro-

environmental intermediaries is also to recognise that each of them is capable of doing productive work in the areas that the other cannot.

### 3.2. Differing Modes of Address

The efficacy of a pro-environmental intermediary, therefore, relies greatly on the audience that it is able to address, and it is clear that multiple intermediaries may work side by side in order to address and also mobilise a more substantial assemblage of individuals. The difference in principles that underpin both Greenpeace and the IWC contributes greatly to the kind of audience that each is able to mobilise; until now, however, I have only discussed the contrast between *why* each group addresses a different audience, and have not touched upon the contrast between *how* each does it. Recalling my argument in the second section of this chapter, the IWC addresses its constituents through a *community-based* framework, and focuses heavily on *household participation and engagement*. By concentrating on the community and household benefits, the IWC is able to successfully integrate individual participation into a global discourse on sustainability, and such constituents may partake in the associated pro-environmental behaviours and practices from the comfort of their own homes. The home—as a site for the cultivation of behaviours and practices—is an important factor in the way that the IWC addresses individuals. As Fiona Allon (2011: 204) suggests, the home ‘is precisely where practices of self-reliance and self-sufficiency (socially, economically and environmentally) can be most effectively developed, demonstrated, and actively encouraged.’ What Allon is proposing here is that the home is a kind of ‘training ground’ where, in this instance, individuals adopt the pro-environmental values articulated by the IWC and cultivate certain behaviours and practices, all the while developing the necessary skills and attitudes to engage in sustainable practices within the broader community.

The home, then, is *initially* the site where most of the productive work of the ‘Home Eco Challenge’ is performed, but it is only once individuals have adopted and engaged with the values articulated by the IWC that they begin to contribute to the community’s discourse on sustainability and thus become participants in public pedagogy. Private-sphere behaviours are therefore a microcosm of the broader community’s sustainable practices. For example, the ‘sustainable food’ challenge incentivises householders to reduce food waste with the claim that ‘the average NSW household throws away \$1000



of food every year' (IWC, 2016a). The Council's proposed solution to this problem is better household-wide management of the purchase, cooking, and storage of food. Each of these practices is in itself a skill that needs to be exercised in order to be refined, and, once confident in the art of minimising food waste, individuals then become the bearers of public-sphere sustainable practices, to the extent that these practices are promoted by the IWC. Such individuals are therefore also in the position to encourage these practices, as well as maintain and improve them. This process of collective learning and engagement is what makes the IWC an effective pro-environmental intermediary; the way that the Council addresses households is a crucial factor in the continued engagement with and articulation of pro-environmental values.

This mode of address, however, differs greatly from Greenpeace. With a strong investment in the principles of people power and environmental justice, Greenpeace habitually addresses its audience with a distinctive sense of urgency, one that translates broad ecological concern into tangible instances of ecological harm that require immediate attention. For example, the Greenpeace 'Save the Reef' campaign tied CommBank's investment in the coal industry directly to the death of the coral in the Great Barrier Reef. One of the emails that I received from Greenpeace on this matter (recall the email that invited subscribers to participate in a poster-plastering campaign) included an image of a poster that Greenpeace had designed and distributed. The poster reads 'CommBank is funding coal projects that are killing our Great Barrier Reef,' and laying beneath this already disturbing text is an even more distressing image of severely bleached coral (2017e). Surrounding the coral is a vast grey-blue expanse that was, at some point in the past, a colourful, thriving ecosystem, and yet now is almost reminiscent of a post-apocalyptic wasteland. The intended message that underpins this poster, of course, is that CommBank is complicit in the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef, and that this issue requires urgent attention should there be any chance of 'saving the reef.'

It is clear that Greenpeace relies upon an environmental justice framework in order to promote its campaign and thus effect meaningful pro-environmental change. The 'sense of urgency' that Greenpeace cultivates is fundamentally different to the way in which the IWC addresses individuals to the extent that it is centred on *specific sites of ecological concern*, whereas the Council draws upon broader principles of sustainability

so as to encourage the development of pro-environmental values and practices within the home. Greenpeace, therefore, articulates pro-environmental values by engaging with specific sites in order to implicate certain companies and institutions in overarching ecological problems; the IWC, on the other hand, articulates pro-environmental values by encouraging the development of localised—that is, in the home and community—behaviours and practices, which then feed back into the broader rhetoric of sustainability. What this means is that that Greenpeace fosters a kind of ‘think global, act local’ approach, whereas the IWC encourages its constituents to ‘think local’ in order to address ‘the global.’ Though the IWC effectively subverts the typical ‘think global, act local’ configuration, these two approaches are by no means incommensurable in terms of their pro-environmental value; *both ‘thinking global’ and ‘thinking local’ are conceivable on the same plane* and do not conflict with one another, as our instincts would have us believe. Recalling once more the agency/structure binary, both Greenpeace and the IWC—characterised as pro-environmental intermediaries—avoid dealing with the issues that this binary poses, as each of them engages individuals in structural environmental problems without depending upon some kind of ‘universal individual.’ Pro-environmental intermediaries, then, are simply different pieces of the same puzzle, and the differing ways in which each is able to engage with and thus mobilise individual people will ultimately determine which role each plays in the global sustainability debate.

## Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis is to reconfigure the way in which individual people are framed by and thus implicated in contemporary discussions about sustainability. The framework that I have constructed—that of the pro-environmental intermediary—addresses some of the issues that the agency/structure binary is complicit in perpetuating within such discussions. To characterise a pro-environmental group as an intermediary, then, is also to reimagine what individual participation might look like in a broader social structure, meaning that pro-environmental intermediaries are able to cut across the divide between agency and structure and *incorporate individual participation into the process of structural transformation*. What I am suggesting here is that pro-environmental intermediaries allow us to think laterally about individual participation and engagement in the various discussions about sustainable futures, thereby enabling us to grasp the full potential of the role that individual people play in structural environmental problems.

A pro-environmental intermediary is therefore a *point of articulation* that is situated between an overarching discourse on sustainability and the actions of individual people. Environmental values and principles, then, are effectively ‘filtered’ by intermediaries, meaning that such values and principles are picked up, reorganised, and redistributed amongst the individuals that these intermediaries relate with. As I discussed in Chapter Three, Greenpeace is an organisation that values environmental justice and a kind of ‘power in numbers’ rhetoric, which means that it addresses its audience with a distinctive urgency; Greenpeace engages with large-scale environmental problems and translates them into specific sites of ecological concern in order to mobilise its audience. The IWC, on the other hand, is a Governmental body, and so it focuses on community engagement in pro-environmental behaviours and the tangible benefits that follow; thus, the focal point of the IWC is the home, or the household. These two differing modes of address are informed heavily by the way that each intermediary is structured, which is to say that the audience an intermediary is able to engage with depends largely on what kind of intermediary it is. Furthermore, neither is bound by any specific conception of agency—such as ‘citizen’ or ‘consumer’—and so each of them is able to address a variety of ‘types’ of individuals.

There are significant differences between these two intermediaries (both in structure and mode of address). But as it turns out, these differences happen to be the source of some positive, as well as negative, implications. For example, each intermediary, viewed in isolation, produces favourable pro-environmental outcomes relative to the capacity of each to mobilise its audience. Greenpeace continues to receive donations, organise rallies, and put pressure on Governments and big banks to stray away from supporting and funding ecologically-damaging practices. The IWC continues to provide information to its constituents, promote pro-environmental programs and initiatives, and foster community engagement with sustainable principles. When comparing the two intermediaries, however, it becomes apparent that each of them has its own strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the other, and these strengths and weaknesses may not always be so easily identifiable. For example, the fact that both Greenpeace and the IWC address different audiences is in some sense dictated by the constitutive principles of each, as I have already suggested, meaning that each intermediary is limited in its capacity to address an audience beyond the one that it already does. This has implications for a broader discourse on sustainability; a focus on intermediaries as a theoretical framework necessitates that there cannot be a universally-coherent pro-environmental discourse, and instead, these intermediaries represent a decentralised network of ‘linkages’—to use Hall’s terminology—placed arbitrarily within an ever-evolving assemblage of pro-environmental values.

The upshot of many independent groups contributing to a somewhat messy discourse on sustainability, though, is that each of them is potentially able to address very different kinds of audiences, effectively meaning that the more pro-environmental intermediaries there are, the broader the audience they will collectively mobilise. To return to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1984) ‘arborescent’ metaphor: our reliance on sustainability as the hegemonic framework for addressing global environmental problems is only effective to the extent that we continue to explore alternative solutions and possibilities. Deleuze and Guattari frame this mode of thought as *rhizomal*, a rhizome being a kind of root structure that grows laterally through the soil, developing shoots that sprout in arbitrary places. Perhaps the value in the intermediary, then, is that it will tend to explore those places ‘in-between,’ where the dominant disciplines and approaches dare not venture.

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